



**Impact and Influence**  
Strategic Plan 2016–2018

**erikson institute**

## A Roadmap for our Future

It is with a sense of excitement and urgency that we present to you **Impact and Influence**, a new strategic plan for Erikson Institute. The result of careful investigation, analysis, and ideas generated by our faculty, staff, and trustees, and enriched by input from our alumni, partners, and supporters, the plan calls us to respond to four Grand Challenges:

- Leading the transformation of the early childhood workforce in America and beyond
- Improving the lives of children by increasing the quality of support for their families and communities
- Informing the mindful integration of technology and digital media to improve the well-being of children, families and communities
- Ensuring a future in which all children have equitable opportunities to realize their full potential through leadership and policy influence

We are excited by the scope of our plan and believe there has never been a better time to achieve transformative change for children, their families, and communities. Across the U.S., and in countries and cultures around the world, we daily observe signs of a sea change, as governments, nonprofits, and funders come to understand that placing children at the forefront is the most important single strategy for creating lasting positive change.

Our sense of urgency, however, reminds us that every day untold numbers of children do not have access to the resources they need and are not experiencing the childhood they deserve. We believe in the boundless potential in each child. There is so much more that can be done to recognize them, embrace them, and transform their lives.

Our plan relies on the dual strategies of **Impact and Influence**, both based on Erikson's historic achievements, current strengths, and greatest expertise. Our success will depend on support from funders, collaboration with partners in our field, strengthening our core assets, and in growing the size and further deepening the commitment of the Erikson community.

We encourage you to explore the strategic plan in detail, and invite your thoughts and comments and your participation in bringing it to fruition. Because nothing matters more than a child's early years.

Michelle L. Collins  
Chair  
Board of Trustees

Geoffrey A. Nagle, Ph.D.  
President and  
Chief Executive Officer

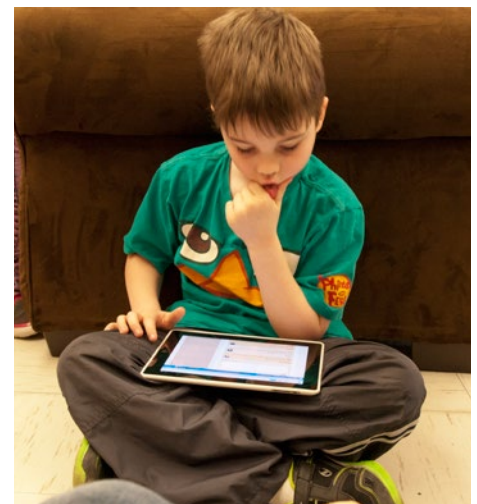




## Executive Summary

**Erikson Institute** was founded on the conviction that the first years of a child's life provide the greatest opportunity to influence lifelong development, resiliency, and well-being. How well we nurture and teach our children in this brief window of time is critical to them, but also to the health of our communities and our society as a whole.

Our new strategic plan, **Impact and Influence**, draws its inspiration and energy from this knowledge. Based on a nearly yearlong process of reflection, inquiry, and lively debate among our faculty, staff, trustees, and alumni, this plan provides a roadmap, directing our energies and resources toward four specific **Grand Challenges** in the early childhood field that we are uniquely—and powerfully—qualified to address.





**Erikson Institute** has long been recognized for groundbreaking contributions to the fields of child development and early childhood education. As our 50th anniversary approaches, we are poised to take bold steps forward to accelerate our impact and elevate our voice. Building on our foundational strengths, the strategies in this report focus our energy in new directions, enabling us to become an even more influential force for positive change on behalf of children, their families, and their communities.

