



Picturing Brighter Futures



Meet Think Small

Think Small is dedicated to advancing quality care and education of children in their crucial early years by teaching families about the importance of early education, training child care providers to improve developmentally appropriate learning in their programs, and influencing decision makers to keep early learning as a top priority – always with children at the center of our focus.



The Big Picture

Strengthen Families



FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Think Small staff administers Early Learning Scholarships and Ramsey County Child Care Assistance to help low-income families receive funding for children to attend high-quality early learning programs.

PARENT EDUCATION

We work with families to increase parent engagement and boost early learning opportunities for children.

who where how

Catalyze Change



POLICY & ADVOCACY

Think Small staff advances policy initiatives focused on improving access to early care and education for children from low-income families.



TRAININGS & COACHING

Think Small holds classes and workshops for child care providers in seven different languages, while also working with child care providers individually, on-site for support in maintaining a high-quality program.



LIBRARY

The Debra S. Fish Early Childhood Library at Think Small, a branch of the St. Paul public library, serves our community with over 6,000 items focused on children and early learning.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Our multilingual staff engages underserved communities to help families navigate, access, and influence complex government systems.

Prepare Providers

PUBLISHING

Redleaf Press, the publishing division of Think Small, creates high-quality materials for the professionals that care for, teach, and nurture young children.



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

At Think Small, we are **picturing a brighter future for Minnesota's kids** and we're working hard to help create it.

We picture a day when ALL young children will have access to high-quality early care and education. A day when little kids, no matter what their race, culture, economic status, or zip code will be ready for success in kindergarten and life. When parents can be more productive because they're assured their children are getting the attention they need in those crucial early years.

We envision a time when child care providers are fully supported and the business of child care is recognized as an integral part of Minnesota's economy.

We believe that even the **smallest actions can make a big difference**.

We are rolling up our sleeves, talking to people, figuring out what needs to change, and digging deeper. That's what Think Small does best. We aren't simply accepting problems, instead we're searching for innovative ways to solve them.

The work we do every day reflects our desire to provide early educators and families with the tools needed to ensure young children are successful in kindergarten and life.

Thank you for being a part of our efforts.



Barbara Yates

Barbara Yates
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF
EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Hunter Saklad

Hunter Saklad
CHAIRMAN OF
THE BOARD

Lens on Quality



Think Small prepares and supports early childhood providers by ensuring they have what they need to succeed as caregivers and teachers.

Promoting Excellence

Enriching the quality of early education and the lives of children is the goal of Parent Aware, Minnesota's quality rating and improvement system. Think Small is committed to doing its part to increase child care provider participation in Parent Aware. In an effort to encourage more providers to earn a star-rating, Think Small produced the three informational videos featuring Hmong, Spanish and Somali providers. The videos were narrated in English, as well as three other languages in hopes of reaching more diverse populations. The videos can be viewed on Think Small's YouTube channel.



Family child care provider Fahmo Ibrahim in front of her Minneapolis home.



St. Paul family child care provider, Joyce Khang meets with Mai Chee Lee, her quality coach from Think Small.



Brenda Ramirez, a family child care provider in Minneapolis, shares a story with the children in her program.

Standout Trainings

Think Small provides professional development opportunities focused on the essential elements of high-quality care. We offer classes and workshops in seven different languages, as well as individual and site-based consultation and coaching.

Early Sprouts is a hands-on curriculum which teaches children about healthy eating and guides child care providers through planting, gathering and serving nutritious foods in their programs. Twelve family child care providers in the Twin Cities participated in the training this year thanks to the support of Cargill.



Retention Incentives

An innovative response to keep those who provide high-quality child care in the field, Think Small began offering retention incentives to recognize the commitment of family child care providers in Minneapolis and St. Paul who maintain their Parent Aware program rating.

