



Mothers' Club  
Family Learning Center

2009 Strategic Plan  
Approved June 23, 2009

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**Special Thanks**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

After fulfilling many of the goals set out in our 2005 Strategic Plan, including the purchase and renovation of our first permanent facility, Mothers' Club began a strategic planning process in fall 2007. The objectives were to develop a shared vision among staff and board for the future direction of the agency; and to identify critical action areas, goals, strategies and key activities to support that vision.

This introduction is intended to provide the plan's foundation: our vision, mission and values, and the process we followed to prepare the 2009 Strategic Plan. It also summarizes the challenges that Mothers' Club faces in the coming years and discusses the trends that we believe will influence our future.

A well-formulated Strategic Plan inspires people to give, join and serve. It is a critical tool for maintaining stability and strategic direction in a time of rapid change, and is an important external tool for attracting funding and volunteer leadership. Our planning process developed skill sets among staff and board members to more actively engage in dialogue with each other, our clients and the community. We developed a range of growth scenarios and explored their potential positive and negative implications. We reached out to other leaders and providers in our community to learn of the challenges families are facing, and the opportunities that may exist for us to deepen our work.

In November 2008, we emerged with a shared strategic vision: **Mothers' Club will expand its positive impact on families by focusing on three inter-related commitments:**

1. Continue strengthening our intensive, relationship-based core morning program;
2. Expand programs for families with children 0-5; and
3. Become an active model for other programs/providers in the fields of parent engagement and parent education, early childhood education, family literacy, and mental health.

The three strategic directions inform and bound each other. That is, staff and board are not pursuing three independent lines of action, but rather, one commitment to increasing the overall impact of Mothers' Club through improvement, expansion, and modeling.

The Strategic Planning committee identified critical action areas to support this vision: **Program Development and Organization Sustainability.** Within the broad scope of long-term sustainability, the committee chose to focus on the following areas: Fundraising, Outreach, Board Development, Organizational Structure, and Staff Retention.

Our 2009 Strategic Plan is designed to guide us through these turbulent economic times and ensure that Mothers' Club continues to serve this community for decades to come.

*A compelling vision, a set of values that defines the organization's ethos, and a mission statement that explains its purpose are the foundation of a Strategic Plan.*

## **OUR MISSION**

Mothers' Club Family Learning Center prepares families living in isolation and poverty to succeed in school and in life through two generation learning programs.

## **OUR VISION**

- All children in our community will be nurtured and educated during their first five years, they will develop healthy bonds with their parents and teachers, and enter kindergarten ready and able to learn.
- Every mother in our community will be prepared for her role as her child's first and most influential teacher. She will know that she is never alone as a parent, and that she is a life-long learner.
- Families will work together to improve the quality of their lives; they will be connected to our schools and community, and will be active, contributing members of society.

## **OUR VALUES**

- **Two Generation Learning:** We are dedicated to providing a high-quality learning environment for low- income, isolated mothers/caregivers and their children through early childhood education, parenting education, and other adult literacy education.
- **Empowerment:** Our families are empowered to make positive changes in their lives and to secure a voice in building their community.
- **Respect:** We value every individual. We show respect for each family, their cultural background and the parenting process. At every level of the organization, we are committed to inclusive and respectful processes that are grounded in active listening and trust.
- **Welcoming Environment:** We provide a safe, nurturing environment to maximize learning that models fun, friendship and community.
- **Quality Improvement:** We seek to continuously improve our programs and maximize our impact by engaging in active dialogue among staff and board members, with clients, and other professionals in our fields.

## **II. BRIEF HISTORY AND OVERVIEW**

Mothers' Club Family Learning Center prepares families living in isolation and poverty to succeed in school and in life through two-generation learning programs. We promote strong parent/child relationships and encourage friendship and mutual support among mothers through our educational programs and social services, thereby creating a stronger community for all families.

In 1961, a 75 year-old retired teacher named Mara Moser set out on a crusade to befriend and support needy, isolated mothers with young children in her neighborhood. Armed with no more than her warm smile and Quaker principles, Mara Moser's vision inspired the grassroots organization still known today as Mothers' Club.

Historically, Mothers' Club has always reached out to isolated mothers with young children and served families from diverse economic and socio-economic backgrounds. Core elements of our program have been early childhood education, parent education and social networking. In the 1990s, the immigrant population increased in Northwest Pasadena. As with most immigration influxes, poverty and illiteracy levels rose. Mothers' Club adapted its services to meet the needs of the changing population by adding an adult education component and leadership training.

Over the last ten years, our reputation as a model program has grown tremendously and we have received a number of regional and national awards. Most recently, in October 2007 Mothers' Club was one of only three programs in the greater Los Angeles area to be validated as an exemplary family literacy program by the Los Angeles County Office of Education. Barbara VanHorn of the Goodling Institute at Penn State and Chris Dwyer from RMC Research and Evaluation Corporation reviewed our best practices and verified that our program leads to "exemplary outcomes" for young children and families.

