

2018 | Report to the Community

The Places We'll Go

Discovering Possibilities for Early Education

think
small[®]
LEADERS IN EARLY LEARNING



Children are the inspiration for



Think Small is committed to advancing quality care and education of children in their crucial early years. We do this by training, coaching, and supporting early child care educators as they provide high-quality programs to children; by engaging families; and by encouraging decision makers to keep early learning as a top priority—always using the best interests of children as our guide.

our journey.

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We are at a pivotal moment. As Think Small enters its 48th year of serving Minnesota's families and determines the places we'll go, the challenges for children and their parents are high. We know that too many children are not entering kindergarten ready for a positive K–12 experience. As a state, we have made little progress in addressing the opportunity gaps—gaps that are some of the highest in the country for children of color.

We are also experiencing a crisis in the shortage of high-quality child care slots for children in Minnesota as unprecedented numbers of programs close their doors and fewer people choose to enter the field. This is an economic development issue for our state because employers have difficulty attracting workers when child care is not available. We are also losing thousands of small businesses—most owned and operated by women. And for families that need child care, the shortage of high-quality programs is a barrier to employment for the parent and represents a missed opportunity to prepare children for kindergarten.

At Think Small, we work with the adults who most affect children—parents, providers and policy makers. While we don't directly work with children, every decision we make is through the lens of what children need and deserve to be happy and successful in life. We will be launching a new five-year strategic plan in January. In this plan, we will boldly position our work with our partners—creating a sense of urgency—to do everything we can to ensure our work helps prepare *all* children for kindergarten. We are transforming how we provide knowledge and expert content to support and engage parents in their children's early learning; developing innovations that support the creation of new child care programs; and financially stabilizing and improving the quality of existing programs. We will use our resources, expertise, and partnerships to ensure strong and sound high-quality child care businesses. We will also continue to use our voice to help drive our early childhood system to one that is equitable and provides safe places of learning for all children.

We know that we are only part of the solution. Eliminating opportunity gaps and preparing children for kindergarten is a big job, but we intend to contribute to that important goal by holding ourselves and our work accountable. It takes a village to raise a child, and we are honored to be part of the village that is raising Minnesota's children.

Children are our compass.

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Barbara Yates

**Barbara
Yates**

**PRESIDENT AND
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER**



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**Marshall
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Charting a Course

Think Small helps early child care educators achieve their goals. By preparing and supporting early childhood providers through professional development, consultation, and coaching, we ensure they have what they need to succeed as caregivers and teachers.



Top Notch Trainings and Coaching

We support excellence in early learning by developing training opportunities for early child care educators. In fact, Think Small held more than 1,000 classes this past year, which were attended by more than 15,600 participants. Trainings covered a wide variety of topics, such as running a child care business, health and safety, relationships with families, and well as promoting social-emotional development. Think Small also offers customized, on-site classes for center-based providers called Tailored Trainings. In addition, our quality coaches work one-on-one with child care providers to help them earn and maintain a Parent Aware star rating.



Tom Copeland, JD, leads the 24th Annual Family Child Care Business Seminar in November.



Child care providers take part in an interactive training with Redleaf author Angele Sancho Passe.



In the last year, Think Small quality coaches provided 2,998 hours of one-on-one coaching to 254 child care programs.



Early Childhood Grants



Think Small connects child care providers with quality improvement grants and emergency funding for early childhood programs. We are pleased to report a 130% increase in the number of Regional Child Care Services grants awarded this year. These funds help child care providers cover the cost of supplies, equipment, technology, and training. We also have funds available to help start a child care business.

Do not follow where the path may lead, go where there is no path and leave a trail. — RALPH WALDO EMERSON



Pathways to Quality



Pathways to Quality

Think Small continued our work with the Bush Foundation and Generation Next on Pathways to Quality, a program that aims to equip child care providers in Minneapolis and St. Paul with training and tools to increase the quality of care they provide to children. Examples of this work include facilitating learning communities for groups of child care providers experiencing language or economic barriers, as well as offering coaching to providers hoping to earn or improve their Parent Aware rating. We are proud to say that the numbers of highly rated licensed family child care programs in Minneapolis and St. Paul continue to rise—which means more children will be ready for kindergarten!

Family Child Care Business Closure Survey



An important piece of our Pathways to Quality work was a post closure survey of licensed family child care providers. The survey results show that Parent Aware-rated programs across Minnesota were twice as likely to have stayed in business than nonrated programs.

Cisa Keller, Senior Vice President of Quality Early Childhood Development at Think Small, testified about findings from a survey regarding family child care business closures at a MN House subcommittee meeting.



