

Next Door's 50th Anniversary



Next Door's Early Childhood Education

Creating Stronger Families Through Education

At Next Door we combine high quality early childhood education and family engagement to prepare young children for school. This approach provides critical support during a child's most important developmental years – the first five years – building a solid academic and social-emotional foundation.

Every day, babies' brains make millions of connections per second, building the foundation for their future. **In fact, 85% of a child's brain is developed by the time they are three years old.**

We serve our community's most impoverished areas. In Milwaukee nearly 15,000 families with children under age of five live in poverty. Children living in poverty may have adverse childhood experiences that can manifest as behavioral issues or mental health problems early in life. Many of these children do not have access to critical educational, physical and emotional resources that are needed for healthy development.

As a result, children growing up in poverty are at risk to enter kindergarten as many as 18 months behind children from more affluent families – creating an achievement gap that is difficult to overcome.

Through home-based and center-based programs **Next Door serves nearly 1,700 children, from birth to five years old**, with three locations and 11 partnership sites in Milwaukee's central city.



For information on how you can help, please contact Hannah at hharris@NextDoorMKE.org



Our two-generation approach and family engagement promotes the parents' critical role in the emotional and cognitive development of their child. **We support strong parent-child relationships, family well-being, and ongoing learning and development for both parents and children.**

Social-emotional development is critical to children's school readiness. Next Door's mental health program, including our Positive Behavior Support Team, helps children and their families learn skills to manage challenging behaviors at an early age and connects them to community resources to address early mental health problems.

Our approach works! **Last school year, 88% of the children assessed met or exceeded developmental benchmarks.**

Further, a recent study conducted by national research universities – which included students at Next Door – indicated that children completing high quality education programs demonstrate stronger literacy skills than their peers, exhibit less challenging behaviors, and develop stronger parent-child bonds – all critical attributes to future success in school.

Next Door incorporates everything science says young children need to flourish. Our approach extends beyond the classroom to help children, families and communities thrive.



High Quality Teaching Practices

Next Door's early childhood and pre-school education provides students with foundational academic and social-emotional skills for entering Kindergarten and first grade. Our programs feature low child-to-teacher classroom ratios and highly qualified staff. We invest in classroom environments and curricula, ensuring teachers have age-appropriate tools to best engage each child. Teachers implement research-based curricula and create literacy-related experiences in classrooms and at home.

One primary tool used in the classrooms is The Creative Curriculum (CC), which supports an approach of hands-on learning, focused on core content areas of math, science, social studies, and the language arts. The CC includes explicit literacy instruction to help young learners make progress toward school readiness.

The CC offers daily plans to help teachers individualize instruction for each child and organize and manage each school day of the year. Lessons come with developmentally appropriate daily resources such as songs, chants, rhymes, games, and short activities.

Next Door's Books for Kids program engages families from all over the community in literacy activities through our "Read with Me" program, weekly Community Library nights, and Mobile Library events. Each year we provide more than 75,000 free books for families to build their home libraries.

The CC aligns with a Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG) an ongoing observational system for assessing children from birth through kindergarten. Children's TSG scores inform lesson planning, coaching, and teaching practices that focus on improving child outcomes.

Young children attending Next Door are prepared for school. Our 2017-18 School Readiness Report indicates that 88% of the children assessed met or exceeded national averages in the areas of Social-Emotional, Language, Literacy, Cognitive, and Mathematics. Teachers used Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG), a research-based system to observe children in the context of everyday experiences and measure children's knowledge and abilities.

High quality early childhood education is critical to building a solid academic and social-emotional foundation - supporting children's development into healthy, thriving individuals.



Teacher and Staff Development

Children's success relies on the efforts of well-trained teachers. Teachers' abilities improve with consistent, strategic approach to professional development and training. Teachers work with experienced coaches to adjust their teaching practices according to each child's individual needs. Our coaches combine classroom observations, in-person modeling, and research-based coaching strategies to help improve children's outcomes.

Next Door's Instructional Coaches and Education Managers lead monthly Collaborative Curriculum Meetings (CCM) to support teachers' curriculum planning and implementation. CCM are held by grade level (Infants and toddlers, K3, K4, and K5). The team discusses factors such as duration of study, needed materials, anticipated concerns, family involvement, take-home folders, and highlight "WOW!" moments. CCMs encourage peer-to-peer learning and provide a framework for teachers to individualize their instruction for each child.