### **III. THE 2005 STRATEGIC PLAN**

Our 2005 Strategic Plan was based on an inclusive process which created a network of over 100 internal and external stakeholders who assisted Mothers' Club with its planning process and, ultimately, helped in the critical implementation stage.

Among the trends identified by our stakeholders, our facility emerged as the greatest threat to our ability to fulfill our mission, with a large number of stakeholders identifying the facility as "an impediment to the future of Mothers' Club." In order to determine the likelihood of success of a capital campaign to support the acquisition of a new facility for Mothers' Club, the Board of Directors engaged a consultant to conduct a feasibility study.

After considering the invaluable information gathered from our stakeholders and the recommendations from the feasibility study, the Board of Directors set the following goals:

- Conduct a capital campaign to secure a permanent home for Mothers' Club that will meet existing program needs and allow for expansion.
- Expand current programs and initiate additional programs to increase our diversity and allow more parents to participate.
- Expand our individual donor base, and implement a long-range financial plan to support the expansion of programs, and the operations and maintenance of a new facility.
- Launch a public relations campaign to increase Mothers' Club's profile in the community, and develop a set of powerful graphic tools for communicating our mission to stakeholders.
- Recruit and retain high quality staff by offering competitive salaries, benefits and professional development. We will continue to attract strong board members with influential community contacts and the ability to provide significant financial resources.

Since adopting the plan in May 2005, we have accomplished the following:

- We completed a successful capital campaign and raised over \$6.6 million and purchased and renovated our new permanent facility.
- We expanded our core morning program and piloted a new afternoon program, enabling us to serve 60% more families than we did in our old site.
- We implemented the Mothers' Club *Guardians*; re-designed our board's role in fundraising to ensure 100% participation; and increased average annual revenue from individual donors by 38%.
- We redesigned our logo, launched a new website and coordinated design of publications and messages about our work.
- We conducted an analysis of sector salaries and benefit packages to ensure that we remain competitive.
- We strengthened Board recruitment and nominating policies and procedures and continued to recruit qualified Board members.

#### **IV. CURRENT STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Work began on our current planning process in December 2007. Board members and lead staff began a year-long, intensive process to develop skills and practices to support each other and Mothers' Club in responding to the opportunities and challenges emerging from its move into its new building and community. The process focused on four central questions facing our agency:

1. What wants to unfold now through Mothers' Club?
2. How do we understand our mission now given the transitions that are occurring within and around Mothers' Club?
3. What is the right relationship with our surrounding community?
4. How do we bring everyone into alignment during such great change?

During the first phase (December 2007 – April 2008), board and staff members developed and practiced active listening and dialogue skills, which resulted in increased self awareness and consensus building skills; and increased levels of trust and respect among each other.

During the second phase (April – November 2008), board and staff interviewed community leaders and service providers to gather information on the needs of families in our community to inform our decisions about future expansion; and explored the possible pathways for expansion, from which emerged the shared strategic vision on which this plan is based.

In the final phase of the planning process (December 2008 – June 2009), a strategic planning committee comprised of board and staff members developed goals, strategies and other priorities to support the approved strategic direction.

## **V. PLANNING ANALYSIS**

Strategic Planning often begins with a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. A healthy organization must be aware of its internal strengths and weaknesses. It is important to understand what we excel at and why, to know the culture, values, and strategies that lead to success and sustainability. It is equally important to acknowledge the areas that we need to strengthen, those skills and qualities that continue to challenge us and can hamper our efforts to grow. Opportunities and threats are the external forces and events that impact an organization. Strong, thriving organizations are positioned to take advantage of opportunities that may arise; they have the infrastructure, the leadership, and the expertise to take action when opportunities are presented. These organizations are also aware of threats in the environment so that they can be pro-active when a threat arises. It is not useful nor wise to ignore unpleasant signs, whether it be the national economy, the local educational system, or changing demographics.

Mothers' Club has spent the past year engaged in an intensive organizational development process that allowed board members and staff to discover their shared values and vision, and to increase their understanding of the strengths that underlie the 45 plus years of its history.

In addition, as part of the process we interviewed many community leaders, educators, funders, and donors to gain an understanding of the external factors in play. The data gathered from these and other sources informed the planning process and shed additional light on the opportunities and threats that we may encounter.

The chart on the following pages summarizes the key findings by the Strategic Planning Committee that have influenced the goals of this plan.

