



Bright Futures

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NextDoorMKE.org



Our Mission: Next Door supports the intellectual, physical and emotional development of children by partnering with their families for success in school and the community.

Our Vision: Next Door's vision is to position neighborhood children and families for long-term success.

Letter from the President

I hope you and your loved ones are staying safe and healthy.

Knowing we have an obligation to provide our critical early childhood education programs to children who need them, we began a slow and safe reopening process for Next Door in June. We welcomed back a select number of our youngest learners, ages birth to three, at both of our locations. We also launched a summer school program to prepare students entering K5 for the new school year. We're currently evaluating plans for a return in the fall.

Reopening has come with extensive planning, frequent consultation with local, state and federal organizations and a host of safety measures to protect our students and staff. The measures include: limiting the number of people in our buildings, special drop-off/pick-up procedures for families, temperature checks for everyone entering our buildings, masks required for employees and increased cleaning and sanitizing procedures.

While reopening brings excitement to have students and staff back, it is important to recognize the current outcry on race relations in our city and across the country. Below is a statement from

our Board of Directors regarding Next Door's commitment to supporting our families and the Black community in Milwaukee.

Despite these challenging times, we've enjoyed some exciting highlights for Next Door over the past few months. In May, we hosted our first-ever virtual Walk for Children with more than 8,000 miles walked from community members to support Next Door. A full event recap is inside.

In June, we received national recognition from Dr. Deborah Bergeron, Director of the Office of Head Start. She wrote a blog post about the importance of fathers in their child's early years and featured a Next Door dad and his son. In July, Dr. Bergeron visited one of our classrooms virtually to see Next Door programming in action!

These success stories keep us motivated to continue doing the most important work in Milwaukee as safely as we can right now. Thank you for your interest and support!

Tracey Sparrow, Ed.D.
Next Door President

A Statement from Next Door's Board of Directors on race relations

Next Door's mission is to help get children ready for success in school – and in life.

Today, 86 percent of the families Next Door supports are members of the Black community. Each school day, our faculty, staff, board directors, and volunteers see the love Next Door parents have for their children. We see their pride when their children reach a new milestone. We hear them speak of their dreams for their children's future. We are proud to share in their love, their pride and their dreams.

The barriers our children and families face are powerful and pervasive – including symptoms of poverty and systemic racism.

Recent incidents of racial violence, like the murder of George Floyd, underscore the need for us all to join together in addressing matters of racism and injustice in a united, meaningful way. As Next Door's Board of Directors, we stand in solidarity with those who are peacefully protesting the systemic racism that is evident in our community and across the country.

We do not have all of the answers, but we believe that Next Door's primary work – early childhood education – is part of the long-term solution to build stronger families in our community. As a Board, we are committed to listening more to the families we support, to strengthening our work as an anti-racist organization, and to working with others in Milwaukee to build a community that is equitable, inclusive and celebrates diversity.



Thanks for supporting Next Door's Virtual Walk for Children!



Next Door hosted its first-ever virtual Walk for Children from May 18-22. We thank Harley-Davidson Motor Company for serving as the Presenting Sponsor – a role the company has played since the Walk for Children began in 1989.

Our goal was to have 1,400 miles walked for every child at Next Door. Thanks to extraordinary community support from individuals and corporations, we far surpassed that goal!

We wrapped up the week with an interactive virtual celebration for Next Door families. The program featured fantastic entertainment from emcee, Shannon Sims from Today's TMJ4, Harley-Davidson, Milwaukee Panthers, Next Door teachers and Drums of Oya with an African drum performance. We're grateful as well for the generous donations supporting Next Door's critical early childhood programming for central city families.



Presenting Sponsor



Thanks to our sponsors!

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Help us give books to kids!

For 30 years, Books for Kids has collected community book donations to help Next Door students build their home libraries. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and our extended time away from school, we need more books for our students so they can keep up with reading at home and further develop critical literacy skills. **Our goal is to double the amount of books we give to our children – up to four books a month for the coming school year.**

In addition to giving away books to our students, Books for Kids distributes free books to children in the community through our Mobile Library, Community Library, and Little Free Libraries. Plus, we work with local organizations/offices on special requests for books.