Each year, we embed nine full days of professional development into our educational staff's schedules. Training is based on each teachers' level of experience and the age of the children in their classrooms.

Family Engagement

Parents are children's primary teachers. We deliver programs to help parents create healthy, stable and safe homes and engage in their children's learning. Next Door offers comprehensive services for families, including prenatal home visits, health and mental health support, adult basic education, and our Books for Kids program.

Teachers involve parents and family members in educational activities such as take-home assignments and volunteering in classrooms. We provide culturally sensitive materials and translated information for dual language learners and families.

Parents attend monthly Parent Committee meetings to receive program updates, assist in developing activities that address the interests and needs of families, and engage directly with community resources. Parents are elected from this committee to serve on the Policy Council, which shares responsibility with staff and Board of Directors in making decisions that affect programming. Two parent representatives serve on the Board of Directors.

Our Family Advocates and Parent Educators interact with families throughout the school year and formally evaluate families' needs three times a year during one-on-one meetings and home visits. Based on the results of these evaluations, they connect families with social service resources and access to affordable housing and health care, help obtain adequate food, and address safety concerns.

Our parents learn about their child's brain development and the impact of trauma. We involve our families and employees in a brain protection strategy that includes education on the health benefits of good nutrition, adequate sleep, strong positive relationships, and intense exposure to a language-rich environment.



Reimagining our Learning Environment

Improvements to our Original 29th Street Building

Previously a carbon manufacturing facility, our 29th Street campus has been the home of Next Door's early childhood programs for more than 25 years. The building was generously donated by the Koenitzer family, long-time members of Our Savior's Lutheran Church.

This gift allowed Next Door to become a Head Start organization and focus its programming on early childhood education. The initial renovation from factory to school happened in 1992, with large, external-facing classrooms, two indoor play spaces, a library and administrative offices.

In 2005, we expanded our 29th Street campus by adding Wisconsin's only Educare school – one of the nation's most effective early childhood education models, focused on high quality teaching practices, parent engagement, professional development of teachers, and utilization of data to inform our approach.

The effectiveness of the Educare model inspired a recent effort to realign our organization as "One Next Door," meaning we work to share best practices across all of Next Door's programs and at partner sites. **Our goal is to ensure that every child at Next Door has the same high quality educational opportunity which includes an engaging and inspiring learning environment.**





The next phase of our “One Next Door” initiative is to improve the learning environments of the former-factory side of our 29th Street campus so that it aligns with current educational philosophies, innovations in learning environments, and the design of the Educare school.

The physical environment can promote healthy development, improve learning and help prevent behavior issues. This is essential for learning success in the classroom and beyond.

An ideal physical learning environment should help students feel safe, express and challenge themselves, promote confidence and allow for flexibility in learning.

In addition, environments outside of the classroom should promote similar educational initiatives, strategies and curricula that are promoted within the classroom to reinforce learning.

Campus Improvements Include:

- Transforming two indoor and three outdoor play areas into age-appropriate, themed areas to support the gross motor development of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
- Creating a Community Café to increase parents’ connections with each other and our Family Services team.
- Redesigning our Books for Kids Library to increase children’s engagement and improve experiences for the 2,000 volunteers who read with children each year.
- Bringing natural light into the entire environment, by removing cement blocks and creating windows throughout the corridors.
- Incorporating playful color themes throughout the entire campus through paint and flooring.
- Updating the external facade to reflect Next Door’s branding and core values.



Indoor and Outdoor Play Areas

Play helps children explore, think creatively and learn new skills. It helps them develop their imagination, dexterity and physical, cognitive and emotional strength. It also gives children choices and allows them to test their limits and continually move their development forward at an appropriate pace.

Play also helps children learn to make and practice new sounds and vocabulary, express their body language, and develop their social skills with peers.

As a part of the project, we will update two outdated indoor playgrounds and three outdoor playgrounds.

For young learners, play areas are an important extension of the classroom. We have designed our new play spaces with input from early childhood teachers to ensure a focus on intentional teaching, to provide a safe, supportive setting for healthy development, and to focus on the ways infants, toddlers and preschoolers engage with the world around them. **This includes age-appropriate equipment to help develop gross motor and typical play skills, help develop sensory and design experiences, and inspire creativity and curiosity.**

Rendering of "Under the Sea" themed infant/toddler play area.