INTERNAL STRENGTHS	INTERNAL WEAKNESSES/CHALLENGES
<p><b>Programmatic:</b> Our programs have many strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our approach to working with two-generations – both parent and child</li> <li>• Our strategies to increase parent involvement</li> <li>• Our programs are culturally sensitive</li> <li>• We respond to the unique needs of each family and customize our services for them</li> <li>• We have established practices and strategies with proven outcomes</li> <li>• Our core morning program has been validated as a model family literacy program</li> <li>• We are sought out by organizations that want to learn from our example</li> </ul> <p><b>Staff:</b> Our staff has many strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have excellent staff retention</li> <li>• Lead program staff are recognized as leaders within their areas of expertise and are trainers of other providers in their fields</li> <li>• Staff openly shares expertise and best practices with others in our field</li> <li>• Strong staff communication and collaboration which is supported by a tiered staff meeting plan</li> <li>• Staff development and other opportunities for staff to increase their skills and knowledge is encouraged and offered to all employees</li> </ul> <p><b>Management Capacity:</b> Board and lead staff work together to ensure that Mothers’ Club resources are used effectively and efficiently through our established financial systems and policies. The Executive Director is evaluated annually, as are all employees. Lead staff is skilled at problem solving and is responsive to the needs of line staff.</p> <p><b>Leadership Capacity:</b> Board and staff leaders apply a mission-centered, focused, and inclusive approach to making decisions, as well as inspiring and motivating people to act upon them.</p> <p><b>Adaptive Capacity:</b> Mothers’ Club has a proven ability to monitor, assess and respond to and create internal and external changes.</p>	<p><b>Leadership Sustainability:</b> Our Executive Director has been in the position for over 20 years and is approaching retirement. She is a highly regarded, recognized leader in the community. We do not have a plan for leadership transition for her <i>OR</i> for other key staff who have been with the agency for more than a decade.</p> <p><b>Board Development:</b> The need for recruitment of talented new board members is on-going and requires constant diligence on the part of the Board and Executive Director. As part of the prior Strategic Plan, the Board has improved its recruiting procedures and has instituted policies to ensure that the procedures are carried out. However, this needs to be an area of focus in order to institutionalize these policies. Additionally, the Board does not have a process for identifying and developing future Board leadership, which can weaken the organization’s sustainability. And finally, most Board members have no prior experience in fundraising, so training in donor cultivation and fundraising is essential.</p> <p><b>Fundraising:</b> While Mothers’ Club has a strong development plan, our individual donor base remains relatively small and our ability to secure major gifts (donations between \$5,000 and \$25,000) is limited. The Board has a structure that requires 100% participation in fundraising, but leadership and follow-through within the Board in development areas (Major Gifts, Guardians, Outreach, Benefit) are inconsistent. As a staff of one, the Development Director is responsible for a broad range of fundraising activities which could be more fully supported by volunteers through training and a greater sense of ownership. Additionally, an area of weakness is corporate and business support, not only for cash donations, but donated goods and services.</p> <p><b>Volunteer Management:</b> Mothers’ Club is just now developing a formal volunteer program. In the past, we have had difficulty recruiting, retaining and acknowledging volunteers. We also have had difficulty providing them with meaningful experiences, training and clear direction.</p>

**Technical Capacity:** We have a facility and equipment that supports efficient operations and programs. Staff has the skills needed to operate the facility. We have the technology and systems in place to support efficient financial operations, effective program evaluation, and staff communication. We invested in donor management software that has streamlined donor relations and donation tracking, as well as increased staff efficiencies. Staff has adequate skills needed to use technology efficiently.

**Fundraising Capacity:** We have long-standing relationships with private foundations, individual donors and government agencies. Programs have a solid reputation and we have a proven track record to support fundraising. We are not over-dependent on any one source.

**Board Development:** Over the last 5 years, the Board has strengthened its policies and operations and is now in a position to attract strong candidates with leadership skills and experience, and the capacity to secure resources for the agency.

**Organizational Culture:** Mothers' Club is an established learning organization with a strong culture, which is unifying, empowering, and re-energizing for staff and Board.

**Marketing and Outreach Skills:** We do not have a staff person dedicated to marketing, public relations and outreach. Currently the Development Director fulfills limited needs in these areas as time permits. We do not have an effective communication plan for internal and external stakeholders. We have limited skills and resources to support organizing our constituents and advocating for families in need and programs like ours that serve them.

**Evaluation:** We continue to struggle in evaluating social capital (parent's resiliency, problem-solving skills, leadership skills, confidence, etc.). While we can qualitatively report growth in the parents we serve, there is no standardized quantitative measure for this. Additionally, it will be challenging to develop new evaluation strategies for new programs as they evolve in order to measure their impact over time.

**Technology:** Website maintenance and upgrades are all done in-house by one person. Training on email campaigns and social networking tools is limited and staff spends a lot of time "figuring things out." Database management, including tracking Mothers' Club alumni is an on-going challenge. Outreach to alumni is also limited. An increase effort to engage alumni and keep them invested in the agency could lead to future donors, board members and advocates.

**Staffing:** Attracting and retaining qualified part-time staff is an on-going challenge. As we develop new direct service programs and training activities, staff may need to develop new skill sets. As we grow and new staff is brought on, there is a risk that the culture can be disrupted if adequate training and support is not available. An on-going challenge is to offer competitive salaries and benefit packages to staff.

EXTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES	EXTERNAL THREATS
<p><b>Facility and Partnerships:</b> Our new facility is an attractive, well-designed center that can support more programs and new partnerships with other agencies. We no longer have any restrictions in regards to hours for programs and services. The opportunity for us to become more fully integrated in our neighborhood will be supported through new partnerships with other agencies and educational institutions.</p> <p><b>Broadening our Impact:</b> Because of our expertise in various fields and the fact that we have a model center that reflects our model program, we have the opportunity to broaden our impact on families in need by training and mentoring other providers in the fields of two generation learning, early childhood education, and family support.</p> <p><b>Funding and Outreach:</b> As we develop into a demonstration/training site, we will likely attract new funding, and there is potential for earned income. The new political climate and renewed focus on early childhood development may generate new funding opportunities and help us leverage any new outreach and marketing activities.</p> <p><b>Volunteers:</b> With no restrictions on facility hours, and three-years of funding secured for our Volunteer Manager, we now have the opportunity to expand our volunteer pool, develop new programs that are volunteer driven, and develop systems to cultivate volunteers as potential donors.</p>	<p><b>Economy:</b> The current economic crisis threatens funding from the public and private sector.</p> <p><b>Government Funding:</b> The possible loss of Even Start and First 5 LA funding will require a close examination of expenditures and may require large budget cuts in the short-term.</p> <p><b>Competition:</b> Funding for new programs may “compete” with funding for our core program and this will be an on-going challenge as we expand services. Across philanthropic sectors, funding for programs providing “basic needs” may take priority.</p> <p><b>Stagnation:</b> As an agency, growing is challenging in these economic times. However, without growth, there is a danger that the agency becomes stagnant.</p> <p><b>Needs of Families:</b> In response to a worsening recession, Mothers’ Club may need to take a broader look at the needs of families as basic needs may become more of a priority.</p> <p><b>Increased Demand for Qualified Teachers:</b> Within the field of early childhood education, more emphasis is being placed on teacher qualifications. In many cases, funding sources require specific qualifications to be met by staff. Teachers who possess higher qualifications are paid more. Over time, Mothers’ Club will need to keep up with staff qualifications and balance the need for increased salaries and benefits.</p>

## **Trends and Issues Influencing Mothers' Club**

### **1. Current Economic Crisis and Projected Length of Recession:**

Due to the economic crisis our nation is experiencing, experts in philanthropy anticipate that fundraising in the next 3-5 years will be increasingly competitive, and overall giving will be down. The impact on the Non-Profit sector will be long-term as individuals and private foundations report losing an estimated 30% of their "wealth." Over an eight month period in 2008, the Dow Jones dropped 5,000 points and the S&P lost 700 points. It is estimated that every 100 point loss on the S&P 500 represents a \$1.5 billion decrease in individual giving – so that is a \$10.5 billion loss to the non-profit community.

Additionally, public funding is at-risk as California and the federal government wrestle with billion dollar deficits. And while Mothers' Club has not relied heavily on corporate support, current reports state that overall corporate giving is on a steep decline.

In an effort to help well-established, strong organizations sustain their core services and operations during this downturn, many foundations are switching their grantmaking from restricted program support to unrestricted core operating support. Additionally, many will no longer consider requests for funding for new or expanded programs, although there are still a handful of foundations considering grants for new programs/services.

Mothers' Club has strong relationships with both individual donors and foundations, but given the economic trends, we anticipate contributions from both will be less in the coming years (between 10% and 20%).

### **2. Need for increased services for young children and their parents; and need for training of early childhood caregivers/teachers, parent educators, mental health providers and adult educators:**

While there are many programs in our community for school-age children, there is a lack of programs for disadvantaged children ages 0-5 – and there are many young children in our community. Head Start is the primary program and serves only 3-5 year-olds. Head Start eligibility income limits are at the federal poverty level, prohibiting many families among the working poor from qualifying. Our local elementary school reports that too many children are entering kindergarten having never been in preschool.

For infants and toddlers, the opportunities are worse. In terms of developmental, curriculum-based programs, Early Head Start serves only 24 children ages 0-3 in a service area with a population over 140,000. In addition to there being a significant need for childcare for infants/toddlers in the community, the quality of childcare for babies is of great concern to many in the field of child development.

Interviews with community leaders and other agencies have confirmed that there is a great need for engaging parents in their children's learning. Many are frustrated that much of the good work they do with a child is not supported once the child goes home. Engaging working parents is particularly challenging and many expressed the need for Saturday programs, citing that funding and staffing is an on-going challenge.

Interviews also revealed a need for training for early childhood teachers and home day-care providers to increase the overall quality of care of young children.

### **3. Demographic trends in Pasadena and meeting the needs of diverse populations:**

From the School Accountability Report Card for our four neighborhood elementary schools, in 2007-2008,

- 79% of students were Hispanic;
- 44% were English Language Learners; and
- 17% were African American.

Our core morning program has developed over the last ten years in response to the needs of the majority of high-risk families in our community. Two significant funding sources (First 5 LA and Even Start) focus on improving family literacy, requiring us to provide four educational components, including an adult education component. We also place an emphasis on fostering dual language development in young children. Thus, our core program is designed to meet the specific needs of non-English speaking families. and our staffing reflects the primarily Hispanic population served by the program.

Mothers' Club Board and staff affirm our commitment to value diversity. Our current target population—families with children 0-5 living in isolation and poverty—reflects a desire to impact such families regardless of ethnicity, race, or other manifestations of diversity. The challenge is not whether we believe in diversity. Instead, it is about the choices we make and the implications of living out that value: for current and future programming, for current and future partnerships; for current and future staffing structures; for current and future budgets.