The number of high-quality child care slots in Minneapolis and St. Paul increased by 1,483 this year. This is a 13% increase, bringing the total number of high-quality slots to 12,512.



Early Childhood Library

With a catalog of more than 6,000 items, the Debra S. Fish Early Childhood Library at Think Small is home to the most current and comprehensive collection of resources for early child care educators in Minnesota. As a branch of the St. Paul Public Library, our materials are easily accessible to anyone in the state.



The Debra S. Fish Early Childhood Library showed off its impressive collection at an open house in April.



Build Your Own: Child Care Program

Think Small introduced “Build Your Own” which offers free individualized assistance in the start-up or expansion of either licensed family child care programs or child care centers. As part of this program, our child care business coordinator meets with current or potential child care providers to assess needs and design a start-up or expansion plan. The program is designed to help foster economic development of Minnesota’s child care community.

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**Build Your Own:
Child Care Program**

.....



Free support and information to guide you through licensing while offering essential skills for success!



Covering More Ground

Think Small aims to put Minnesota children on a path to success by supporting and strengthening families, especially those in underserved communities.



Early Learning Scholarships

Think Small connects families with need-based early learning scholarships so our most vulnerable children can have access to high-quality early care and education. We believe early learning scholarships are a crucial tool for closing the opportunity gaps facing Minnesota children. Research shows gaps forming between children from low-income families and their more well-off peers starting as young as 18 months old.



Last year, Think Small administered more than **4,400** eligibility-based scholarships for families to enroll children in programs with **Parent Aware** quality ratings in **Hennepin and Ramsey** counties.

Stephon's Story

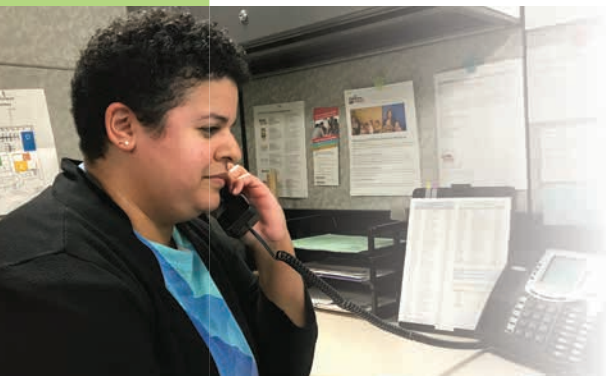
Early learning scholarships support high-quality early learning, which helps prepare children for success in school and life. When Minneapolis mother Nichole Flowers needed child care for her two-year-old son, Stephon, so she could work, an early learning scholarship helped her afford a high-quality program in her neighborhood. "Without that support," Flowers said, "I know it would definitely be hard. More than likely I would be struggling."



Minneapolis mother Nichole Flowers, with her son, Stephon.



Watch Stephon's Story at www.ThinkSmall.org/AnnualReport



Vanessa Carrasco Berliz, Language Access Line Specialist, provides phone support in Spanish.



Multicultural Services

Think Small's multilingual community outreach staff works with providers and families in underserved communities so they can fully engage in Minnesota's early care and education system. This year, Think Small staff provided language translation services on nearly 60 different projects, and more than 3,000 newsletters were distributed to child care providers in Hmong, Spanish, and Somali. Think Small also offers a language access line for anyone needing individualized phone support in their home language.



Child Care Assistance

Think Small administers the basic sliding fee Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) for Ramsey County. Through our work, more than 1,700 children received funding to help with child care costs so their parents could work, look for a job, or attend school. In April, Think Small held three bilingual parent sessions to educate families about significant policy changes to the child care assistance program.



CHANGES

Child Care Assistance Legislative Changes

Since October of 2017, there have been some **big legislative changes to the Child Care Assistance Program** across Minnesota. Join the Child Care Assistance staff at Think Small as they explain **what parents can expect, and how these changes will affect you**. Light refreshments will be provided.

think small
LEADERS IN EARLY LEARNING

Location:
Think Small East Office:
10 Yorkton Court
St. Paul MN 55117
Room 203

Wednesday, April 11, 2018 6:00pm-7:00pm Somali interpreter will be present	Monday, April 23, 2018 6:00pm-7:00pm Hmong interpreter will be present	Monday, April 23, 2018 6:00pm-7:00pm Spanish interpreter will be present
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For any questions please contact Think Small at 651-641-6665.



Aaron and his mom, Katherine, read a book together.

Aaron's Story

Four-year-old Aaron Santamaria Mendez attends a four-star Parent Aware-rated child care center in St. Paul while his mom, Katherine, attends the University of Minnesota. The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) helped Katherine afford child care so she could graduate from high school and move on to college.