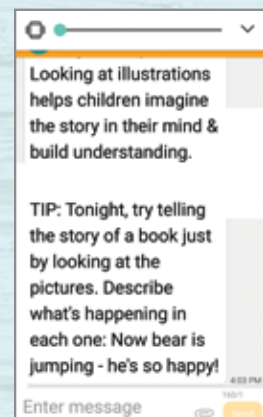
Turning Everyday Moments into Early Learning Experiences

Think Small is always looking for new ways to engage busy families. We introduced Think Small ParentPowered Texts because we know that parent engagement is key in early learning. This free tool is based on research out of Stanford University and is designed to help parents boost their child's learning while enjoying everyday moments.

Families who sign up receive three text messages a week with tips and simple activities they can use to support their child's development and help get them kindergarten-ready. Parents can sign up for Think Small ParentPowered Texts on our website at thinksmall.org/texts.



St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman reading at Story Time after launching Think Small ParentPowered Texts with our community partner, the St. Paul Public Library.



An example of a Think Small ParentPowered Text message.



"I signed up for Think Small ParentPowered Texts and love the messages! One of the recent tips about teaching empathy had a huge impact on my son, Jeremiah. The texts are simple, practical, and fun for both of us."

-Mary Texidor
Minneapolis Parent

Focus on Family

Think Small is focused on strengthening Minnesota families, especially those in underserved communities. We strive to educate parents about the importance of high-quality early care and education for all children and how it leads to success in school and beyond. We connect families with a wide range of resources including Parent Aware rated programs, need-based Early Learning Scholarships, and other financial supports, as well as innovative programs aimed at enhancing a child's learning at home.

Early Conversations Impact a Child's Life

Think Small partnered with the LENA Start program to help close the word gap – a 30 million word deficit between children from low-income families and their more well-off peers that is evident by age three. LENA Start uses "word pedometers" to track how many words are spoken to the child and how many words the child speaks. Think Small is the first in the nation to bring together parents and family child care providers using LENA Start's technology. Our initial results indicate a higher gain than the national average.

Graduation night for a Think Small LENA Start cohort. Classes were held for 13 weeks at our offices in Minneapolis.



A LENA Start vest and language pedometer.



Connecting Families with Needed Financial Supports



Think Small's Senior Vice President of Family Engagement, Dianne Haulcy, and Board Member, Art Rolnick, stand behind State Representative Jenifer Loon as she leads a news conference at the Capitol.

Early Learning Scholarships are a proven, targeted approach for our littlest learners and their families. Because of this, Think Small staff and board members participated in an April news conference at the State Capitol where parents, advocates, and business leaders spoke out about the importance of Early Learning Scholarships and the need for more funding.



Think Small offered free Creating Cultural Connections trainings in June. The course looked at the resources and reflective skills child care providers need to work successfully with diverse families.

Framing the Future

Think Small catalyzes change by activating leaders and advancing policy initiatives on issues that concern our youngest children. By developing innovative policy concepts and taking them full-scale, Think Small has helped improve access to quality early learning opportunities for Minnesota children.



Legislative Engagement

In order to make good policy decisions, our leaders must understand what's at stake. Think Small facilitates a dialogue between lawmakers and those working directly in the early childhood field as well as empowers families and child care providers to voice their own needs to legislators.

Think Small helped coordinate a tour of Bloom Early Learning and Child Care in Plymouth for Minnesota House and Senate candidates.



Letter to Lawmakers

Think Small is a champion in the movement to make early learning a priority for elected officials in our state. In May, we collaborated

with early childhood partners to draft a letter supporting more funding for Early Learning Scholarships. The letter, with over fifty group and individual signees, was delivered to the desk of Governor Mark Dayton and state legislators.

Advocacy and Awareness

Think Small's Senior Vice President of Early Childhood Quality Development, Cisa Keller, testifies at a House committee meeting in April.