We have a fair amount of data from community interviews about the difficulty of meeting the needs of African American families who live in isolation and poverty. We have demographic data that shows a large out-migration of African American families over the last decade. We know that there are significant tensions that arise between African American and Latino individuals and families. Given these and other considerations, Board and staff will explore the potential implications on existing and new programs in connection with our commitment to valuing the diversity of families served by Mother's Club.

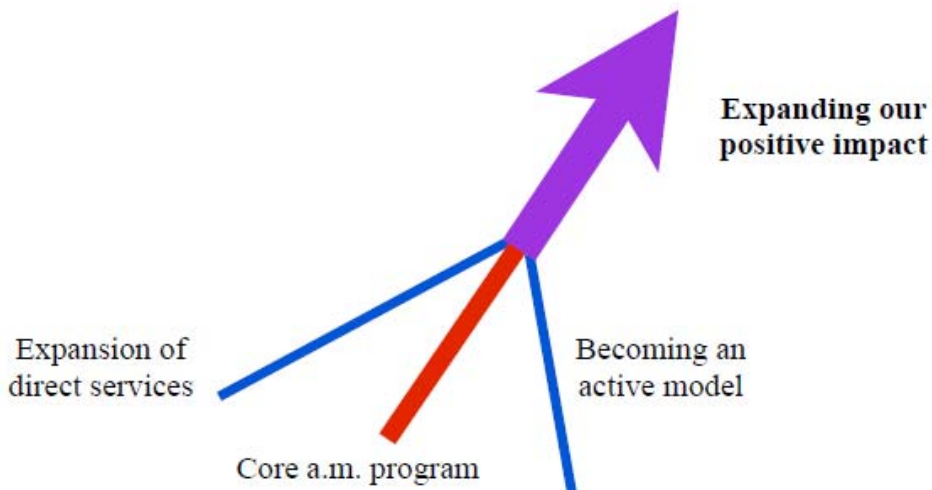
### **4. Keeping up With the Times:**

There are a number of trends that require Mothers' Club to develop new strategies to support fundraising, volunteer recruitment and management (both of Board members and program volunteers), and overall outreach to new potential supporters of Mothers' Club. E-technology is advancing at a tremendous pace and is now the preferred method of communication among Generation X and the Millennials. Civic responsibility is a core value among these generations, but they have different expectations than the Baby Boomers. It will be important for the Board and staff to consider the changing needs of the younger generations as we work to grow our network of support. In addition, staff is likely to need new skills in technology and e-communication in order to effectively cultivate and retain younger constituencies.

## **VI. STRATEGIC DIRECTION FROM THE BOARD RETREAT**

In November 2008, the Board and lead staff attended an all day retreat during which the ad-hoc group presented data gathered in the community interviews, the various expansion scenarios that were developed and explored, and made various recommendations to the full Board. Based on these recommendations, Board and staff reached a number of agreements by consensus about the future direction for Mothers' Club:

- A. Mothers' Club Board members and lead staff commit to increase our positive impact on families, community, and on programs and providers in our field.
- B. Driven by this commitment, Mothers' Club's future development will be guided by three interrelated impulses:
  - 1. Continue strengthening our intensive, relationship-based core morning program;
  - 2. Expand programs for families with children 0-5; and
  - 3. Become an active model for other programs/providers in the fields of parent engagement and parent education, early childhood education, family literacy, and mental health.
- C. These three impulses inform and bound each other. That is, staff and the Board are not pursuing three independent lines of action, but rather one commitment to increasing the impact of Mothers' Club through improvement, expansion, and modeling.
- D. One image of how these three impulses relate to each other that emerged during our dialogue:



- E. The Board and staff then agreed to establish a Strategic Planning Committee to work from December 2008 through June 2009 to finalize a strategic plan to support this direction.

## **VII. 2009 STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

Organizations do best when goals and expectations are clear. A Strategic Plan is not a wish list. It is a carefully crafted document that identifies our very highest priorities and sets out clear and achievable goals to create our desired future and achieve our vision. By embracing critical goals and making their achievement the organization's highest priority, Mothers' Club Family Learning Center can continue to be a vital education and resource center and expand its client base. The board and staff of Mothers' Club are committed to maintaining the caliber of our staff and programs while evolving to meet the changing needs of the families we serve.

The planning horizon for this Strategic Plan is the next three to five years. The two critical focus areas are Program Development and Organization Sustainability. A sustainable organization is an agency with a solid infrastructure and established policies and procedures; it is not dependent on any one leader; it has successful strategies to support diverse fundraising needs and staffing structures to deliver programs and support operations; and it is adaptive in responding to changing realities while always remaining true to its mission. Critical to sustainability, the Strategic planning Committee has chosen to focus on the following areas: Fundraising, Outreach, Board Development, Organizational Structure, and Staff Retention.

