

GREATER TOGETHER

THE CAMPAIGN TO BUILD A MILWAUKEE FOR ALL



GREATER TOGETHER: CAMPAIGN PRIORITIES

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE & EDUCATION

A plan to transform early childhood care and education in our region

Early childhood care and education is the key to giving every child the start in life they need and deserve.

In the critical years between birth and age 3, 80 percent of a child's brain is developed – meaning the opportunities and education they receive in these first years can shape the course of their life. What's more, early childhood care and education enables the parents of young children to participate in the workforce, providing a further benefit to both families and the greater community.

Yet half of all Milwaukee children under age 6 lack access to quality early childhood education, and Black and Latino children are disproportionately affected during this critical time of life.

Every child deserves the very best start in life, and there's no time to waste. That is why the Greater Milwaukee Foundation is preparing to lead a generational investment in early childhood care and education.

The Gaps in Early Childhood Care and Education

The Foundation has long invested in education, and prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we commissioned a needs assessment to spotlight the gaps in our region's early childhood education system and inform a strategic, systemwide approach.

Our assessment identified three major issues that must be addressed:

- **Access:** Half of all Milwaukee children under age 6 lack access to quality early childhood education that meets the needs of their families and supports their future success.
- **Quality:** Less than half of providers are considered high-quality, as defined by a quality rating of 3, 4, or 5 stars from YoungStar, Wisconsin's child care quality rating and improvement system.
- **Affordability:** A nationally determined standard specifies that no more than 7% of household income should be spent on early childhood education, yet Milwaukee families

not eligible for any type of federal or state subsidy spend an average of 19% of their household income on these services.

Behind these gaps is a broken market. While limited public funding supports the system, child care is largely a private market funded by parent fees. The majority of families cannot afford quality care. Moreover, high-quality child care is labor-intensive by nature, requiring low adult-to-child ratios. Because of this, even high per-child fees do not generate enough revenue to pay child care professionals – many of whom are women of color – a fair wage with benefits. As a result, our region faces significant staffing shortages and regularly loses experienced, high-quality providers. This is why our region continues to suffer from a system that cannot offer every child and family an affordable, high-quality option. We need to change this dynamic at the local, city and systemic level – and with your support and investment, we will.

The Impact of COVID

The issues in our early childhood care and education system have persisted for years – and they were all exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic crisis. Many providers in this already-overwhelmed sector now face:

- **Declining revenue** due to decreased enrollment resulting from families' safety concerns or growing inability to pay;
- **Increased expenses** for staff, protective equipment and cleaning supplies;

- **Severe staffing shortages** as educators choose to stay out of the workforce or pursue higher compensation in other sectors; and
- **Increased mental health challenges** for both early childhood professionals and the children and families they serve, resulting from the physical and economic challenges of the pandemic, compounded by racial inequities.

A Systemwide Strategy

We invite you to invest in a systemwide strategy that will address these gaps and create an accessible, affordable, high-quality early childhood care and education system for all.

That means:

- 1. Expanding access to quality early childhood care and education in neighborhoods where it is most needed; and**
- 2. Increasing recruitment, retention and professionalization of the early childhood education workforce.**

The Foundation and Milwaukee Succeeds are partnering on these shared goals alongside the Early Childhood Education Coalition, a group of dozens of local experts, practitioners and parents. To help realize these strategies for the benefit of all Milwaukee – and especially neighborhoods of color facing the greatest strain and the greatest need – donors like you have the opportunity to invest in them at multiple levels:

Hyperlocal Investments

- Establishing a new, high-quality early childhood care and education center in the ThriveOn King building – the redeveloped Gimbel-Schuster’s Department Store on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, which will serve as the Foundation’s headquarters, the home of the Medical College of Wisconsin’s community engagement programs and a multifaceted community hub for our neighbors.
- Providing professional and facilities support for existing providers in the surrounding neighborhoods of Harambee, Halyard Park and Brewers Hill.

Citywide Investments, Prioritizing Predominantly Black and Brown Communities

- Supporting programs that strengthen and diversify the pipeline into the early childhood education workforce.
- Supporting child care programs as they increase their quality ratings through national accreditation.
- Expanding and supporting existing educator- and family-focused trainings on trauma-sensitive early care and effective stress regulation strategies, accompanied by materials and resources that help participants put the training into practice in their classroom or home.

Investments for Systems Change

- Supporting the MKE Early Childhood Education Coalition’s advocacy for increased public investment (e.g. in supporting and retaining early childhood educators) and equity-advancing policies for our early care and education system.
- Supporting higher education, credentialing and wraparound supports for aspiring early educators and current educators who are looking to progress in their career. This includes increased compensation for early educators, recruitment and retention stipends and dedicated access to affordable housing for early educators.

“The MKE Early Childhood Education Coalition is a gamechanger for our early childhood care and education community. We’d been barking up the same trees for a very long time in this sector. To have a coalition that works together to be a catalyst for change – both to mitigate everyday issues and simultaneously work systems change and advocacy – and already have important successes that will help us continue our work.”



TAMARA JOHNSON

Malaika Early Learning Center Executive Director

Immediate Funding Opportunities

For donors interested in supporting early childhood care and education throughout our community, the Foundation offers several unique immediate funding opportunities:

- **Early Childhood Education Fund:** Your gift can fuel the work of the MKE ECE Coalition – comprising the Foundation, Milwaukee Succeeds and dozens of local experts, practitioners and parents – as we advocate for increased public investment, equity-advancing policy and systems change for all of Milwaukee.
- **ThriveOn Early Childhood Education Fund:** Your gift can help build out a high-quality, leading-edge early childhood care and education center in the ThriveOn King building or support existing early childhood education providers in the neighborhoods around it so that children in Halyard Park, Harambee and Brewers Hill have high quality early childhood care and education options