



Spartan Child Development Center

Strategic Plan

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**PUBLIC SECTOR
CONSULTANTS**

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Spartan Child Development Center Strategic Plan

Play, learn, and grow

SCDC provides individualized and developmentally appropriate early childhood education that nurtures the growth of children in a diverse and inclusive environment

Introduction

The Spartan Child Development Center (SCDC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit childcare center located on the Michigan State University (MSU) campus. The center provides care focused on the social-emotional, cognitive, and physical needs of developing children. Most families enrolled at the center are affiliated with MSU. The center has capacity for 140 children and generally operates with a waiting list. Exhibit 1 shows current enrollment figures.

EXHIBIT 1: SCDC Current Enrollment

Classroom	Current Enrollment
Infant	12
Toddler	24
Transition	24
Preschool 3	36
Preschool 4	36
Total Enrollment	140
Current Waitlist: 383	

Planning Process Overview

SCDC partnered with Public Sector Consultants (PSC) to support their development of a three- to five-year strategic plan to guide center activities. The center and its board members are interested in maintaining and expanding the quality care provided to families, exploring ways to increase their financial health, and creating an inclusive, welcoming environment for all their children. PSC collected stakeholder feedback from parents, board members, staff, and administrators to inform this vision. The feedback was shared with the strategic planning committee, who participated in three PSC-facilitated brainstorming sessions to identify five-year goals, objectives, and corresponding strategies, which are summarized in Appendix A.



Strategic Plan

Goal One: Provide High-Quality Child Care

Objective A: Adopt a strong, evidence-based early childhood curriculum by XX, 20xx

Strategy: Create a curriculum subcommittee composed of administrators, teachers, and board members

Strategy: Identify a short list of accreditation-approved curricula

Strategy: Create an evaluation rubric for decision making

Objective B: Reduce staff turnover by X percent annually

Strategy: Conduct compensation study on a biannual basis

Strategy: Ensure that staff receive equitable pay and benefits

Objective C: Prioritize and support the social-emotional (SE) needs of the center's children

Strategy: Foster opportunities for children to develop emotional literacy

Strategy: Regularly evaluate children with parent input to identify developmentally appropriate SE supports using an approved screening tool

Strategy: Ensure the space and environment provide developmentally appropriate materials and opportunities for growth

Strategy: Support teachers in their understanding of SE growth through targeted professional development

A woman and a young boy are looking at a book together. The woman is on the left, and the boy is on the right. They are both looking down at the book, which is open on a table. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a library or a study area with bookshelves.

Goal Two: Strengthen Parent Engagement

Objective A: Implement bimonthly school engagement activities

Strategy: Create budget for engagement activities

Strategy: Survey parents to identify desired types of activities and education

Strategy: Create and distribute calendar of events and communication strategy

Objective B: Implement a parent education curriculum that includes quarterly learning sessions

Strategy: Identify parent education needs through survey

Strategy: Create a program marketing strategy

Strategy: Identify MSU researchers to lead classes

Objective C: Distribute annual community resource guide to families

Strategy: Create a community engagement committee

Strategy: Identify community resources for recreation, social services, and pediatric mental health

Goal Three: Support Teacher Growth

Objective A: X percent of new staff are paired with a teacher mentor

Strategy: Identify lead teachers to serve as mentors

Strategy: Create a structured participant framework

Strategy: Provide training for mentors, including expectations on engagement and cadence with mentees

Objective B: Training is provided to all teachers and support staff on a [monthly/quarterly/yearly] basis

Strategy: Identify collective staff training needs through feedback in surveys and performance reviews

Strategy: Create a [monthly/quarterly/yearly] training calendar

Strategy: Identify content and training experts for identified training needs

Objective C: Center administrators provide and document individualized teacher supports as needed

Strategy: Conduct a needs assessment through continual teacher and classroom observations

Strategy: Develop individual professional development plans in partnership with teachers

Strategy: Create a resource bank of materials for teacher reference

Objective D: Staff events and team-building activities are conducted on a [monthly/quarterly/yearly] basis