### **2009 Strategic Plan Goals**

- **Program Development:** Develop and implement programs and other activities that support all three aspects of the strategic vision.
- **Fundraising:** We will increase our long-term capacity to sustain programs and on-going operations by continuing to diversify our funding streams to include a broad individual donor base with the capacity to make major and planned gifts, private foundations, local businesses and corporations, government grants and partnerships with complementary agencies and institutions.
- **Outreach:** We will have multiple opportunities for community members to become engaged with Mothers' Club. We will have defined key messages and marketing strategies that meet the evolving technology and communication needs of our diverse stakeholders.
- **Board Development:** We will attract and maintain highly qualified Board members who are engaged in our mission and committed to securing and leveraging financial resources for the agency. Board members will have well-defined roles and responsibilities and possess the diverse expertise needed to sustain and broaden the impact of our mission.
- **Organizational structure:** Maintain an adaptive and responsive organizational structure that will support the growing needs of the organization.
- **Staff Retention:** Recruit and retain highly qualified staff by offering competitive salaries, benefits and professional development.

## **VIII. IMPLEMENTATION**

In order to ensure that the goals in the Strategic Plan are met, it is necessary to have detailed work plans. Work plans will assist the implementation committees in describing the tasks needed to achieve the goals; the parties responsible for delivering on each task; the time-frame for accomplishment; and the resources required. Work plans will be updated by the sub-committees regularly to reflect progress made and changing circumstances. The first task in implementing the Strategic Plan is for Board to create working sub-committees who will then develop work plans for each planning area.

The Executive Director will prepare regular reports summarizing progress to date on each of the areas and flag areas that require additional resources or new tactics. The board will also review the Strategic Plan at its annual retreat to assess progress and determine if any mid-course policy directions are required.

This section of the Strategic Plan highlights the key strategies and activities that will provide the foundation of the work plans and be used to achieve our goals.

### **Program Development**

**Goal:** Broaden the impact of Mothers' Club by developing and implementing programs and other activities that support all three aspects of our strategic vision. Key strategies<sup>1</sup> include:

**For Core Morning Program:** We will continue to strengthen our intensive, relationship-based core morning program by:

- a. Monitoring attendance and enrollment to ensure maximum participation by clients;
- b. Strengthening program policies and procedures;
- c. Monitoring and strengthening evaluation strategies;
- d. Strengthening partnerships with other agencies; and
- e. Developing ways to track success of Mothers' Club alumni families and engage them in the on-going work of Mothers' Club.

**For Expanded Programs and Partnerships:** We will expand partnerships and programs for families who become involved with Mothers' Club by:

- a. Developing and piloting a variety of short and long-term programs in the afternoons, evenings and weekends;
- b. Conducting a needs assessment to ensure that we are meeting the needs of families in the community;
- c. Developing and implementing activities that engage volunteers from various age ranges; and
- d. Identifying potential partner agencies and implement formal partnerships to support new afternoon and evening programs

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<sup>1</sup> Attached as Appendix A is a matrix detailing key activities for the immediate future.

***As an Active Model:*** We will become an active model for other programs/providers in the fields of parent engagement and parent education, early childhood education, family literacy, and mental health by:

- a. Launching Two-Generation Learning Forums for other providers in our fields;
- b. Presenting at regional and national conferences;
- c. Defining the objectives we wish to achieve as a model and designing activities to support those objectives; and
- d. Developing formal partnerships with other agencies and educational institutions to support our work as a model.

**Organization Sustainability:** A sustainable organization is an agency with a solid infrastructure and established policies and procedures; it is not dependent on any one leader; it has successful strategies to support diverse fundraising needs and staffing structures to deliver programs and support operations; and it is adaptive in responding to changing realities while always remaining true to its mission. Mothers' Club has developed the following goals and key activities in five areas that are critical to long-term sustainability: Fundraising, Outreach, Board Development, Organizational Structure, and Staff Retention.

#### **A. Fundraising**

***Goal:*** We will increase our long-term capacity to sustain programs and on-going operations by continuing to diversify our funding streams to include a broad individual donor base with the capacity to make major and planned gifts, private foundations, local businesses and corporations, government grants and partnerships with complementary agencies and institutions.

#### ***Key Activities & Strategies:***

- a. Develop and implement annual fundraising plan to sustain and grow Mothers' Club programs and operations.
- b. Increase outreach to and cultivation of individual donors, continuing our focus on the *Guardians* (annual gifts of \$1,000 or more), increasing from the current 70 members to 100 members by fiscal year 2013.
- c. Increase funding from private foundations, corporations and government sources to align with program activities in the Strategic Plan.
- d. Strengthen our ability to secure in-kind products and services.
- e. Develop and document planned giving guidelines and a marketing strategy to inform, inspire and solicit Mothers' Club donors.
- f. Establish goals and strategies to improve the long-term capacity to sustain the organization; assess the feasibility of conducting a successful endowment campaign and present recommendations to board of directors; and develop policies for the maintenance and use of financial reserves.

## **B. Outreach**

**Goal:** We will have multiple opportunities for community members to become engaged with Mothers' Club. We will have defined key messages and marketing strategies that meet the evolving technology and communication needs of our diverse stakeholders.

