



# The Giving Common

An Initiative of the Boston Foundation

[www.thegivingcommon.org](http://www.thegivingcommon.org)

Strategies for Children, Inc.



## General Information

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**Website**

[www.strategiesforchildren.org](http://www.strategiesforchildren.org)

**Organization Contact**

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**Year of Incorporation**

2001

# Statements & Search Criteria

## **Mission Statement**

Strategies for Children, Inc. (SFC) works to ensure that Massachusetts invests the resources needed for all children, from birth to age five, to access high-quality early education programs that prepare them for success in school and life.

## **Background Statement**

Since its founding in 2001 by nationally known child advocate Margaret Blood, SFC has established itself as a cutting-edge advocacy and policy organization for young children and families. The need is urgent. MA, with an aging workforce and innovation-based economy, faces a mismatch in demands for a pipeline of skilled, well-educated workers and the preparedness of an increasingly diverse population of children. Only 83% of MA high school students graduate in four years. Each drop out costs taxpayers \$350,000 over his/her lifetime. Yet often times our interventions are too costly, too little, and too late. We ignore a critical benchmark that predicts children's future success in school and in life. Seventy four percent of children who are not proficient readers in third grade continue to struggle, significantly reducing their chances of graduating high school, attending college, and become productive members of society. Get reading right and everything else on the educational agenda – achievement gap, stem, drop-out – becomes much easier to tackle.

The trick is to start early. Learning begins at birth, and so does the path to literacy. SFC's reading campaign has spurred a renewed sense of urgency about investing in high-quality early education. It has attracted new partners. It has engaged policymakers and practitioners across MA, from the governor and secretary of education to legislative leaders, from superintendents and school committees to early educators and program administrators. Our work has generated national attention, from groups such as the National Governors Association, Education Commission of the States, and the National Conference of State Legislators, as well as from other states and national philanthropic and advocacy groups.

SFC has mobilized a broad-based coalition of leaders – from business, education, early childhood, labor, health care, religion and philanthropy -- to build a statewide system of high-quality early education. SFC led efforts that resulted in the creation of the nation's first Dept. of Early Education and Care; creation of Universal Pre-Kindergarten in grant and statute; and establishment of the Early Childhood Educators Scholarship, which has awarded more than 5,000 scholarships to working early educators earning college degrees. It helped propel an increase in kindergartners in full-day programs, from 29% in FY00 to 83% today. It played a critical role in securing more than \$281 million in public investments in early education since 2005 – including the \$50 million federal Early Learning Challenge grant noted above.

Rick Lord, president of Associated Industries of MA, says, "SFC has been tremendously successful at convening diverse leaders to embrace a common vision for children and families."

SFC continues to use its core strategies – research and policy, communications and coalition-building – to great success. The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, led by a senior vice president of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, noted SFC's role when it recently recognized MA as a State Pacesetter.

SFC is well-positioned to continue to have a strong positive impact on young children and families in MA and to inform efforts in other states and nationally.

## **Impact Statement**

After a decade spent laying the foundation for a statewide system of high-quality early education, SFC launched our 10-year campaign to improve reading proficiency in 2010 with the release of "Turning the Page: Refocusing MA for Reading Success," (TtP) which the Boston Foundation helped fund. SFC commissioned the groundbreaking report from a Harvard literacy expert to address a stubborn problem. Research identifies third grade reading as a critical benchmark, but 39% of MA third graders - and 66% in Boston - read below grade level. Among low-income children, 60% are not proficient. Performance is virtually unchanged since 2001. SFC is using the report's framework to guide its reading proficiency campaign at the state and local levels. Our efforts have paid off. In January, Governor Patrick included an unprecedented \$131 million in new early education investments in his FY14 budget proposal, using third grade reading proficiency as a frame.

Other highlights include:

- SFC launched the MA Reading Proficiency Learning network. SFC is partnering with five communities – including Boston – to go deeper and to improve children's ability to read proficiently;
  - SFC launched Leading the conversation, a statewide series of events which delve deeper into the recommendations from TtP;
  - Governor Patrick signed an Act Relative to Third Grade Reading Proficiency into law. We worked with the legislature to file the legislation, which was informed by TtP. The law positions early learning in the highest levels of state government;
  - The state was awarded a \$50 million federal Early Learning Challenge grant. The grant was a validation of our work laying the foundation for a system of high-quality early education.
- SFC's 2013 goals are to leverage the governor's proposal to increase investment; to continue developing our ambitious reading proficiency campaign; and to further build our organizational capacity to support the work.