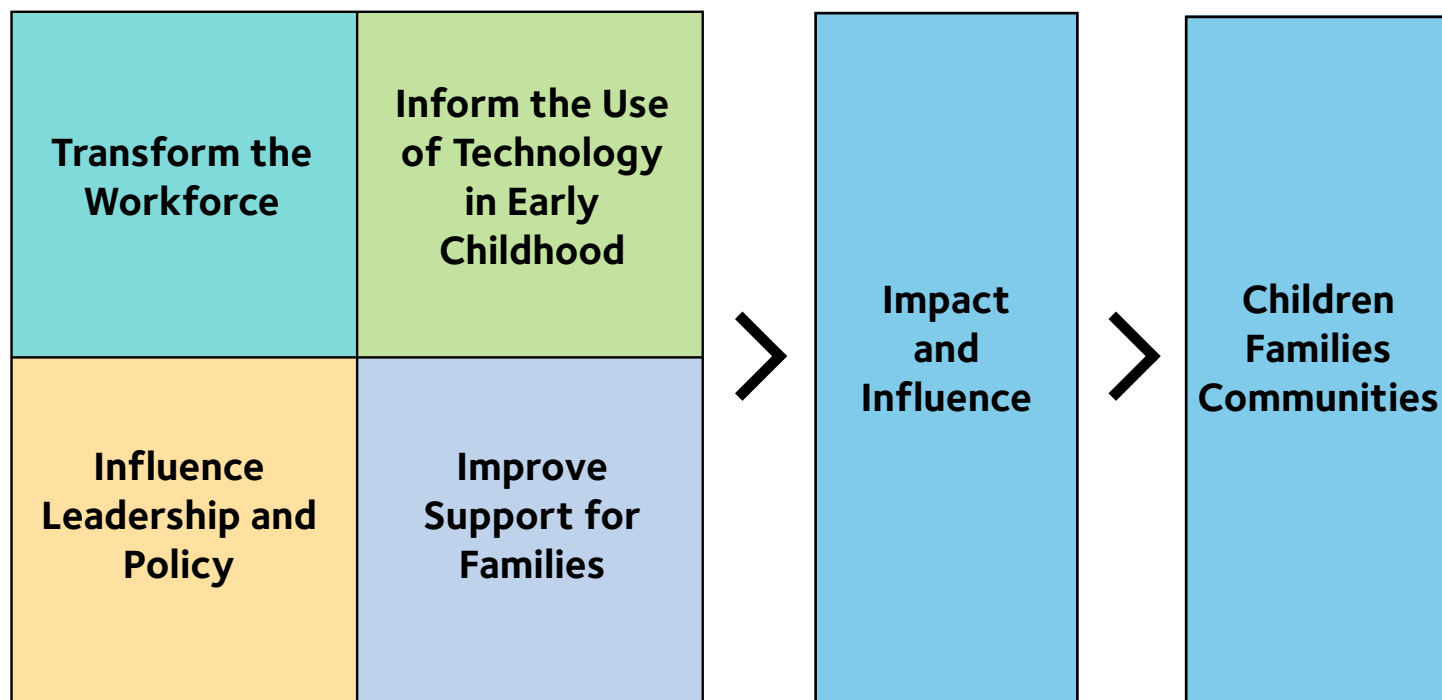
Our new strategic plan is intentionally ambitious and emblematic of the urgency of our vision. It creates a new framework for principles that have long been critical differentiators of what we offer and what we do on behalf of children. Its implementation will guide our efforts to establish a clearer identity, strengthen our financial vitality, and create new value around Erikson's rich and broad expertise.

The strategic planning process included market and trend research, in-depth interviews and surveys of

key constituents, providing us with a clear view of our most pressing challenges and promising opportunities for the coming years. The recommendations presented here emerge directly from our considered response to the world around us, the changing landscape of higher education, the evolution of the field, and an almost overwhelming sense of urgency to use our deep knowledge to make a difference in the lives of as many children as possible.

**Impact and Influence** leverages our proven strengths by directing our energies and resources toward four **Grand Challenges** we have identified in our strategic plan research process. Simultaneously, we will strengthen our ability to achieve our mission through recommended new initiatives and investments in our internal operations, which will be the Key Drivers of our ability to succeed. We are confident that implementation of this plan will propel Erikson closer to becoming the single most influential force for change in the early childhood field on behalf of young children.

## Our Four Grand Challenges



The **Grand Challenges** we have identified grow from recognition of where the child lives—in the family, in the school, in a community, and within a context of service and regulatory systems. We worked to identify how we can be most effective within each of these environments and have spelled out specific strategic priorities. The challenges outlined here are of equal importance and are not listed in a particular order.





## **Children Families Communities**

Our new strategic plan stays true to the vision of our founders – to create a diverse, interdisciplinary group of early childhood practitioners—educators, social workers, administrators, policymakers, and community leaders—who are committed to nurturing the greatest potential in each and every child. At the same time, our plan continues to raise the bar for Erikson and challenges us in new ways that will allow us to be nimble, relevant, and a trusted voice as we continue to set standards in our fields of expertise.

## Grand Challenge

# Lead the transformation of the early childhood workforce, in America and beyond.

In their report entitled *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*, the Institute of Medicine (a division of the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine) and the National Research Council note:

“The foundation for a workforce that can truly meet the needs of children from birth through age 8 is based on essential features of child development and early learning and on principles that guide support for high quality professional practice with respect to individual practitioners, leadership, systems, policies, and resource allocation.”

As the nation’s premier graduate institution for child development, Erikson has a critical role in educating early childhood professionals and leaders, advancing the field through research, and influencing policy for the benefit of young children. Our growing expertise in social work enables us to integrate multiple disciplines and expand Erikson’s influence to this complementary field, many of whose professionals are engaged in serving children, families, and communities. Finally, our work in distance learning and international education has provided us the opportunity to transform early childhood education for the better beyond United States borders.





## Grand Challenge

### Strategic Priorities:

- **Develop new and compelling degree and non-degree academic programs to address emerging needs in the fields and professions served by Erikson and thereby increase student enrollment.**



- **Close the achievement gap by advancing the evolution of humane<sup>1</sup> and intellectually rigorous schools (with a focus on Pre-K to 3rd grade classrooms), through research and teacher development.**



<sup>1</sup> The term "humane" is used to draw a sharp contrast with commonplace practices in schools that undermine the intellectual, emotional, cultural, and developmental needs of the whole child.



## Grand Challenge

# Inform the mindful integration of technology and digital media to improve the well-being of young children, families, and their communities.