### ***Key Activities & Strategies:***

- a. Develop and update annually a marketing and communication plan that identifies our various stakeholders and outlines key messages and marketing strategies to be used with them.
- b. Develop public relations campaign to support Mothers' Club Family Learning Center's 50 year anniversary in 2011.
- c. Assess the success of volunteer programs and other opportunities used to engage people in Mothers' Club; prioritize volunteer strategies and develop long-term program goals for supportive engagement of volunteers and outside organizations.

## **C. Board Development**

**Goal:** We will attract and maintain highly qualified Board members who are engaged in our mission and committed to securing and leveraging financial resources for the agency. Board members will have well-defined roles and responsibilities and possess the diverse expertise needed to sustain and broaden the impact of our mission.

### ***Key Activities & Strategies:***

- a. Develop a shared understanding of the skill sets and attributes needed in Board members to support the agency's new strategic vision; and develop and document a clear process for identifying and recruiting prospective Board members who possess these desired skills and attributes.
- b. Conduct annual, in-depth and interactive orientation for Board members, and provide on-going leadership training to develop candidates for top leadership roles within the Board (Executive Committee).
- c. Analyze Board committee structure, including policies and procedures for selecting officers, and present recommendation to the Board for a structure that supports the implementation of the Strategic Plan.
- d. Analyze Board Development Sub-Committee structure, identify areas for improvement, and implement changes to further engage, train and support Board members in their fundraising efforts.

- e. Assess and redefine the goals for and role of the Community Advisors. Develop a plan to keep them engaged through formal and informal meetings, programs, and outreach.

#### **D. Organizational Structure**

**Goal:** Maintain an adaptive and responsive organizational structure that will support the growing needs of the organization.

***Key Activities & Strategies:***

- a. Conduct an analysis of administrative and program responsibilities and who is currently responsible and identify new responsibilities that will emerge as new programs are implemented.
- b. Conduct an analysis of current staff skills, strengths, deficiencies and capacities to expand their skills to meet an evolving organization structure.
- c. Conduct an analysis of the lead staff structure to identify areas for increased efficiencies and more effective communication.
- d. Develop staffing scenarios for new programs and corresponding budget implications for consideration by the Board.

#### **E. Staff Retention**

**Goal:** Recruit and retain highly qualified staff by offering competitive salaries, benefits and professional development.

***Key Activities & Strategies:***

- a. Analyze salary/benefit packages in comparable organizations to determine competitive salary and benefit packages for Mothers' Club current and future employees.
- b. Develop alternative incentives designed to reward staff in lieu of salary increases during the economic downturn.
- c. Design succession plan to maintain strong and consistent organizational management during transition of key lead staff.
- d. Conduct annual review of professional development activities to identify areas for improvement and expansion as an added benefit to employees.
- e. Maintain up to date recruitment plan, including current job descriptions and qualifications, and contacts for recruitment.

<b>Strategic Vision</b>	<p><b>Mothers' Club will expand its positive impact on families by focusing on three inter-related commitments:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue strengthening our intensive, relationship-based core morning program;</li> <li>2. Expand partnerships and programs for families who become involved with Mothers' Club; and</li> <li>3. Become an active model for other programs/providers in the fields of parent engagement and parent education, early childhood education, family literacy, and mental health.</li> </ol>
<b>Core Morning Program</b>	<p><b>Key Activities:</b></p> <p><i>The following activities are already underway and will continue:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Monitor attendance and enrollment data and review and amend attendance action plans to ensure maximum participation</li> <li>2. Strengthen program policies and procedures       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. i.e. How long families stay at Mothers' Club? When can a child be at Mothers' Club without a parent?</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Develop and implement Parent Intern Training Program</li> <li>4. Identify and strengthen partnerships to enhance service delivery</li> </ol> <p><i>These activities have not yet begun:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Strengthen evaluation of parent education, leadership and social capital (the ability to seek out help for oneself and family, basic problem solving skills, confidence, resiliency, etc.)</li> <li>6. Strengthen our ability to track and communicate with alumni families, and collect qualitative data from them over time; and explore the feasibility of systematically collecting data on children who graduate from Mothers' Club and enter kindergarten through the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Obtaining data on children's progress after they leave our program will enable us to know if children are reaching critical academic benchmarks, and we can then make comparisons to groups of children with similar socio-economic realities who did not go through Mothers' Club. Key questions to answer include what are we trying to accomplish with the data; how does it help us; how much will it cost us to do it, does it tie into long-term sustainability etc.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<b>Expanded Programs and Partnerships</b>	<p><b>Key Activities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop plan to fully implement <b>First Connections</b> expanding to four classrooms (offered M-W from 1:30-4PM) and serving 50 children and their parents (45)       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. This expansion is entirely dependent on funding in the coming years. We are working to sustain <i>First Connections</i> next year at the current level.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Assess feasibility of an afternoon <b>LAUP</b> pre-k program to serve 21 children from 1-4:30 PM, and develop scenarios for parent engagement component.       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Program Development Sub-Group believes that if we move forward with an afternoon pre-k, it cannot simply be a drop-off - we need to have a parent engagement component. Staff will develop various scenarios of what that might look like and make a recommendation to the Board.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

