Head Start of Jefferson & Western Kenosha Counties

Visioning for the Future Plan and Proceedings Report

A Strength-based Vision for the Future of Families with Young Children in Jefferson and Western Kenosha Counties, Wisconsin

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Planning Team Participants

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Nancy Thompson – CESA 2 Board of Control Chair
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Introduction

The strategic visioning process began with a plan for the plan meeting on June 7, 2012 between Kathleen Eisenmann, UW-Extension, Jefferson County; members of the organization’s management team and Mary Anne Wieland, executive director. The purpose of the meeting was two-fold:

- provide a planning process overview, plan for the plan and create a draft timeline
- identify and develop the planning team

An executive committee of Ms. Eisenmann and Ms. Wieland was established to guide the planning process. Key staff and community representatives/volunteers/program participants were selected to form the planning team.

The planning process took place over two sessions. The bulk of the work was done at a six hour session on June 26, 2012. A follow-up planning session was held on June 27, 2012 to identify and prioritize strategic issues and engage in a strategy development exercise. Ms. Eisenmann facilitated the planning process using a research-based comprehensive framework.

This proceedings report was approved by the Board of Control and Policy Council of the organization at subsequent meetings. The proceedings of the plan process are included in this report along with the plan itself.
Individual/Organizational Interests

The participants began the process by identifying their self-interests in engaging in planning. Disclosure of self-interests helps the group establish respect, understanding and trust among its members. In addition, disclosure of self-interests builds a foundation for planning because it’s important that the plan developed reflect the interests of those involved.

Why I am involved in Head Start?

◊ 20-year veteran
RMS – in-school suspension abatement
Started as Head Start social worker
Dedicated

◊ 25-year veteran
Student teacher from Whitewater
Will be a part of my life forever

◊ 6-year with Head Start
Love the work we do with kids and families

◊ Newbie to Head Start
Missing grandkids; policy council member;
thrilled to be helping anyway I can

◊ 21-year veteran
Learned about Head Start by student teaching at Oneida nation
Home-based program was “best thing in the world”

◊ 12-year veteran
Head Start was new to me; what’s needed for children; absolutely positively needed

◊ Taught Home Economics for years
Worked with seniors for a while
Then in-home daycare
Met Mary Anne as a coach
Started with home-based then moved and changed over the years

◊ 3-year veteran
Educational manager for Fort Atkinson Schools
Came from Birth to 3
Gives kids experiences they might not have otherwise had

◊ Family Services part of program
Social worker experience
Home-based to family service portion of program
Family service is important part of program
Visionary or strategic planning is ultimately about purpose, meaning, value and virtue. It is philosophical at its base. (Bryson, 2004) Achieving clarity and common understanding about the organization’s purpose, meaning, value and virtue is a key precursor to developing a meaningful vision/mission statement and identifying strategic issues. This clarity and common understanding provide an influence into organizational identity, a connection to the outside world, define an organization’s relationship to its key stakeholders, provide a basis for identification of strategic issues that are in line with core values and philosophy, and articulate a social justification for the organization as a public institution.

The planning group began the process by considering Head Start’s purpose and how it might have evolved over time. Before taking on that task, it was necessary for the planning group to learn how purposes are established.

**Purpose Hierarchies**

A purpose hierarchy is a tool used to develop and examine various possible organizational purposes. It begins with the smaller scope purpose on the bottom rung and expands the solution space to higher level, larger purposes by posing the question “What is the purpose of this purpose?” It is important to note that every purpose on the hierarchy is a legitimate purpose. The only difference between purposes is their scope. See the diagram below.
Below is an example taken from a for-profit corporation whose business was to manufacture plastic bags.¹ The packaging department had a machinery breakdown and was trying to create a solution to the problem of the stamping machine failure. Here is the purpose hierarchy this department used to analyze the problem.

The purpose chosen by the department is a higher level one than the one which originally identified the problem located at the bottom of the hierarchy. This higher level purpose assisted the department in expanding the possible solutions to the problem by redefining what the department was trying to accomplish. Of special note is the department’s willingness to define its solutions within the context of what it could accomplish as a department as opposed to the higher level purposes which might more appropriately define the entire organization’s mission.

