

Connecting the Dots for Minnesota's  
Children and Families



**think  
small**<sup>®</sup>  
LEADERS IN EARLY LEARNING

Report to the Community  
2016

# Meet Think Small



**A child's crucial early years build the foundation for their future.**

Think Small connects the dots between early learning professionals, families, and elected officials to make sure children are supported from birth to age five, setting them on a path to success.



**PARENT ENGAGEMENT**  
Specialists teach families about the importance of early learning and how to identify quality programs.



**POLICY & ADVOCACY**  
Think Small staff advances policy initiatives focused on improving early care and education for children from low-income families.



**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**  
Minnesota Early Learning Scholarship and Ramsey County Child Care Assistance Program staff help low-income families apply for financial funding for children to attend high-quality early learning programs.



**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.



**COMMUNITY OUTREACH**  
Our multilingual staff engages underserved communities to help families navigate and influence complex government systems.



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



**LIBRARY**  
The Debra S. Fish Early Childhood Library at Think Small, a branch of the St. Paul public library, with over 5,900 items focused on children and early learning.

# Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Think Small is a unique place serving a special purpose. Our staff works tirelessly to connect the dots by **preparing child care providers, strengthening families, and catalyzing change** among decision makers to improve early care and education in Minnesota.

Here are some of the highlights from our last year:

- **Enrolled over 27,000 providers in early care trainings on a variety of topics, such as social-emotional issues and Parent Aware aligned curriculum**
- **Administered nearly 5,300 eligibility-based scholarships for families to enroll children in programs with Parent Aware ratings**
- **Presented at Clinton Global Initiative America and made a commitment to action which leverages our efforts and impact locally and beyond**

But that's not all. Together with partners, we've created one of the most cutting edge projects in the country, Pathways to Quality, to improve early care and education in communities that need it the most.

We encourage you to read about what we've done and where we're going. But remember, our work is far from done. Minnesota still has some of the worst achievements gaps in the country. We must continue connecting people and resources to best serve children who need help the most.

Thanks for all that you do.



*Barbara Yates*

**Barbara Yates**  
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF  
EXECUTIVE OFFICER



*Hunter Saklad*

**Hunter Saklad**  
CHAIRMAN OF  
THE BOARD

## Photos (top to bottom)

- Child care site participating in the Early Sprouts program with Think Small Quality Coach Rochelle Mateffy
- Ehrow Paw Kyaw, a recent refugee, earning her license for family child care
- Civic Engagement Specialist Marie Huey representing Think Small at Tour De Nice, a local bicycle competition sponsored by the Minneapolis Foundation
- Bilingual/bicultural trainer celebration
- Kia Vang, Quality Supports Program Assistant, and Julie Yang, Language Access Line Supervisor and Quality Coach, share Hmong culture as part of cultural engagement for staff
- Redleaf Press author Michelle Worthington reading *Noah Chases the Wind* to the real Noah and his classmates



# Connecting the Dots to *Make a Difference*

## Mom Graduates with a Degree as Son Graduates Pre-K on Early Learning Scholarship

Delgermaa pursued her degree knowing she needed help to graduate. She needed quality child care for her son while she attended school full-time. Luckily, her son received an early learning scholarship to attend a high-quality program year round. As Delgermaa graduated with a degree, her son graduated pre-kindergarten loving his teachers and school. Delgermaa's entire family is now better suited for success.



## Most High-Quality Family Child Care Programs in Twin Cities Led by People of Color

For many children of color, having a teacher that looks like them can have a tremendous impact on their self-esteem and cultural awareness. The majority of family child care programs in Minneapolis and St. Paul in Parent Aware, Minnesota's quality rating system, feature providers of color. Of the programs in Parent Aware, 63 percent of St. Paul family child care providers are people of color. In Minneapolis, it's 81 percent. This is enormously important for children and families, and it is a vital strength of Minnesota's child care field.

## Think Small Strengthens Parent Aware with Advocacy Efforts

Think Small organized, educated, and mobilized advocates for early education across Minnesota, resulting in continued state funding for Parent Aware. Parent Aware is Minnesota's statewide rating system for early care and education programs, rating programs on how well they incorporate kindergarten readiness best practices. Work in this area included sending 448 messages from advocates to legislators, hosting seven legislators on tours of early care programs, and inviting child care providers to speak at the Capitol.



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## Early Sprouts Gardens Teach Kids Value of Nutrition Across Twin Cities

Fifteen child care programs in the Twin Cities implemented Early Sprouts, a hands-on curriculum published by Redleaf Press that guides child care providers through planting, gathering, and serving nutritious foods in their program. Children love seeing seeds they plant grow into delicious lunch options and parents love helping their children explore more nutritious meals and creating knowledge about healthy eating habits that can result in lifelong behaviors. Thank you to Cargill for sponsoring this work.



## Think Small Presents at Clinton Global Initiative America

This summer, Think Small received a very exciting invitation to present at Clinton Global Initiative America, joining notable leaders like President Jimmy Carter and President Bill Clinton. Think Small has made a commitment to improve quality early care and education programs through our Pathways to Quality initiative, leveraging our efforts and impact locally and beyond.



## Think Small & Nick Jr. Donate School Supplies to Minnesota Children from Low-Income Families

Every year in Minnesota, thousands of kids start kindergarten without the proper supplies they need for school and without the skills they need to be successful in the classroom. Nick Jr. partnered with the Mall of America and Think Small to help send more children to school ready to learn by packing 500 backpacks with school supplies for children in need, including materials about how to be ready for kindergarten.