- b. We are currently assessing whether we have the ability to recruit and enroll 21 children in an afternoon program.
  - c. This opportunity is entirely dependent upon funding from LAUP.
3. Develop implementation plan for a Saturday morning training program for infant/toddler caregivers, which is paired with a **Saturday Infant/Toddler Program**, serving 36 children and their parents with an emphasis on participation by fathers.
  - a. This expansion is entirely dependent on funding in the coming years.
4. Develop, pilot and assess a Kindergarten Transition Program.
  - a. The concept for this program has been evolving over the past couple of months and emerged out of conversations about how we can (1) serve more families; (2) expand evening and weekend programs that create opportunities for volunteers; and (3) meet an unmet need in the community.
  - b. Pilot design consists of a series of workshops (4-5 throughout the year) offered on a Saturday; parents are in training provided by partner agencies; children are engaged with volunteers in activities, crafts, etc.
  - c. Based on feedback from local elementary schools and parents in our core program who have children in elementary school, we know that the transition to primary school can be overwhelming for parents. Preliminary areas identified for support are: understanding expectations, report cards, how to support homework, teacher conferences, volunteering, etc.
  - d. It is a unique service because it focuses on informing and empowering parents to be partners in and advocates for their children's education.
  - e. A key aspect of this program is to strengthen our partnership with the local public schools.
  - f. The program could be open to not only alumni families, but other kindergarten families in the local public elementary schools.
  - g. As currently conceived, this program could be piloted with minimal resources in fall 2009.
5. Develop Program Plan for **Thursday and Friday afternoon and evening programs**
  - a. Short-term programs (8-16 weeks) based on our core competencies and reaching targeted audiences, i.e. special needs, grandparents, new mothers
  - b. Monthly support groups and/or workshops for targeted sub-groups (i.e. fathers)
  - c. These activities are dependent on new funding, or partnerships with other agencies who will provide staffing and other resources. We may be able to begin piloting some next year.
6. Conduct a **needs assessment** with current and alumni families, and other families in the community to identify priority needs and target sub-groups (ie. working families, homeless families, teen mothers, single mothers, fathers, grandparents, special needs, etc.)

	<p>7. Identify a range of potential partner agencies and institutions for new and existing programs; identify criteria to be considered when partnering with another agency (i.e. staff resources needed to develop and maintain partnership, benefit to clients, and alignment with our mission, vision and values) and a method to assess the value of the partnership; and formalize partnerships that meet identified criteria.</p>
<b>Becoming an Active Model</b>	<p><b>Key activities:</b>  <i>These activities were identified and selected as necessary first steps we can take over the next couple of years without significant budget implications:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Design and launch quarterly Two-Generation Learning Forums for other providers, including an outreach plan</li> <li>2. Develop “take away” materials for the Forums by engaging in dialogue to hone and document our core competencies, philosophies, practices and strategies</li> <li>3. Train teaching staff to increase their confidence and skills in talking about our core competencies, philosophies, beliefs, practices and strategies</li> <li>4. Lead staff will present at regional and national conferences</li> <li>5. Research other model/institutes and similar programs to define existing types of models and their objectives</li> <li>6. Define our goals and objectives as an active model – what do we want to achieve?</li> <li>7. Develop program design to support defined goals and objectives</li> <li>8. Identify potential target audiences</li> <li>9. Develop formal partnerships with other agencies and educational institutions as appropriate</li> </ol> <p><b>Background and Emerging Concepts</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As lead staff reflected on preliminary activities that we could implement in the short-term as we work to define our objectives as an active model, we talked about groups who are coming to us now requesting tours of our program. Our existing monthly open houses are not tailored to suit the needs of co-professionals in our field, but more targeted at potential donors and volunteers. A quarterly forum would provide professional peers with a tour and dialogue about our work with families.</li> <li>2. To support these forums, staff feels we need to develop a clear and concise document that answers the questions, “What do we want other professionals to take away from Mothers’ Club?” and “What make Mothers’ Club unique?” While we have many documents that contain information about our philosophies and practices, we have not taken the time to explore and refine our core</li> </ol>

competencies.

3. Additionally, while our teachers are excellent and highly trained, they have not developed the language, skills and confidence needed to engage their peers in dialogue that is consistent with our philosophies and practices.
4. In a dialogue lead staff had about our role as a model and what we are looking to achieve, there was emerging consensus around the idea that we want to be a holistic, learning model with the desire to increase the quality of services in our greater community and region. Staff reflected on the fact that Mothers' Club is among the top 20 non-profit agencies serving children and families in Los Angeles and that within that group, there is no other program like us. That provides us with a unique opportunity to impact other providers by bringing them to our center and having them witness first-hand the philosophies and practices we hope to disseminate. An example was made: "I can purchase a packaged parent education curriculum from a program in New York, but I can't go and see it." And as a Board member has said, "Not everyone can afford to go to Italy and see Reggio Emilia." But, providers in our community can come and see our work.
5. Staff also agreed that there are many variations out there and we need to spend time learning about other models and other similar programs in the country. We also agreed that there is much we can learn from others who are going down this path.