**This denotes the purpose chosen by the department.**
The planning team was asked to review its current mission statement, and in the course of reviewing its mission, respond to a series of six questions in order to assist them in developing a common understanding and clarity as to the purpose, meaning, value and virtue of Head Start as a nonprofit organization. The organizational leadership had charged the planning team with crafting a vision for Head Start’s future. The first step to creating that vision is to understand the organization’s present purpose. In the course of that discussion, the planning team considered what the purpose said about the organization and what was unique about the organization. Those characteristics are below:

**What is Unique about Head Start?**

- Have to be flexible, individualized approaches
- Universal application/approach to program
- Involves families from the “get-go”
- Surround ourselves with people who are knowledgeable about ECC, provide professional development; expect continuing growth
- Strength-based approach, rather than deficit
- Individual child and family service focus
- Unique how we track a child’s growth and development (have record)
- Provide good quality services to children and families (as knowledgeable staff - B.S. degree; S.W. degree)
- Highly accountable under what we “have” to do. It’s about impact on people.
- Whole goal is to empower families and we do a great job giving them the tools
- Taxpayer accountability and can’t exist without that support (political)
- Outreach to families and program partners
- Unique child issues – more challenging
- Bilingual education
- “Must serve all” piece
What Social Needs/Community Interests does Head Start exist to serve?

- School readiness
- Empower families’ lives
- We want parents to be advocates for kids
- Safe, nurturing and stimulating environments for kids
- Promote self-sufficiency

What is Head Start’s role in responding to those needs? How is that different from other early childhood education organizations?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Head Start’s Role</th>
<th>Differ?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early age to get in</td>
<td>Some others start later at age 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No requirements (potty trained) and extra charges</td>
<td>Other schools may have prerequisites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do comprehensive screening</td>
<td>Others don’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage (req.) parental involvement at all levels - responsibility and rights as parents</td>
<td>Others do not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot exclude child; must serve all – make referrals</td>
<td>Others don’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused on family</td>
<td>Others are not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R &amp; R process</td>
<td>Can be a barrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must meet needs each years</td>
<td>Others don’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide comprehensive services (mental health)</td>
<td>Other’s do not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide more hours/day in learning activities</td>
<td>Others do not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide more options for meeting needs</td>
<td>Others don’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide bilingual services</td>
<td>Others don’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have 750 performance standards</td>
<td>Others don’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a role in making sure physical health is taken care of (immunizations)</td>
<td>Others do not</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How should Head Start recognize and respond to these needs?

**Accommodate the child’s needs and changing family structure/demographics (homelessness)**

**Evolve with partners as they change**

*Newly eligible families (more of them) are not as knowledgeable about services (low income for the first time)*

Keeping up with research base on Early Childhood Education – learning gap

No room for complacency; no status quo

Good stewards of funding

As federal rules go, so Head Start does, too

What are the organization’s core values and philosophy?

Respect for individuality

Every child is unique and has a right to the best education possible.

All children can succeed.

Provide experiences that not all families would have if not for the program

Recognize importance of family to child’s development

Respect decisions parents make for their children; don’t impose our biases

Accept parents where they are at; help them improve; nonjudgmental
How should Head Start respond to its key stakeholders?

Different ways to reach out to everyone; catch all kids and families needing programs

Include them in decision-making and assessing needs

Nurturing compassionately and professionally

Respectful and feel privileged to provide the program; provide a listening ear for them; don’t disqualify what they have to say

Recognize what families have to offer, includes staff

Mission Statement

The mission of the Jefferson and Western Kenosha County Head Start program is to nurture and promote the individual growth and development of each child, with respect to the diversity of each child’s family. We are passionate in our belief that in order to meet the needs of our children and families, we must include in our work the expertise of our staff and community members and partners. Our effectiveness relies on the active involvement of all participants, thus empowering parents and ensuring school readiness. Together, we are dedicated to providing quality services that encourage success.