Strategy: Establish a culture committee

Strategy: Survey staff to assess interest and identify activities

Strategy: Populate staff event and team-building calendar to include social, wellness, and community-based activities

Goal Four: Establish Clear Board and Operational Practices

Objective A: Communications with staff and families are consistent and reliable

Strategy: Establish parent communication protocols for staff

Strategy: Create a communications content calendar

Strategy: Explore ways to increase parent communication, such as text programs, weekly updates, and newsletters

Objective B: Board members have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities

Strategy: Share board member expectations with potential board members

Strategy: Provide training for incoming board members

Strategy: Develop accountability measures for board participation

Strategy: Review and amend board policies that inhibit policy progress and implementation

Objective C: Center policies and procedures are reviewed, updated and communicated on a [quarterly/annual] basis

Strategy: Establish a board/staff subcommittee to review center policies and procedures

Strategy: Identify opportunities within hiring and enrollment processes to share center policies

A background image showing several young children sitting at a table, focused on playing with wooden blocks. The image is semi-transparent, allowing the text to be overlaid clearly.

Goal Five: Diversify and Maintain Financial Health

Objective A: Secure at least two new funding sources annually

Strategy: Create and maintain an alumni database for fundraising and outreach

Strategy: Host a silent auction

Strategy: Sell SCDC-branded swag

Objective B: Center enrollment is at an average of X percent capacity annually

Strategy: Re-evaluate and implement a new procedure for transitions, enrollment, and unenrollment

Strategy: Create a marketing strategy to recruit new families to the center

Objective C: Maximize the connection with MSU

Strategy: Evaluate governance models of being an MSU-housed vs. -affiliated center

Strategy: Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of shifting governance to MSU

Strategy: Identify innovative ways to partner with MSU researchers and students

Goal Six: Foster a Diverse and Inclusive Environment

Objective A: Increase cultural competency of staff as measured by the percent who have attended cultural and diversity workshops

Strategy: Provide ongoing training for staff on topics such as implicit bias, cultural competency, and anti-racism

Strategy: Facilitate workshops that focus on inclusive practices and strategies for supporting diverse learners

Objective B: Increase staff diversity by X percent annually through targeted recruitment

Strategy: Implement hiring practices that prioritize diversity and actively seek candidates from various backgrounds

Strategy: Review existing center policies with an equity and diversity lens

Objective C: Support the language, culture, ethnicity, and racial diversity of families and the community

Strategy: Design spaces that reflect diversity, such as murals, posters, decorations, and learning materials that celebrate different cultures

Strategy: Provide families with opportunities to share their cultural traditions and experiences with the center

Strategy: Use multiple languages and accessible formats for communication with families to ensure everyone feels welcome

Appendix A: Stakeholder Engagement Findings

Parent Focus Group Summary

Public Sector Consultants (PSC) interviewed three parents in a focus group session held in fall 2023. Parents were asked to reflect on the Spartan Child Development Center's (SCDC's) communication, curriculum, and quality of care, and to identify areas for improvement. Participants expressed overall satisfaction with the center and offered a few areas for improvement. The key takeaways are:

- Participants highlighted a general satisfaction with SCDC communications. They noted occasional lapses when using the mobile communication app but appreciated personal interactions during drop-off and pick-up.
- Parents praised the center's ability to retain skilled staff, maintain a clean and safe environment, and offer structured educational programs with a balanced curriculum.
- Staff competency and dedication to child care, with continuity and familiarity across classrooms, were noted as strengths.
- Parents expressed satisfaction with the programming quality, focusing on emotional, social-emotional, and educational development, and noted that it is important to them to have flexible, play-based curriculum.
- Areas for improvement included enhancing consistency in outdoor activities, expanding educational resources like sign language teaching, and addressing wage concerns to retain staff.
- Staff could improve their management of children's behavioral issues, including in their understanding of normal developmental behaviors.
- Parents recognized the center's value despite pricing and waitlist concerns; all expressed a willingness to recommend the center to others.