## **Needs Statement**

SFC's most pressing needs are:

- Financial support for our proven constituency building/research/awareness/mobilization strategies to leverage the Governor's leadership for significant investments in high-quality early education and care;
- Financial support to further develop our ambitious reading proficiency campaign which has great potential to impact the lives of millions of children across the country;
- Financial support for the MA Reading Proficiency Learning Network. While participating communities contribute to help defray the overall cost of \$100,000, additional funding is necessary;
- Financial support to expand Leading the Conversation. Interest in this event series is far exceeding venue capacity. Additional funding is sought for technology for webinars and other means of reaching a wide audience.
- New champions from business and other sectors who recognize that the future of our commonwealth is dependent upon our collective ability to provide children the chance they need to succeed in school and in life.

**CEO/Executive Director Statement**

Strategies for Children is evolving to fill a new role in the birth-third grade continuum. Policymakers and community leaders are increasingly interested in prioritizing young children's growth and development, school readiness, and early academic success. The question we now face is – how do we get there?

Building upon our expertise in advocacy, awareness-raising, and coalition building, SFC is bridging the worlds of policy and practice, and helping to ensure public and private resources are allocated effectively to impact outcomes for children. This means helping to inform the early learning strategies of local leaders and teams, and connecting communities to state policy opportunities and to one another, all while advocating for increased public investment to expand high-quality pre-k. If we hope to close the achievement gap (evident between groups of children as young as 18 months), the commonwealth must invest in high-quality early learning supports and programs for all children, beginning at birth. Having spent a career in K-12 education and leadership roles, I know that schools can't do it alone, nor should they be expected to.

As a political issue, early education is more prominent in this year's Massachusetts gubernatorial race than in any previous state election. This presents a huge opportunity to achieve our vision. I look forward to working with you, our partners, to turn these opportunities into meaningful outcomes for children.

## **Board Chair Statement**

Paul O'Brien, president of The O'Brien Group, a technology investment and consulting firm, chairs the board of Strategies for Children. He also serves as president of Pan-Asia Development, an investment firm pursuing opportunities in Asia. Mr. O'Brien was a co-founder of Telecom Holding, LLC, a private equity fund investing in communications companies. He is the former CEO and chairman of the board of New England Telephone, after having served as executive vice president of New York Telephone. Mr. O'Brien currently sits on a variety of boards of both private and public companies and is a former director of the Bank of Boston and is an Advisory Board member of Sovereign Bank. Mr. O'Brien received a B.S. in electrical engineering from Manhattan College and an M.B.A. from New York University.

Here is his statement:

My involvement in SFC is grounded in a sense that if you are lucky enough to get an education, you have an obligation to give something back. My mother was a teacher. Both my sisters were teachers. One of them still is. So it was a natural evolution for me to become an advocate. From a business perspective, investing in early education is the most cost-effective use of resources.

There are many examples of businesses having jobs they can't fill because people don't have the skill set. The only way you get the skill set is through education and experience. You need an educated populace. It is incumbent on us to build an infrastructure for young children. It's like seed capital. Numerous researchers, including the Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman, say investing in young children is not only the right thing to do, it's also the smart thing to do.

Even though Massachusetts is one of the more successful states, there's still a long way to go. Nearly two-fifths of third graders read below grade level. There is still a lot of child poverty. We have not allocated the resources needed to ensure that all children have access to high-quality early education.

I am proud to have been associated with SFC since its inception. The key to a successful organization is to have people who think out of the box. SFC has that. It's why we've been such a successful catalyst for laying the foundation for a statewide system of high-quality early education.

It's why the reading proficiency campaign is generating such strong response and holds such great promise.

Supporting this mission and this highly successful organization remains a challenge, as several of our major funders have ceased funding early education. SFC seeks new resources to develop additional capacity to drive the movement to give young children the strong start that will benefit us all.

## Service Categories

Preschools

Government and Public Administration

Community Coalitions

## Geographic Areas Served

SFC's campaign is to ensure that children across Massachusetts have access to high-quality early education and become proficient readers by the end of third grade. Although its mission is universal, SFC focuses first on closing the achievement gap among children in low-income families. Locally, we partner with communities who are committed to early learning and nationally. Nationally, we provide consulting and advisory services to advocacy, philanthropic and civic organizations working in other states and at the federal level.

Please review online profile for full list of selected areas served.