Current infant/toddler play area.





Rendering of "Outer Space" themed preschooler play area.



Current preschooler play area.

Improvements Include:

- Creating an infant/toddler "Under the Sea" themed indoor play area. Children taking their first steps in life need space and equipment that encourages reaching, grasping, crawling, climbing, balancing and walking.
- Creating a preschooler "Outer Space" themed indoor play area. Children at this age need space for running, climbing, balancing and social play.
- Updating new flooring, wall coverings and safety corrals to ensure all children play safely.
- Adding themed gross motor teaching tools and equipment and décor.
- Creating three nature-based outdoor play areas to enhance sensory experience, connect to the natural world, and inspire creativity and curiosity.
- Adding treatments to the outdoor ground and fencing to create a nature-inspired feel.

Books for Kids Library

Learning to read early in life is critical to future success, especially when children start to use reading to learn other subjects.

Research shows the number of books available to children may surpass all other variables in predicting their first grade reading achievement. Next Door's Books for Kids program distributes free books to low income children and their families through our libraries, medical offices, and other partner sites around the city.

The Books for Kids Library is the hub of literacy activities like our "Read with Me" program, Mobile Library, and Community Library. During Community Library, families, teachers, community partners, and other literacy programs in the city visit us weekly and select dozens of books to share with their own communities. The Mobile Library visits our 11 partnership sites four times per year and shares the gift of books through community events. Children and parents climb aboard the shuttle-sized van and select free books to take home.

The Books for Kids library also receives, cleans, repairs and categorizes nearly 100,000 books from book donations every year.

Rendering of the new Books for Kids library.

Current Books for Kids library.





Rendering of overhead view of the new Books for Kids library.

Each school day, classrooms visit the Library for “Read with Me” sessions where community volunteers read one-on-one with children. Afterward, children choose a book, give it a hug, and take it home to build their very own libraries. **The redesigned Books for Kids Library emphasizes the idea of “Read with Me” as an in-house field trip to a unique space that sparks the imagination and gets young children excited about reading.**

Improvements Include:

- Transforming the entire space to a forest-inspired theme to create an immersive environment.
- Adding new portable, cushioned seating for volunteers to utilize when reading to children. These pods will store easily underneath shelving.
- Removing traditional ceiling panels to create the appearance of a larger space and installing leaf-shaped acoustic panels to absorb sounds from readers and children.
- Creating new shelving to best utilize limited space for displaying and distributing our donated books.
- Implementing a new electronic inventory tracking system to better intake, categorize, store, and distribute books.



Current Books for Kids library.

Community Café

Family engagement is critical to children's success. We deliver programs to help parents create healthy, stable and safe homes and engage in their children's learning.

