



## Strategic Plan 2014-2019



A Head Start for children and families



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## **Introduction**

Growing Futures Early Education Center provides early childhood education and comprehensive family services to primarily low-income children and their families residing within the Shawnee Mission School District boundaries in Johnson County, Kansas. Head Start-eligible families must meet or make less than federal poverty income guidelines. We also offer community enrollment opportunities to other children and families.

We are an independent not-for-profit with a Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families Federal Early Head Start and Head Start grant.

Founded in 1965 under the name of Head Start of Shawnee Mission, our program is celebrating fifty years of serving low-income children and their families in Johnson County, Kansas. We are the only birth-to-five early childhood program in Johnson County, Kansas delivering both an Early Head Start and Head Start program. We serve over 200 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, as well as pregnant women and their families.

In addition to an early childhood education and childcare, our program provides the following comprehensive services; medical, dental, nutrition, mental health, services to children with special needs, social services, parent education and family engagement opportunities.

## **Mission Statement**

The *mission* of Growing Futures is to nurture children and strengthen families to enrich our community.

## **Vision Statement**

The *vision* of Growing Futures is to be a leading center of excellence in the growth and development of young children and support of their families.

**Growing Futures Early Education Center is governed by both a Board of Directors and a parent governing board called Policy Council.**

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Kelly Green, Community Representative from Women, Infants and Children, WIC.

## A message from the Executive Director

### Terrie VanZandt-Travis, LMSW

I am in my thirteenth year of service at Growing Futures. I started my tenure as a preschool teacher. I had been teaching preschool at a local church preschool and wanted the opportunity to focus on the whole child and family while using my Master of Administrative Social Work degree.

My experience in the classroom and on home visits impassioned me to our mission. I am so honored to have the opportunity to work where you can directly see the positive impact of our services on the lives of real children and their families living in my community.

Johnson County has changed a lot in the fifty years we have provided an early childhood education and comprehensive family services program to local children and their families.

*THE SCOUT*, a weekly newspaper, reported on June 4, 1965 that eleven Kansas cities would receive grants under President Johnson's Poverty Program. The article shared there was an organization of charitable ladies called Children's Educational Enrichment Services of Johnson County, whose president was Mrs. Robert B. Olsen. The group's project was to "help provide educational facilities for underprivileged children." The article references there just so happened to be a "poverty pocket or two in Johnson County, down in the South Park area and the good ladies are trying to relieve the situation there."

Johnson County, Kansas has changed a lot since 1965 and during my tenure. Today, one in 17 Johnson County residents has income below the poverty level. Children ages 0-17 account for 30% of those living in households with income below 100% of the poverty level. The child poverty rate in 2013 was 6.4%, a change from a "poverty pocket or two" in 1965.

We are 50 years from the onset of the War on Poverty and poverty looks different than it did. Poverty has exploded in suburbs across the nation and such is the case in Johnson County.

#### Poverty Changes from 2000 to 2013 Johnson County, Kansas

Poverty Demographic	2000		2013	
	Number	%	Number	%
People below 100% of poverty	15,330	3.4	32,890	5.9
People below 200% of poverty	48,300	10.8	98,660	17.6
Children & youth (ages 0-17) below 100% of poverty	4,310	4.0	9,220	6.4

*Data from United Community Services of Johnson County*

Johnson County poverty data drives our mission, our passion and our Strategic Plan. We have the knowledge to deliver a quality, family-centered early childhood program to both Head Start eligible and community children living in Johnson County.

## **Strategy Formulation**

The goal of the Strategic Plan is to guide the work of Growing Futures in the delivery of quality services to children birth to five, pregnant women and their families.

The plan will be updated annually to reflect the shifting needs of our community within the ever changing context of early learning in the State of Kansas. The five overarching Strategic Plan goal areas for 2014-2019 are:

### **Goal 1-Compete for professional talent and workforce**

We need qualified staff to deliver a high-quality early childhood and family services program. We are committed to meeting the Office of Head Start staff qualifications. We strive to seek partnerships with local community colleges to provide a feeder system of qualified staff and to provide language interpretation internships.

### **Goal 2-Elevate the professional standing of employees by investing in continuing education and training**

The professional development of staff has a positive impact not only on children and families, but the staff as well. Student and family learning and readiness increase when we engage in effective professional development.

### **Goal 3-Achieve school readiness**

Capitalize on the investment in our professional staff to afford better outcomes for children and families.

### **Goal 4-Demonstrate our success through data**

Capture and analyze data to verify and measure the effectiveness of our programs and services. This helps us make informed program and practice decisions, with the ultimate goal of improving outcomes for the children and families we serve.

### **Goal 5-Build Community Awareness of our programs and services**

We have served the Johnson County community for fifty years focusing primarily on services to the neediest of the needy. Families meeting Head Start income eligibility are living at 100% of the federal poverty level. In the next fifty years, we will look at ways to expand our services so that all families who need us--not just those who are eligible for Head Start services--have access to cost-friendly, high-quality education and comprehensive services.