The planning committee reviewed the current mission statement in light of the discussion and had these reflections on its responsiveness. Reflections included:

- Needs to be tweaked
  - Often lose sight of what we are about – “gives me goose bumps”
  - Need to “toot our horn”; current mission doesn’t do what it needs to do
    - Focus more on uniqueness
    - Focus on comprehensiveness of programs
Mission Statement

A subgroup of the planning team met after the main planning process to revise the mission in light of the analysis and feedback from the planning team. The revised mission should be reviewed and adopted by board, management and staff.

REVISED MISSION

Since 1965, Head Start has been serving families, partners, and communities by promoting positive outcomes and healthy development with respect to the diversity of each child’s family. Our highly qualified staff is passionate and committed to providing services at both school and home in the areas of education, health, and family support. We are dedicated to nurturing the role of parents as primary caregivers, educators, and advocates for their children.

Vision of the Future

Eisenmann assisted the planning team in developing the new vision and mission by outlining the basic challenges to achieving a vision for the future and providing the team with an understanding of the eight sequential and critical steps to effective change as determined by organizational development research (Kotter, 1996).

Challenges to Achieving an Organizational Vision

• Describing the vision in clear, understandable way

• How do you get from where you are now to where you want to be?

Eight Steps to Major Change

1. Establish a sense of urgency
2. Create guiding coalition
3. Develop vision and strategy
4. Widely communicate the change vision
5. Empower broad-based action
6. Generate short-term wins
7. Consolidate gains and produce more change
8. Anchor new approaches into the organization’s culture
Mandates

Mandates are formal and informal rules that govern the organization. Formal rules may include but are not limited to bylaws, written policies/procedures, standards, and contracts or other agreements. Informal rules include organizational or community norms and expectations about how the organization will conduct its business and have relationships with its key stakeholders.

Understanding and clarifying organizational mandates is helpful in a strategic thinking process because these mandates are key components of the organization’s purpose or mission. Clarity about what is mandated will increase the likelihood that the mandates will be met. Research on goal setting indicates that one of the most important determinants of goal achievement is the clarity of the goals themselves. (Bryson, 2004, citing Locke, Shaw, Saari, and Latham 1981; Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983; Boal and Bryson 1987b). Understanding the organizational mandates and what is required also assists the organization in creating a vision that is not limited to just those mandates. The process helps the organization look beyond what is required to what its potential purposes could be - based on what is not forbidden (Bryson, 2004).

FORMAL MANDATES

- Performance standards
- State regulations
- Daycare licensing
- County codes
- Head Start Act (federal)
- Personnel policies
- School policies
- Parent handbook
- Program plans
- Classroom rules
- Educational requirements
- CACFP (food program regulations)
Informal Mandates

- Safe place to be
- Staff has input to the program
- Be there for families to pick up and provide services
- Community expects program to serve all low-income children and families
- Do all the things that you say you will do
  Unrealistic expectation
  Continuing challenge
- Provide quality education and services
- Professionalism and respect
- You will teach their child and the child learns
- Good communication between Head Start and families
- Children prepared to enter Kindergarten
- Expecting more of Head Start due to program expansion; there beyond just ECE; be there in every possible way
- Program needs change; comprehensive
- Communities expect you will meet needs
- Head Start will prove its worth as a program
  Definition continues to change and means different things to different audiences
- Good staff communication is to be valued; support
- Living wage and benefits
- Head Start is “at the table” with community partners
Stakeholder Analysis

Participants identified those individuals or groups that either affect or are affected by Head Start’s initiatives. Identification of key stakeholders is an important step of the process because it is these key individuals and organizations that will most influence Head Start as it works toward its vision of the future. Stakeholders are first grouped into two major categories—those internal to the organization and those who are external to the organization.

