



Bright Futures

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Connect With Us

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NextDoorMKE.org



Get Involved

Volunteer or Host a Book Drive

Contact Martina at
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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'm excited to share that hundreds of Next Door students - ages six weeks to five years old - are back in our classrooms this fall engaging directly with their teachers and peers. With Covid-19 safety precautions in place, we have resumed 100% in-person learning for both our center-based and home-based programs.

A critical part of our work this fall centers on our Accelerating Equity Initiative. The initiative aims to address the impact of the pandemic on children's learning and growth during a significant time of their brain development. We're expanding our academic, physical and social-emotional resources for children to meet today's needs. The initiative also includes support for parents and staff. Read more inside.

We continue to invest in our buildings with recent upgrades to indoor play spaces at our Capitol Drive location. We now have vibrant murals in these areas offering our children more ways to learn at Next Door! Check out the photos inside.

We've enjoyed generous community support this fall, including a special book drive for Next Door at Summerfest sponsored by Northwestern Mutual.

We were also honored to welcome Milwaukee Municipal Court Judge Derek Mosely at our virtual all-staff meeting to kick off the new school year. He spoke about eliminating unconscious bias in connection with our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts.

I want to thank our community supporters for their commitment to Next Door during these unprecedented times. Your contributions are now more impactful than ever before as we navigate this critical year for our students, families and staff.

Tracey Sparrow, Ed.D.
Next Door President

Going Beyond the Mission: Next Door's Covid-19 Vaccine Outreach Team

Through a grant from Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Next Door launched an outreach team in the summer of 2021 to educate Next Door families, staff and residents in our neighborhoods about Covid-19 and the vaccination. The team reached more than 500 people through neighborhood canvassing, community events and collaboration with churches.

The team also promoted free vaccination sites and transportation. They hosted four clinics at Next Door in partnership with City of Milwaukee Health Department, Hayat Pharmacy and Medical College of Wisconsin and administered 270 vaccines.

The team's work culminated in a resource fair offering additional vaccinations plus support services from community partners to navigate life during the pandemic.



Next Door's Accelerating Equity Initiative

Over the past year and a half, we know that many Next Door children have missed out on critical in-person learning to achieve the benchmarks they need for success. We also know that our students may have experienced trauma or chronic stress during the pandemic, which can translate into challenging behaviors.

To support our students this fall in our return to 100% in-person learning, we're implementing an Accelerating Equity Initiative across our center-based, home-based and partnership programming.

The initiative encompasses a series of enhancements to Next Door's high quality early childhood education and comprehensive support services. We know that these early years go by fast and we must do all we can to ensure our students are ready for success in their next level of education.

Below is a closer look at our efforts, which also include support for parents and our staff.

Supporting our Students

Academic enhancements

- Two new reading specialists to coach teachers on literacy development + embedding literacy into a new math curriculum and other content areas
- One-on-one tutors for K4 and K5 students, called Accelerators, to work with children in core areas like reading, writing and math
- Community partnerships with Leading Men Fellows and 414 Fellows to provide our students with more individualized academic support
- Expanding innovation in early childhood education like virtual reality and robotics programming
- Reinforcing learning through increased art studio visits combining singing, movement and drawing/painting

Physical Health Enhancements

- Expanding our team of Health Advocates to better serve student health-care needs
- Enhancing health curriculum for K4 students covering topics like hygiene, mask-wearing, water and pedestrian safety, and safety with strangers
- Expanding our focus on meals/snacks made from scratch and fresh, whole-grain-rich foods, and introducing new healthy foods in special tasting experiences

Mental Health Enhancements

- Expanding Next Door's Positive Behavior Support Team to respond to an expected increase in challenging behaviors
- Implementing a new social-emotional curriculum offering small-group workshops for K5 students to build strong social-emotional skills
- Expanding on-site counseling services with Children's Wisconsin for children ages birth to five
- Increasing collaboration with the Next Step Clinic at Next Door for students needing mental health and developmental services
- Weekly yoga classes for K5 students from a community partner



Supporting our Families

- Returning to on-site parent meetings and family engagement events
- Continuing virtual at-home engagement through educational apps
- Introducing a new parent engagement center at our 29th St. campus for one-on-one meetings with teachers and family advocates and group meetings
- Employing parents as Family Ambassadors who serve as the voice of families, build relationships with Next Door leadership, and connect families to volunteer opportunities



Supporting our Staff

- Hiring a Wellness Specialist to lead programming agency-wide focused on stress reduction and healthy lifestyles (includes fitness classes and educational presentations)
- Expanding mental health support with self-care plans for teachers coordinated with Next Door's Success Coach
- Expanding a mindfulness program called EMBRACE with the Educare Learning Network to ensure teachers have tools to support their mental health
- Offering a new sleep education program on the importance of proper sleep and tips to achieve it



New murals enhance student learning!

Just in time for the new school year, we wrapped up work on a beautiful set of murals at our Capitol Drive campus. The murals have significantly brightened up indoor play areas and additional

gathering spaces. They feature a trip around the world with special landmarks for the children to learn about, a day-to-night nature scene, a beehive to explore and inspirational quotes.





Next Door Foundation
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Read with Me is back!



Volunteer readers have returned to Next Door to engage our students in one of the most important early learning experiences for children. Pictured is Armon, 2, reading in our library with students from Medical College of Wisconsin. For the safety of our students, we're requiring volunteers to be fully vaccinated for Covid-19. If you're interested in Read with Me, contact Martina at 414.999.2529 or mstevens@NextDoorMKE.org.