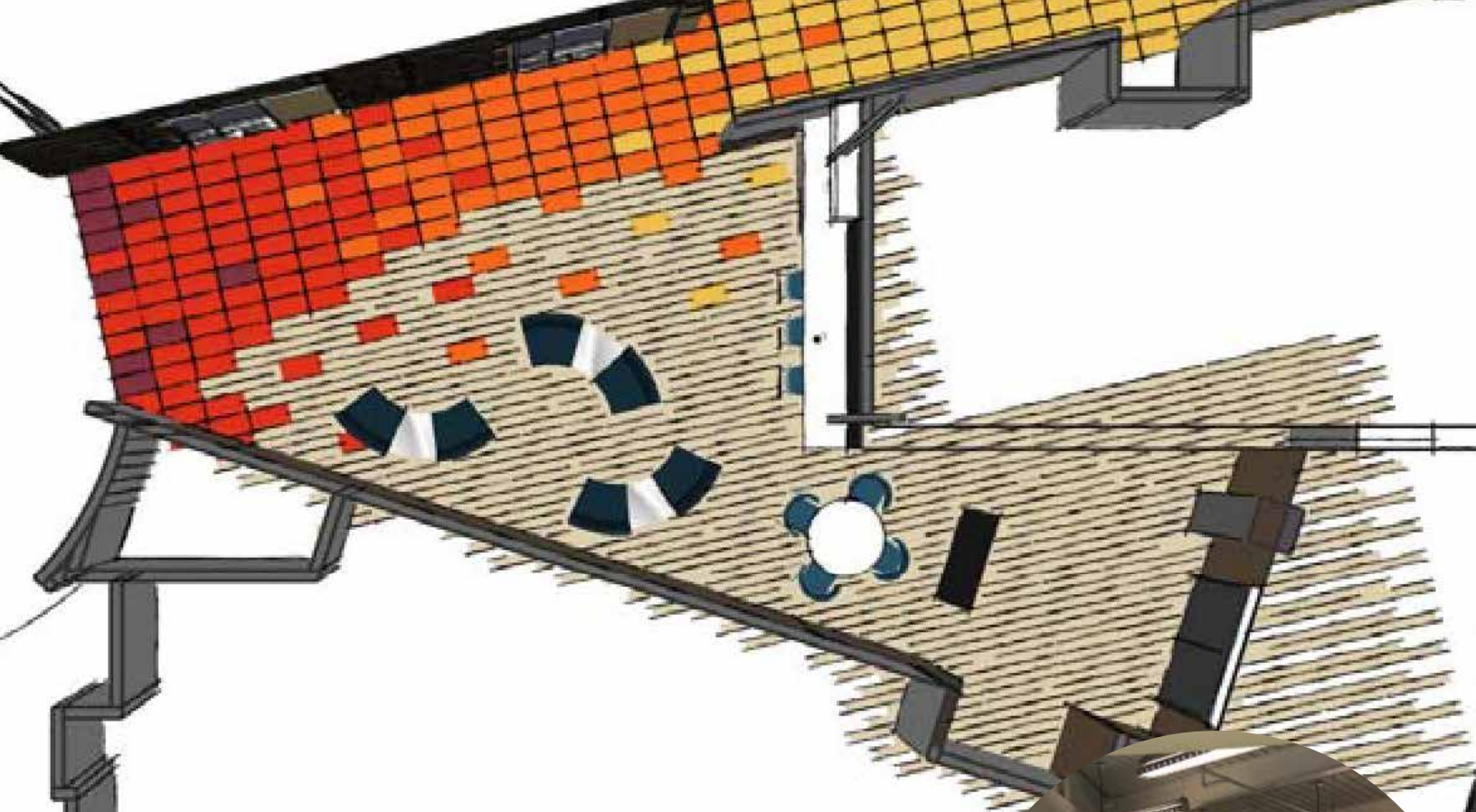
Every child enrolled at Next Door has a Family Advocate who works with their family to provide resources and encourage success. **Each year, we develop strength-based relationships with our families and set annual goals based on families' basic needs.**

Our Family Services staff regularly interacts with parents, connecting parents with needed resources and services. We help ensure that parents have access to affordable housing and health care, can obtain adequate food, and address safety concerns. Our Family Services staff will use the space to connect with parents during children pick-up and drop-off times and to host parent meetings and trainings.

Rendering of the new Community Café – family engagement space.

Former entrance and reception area.





Rendering of the new overview of the Community Café – family engagement space.

Parents attend monthly Parent Committee meetings to receive and provide input into program updates, assist in developing activities that address the interests and needs of families, and engage directly with community resources. This year meetings have been hosted in main spaces to encourage attendance. The new Community Café will provide a flexible open space for these meetings.

The new Community Café will provide parents a space to interact with one another, learn about programming and updates at Next Door, access community resources and to connect with their family support team.



Former entrance and reception area.



Campus Enhancements

Our goal is to ensure that every child at Next Door has the same high quality educational experience, including an inspiring, welcoming learning environment.

Our Educare school located at our 29th Street site features a bright, spacious foyer, high ceilings, wide hallways, and connection to natural light from every angle - all researched components of a positive learning environment. These components have been incorporated into 23 Educare schools around the country.

The older portion of our 29th Street campus still includes certain components of its original state as a carbon manufacturing building. The building was renovated in the early 1990s and hasn't had any major updates since.

While all classrooms are outward facing, have access to natural light, and feature modern finishes and furniture, our internal spaces are cement block, narrow hallways, original tile flooring, and overhead fluorescent lighting in drop ceiling panels.

Improvements Include:

- Bringing natural light into the entire environment, by removing cement blocks and creating windows throughout the corridors.
- Replacing fluorescent light panels with contemporary light fixtures designed to emulate natural light.
- Removing low-hanging drop ceiling panels to create more spacious hallways.
- Incorporating playful color themes throughout the entire campus through paint and flooring.

Renderings of a new hallways.

