



# Strategies for Children

# highlights

August 2013–July 2014



## letter from the president

Strategies for Children is evolving to fill a new role in the birth–third grade continuum.

Policymakers and community leaders are increasingly

interested in prioritizing young children's growth and development, school readiness, and early academic success.

The question we now face is—how do we get there?

Building upon our expertise in advocacy, awareness-raising, and coalition building, SFC is bridging the worlds of policy and practice, and helping to ensure public and private resources are allocated effectively to impact outcomes for children. This means helping to inform the early learning strategies of local leaders and teams, and connecting communities to state policy opportunities and to one another, all while advocating for increased public investment to expand high-quality pre-k. If we hope to close the achievement gap (evident between groups of children as young as 18 months), the commonwealth must invest in high-quality early learning supports and programs for all children, beginning at birth. Having spent a career in K-12 education and leadership roles, I know that schools can't do it alone. We all have a role to play.

As a political issue, early education is more prominent in this year's Massachusetts gubernatorial race than in any previous state election. This presents a huge opportunity to achieve our vision. I look forward to working with you, our partners, to turn these opportunities into meaningful outcomes for children.

*Chris Master*



## policy wins

Governor Patrick prioritizes significant increased investments in early education in his fiscal year 2015 state budget proposal. (JANUARY 2014)

Legislature funds early education and care at \$535 million in FY15, representing the largest annual increase since 2008. (JULY 2014)

New \$1 million pre-k classroom grant program funded to expand pre-k in high-needs schools and districts.

(JULY 2014)

Second consecutive \$15 million state investment made in FY15 to provide early education and care subsidies to an estimated 1,700 income-eligible children on the state's waiting list. (JULY 2014)

The Early Literacy Expert Panel convenes to examine current birth–8 literacy initiatives and policies and make recommendations to the three state education agencies on policy alignment, coordination, and implementation. The panel was created in *An Act Relative to Third Grade Reading Proficiency* (2012) (OCTOBER 2013–ONGOING)

SFC selected as a member of the Massachusetts team participating in the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices policy academy. Team holds statewide Birth–Third Grade policy forum featuring all three state education commissioners and local participants from across multiple sectors. (MAY 2014)



Photo by Alyssa Heywood



Photo by Mass. Nonprofit Network

## gaining recognition

Geoffrey Chamberlain, Appleton Partners; Rick Jakious, Mass. Nonprofit Network; Carolyn Lyons & Titus DosRemedios, Strategies for Children; Kristy Lee, NECN.



SFC wins 2014 Excellence in Advocacy award from the Massachusetts Nonprofit Network. (JUNE 2014)

National philanthropies fund SFC to provide technical assistance to other states, and monitor/drive federal policies and resources. (ONGOING)

# local innovation

SFC completes year one of the Massachusetts Reading Proficiency Learning Network. Representing more than 80,000 children, the Massachusetts Third Grade Reading Proficiency Learning Network is composed of four communities all focused on ensuring high-quality early education and early literacy. (ONGOING)



Knowing that policy alone is not sufficient, the network seeks to align policy to community-level action. Engaging in an innovative improvement process developed by SFC and Dr. Nonie Lesaux, of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, communities have mapped, assessed, and determined how to best allocate resources to impact children's literacy outcomes.

Outcomes to date include: impact-focused philanthropic grantmaking; strengthened partnerships between schools and communities; scrutinized budgets and outcome-driven program planning; and politically engaged local campaigns.



Kelly Kulsrud, Co-author &  
SFC Director of Reading Proficiency

SFC releases brief highlighting the Learning Network's first year, "Changing the Trajectory: Communities Take Action to Increase Reading Proficiency." (JUNE 2014)



Photo by United Way of Mass., Bay and Merrimack Valley

## leading the conversation

SFC partnered with 27 co-sponsors to organize and hold the "2014 Gubernatorial Candidates Forum: Early Childhood and Education, Closing the Achievement and Opportunity Gaps," at University of Massachusetts Boston. Attended by eight gubernatorial candidates and moderated by New England Cable News political reporter Alison King. (JUNE 2014)

More than 200 attend "Conversation with the Boston Mayoral Candidates—Early Childhood and Education" at the Boston Children's Museum, with the final two candidates John Connolly and Marty Walsh. Event co-sponsored by SFC and 36 other organizations and moderated by WBZ political reporter Jon Keller. (OCTOBER 2013)



Amy O'Leary, EEA Campaign  
Director, introduces the  
gubernatorial candidates

SFC held third event in series on literacy best practices. "Designing and Implementing Effective Volunteer Efforts Focused on Literacy." The series has drawn more than 500 early educators, K-12 teachers and administrators, nonprofit community leaders, advocates and philanthropists. (MARCH 2014)

## increased awareness & support

SFC and its policy and advocacy agenda was featured 33 times in 20 newspapers and magazines, including prominent pieces in The Boston Globe, Cape Cod Times, Lowell Sun, and Wall Street Journal. (AUGUST 2013-JULY 2014)

SFC organized more than 1,300 grassroots email advocacy messages to legislators and the governor throughout FY15 state budget debate. Rising Stars 2014 campaign engaged early educators, parents, and children statewide in sending stars and letters to elected officials. (JANUARY-JUNE 2014)

@EarlyEd4All twitter account approaches 5,000 followers.

More than 325,000 page views on SFC's Eye on Early Education Blog.



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## funders

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