Watch Aaron's Story at www.ThinkSmall.org/AnnualReport



Think Small ParentPowered Texts

We are thrilled to report that more than 7,500 people have signed up to receive Think Small ParentPowered Texts. This program is based on research out of Stanford University. Families who sign up receive three text messages per week designed to help parents or caregivers boost their child's learning while enjoying everyday moments.



Diana Neidecker, Community Engagement Coordinator, promotes Think Small ParentPowered Texts at "Rock the Cradle" in February. The event was held at the Minneapolis Institute of Art/Children's Theatre Company.



www.ThinkSmall.org/texts



Jacqueline Perez, Outreach and Engagement Manager, shared information about our texting program at the Minnesota State Fair in August 2017.



Steps in the Right Direction


Think Small believes all children should have access to high-quality early care and education. We catalyze change by advancing early learning policy initiatives and by educating legislators, as well as the public, about the value of high-quality early childhood education.



Advocacy Training

Think Small developed and launched an advocacy training for early child care educators. The training, taught by Think Small's Public Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, is designed to help others understand the early learning field and to channel their energy to advocate for children.

Want to have your voice heard but don't know where to start?



Advocating for Young Children
Your Voice Matters

Wednesday, October 17, 2018
7:00pm to 9:00pm
New Horizon Academy
9085 203rd Street West
Lakeville, MN 55044
Register by October 10, 2018.
Registration is required and available at www.thinksmall.org (a Develop ID is required for registration)
FREE Event ID: 287131

Senator Tina Smith Visits Think Small

In February, Think Small was honored to host United States Senator Tina Smith and her staff for a round table conversation about child care access and affordability. The event was a kickoff to her statewide effort to address Minnesota's growing shortage of child care providers. Sen. Smith recently introduced a bill aimed at improving access to child care across the nation. Think Small is proud to have shared our expertise on early care and education with her during the crafting of that bill.



US Senator Tina Smith visits Think Small.

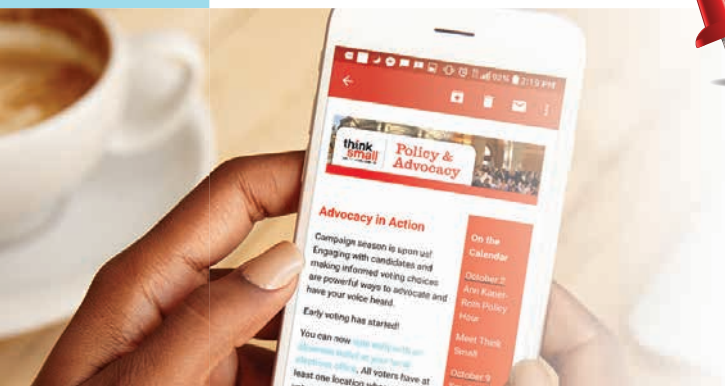


Policy and Advocacy Update

Our Policy and Advocacy Update is full of early learning news and upcoming events. Delivered electronically to more than 5,400 subscribers every two weeks, our goal is to keep readers up-to-date on important policy initiatives and information related to early care and education in Minnesota.



Subscribe at www.ThinkSmall.org/AnnualReport



Sometimes the smallest step in the right direction ends up being the biggest step. — NAEEM CALLAWAY

Todd Otis Public Policy Internship



Intern Emma Klinger and Todd Otis



In March, Think Small welcomed its first Todd Otis Public Policy intern. The internship honors Todd's lifelong advocacy career, while providing a unique opportunity to learn firsthand about Minnesota's early learning policy and advocacy landscape.

Policies in Play Blog Series



In August, we published our first "Policies in Play" post on the Think Small blog. The series takes a closer look at recently passed state legislative policies that affect early care and education. We worked with partners to find out what these policies look like in action and how they affect Minnesota children and families.

 [The Policy and Play series can be found at www.ThinkSmallBlog.org.](http://www.ThinkSmallBlog.org)

Redleaf Press® Reaching New Heights

Redleaf Press plays an important role in Think Small's mission of advancing quality care and education of children in their crucial early years.

A leading publisher of early learning resources for more than 40 years, our authors are award-winning experts in the early care and education field. We are exploring new ways to expand Redleaf's content and expertise beyond the realm of printed material, while remaining a trusted source for early childhood professionals.

 [Our website has a new look! www.RedleafPress.org.](http://www.RedleafPress.org)



Redleaf Press Blog was named a "Top 100 Early Childhood Education Blog" by Feedspot.