Internal Stakeholders

- Kids
- Parents
- Families
- Management
- Staff
- Director
- CESA 2
- Board of Control
- Policy Council
- CESA 2 Agency Administration

External Stakeholders

- Dentists
- WIC
- Public Health Agencies
- Santa, Inc./Christmas Partners
- Lions’ Club
- Business Donors
- Wal-Mart
- Neighborhoods
- School Districts
- Federal Government
- State - DPI
- Employee Families
- Community Partners
- Program Consultants
- United Way of Jefferson and North Walworth Counties, Inc.
- Individual Donors
- CACFP (food/nutrition program)
- Region 5 Federal Partner
- Regional Program Specialist
- UW-Extension
- Busing Companies
- Grocery Stores
- Chickens Unlimited
- Elks’ Lodge
- Community Libraries
- Madison College
- Jefferson County Literacy Council
- Taxpayers
- Other ECE organizations
- Mary Linsmeier Preschool
- Landlords – building rentals
Stakeholder Analysis

Further analysis of these key stakeholders was done to determine their influence on the organization. The planning group identified a number of stakeholder groups who could be comprised of members holding various levels of interest in Head Start’s mission or power to influence the organization in achievement of its mission. Those groups are repeated in the grid below.

Research on organizational development shows the most effective organizations allocate their time between their stakeholders, spending most of their time with the players (those who have the most interest and power), less time with the context setters and subjects (those that either have high interest or high degrees of power) and a minimal amount of time with the crowd (those that have low interest or power). This allocation of time increases organizational effectiveness because the majority of time is spent with stakeholders who must be taken into consideration in order to address the organization’s purpose or strategic issues. (Bryson, 2004). Satisfying these key stakeholders will be important to the formulation of strategic issues later in the process.
Hopes and Concerns Analysis

Assessing the internal and external environments in which the organization operates is the next crucial step in the planning process. This and the other initial steps in the process are really a comprehensive look at the organization as a whole in relationship to the environment in which it operates. Public institutions must understand their internal and external environments in order to respond effectively to changes in those environments and to develop strategies to effectively link those environments in the process of meeting the organization’s purpose and achieving its vision. (Bryson 2004) Internal and external environmental scans are performed as follows.

This step of the analysis looks toward the future and talks about what the planning team saw as their hopes and concerns for the organization. This analysis is important because it may lead to the identification of future opportunities and challenges for the organization and lay the groundwork for identification of strategic issues. The planning team developed the following set of hopes and concerns for Head Start’s future.

HOPES

▶ Guaranteed funding
▶ Expansion to Early Head Start
▶ Home-based program
▶ One big place
▶ Community Early Childhood Center
▶ Parents are open to the program – “pounding down the doors”
▶ Broader income guidelines; more reflective of community
▶ Busing for all
▶ More parent involvement – fewer barriers
▶ Parent Center – Laundromat; computers…
▶ Better community awareness
▶ Salary increases
▶ Realigning staff salaries/compensation and benefits
Hopes and Concerns Analysis

CONCERNS

► Funding

► Enrollment

► Regarding competition (Automatically put into pool to compete for funding; Subjective; no appeal)

► Increase competition

► Recruitment of kids and families (Community outreach efforts may not always be supported; Transient families without housing)

► Recruitment of qualified staff, i.e. special needs

► Number of kids in classroom with special needs or diagnosis has an effect on classroom and staff

► Needs of families and children are getting more complex and increasing

► How does Head Start build capacity with a very defined structure?

► Adults with mental health issues – untreated

► Required shift in how you do business requires different service delivery – integration of programs

► Broader community awareness and engagement
Vision Sketch of the Future

The planning team considered the purpose hierarchy, successful vision development and stages of effective organizational change in a lengthy discussion of mission and vision for the future. The consensus of the planning team was to adopt the following sketch for the vision of Head Start’s future:

Mission:
- School Readiness
- Strength-based both as to family and child
- Working with needs of family to achieve success
- Comprehensive; encompassing for children birth to age 5
- Coordinating services with the community and how providers are involved in decision making
- Seamless service delivery from entrance to exit
- Includes families in ALL aspects of program
- Diverse program options that meet needs of family
- Broader capacity to support and strengthen families to create enriching environment in homes