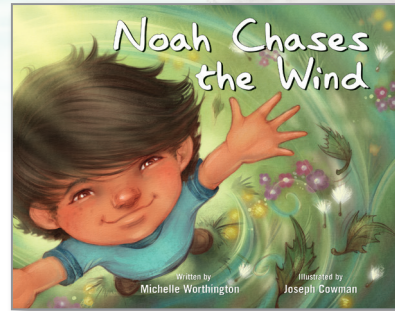


Photo credit:  
Barbara Kinney/  
Clinton Global Initiative

# Connecting the Dots to Publish Books that Matter

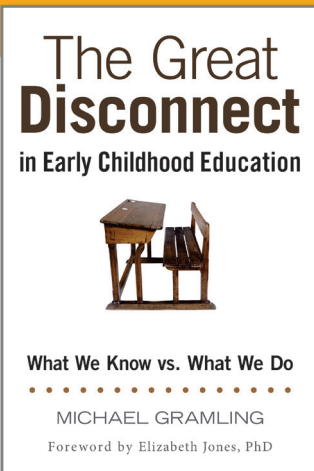
## Redleaf Press Wins Record Number of Awards

Think Small's publishing division, Redleaf Press, was thrilled to win seven book awards this year, a record number for Redleaf in a single year. Each award represents the hard work Redleaf Press puts into producing high-quality early childhood professional development resources and children's books.



### Noah Chases the Wind

- A silver medal in the Moonbeam Children's Book Awards in the Picture Book 4-8 Year Old category
- A Gelett Burgess Award in the Growing Up category



### The Great Disconnect in Early Childhood Education

- INDIEFAB Book of the Year Awards finalist in the Growing Up category



### Loose Parts and Brain Insights

- Each won a Tillywig Toy and Media Brain Child Award



### Wisteria Jane

- Bronze medal in the IPPY Awards in the Children's Book for 7 and Under category



### Creating a Beautiful Mess

- Gold medal in the National Parenting Publications Awards

# Connecting the Dots to *More Innovation*

Think Small helped many children and families this year, but one of the most exciting things about the past year is the next three. Together with Generation Next, the Bush Foundation awarded Think Small a \$3 million grant to create **Pathways to Quality**. This three-year program aims to raise the number of 3- and 4-star Parent Aware rated family child care programs in the Twin Cities by more than 100 programs, reaching an additional 1,700 children. It provides tools to child care providers to improve their program with individual coaching, business seminars, and small group learning communities, and engages parents in innovative ways with the **LENA Start** and **Think Small Texts** programs.

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## *Pathways to* Quality



### LENA Start

The word gap—a 30 million word deficit between children from low-income families and their more well-off peers—is evident by age three. To close this gap, Think Small is partnering with LENA Start to improve the language children are exposed to during their earliest years. LENA Start creates small devices that measure a child's interactions and vocabulary for sixteen hours a week. The device measures frequency and quality of interactions. This information is condensed into a report card, which a trained Think Small professional will discuss with the child's parents and child care professionals. This real-time feedback shows caregivers where they are excelling and where they have the opportunity to improve, paving the way for brighter futures. We are excited to be one of the first to pilot this program with providers and parents.

### Think Small Texts

Based on successful programs across the country, Think Small is launching a texting program to deliver timely, useful early learning and care tips to low-income families. Research shows sending parents specific, actionable tips can significantly improve early literacy. This program has the potential to impact families and children across Minnesota who are most likely to start kindergarten behind.



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I DREAM OF THE DAY WHEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES A CHILD IS BORN INTO DO NOT ACCURATELY PREDICT THE OUTCOMES OF THEIR LIFE. I DREAM OF THE DAY WHEN ALL KIDS IN MINNESOTA HAVE A FAIR SHOT.

*Barbara Yates*

REVENUES AND SUPPORT	FISCAL YEAR 2016
Contributions	\$2,574,907
Government Contracts	\$27,444,081
Publishing	\$3,702,669
Other Revenue	\$663,039
.....	
<b>TOTAL REVENUE &amp; SUPPORT</b>	<b>\$34,384,696</b>

EXPENSES	
<i>Prepare Providers</i>	
Professional Development, Consultation, Coaching	\$2,657,764
Community Outreach & Access	\$501,412
Redleaf Press Publishing	\$3,344,671
Debra S. Fish Library	\$73,411
<i>Strengthen Families</i>	
Family Education & Referral	\$228,145
Scholarships & Other Financial Supports	\$24,642,022
<i>Catalyze Change</i>	
Policy, Advocacy & Initiatives	\$249,951
<b>TOTAL PROGRAM SERVICES</b>	<b>\$31,697,376</b>

Support Services	
Management & General	\$1,087,709
Fundraising	\$365,229
<b>TOTAL SUPPORT SERVICES</b>	<b>\$1,452,938</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$33,150,314</b>

Change in Unrestricted Net Assets	\$80,832
Change in Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	\$1,153,550
<b>TOTAL CHANGE IN NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$1,234,382</b>

FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF JUNE 30, 2016	
Assets	\$14,330,132
Liabilities	\$8,648,092
.....	
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$5,682,040</b>





Think Small recognizes with gratitude the time volunteered and financial support contributed by the following between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016.

Thank you for connecting the dots!



*This past fall, over 220 supporters attended our Leaders for Early Learning fundraising breakfast to support Think Small's mission. Thank you to everyone who attended and made the event an enormous success!*



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*Families*

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**THINK SMALL WORKS WITH THOUSANDS OF CHILD CARE PROVIDERS AND FAMILIES EVERY YEAR. WE WORK TOGETHER TO CHANGE THE LIVES OF CHILDREN, WHICH IMPROVES THEIR FAMILIES, WHICH THEN IMPROVES THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY. IT ALL GROWS AND EXPANDS AND IT'S HAPPENING IN ALL OF OUR COMMUNITIES.**



**CATALYZE**  
*Change*

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