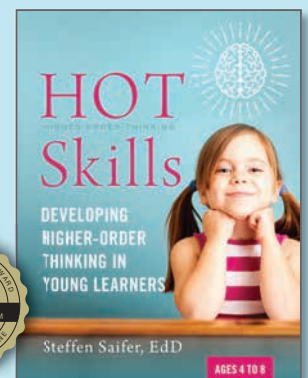
In Demand Authors

Loose Parts 3 coauthor Miriam Belgovsky was interviewed by *The Preschool Podcast*.



Reaching Our Audience

Publishing has endured some unstable years, yet Redleaf Press managed to increase the domestic sales 2%, and international sales 3% in FY 2018.



Award-winning resources

HOT Skills won the Learning Magazine 2019 Teachers' Choice Award for the Classroom.

Thanks for Walking with Us

Think Small recognizes with gratitude the time volunteered and financial support contributed by the following between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2018.

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Images from Think Small's Picturing Brighter Futures Fundraising Breakfast that took place in April 2018.



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Joy in the Journey

We ARE better together.

Team-building activities and STIR (Support, Trust, Inclusion, and Respect) sessions allow Think Small staff to grow personally and professionally so we can provide excellent experiences for the early child care educators and families we serve.



In September, Think Small staff welcomed 2018 McKnight Distinguished Artist and photographer Wing Young Huie for a dynamic presentation of his work, which confronts social issues such as cultural bias, immigration, religion, and social disconnection.

Think Small's STIR Committee offered team members a chance to view *The Raising of America*, a five-part documentary series that aired on public television and illustrates how a strong start for all kids can lead to better individual outcomes and a healthier, safer, more prosperous and equitable America.



Congratulations to David Heath, Senior Vice President of Redleaf Press, who retired in June after 10 years with Think Small!

We cannot accomplish all that we need to do without working together.

— BILL RICHARDSON



Setting the Pace

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July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018

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Director of Innovation

GAIL BULTMAN

Administrative Director

Exploring Realities



REVENUES AND SUPPORT	FISCAL YEAR 2018
Contributions	\$1,900,937
Government Contracts	\$28,155,490
Publishing	\$3,450,718
Other Revenue	\$1,432,139
TOTAL REVENUE & SUPPORT	\$34,939,284

EXPENSES	
Prepare Providers	\$8,303,672
Strengthen Families	\$25,251,588
Catalyze Change	\$241,687
TOTAL PROGRAM SERVICES	\$33,796,947

SUPPORT SERVICES	
Management & General	\$1,236,383
Fundraising	\$358,896
TOTAL SUPPORT SERVICES	\$1,595,279

TOTAL EXPENSES	\$35,392,226
Change in Unrestricted Net Assets	(\$312,278)
Change in Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	(\$140,664)
TOTAL CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	(\$452,942)

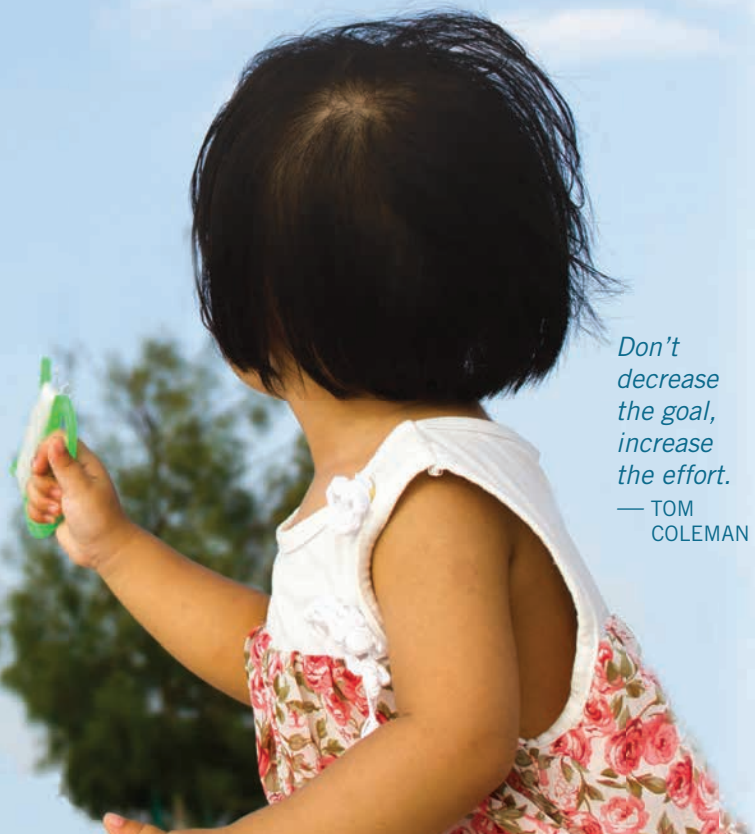
FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF JUNE 30, 2018	
Assets	\$11,672,992
Liabilities	\$6,300,610
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$5,372,382

Strategic Plan: Guiding Our Work



In November 2017, Think Small's Executive Leadership Team and the Board of Directors officially began work on the agency's new strategic plan that will cover a five-year period from 2019 to 2023. We are using a Results Based Accountability (RBA) Framework for our strategic planning process. With improved data collection and support from our partners, we are working to achieve a population-level result, ensuring that "All children in Minnesota are ready for Kindergarten."