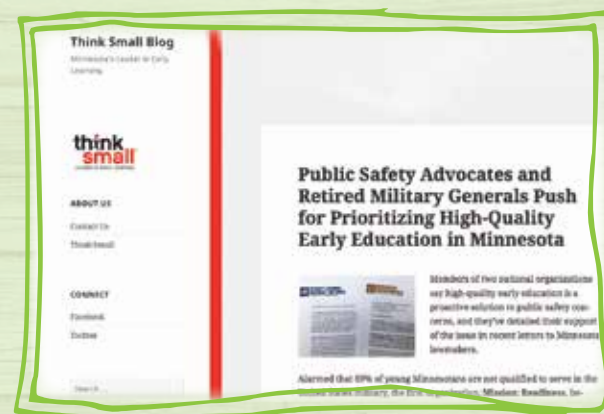


Think Small's Senior Vice President of Family Engagement, Dianne Haulcy, testifies at the State Capitol in March.

Think Small continues to advocate for high-quality early care for the most vulnerable children. After testifying at several legislative hearings at the Capitol, the legislative session resulted in increased funding and expanded eligibility for Early Learning Scholarships, including expansion for children ages birth to five.



Barbara Yates, Think Small President & CEO, and Michelle Walker, Generation Next Executive Director, were interviewed by KSTP-TV, KMSP-TV, and KARE-TV during a Think Small ParentPowered texting event in June.



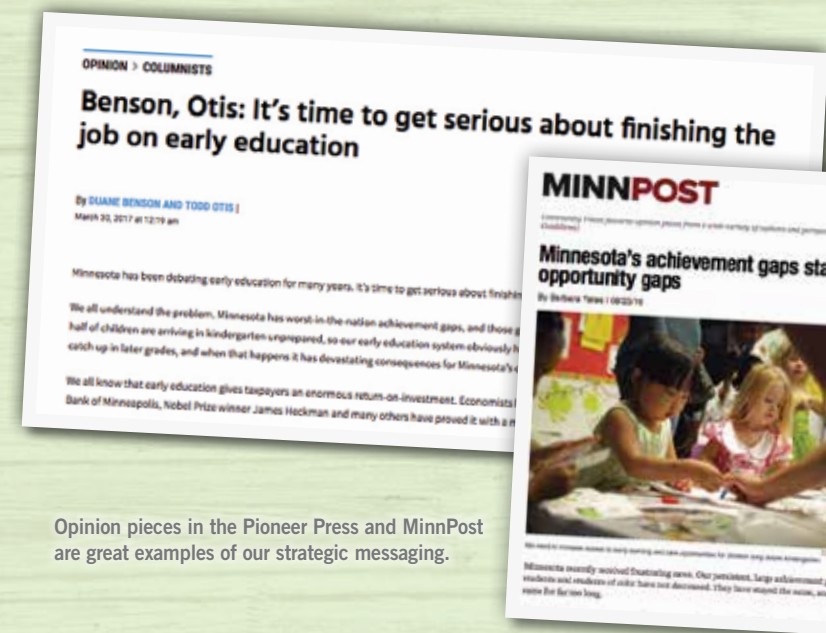
Think Small's blog hit a first-year publication milestone in January! We are thrilled to provide interesting articles about child care, early education, and policy insights.

Early Education Exposure

Think Small is working hard to shine a light on the important issues affecting early care and education in Minnesota.

Media and Messaging

Think Small plays a significant role in advancing early childhood policy initiatives across the state. As leaders in early learning, we aspire to bring about positive change for children, providers, and families.



Opinion pieces in the Pioneer Press and MinnPost are great examples of our strategic messaging.

Depth of Our Field

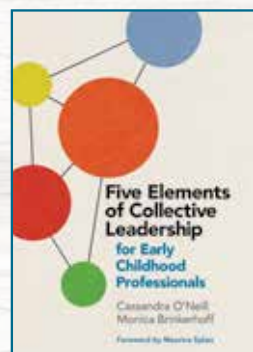


Since 1973, Redleaf Press has been an important part of Think Small's mission of advancing quality care and education of children in their crucial early years by publishing exceptional resources for early childhood teachers, parents, and policy makers. This year, Redleaf Press continued to push into new territory with several first-to-market books and strong contributions to all areas of early childhood education.