Staff Focus Group Summary

During winter 2024, PSC interviewed staff during a focus group session. Staff were asked to reflect on their satisfaction with their job, areas where the center was operating well, and ways that policies and processes could be improved. Overall, while staff demonstrated high morale and a commitment to the center. Addressing their areas of concern could further enhance their experience and strengthen the center's community.

- Staff expressed a strong sense of autonomy and flexibility in their roles, particularly appreciating the increased trust and input they have over curriculum decisions.
- The supportive environment among colleagues was a notable highlight, with many staff members emphasizing how much they care for one another. This contributed to a sense of community and belonging, making the center a place where employees feel appreciated.
- The recent initiatives for training have been well received. The establishment of a position dedicated to uniform training ensures that all staff start from the same foundational knowledge. Additionally, staff value the planning time they have, which helps them manage their workload without taking tasks home.
- Staff also highlighted the strong community engagement, especially the center's responsiveness to families during challenging times. There is a desire for even more opportunities to connect with the community and strengthen these relationships.

- Maintaining consistent working hours has been particularly important to staff, allowing them to achieve a better work-life balance, which they greatly appreciate.
- One significant concern among staff is the need for greater consistency in aide assignments. Many expressed that having aides assigned to specific rooms or age groups would help reduce confusion for both children and staff.
- There was a call for improved communication and clarity regarding roles and responsibilities. Staff indicated a need for clearer guidelines to prevent overlaps and misunderstandings about what is expected from each position.
- While staff generally feel supported by administration, some expressed frustration about boundary-setting and perceived inequalities in workload distribution. This was especially true for staff with longer tenure, who often felt they were given additional responsibilities.
- Concerns about mental health and burnout were prevalent. Staff requested ongoing support and resources to help manage stress and highlighted the importance of administrators following through on commitments related to mental health initiatives and programming.
- Staff expressed a desire for enhanced and increased parent engagement opportunities. Some suggested that inviting parents into the center more often could improve relationships, allowing for better communication and collaboration.
- It was a concern that aides were not included equitably in center initiatives. Staff suggested that their inclusion could create more connections with families and other staff members and positively impact their retention.
- Finally, staff voiced concerns about emergency preparedness, noting that safety drills and protocols need better communication and practice to ensure everyone is equipped to handle potential crises effectively.

Board Member Engagement Summary

PSC conducted interviews, a focus group, and strategic planning sessions with board members in 2023 and 2024. Board membership includes a combination of parents, MSU staff, and community members. Overall, while board members are optimistic about the center's programming and community impact, they also recognize several key areas for improvement that could enhance both the educational experience for children and the satisfaction of families and staff.

- Board members expressed high satisfaction with the center's programming, highlighting the High Scope curriculum's play-based approach.
- Members appreciated the Brightwheel mobile app that helps facilitate connections between families and staff.
- Board members emphasized a culture of care at the center and felt that staff are genuinely invested in each child's well-being.
- It was noted that the center does a good job to embrace diversity, particularly in how different cultures and celebrations are incorporated into the curriculum.
- Staffing issues were a recurring theme, and board members suggested increased support to address high ratios in classrooms. This is especially when working with children who may have special needs or behavioral challenges. Board members expressed a desire for more resources and specialized training for staff to better support these children.
- The board members voiced a need for improved communication regarding center policies and changes, particularly in areas like parental leave and operational hours. They believe that clearer information would enhance trust and satisfaction among families.
- There was a strong consensus on the importance of maintaining the center's mission and vision, particularly in light of potential growth and changes related to its affiliation with MSU. Board members emphasized the need to balance expansion with preserving the quality of care and education provided.

- Concerns about tuition increases were discussed, with many board members recognizing the challenge of enhancing services while ensuring affordability for families. Suggestions included exploring partnerships with MSU and community organizations to bolster resources without compromising financial accessibility.
- Board members discussed reevaluating the enrollment period and how it impacts the center's ability to maintain capacity and manage its waitlist.



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