The great thing in the world isn't so much where we stand as is what direction we are moving.
— OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, SR.



Don't decrease the goal, increase the effort.
— TOM COLEMAN

Leaving an Impression

Small Talks

Think Small introduced Small Talks in August 2017 to an enthusiastic crowd. The one-hour sessions feature leaders who share key insights on early childhood education and discuss innovative solutions to early learning issues in Minnesota. Additional Small Talks were held in October, January, March, and June with attendance growing at each event.

 Register for future events at www.ThinkSmall.org/SmallTalks

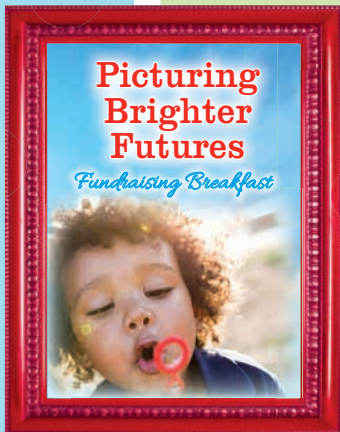


Ben York, founder of ParentPowered Texts, answers questions at the October 2017 Small Talks event.

smalltalks
A THINK SMALL SPEAKER SERIES



2018 Fundraising Breakfast



Think Small hosted a “Picturing Brighter Futures” fundraising breakfast in April. Close to 250 guests attended the event which offered an opportunity to learn more about Think Small and the impact we’re making in the field of early care and education. Economist and Think Small board member Art Rolnick talked about the Minnesota Model of Early Learning in his keynote address and Think Small’s role in helping advocate for it.

“Think Small doesn’t think small, they think BIG,” said Art Rolnick. “They’ve become the voice of all children, in particular the most vulnerable children.”



Emma’s Story

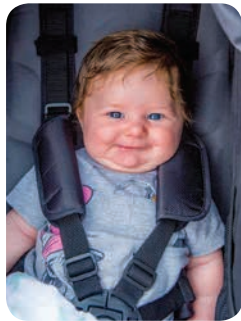
Early learning scholarships make a huge difference for Minnesota families by helping children who can’t otherwise access high-quality early education and who are most likely to fall into achievement gaps. Former scholarship recipient, Emma Mendieta Idrovo dazzled the audience with her reading and speaking skills during the fundraising breakfast. Seven-year-old Emma is a perfect example of how early learning scholarships work!



 Watch Emma’s Story at www.ThinkSmall.org/AnnualReport

Brew for Good

Think Small welcomed visitors to our backyard in June for 'Brew for Good'. Guests were able to sample beer from 20+ home brewers as part of this summer fundraising event. Live music and food trucks were also on-site. This event was hosted in partnership with Good Company Brewing, with all proceeds benefiting Think Small.



Early Education Spotlights

We're spreading the word about the importance of high-quality early education by showcasing great work happening in child care and preschool settings across Minnesota.

Favorites this year included:

HERE WE GROW

A nature-based early childhood center near Mankato, MN.

This high-quality program offers children plenty of opportunities to learn through outdoor experiences.



PEOPLE SERVING PEOPLE

Minnesota's largest and most comprehensive homeless shelter.

The downtown Minneapolis shelter houses around 100 families per night and provides resources to support young children and their parents. One of these resources is a four-star Parent Aware-rated child care center.



THE BIG RED HOUSE

A Parent Aware-rated family child care program located in Moorhead, Minnesota.

See how owner Greta Miller is working hard to make sure the kids in her program have a high-quality place to learn, play, and grow.



Watch these Early Ed Spotlights at www.ThinkSmall.org/AnnualReport

Community Leader Award

Think Small was honored at an early education reform breakfast hosted by Close Gaps by 5 in December 2017. Think Small was presented with a Community Leader Award for being an Early Education Four Star Leader by supporting Minnesota's smallest and most vulnerable children.



think small[®]
LEADERS IN EARLY LEARNING



All you need to know is that it's possible. — AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Meet Think Small

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 ENGAGEMENT

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



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.

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.



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.