Leadership in Early Childhood

"Delivering on the promise of early childhood education requires leadership in the classroom, within systems, and in the public square. By challenging assumptions and nudging us outside our comfort zones, the authors show us how to lead effectively and inspire others to see themselves as leaders, too."

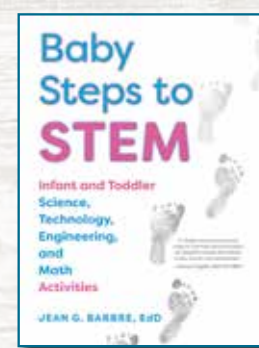
—Rhian Evans Allvin, CEO, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)



Policy and Standards

"A timely survival guide. This wonderfully challenging, readable book invites us to sharpen our perceptions of a whole range of state and national standards and to share responsibility for explaining them to teachers and parents and the public. As a standards-resister myself, I've just been won over. Read this book!"

—Elizabeth Jones, Faculty Emerita, Pacific Oaks College



STEM

"A valuable resource for parents and caregivers. It provides practical strategies, and thoughtful examples which illustrate the back and forth interactions between adults and young children that stimulate wonder, curiosity and communication."

—Christina Nigrelli, Senior Director of Programs, ZERO TO THREE

Debra S. Fish Early Childhood Library

The Debra S. Fish Early Childhood Library at Think Small contains the most current and comprehensive collection of resources for early childhood professionals in Minnesota. As one of St. Paul Public Library's (SPPL) branches, our resources are easily accessible to anyone in the state. The library features hard-to-find titles on a broad range of early childhood topics. Visitors will also find multilingual children's books in Chinese, Cambodian, English, Hmong, Karen, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

The Debra S. Fish Early Childhood Library is home to more than 6,000 early learning items.



Our on-site librarian Jennie Walker Knoot, is happy to answer questions about early childhood resources available statewide.

We're Glad YOU'RE in the Picture

Think Small recognizes with gratitude the time volunteered and financial support contributed by the following between July 1, 2016, and June 30, 2017.

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 in honor of Think Small for the
 opportunity to work with a positive
 and meaningful organization
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 in honor of Todd Otis

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 of our grandchildren

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 Lakeshore Learning Materials
 Mall of America
 Todd Otis and Caren Dewar
 Parsimony Inc.
 Radisson Hotel Bloomington by
 Mall of America
 Diana Rockstad
 Science Museum of Minnesota
 St. Paul Saints Baseball Club
 The Works Museum

Pictured left to right: Art Rolnick, Rhoda Redleaf, André D. Dukes, Ramsey County Attorney John Choi, Senator Jim Abeler, Todd Otis, Dan McElroy



Pictured top to bottom: Mariam Mohamed, Mary Ann Barrows Wark, Barb Fabre, Ericca Maas, Bud Hayden

Memorable Moments

Inaugural Sylvia Carty Award



Celeste Carty, daughter of Sylvia Carty, with Melvin Carter, Executive Director of the Minnesota Children's Cabinet.

Think Small created the annual Sylvia Carty Award to honor an early childhood advocate. The first award was given posthumously to Sylvia Carty in recognition of her outstanding contributions to children in Minnesota. The award was accepted by her daughter, Celeste Carty, during our 45th anniversary celebration.



Leaving a Legacy

Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton, with Think Small's Todd Otis, and Barbara Yates, President and CEO of Think Small.

Think Small announced it would establish a Public Policy Internship to honor Todd Otis, our Senior Vice President of External Relations who retired June 30th. The Todd Otis Public Policy Internship at Think Small will provide participants with a hands-on advocacy experience and will focus on advancing public policy initiatives that improve early learning opportunities for young children in the state.

Think Small Day in Minnesota

Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton proclaimed October 13, 2016, as Think Small Day in Minnesota in honor of our 45th anniversary! It all started with a bus and we are proud to still be serving early educators and families who create brighter futures for children.