“There has never been a more important time to apply principles of development and learning when considering the use of cutting-edge technologies and new media,” according to the joint position statement published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning in 2012.

Erikson Institute has earned an international reputation for expertise in technology and digital media for young children through the work of the Technology in Early Childhood Center (TEC). The TEC Center empowers early childhood educators to make informed decisions about the appropriate use of technology with children from birth to age 8. Through carefully selected resources and real-world examples, the TEC

Center strengthens educators’ digital media literacy and their ability to intentionally select, use, integrate, and evaluate technology in the classroom and in other early childhood settings.

Erikson has become a thought leader and a trusted source of information for early childhood professionals about developmentally informed, evidence-based, appropriate, and intentional use of technology and digital media to support children’s development and learning in early childhood settings. Through proposed investments to strengthen Erikson’s technology infrastructure and the strategic priorities described here, TEC Center activities can be scaled up to achieve a significantly higher level of influence and impact in the early childhood field nationally and internationally.



## Grand Challenge

### Strategic Priorities:

- Establish the TEC Center as an internationally recognized hub for innovation and creation of best practices in technology integration to support early childhood development and learning.



- Through new degree, continuing education, and professional development programs, educate, empower, and influence early childhood professionals to integrate best practices for using technology into formal and informal early childhood settings.





## Grand Challenge

# Improve the lives of children by increasing the quality of support for their families and communities.

While early childhood professionals have an enormous impact on the lives of the children in their care, parents and families have the earliest and the most important role to play in ensuring the future well-being of their children. Through our research, education, and innovative community and direct service programs, Erikson Institute is putting knowledge to work in service of young children in multiple ways: through research-based work to improve the quality of family support provided by programs and state agencies nationwide (and internationally); through our work in schools, exploring and implementing innovative methods in the classroom; by exploring new ways to use technology to build parent engagement; and through direct service and educational programs for families and children in the greater Chicago community.

Erikson researchers are nationally respected thought leaders in the role of families in early childhood services, care, and education settings. Our research is impacting state, national, and in some cases, international networks and agencies, helping to develop new methods for assessing, measuring, and improving the quality

and effectiveness of early services, care, and education across multiple settings, from home visiting programs to home-based child care. The strategic plan calls for increased support for this fundamental and transformative work.

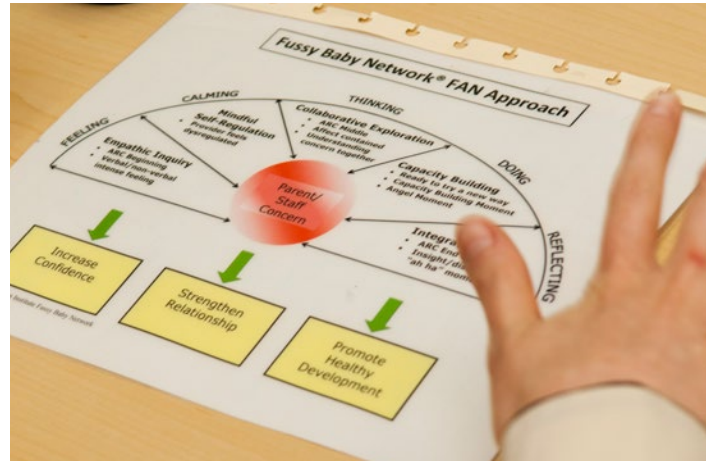
Serving families must also include expanding Erikson's footprint to diverse communities, including lower income and culturally diverse communities. By growing our direct engagement with more children and families, regardless of economic standing, we will further extend our impact and influence on behalf of young children. We will scale our direct services through our clinical-based work, online capabilities, and school- and community-based efforts.



## Grand Challenge

### Strategic Priorities:

- Conduct and disseminate research to improve the quality of support services for families of young children.



- Increase the number of families directly served by Erikson.





## Grand Challenge

# Ensure a future in which all children have equitable opportunities to realize their full potential, through leadership and policy influence.

“Erikson Institute needs to become a voice that policymakers go to, that they can count on to provide good information rather than biased information. Erikson can make a difference in highlighting the science around early child development.”

—From a personal interview conducted with an Erikson funder during the development of the strategic plan.

Some of the greatest opportunities to improve children’s lives lie in the making of policies that affect them, whether it is shaping learning standards and assessments, funding health and wellness initiatives, or providing universal, accessible, high quality childcare programs.

As a knowledge and thought leader in the early childhood field, Erikson has a duty

and responsibility to proactively influence policymakers for the benefit of young children, their families, and communities. We will do so by providing policymakers with the most credible and up-to-date research-based understanding of early childhood development so that they can make the best and most informed decisions about policy setting and resource allocation. We will further this commitment by developing educational programs to empower a new breed of policy leaders, knowing that informed leadership from a diverse group of committed professionals will lead to the deepest, most lasting, most positive change.



## Grand Challenge

### Strategic Priorities:

- **Develop a broadly diverse group of highly committed leaders in support of the early childhood field.**



- **Inform the development of key early childhood policies to create positive outcomes for children, families, and communities.**







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