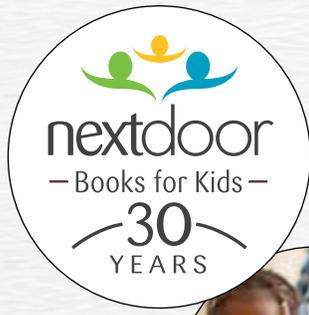
What We Need

- New/gently-used books for kids – infants to five
- Board books
- Picture books
- Multicultural books
- Multilingual books
(Spanish, Hmong, Burmese, Karen)
- Social-emotional books

How To Donate

- Host a Book Drive
- Donate your own gently-used books
- Buy books on our Amazon Wish List
- Make a Gift

For more information, visit Books for Kids online at NextDoorMKE.org



Learning and teaching through a pandemic

As part of our slow and safe reopening process, Next Door classrooms are starting to buzz again this summer with engaging academic and social-emotional learning experiences for a select number of our students. In addition, parents are working hard at home to keep up their child's education. These photos offer a glimpse into the enrichment taking place.



Faith practices her numbers by making sure the yellow squares in each row match the number on top.



Karmani is pictured here by a tomato plant she grew with her class.



Zynmir works on his pattering skills with beads.



Rylan works on his coloring and fine motor skills at home.



This Next Door dad reads the book "Hair Love" to his children Kai, Kayley & Adriel at home.

Next Door's frontline workers: Meet Ms. Sheila

Ms. Sheila teaches in a three-year-old classroom at Next Door. When COVID-19 hit our community and we had to close our buildings, Ms. Sheila worked incredibly hard to keep up communication and engagement with her students and their families. Below, she shares some of her experiences during the shut-down.

How often were you connecting with your students and their families and in what ways?

In most cases, I connected with my families on a daily basis to make sure their needs were addressed during the shut-down. We connected by phone, text, videos, home visits, and ClassDojo (a classroom portal that helps teachers and parents build communities and share lessons and materials). The videos featured myself and co-teachers demonstrating projects for parents to work on with their children at home. For home visits, I would safely drop off materials to carry out lessons including: markers, pencils, crayons, construction paper, glue, finger plays, empty tissue boxes, empty toilet paper rolls, chalk, journals for writing and drawing, bubbles, balls, paint, books, science materials, letter stencils and flannel stories.

What were some of the ways you engaged your students in learning?

I engaged the students primarily through lesson plans posted on the Class-Dojo program every day. The lessons focused on building critical social-emotional skills as well as fine motor, gross motor, science and math skills. One of the activities encouraged families to plant together. I safely delivered seeds, soil and containers to their homes and provided an instructional video. It was awesome to see pictures of the plants later on! Another activity encouraged families to engage in learning over mealtimes. I remember getting photos from parents showing their children helping

prepare breakfast and eating it afterwards. Those images really made my day, too!

What were some of your proudest accomplishments?

One of my proudest accomplishments was getting positive feedback from the parents who were always participating in their child's education through the ClassDojo program. I felt like my relationships with them grew even stronger during the pandemic and I will always treasure them! Another accomplishment was having the courage in the midst of the pandemic to do a project called "Affirmations!" My co-teachers and I safely visited the children at their homes and took pictures of them holding signs with "I Am" messages like "Peace", "Intelligent" and "Sharing." We then assembled the photos into a video and shared them with the families.



What were some of the lessons you learned from this experience?

One of the biggest lessons learned during this time was the importance of taking risks in life. I found myself having to think out of the box and try new things to adapt to remote teaching and communication with families. As their teacher, I had to do whatever I could as safely as possible to make sure their needs were met. In the end, I discovered the risks I took – both remotely and through careful home visiting – paid off and brought me a huge sense of fulfillment. I think the following quote from Leo Buscaglia sums it all up: "Risks must be taken because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing!"



Congratulations to Next Door K5 graduates!



Meet Amoura! She's one of Next Door's K5 graduates from the Class of 2020. We hosted a special outdoor distribution event in June where each child received their diploma, an award for a STAR behavior and a package of goodies including a cake, a commemorative graduation t-shirt, a yard sign and a new book.