Board of Directors & Leadership 2016-2017

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Community Volunteer

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Mary Ann Barrows Wark

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Kristen Harinen

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Director of Family Financial Supports

Eric Johnson

Director of Marketing & Communications

Wendy Nielson

Director of Quality Initiatives

Diana Rockstad

Director of Human Resources

We help more than **9,800** families annually.

We've offered more than **3,200** hours of one-on-one coaching to child care providers in 2017.

We've had **10,500** interactions with child care providers and parents from underserved communities in 2017.

Redleaf Press distributes **200,000+** products annually to a global audience.

We've provided **1,100+** trainings with more than **15,500** participants.

The Debra S. Fish Early Childhood Library features more than **6,000** early learning resources.

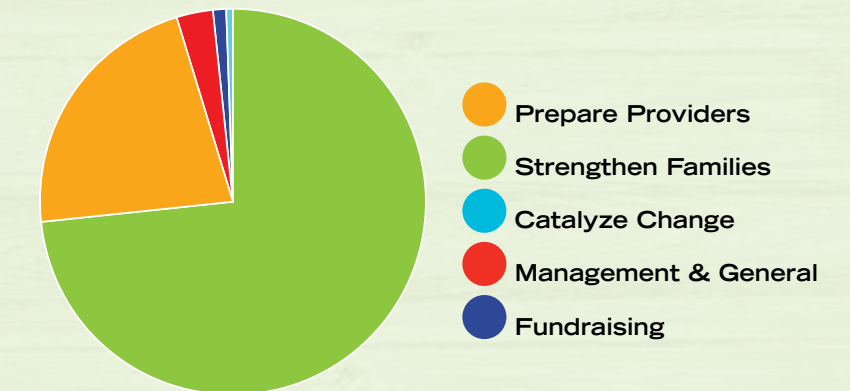
We count over **2.5 million** times we touch people's lives each year.

think small
LEADERS IN EARLY LEARNING

Making it Click



REVENUES AND SUPPORT	FISCAL YEAR 2017
Contributions	\$1,574,826
Government Contracts	\$29,738,806
Publishing	\$3,626,277
Other Revenue	\$932,374
TOTAL REVENUE & SUPPORT	\$35,872,284
EXPENSES	
Prepare Providers	\$7,750,804
Strengthen Families	\$26,217,809
Catalyze Change	\$233,170
TOTAL PROGRAM SERVICES	\$34,201,783
SUPPORT SERVICES	
Management & General	\$1,183,556
Fundraising	\$343,661
TOTAL SUPPORT SERVICES	\$1,527,217
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$35,729,000
Change in Unrestricted Net Assets	\$322,876
Change in Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	(\$179,592)
TOTAL CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	\$143,284
FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF JUNE 30, 2017	
Assets	\$12,764,772
Liabilities	\$6,939,448
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$5,825,324



Once approved by the Board of Directors, Think Small's audited financial statements will appear on our website at thinksmall.org/financials.

It takes a lot of time and investment to develop and implement projects to advance quality care and education for children. Here's how we're able to do what we do.

Provider Portraits



**Brenda
Novack**

Family child care programs often make special adaptations to meet the needs of their community. Little Wonders Daycare in Waterville, Minnesota, is a perfect example of this. Owner Brenda Novack knows her families well, and she tailors her high-quality program to fit their schedules.

To read more about Brenda's program or watch the Early Education Spotlight video about Little Wonders, visit <http://www.thinksmallblog.org/?p=919>.

Think Small's Early Education Spotlight is an ongoing series that showcases great work happening in child care and preschool settings across Minnesota. From innovative early learning programs to provider and parent perspectives, our Early Education Spotlight provides unique examples of Minnesota's early learning successes.



**Maria
"Elisa"
Vega**

Maria "Elisa" Vega's licensed family child care, Little World of Angels, located in St. Paul, Minnesota, is full of children learning through conversation and play. Kids in her program come from a mix of English-speaking and Spanish-speaking families. When they come to Elisa, they sing, read stories, and interact with each other in both English and Spanish.

To read more about the Little World of Angels program, visit <http://www.thinksmallblog.org/?p=838>.