People:
- In-home staff would act in both teacher and family support roles
- Teaching staff feels comfortable and qualified to meet needs of kids in the classroom, especially higher needs
- Service open to all regardless of income, but within certain eligibility criteria
- All staff have accrediting process to assure understanding of the family support role
- Staff are friendly and welcoming
- Parents are an integral part of the program and feel that they are
- Key stakeholders understand mission and goals – champions
- Engage volunteers
VISION SKETCH OF THE FUTURE

Structure:

- Connections/networking for families
- Identifiable place/location
- Full-Service facility (restrooms)
- Diverse – whatever child needs; virtual
- Parent resources

Services:

- Parent education program – how education in the home can be supported (staff-supported and mentored)
- Parent opportunity for GED post-secondary education
- Wellness policies that make a difference for kids and families
- Busing for all!
- Technology apps for education (unimaginable)
- Parent/staff training
- Interactive learning
- Bilingual/diverse component
- Serving Birth to 5 with wrap around child care

Resources:

- Mental health services, especially for Latino families
- Engaged volunteers
- More technology – use of it
- Parent resources
- Engaged community who more generous than they already are
- More diverse Board membership
VISION SKETCH OF THE FUTURE

Culture:
- Team oriented with cross components – varies from class to class
- Cultural diversity within community is represented in families
- Very culturally competent across different types of cultures
- Professional and respectful
- Very open and welcoming culture

External Support:
- Consistent in their support
- Staff are professional (viewed that way)
- Head Start is an invaluable piece of their community – do what we say we will do
- Advocate for Head Start and spread the word
- Appreciate cost/benefit or prevention-focused

Vision Gaps
The planning team then reviewed their current status with their vision sketch and identified the following gaps between where they are now as an organization and their vision for the future:

- New job descriptions
- Can’t do Birth to 5 because need Early Head Start
- Busing
- “Off the beaten path” facilities
- Engaged volunteers – more of them
- Technology keeps evolving (Professional development Funds to keep up)
- Parent engagement
- Fully enrolled
- Money to pay for every gap
- Personnel package
- Need additional professional development to meet the needs of kids and families
- Kids could be “more ready” for school (Need data on achievement & Parents being better advocates)
- Ability to change programs based on data
- Negative perception of program (How do we market ourselves to move away from “low-income” to “just a program in the community”?)
Strategic Issues

Strategic issues are fundamental policy questions or critical challenges that affect an organization. Each participant identified their top issues based on their interpretation of alignment with key stakeholders, adherence to formal/informal mandates, vision of the future, and environmental analysis. The planning team then discussed their respective top issues and used a decision matrix to select from among five their priorities.

A decision matrix is a consensus building tool which allows groups to rate or prioritize various issues according to objective criteria along a five point scale rather than rely on subjective means. The criteria the planning team used to evaluate the possible issue priorities were as follows:

- Extent to which the issue moves the organization towards its vision?
- Extent to which there is support for acting on the issue by those most critical to achieving the vision?
- Extent to which the organization has the resources and leadership to address the issue?
- Extent to which not addressing the issue could have significant consequences?
- Extent to which it is critical to address the issue?

The planning committee prioritized the following issues*:

1. **How do we realign our budget to achieve our vision?** (235 pts.)
2. **How can we ensure continued funding at appropriate levels to achieve our vision?** (227 pts.)
3. **How can we market Head Start’s mission and vision in order to create greater public awareness of the value-added program benefits; attract newly eligible families; and increase our visibility in the community?** (221 pts.)
4. How can we improve our recruitment strategies and practices in order to develop a balanced approach to recruitment and identify additional program-eligible children and families? (204 pts.)
5. What can we do to improve our ability to connect families up with the classrooms and family support services? (202 pts.)
6. What can we do to improve staff development (through improved training policies and procedures) in order to meet the greater/newly emerging needs of children and families in the program? (174 pts.)

* Bold Font denotes issues with highest priority.
Conclusion

The management and staff will need to complete additional action plans for the high priority issues. The organization has committed to the implementation of this plan and will be reviewing its progress on a regular basis over the course of the next three years.

Adaptation of Research

The methods and processes used to develop this strategic plan were based on the following research:


