



*A Champion of
Early Childhood Education*

NCRC Strategic Plan
2022 – 2028





NCRC: A Champion of Early Childhood Education

Founded in 1928, National Child Research Center (NCRC) provides a preschool education in an environment that nurtures the whole child, fosters partnerships with families, and honors the school's commitments to diversity and the inclusion of children who benefit from additional supports and adaptations in the classroom.

A co-ed independent preschool located in the historic district of Cleveland Park, NCRC is the oldest continuously operating preschool in the District of Columbia.

Looking ahead to the school's centennial, NCRC's leadership embarked on a two-year journey of deliberation, discussion, review, and research to develop a strategic plan for the school that would:

- ① reaffirm and refine the school's Mission;
- ① strengthen and expand the school's leadership in the early childhood education arena; and
- ① underscore, enhance, and communicate the programs and practices at NCRC that are unique amongst preschools.

This document provides an outline of the culmination of that work.

NCRC is grateful for the support and significant input provided by the NCRC Board of Trustees, school leadership, faculty, the broader school community, and a team of consulting volunteers from Compass, led by Mary E. Gross, in the formation of NCRC's 2022-2028 Strategic Plan.



NCRC's Mission, Refined and Reaffirmed:

National Child Research Center nurtures the whole child - socially, emotionally, and intellectually - toward a lifelong love of learning. Informed by current research and continuing education, NCRC's exceptional faculty guide each student's unique development through a play-based, child-centered curriculum in a diverse, family-focused community, with a commitment to the inclusion of children who benefit from additional supports and adaptations.





Over the course of the next six years, NCRC will draw on the collective knowledge, resources, experiences, and partnerships of its faculty and staff to refine the school’s pioneering model of inclusive, play-based early childhood education and better educate the broader community about it, solidifying the National Child Research Center as the learning community of choice for children, parents, and educators alike.

Throughout execution of this Strategic Plan, three principles will guide all work.

- ⦿ An NCRC student’s learning experience requires an environment grounded in the fundamental values of respect, diversity, and the inclusion of children who benefit from additional supports and adaptations.
- ⦿ To fulfill the promise of its mission, NCRC must continue to attract, develop, and retain world-class faculty who leverage early learning best practices, research, and are leaders in early childhood education.
- ⦿ Robust financial stewardship is essential to strengthening NCRC’s program and enhancing its near century-long commitment as a champion of early childhood education.



The following goals will serve as points of focus around which NCRC’s faculty, staff, and Board of Trustees will organize their work in service of this new Strategic Plan. In achieving these goals, and the objectives that follow, NCRC will expand and strengthen its role as a champion of early childhood education, into the school’s Centennial year and beyond.

- ⦿ Nurture a diverse, culturally competent, and equitable community that affirms and celebrates all.
- ⦿ Enhance NCRC’s child development team to support the needs of all children and their families.
- ⦿ Strengthen facilities to ensure that they are accessible, interdisciplinary, and supportive of NCRC’s mission.
- ⦿ Establish NCRC as a convener of the brightest minds in early childhood education.
- ⦿ Ensure a clear understanding of the unique offerings of an NCRC education amongst the broader community.
- ⦿ Prioritize investment in ongoing development of experienced and knowledgeable faculty & staff.
- ⦿ Secure sustainable and diverse financial support for expanded mission delivery.



Nurture a diverse, culturally competent, and equitable community that affirms and celebrates all.

NCRC believes that students benefit from a learning environment that reflects a vast diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences. NCRC will continue to foster a diverse, culturally competent, and equitable community that affirms and celebrates all through its curriculum, its faculty and staff training, and its parental enrichment programs.



Objectives:

- ① Set a vision regarding diversity of the NCRC community (students, faculty, staff, and Board of Trustees) that affirms and supports NCRC's values and establish a process for reporting on that data to the community.
- ② Increase the socioeconomic diversity of NCRC students to enhance the educational and cultural experience of the NCRC community and enhance NCRC's fundraising capacity to reliably fund tuition assistance at levels that enable NCRC to meet its goals for socioeconomic diversity.
- ③ Further strengthen diversity, cultural competence, and celebration of differences in teaching practices and learning materials to ensure an ongoing breadth and depth of curriculum in these areas.
- ④ Ensure policies and practices support diversity, cultural competence, and equity among faculty, staff, the Board of Trustees, and the parent community.
- ⑤ Expand the Director of Diversity, Equity, & Community role, allowing more dedicated community-wide focus on diversity, cultural competence, and equity in a full-time, dedicated position.
- ⑥ Develop and implement an ongoing parent engagement program focused on diversity, cultural competence, and equity, while ensuring intentional and consistent communication on issues related to these topics.

Enhance NCRC's child development team to support the needs of all children and their families.

NCRC has a long-standing and mission-driven commitment to the inclusion of children who benefit from additional supports and adaptations. To this end, NCRC will further strengthen, enhance, and expand the Child Development Team (CDT) to ensure that the school's inclusion model remains at the forefront of early childhood education.

Objectives:

- ④ Expand the CDT to include a Social Interaction Coach who will work with students, faculty, and staff alongside the School Counselor, Occupational Therapist, and Speech & Language Pathologist.
- ④ Ensure consistency in delivery of the Inclusion program through regular training for faculty and staff that is continually updated to reflect best practices.
- ④ Document, communicate, and update—as necessary—key processes that provide a high-quality Inclusion experience for all NCRC students.
- ④ Proactively track trends for inclusion of those who benefit from additional supports and adaptations in both students (applications and admissions) and faculty and staff (applicants and hires).



Strengthen facilities to ensure that they are accessible, interdisciplinary, and supportive of NCRC's mission.



NCRC will enhance and upgrade existing facilities to support the growth and development of every child and enable expanded work of the Child Development Team.

Objectives:

- ⦿ Assess and determine desired upgrades based on educational and inclusion-driven outcomes, primarily focused on the Playground and the second floor of the Playhouse building.
- ⦿ Identify opportunities for new or upgraded physical space for NCRC's Early Beginnings and Play Pals programs, alongside the outdoor environment.
- ⦿ Engage consultants and experts in accessible play spaces to advise on improvements.
- ⦿ Consider enhancements to existing facilities that could be leveraged in the short term while working to secure the financial resources required to complete the long-term upgrades.
- ⦿ Upon securing all necessary resources, engage the necessary experts to complete the work.



Establish NCRC as a convener of the brightest minds in early childhood education.

As a model of early childhood education, NCRC will look to highlight its integrated approach to inclusion, play-based emergent curriculum, and diversity with practitioners (teachers, researchers, education specialists, and administrators) from the early childhood education community.

Objectives:

- ⦿ Establish an NCRC Summer Summit, an in-person, multi-day series of seminars, presentations, and discussions, to be made available to other preschools, schools, and institutions in DC and the surrounding area.
- ⦿ Develop a robust and evolving program, with agenda, topics, and presenters to be determined annually.
- ⦿ Evaluate attendance, cost, generated revenue, engagement goals, and other indicators to support adaptation for future iterations of the Summer Summit.
- ⦿ Enhance NCRC's visibility through outreach to the education community leading up to, throughout, and following the Summit, to strengthen our position as a leader in early childhood education.

Ensure a clear understanding of the unique offerings of an NCRC education amongst the broader community.

Establish a clear and consistent approach to communicating the mission and vision of NCRC as a model preschool and a leader in early childhood education. This should highlight NCRC's program and the resources available to support all its constituents; children, families, and educators, as well as NCRC's continued position as a center of excellence.

Objectives:

- ⦿ Enhance NCRC's website and social media presence to better educate current and prospective families and the broader Early Childhood education community about the school and its program.
- ⦿ Market NCRC Summer Summit with other preschools, schools, and institutions in the DC area.
- ⦿ Increase communications about inclusion, using all available platforms and ensuring intentionality and consistency.
- ⦿ Develop an action plan to better communicate with, and increase applications from underrepresented groups.
- ⦿ Improve communication regarding availability of tuition assistance through multiple channels.



Prioritize investment in ongoing development of experienced and knowledgeable faculty & staff.

NCRC will continue to recruit and hire teachers and staff from leading institutions in the field of early childhood education. NCRC will champion the growth and development of current faculty and staff by fostering relevant and equitable professional development and expanding collaboration between and amongst faculty, staff, and senior administrators.



Objectives:

- ① Ensure faculty salaries remain at or above comparative averages.
- ① Maintain and expand NCRC's Scholar Program to support faculty seeking graduate degrees.
- ① Further develop the Associate Teacher position to provide a focused, supervised experience for novice faculty and any Resource Teacher aspiring to be a Directing (Lead) Teacher.
- ① Enhance the process to identify and make available professional development opportunities for all faculty and staff, based on individualized professional growth goals that will be developed through a standardized and collaborative process.
- ① Ensure faculty and staff performance evaluations include a review of competencies and performance with respect to diversity, cultural competence, and equity.
- ① Reinstate a Teacher Field Trip "Circuit" whereby faculty have the opportunity to visit other early childhood programs in the DMV.
- ① Expand research-focused relationships with local universities that have schools of education.

Secure sustainable and diverse financial support for expanded mission delivery.



To solidify NCRC's position as the learning community of choice for families, children, and educators, the school's leadership must ensure the financial stewardship necessary to provide high quality early childhood education to a diverse student body, attract and retain exceptional faculty and staff, and secure the financial future of the institution.

Objectives:

- ⦿ Identify revenue enhancements outside of tuition increases that can be implemented to fund operating priorities without harming NCRC's quality, culture, and strong sense of community.
- ⦿ Further enhance efficiency and capability in financial reporting tools.
- ⦿ Explore additional financial tools and instruments to fund specific strategic priorities.

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