# Programs

## **Early Education for All Campaign**

<b>Description</b>	The pioneering Early Education for All Campaign is a statewide coalition of leaders from diverse sectors – business, education, early childhood, labor, health care, philanthropy, religion – that works with parents, grassroots leaders and policymakers to ensure that Massachusetts children have access to high-quality early education. Its successes include creation of the nation’s first Department of Early Education and Care and establishment of the Early Childhood Educators Scholarship.
<b>Budget</b>	\$600,000.00
<b>Category</b>	Education, General/Other
<b>Population Served</b>	Children and Youth (0 - 19 years), ,
<b>Program Short Term Success</b>	Increased investment in high-quality early education in the FY14 state budget.
<b>Program Long term Success</b>	Unanimous passage and enactment of An Act Relative to Early Education and Care in 2008, which formally establishes UPK in state law.
<b>Program Success Monitored By</b>	We have developed a robust internal evaluation/tracking system that allows us to monitor both our policy outcomes and the strategies and tactics we use to achieve them.
<b>Examples of Program Success</b>	Public early education investments totalling \$281 million

## Leading the Conversation: Turning the Page.

<b>Description</b>	Leading the Conversation is one prong of SFC's two-pronged best practices initiative. It is a series of events designed to help leaders and practitioners serving children from birth to age 9 implement the recommendations in "Turning the Page." Each Leading the Conversation event features experts summarizing research and offering examples of best practices. Resources permitting, Leading the Conversation will also include webinars and other means to disseminate the information to a broad audience. Judging by the response to the first event (on family engagement), which quickly attracted so much interest SFC moved it to a bigger venue, there is a hunger for this information. The series is designed to complement the statewide policy work that resulted in An Act Relative to Third Grade Reading Proficiency, which Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick signed into law in September 2012 and which is also informed by "Turning the Page."
<b>Budget</b>	\$50,000.00
<b>Category</b>	Education, General/Other
<b>Population Served</b>	Adults, ,
<b>Program Short Term Success</b>	Significant attendance at each of five events we are holding across the state; an qualitative evidence of the impact of the events. Each event delves into a specific recommendation from Turning the Page.
<b>Program Long term Success</b>	It is our hope that as a result of these events and other dissemination strategies we pursue (once we are able to secure additional funding), there will be significant awareness and utilization of the KEY strategies that research demonstrates have the most impact on children's language and literacy acquisition.....ultimately resulting in more children reading proficiently by the end of third grade. This is a stubborn problem which has not been solved over the course of a decade, in Massachusetts or elsewhere.
<b>Program Success Monitored By</b>	we have developed a robust internal tracking system for these events. We monitor key metrics such as attendance, and survey participants both before the event (to understand key issues they would like to see covered) and after (for both feedback on the event itself as well as specific ideas on using the learnings gleaned from the event in their own personal literacy practice.

**Examples of Program Success**

We held our first event, on family engagement, in November. We originally had planned to host the event at the Boston Foundation, but quickly scrambled to find a new venue when the save the date alone resulted in 80 RSVPS (the boston foundation's room capacity was 80.) We wound up having over 150 very enthusiastic people attend the event at the new location. Approximately half of the participants filled out the evaluation form with very good suggestions re. event improvement and ideas on how they will utilize the learnings.

## Program Comments

**CEO Comments**

SFC is at a very exciting juncture....as we evolve from a pure advocacy/policy focus on children ages birth through five through our Early Education for All Campaign to a more robust set of strategies which tackle the vexing problem of language and literacy acquisition for Massachusetts' 750,000 children under the age of ten. Our biggest challenge continues to be securing the financial resources required not only to sustain our early education work, but to help build capacity to achieve our broader - and very ambitious vision - for children.

Over the past two years, many of our longstanding philanthropic partners focused on funding early education and policy have ceased funding one or both. This is part of a national trend. fortunately over the years we have managed our expenses well enough to build up a significant operating reserve. Our board has authorized tapping into that reserve to help cover operating deficits as we have continued to implement our early education for all campaign. We have already successfully attracted new funders through our ambitious reading campaign and anticipate that as we continue to develop those strategies that funding will grow. The other area which we are very excited about is our work - in partnership with national groups such as the Campaign for Grade Level Reading - to explore alignment opportunities between public and private funding to benefit young children. Examples of this include pay for success contracts such as social impact bonds.



# Management

## CEO/Executive Director

**Executive Director**

Mr. Chris Martes

**Term Start**

July 2014

**Email**

cmartes@strategiesforchildren.org

**Experience**

As president and chief executive officer, Christopher Martes is responsible for the overall strategic leadership and management of Strategies for Children, an independent nonprofit organization that works to ensure that children in Massachusetts have access to high-quality early education, enter elementary school ready to succeed, and become proficient readers by the end of third grade. Chris has served on SFC's board since 2012. A former director of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Chris has decades of experience in many K-12 leadership roles. After starting his career in the classroom, he served as both principal and superintendent in a number of Massachusetts communities including Framingham, Newton, Foxborough, and Medfield. In the 2013-2014 school year, he served as interim superintendent for Wrentham Public Schools. In 2008, Chris was honored as the Massachusetts School Superintendent of the Year by the American Association of School Administrators. He has served as adjunct faculty at Cambridge College and University of New Hampshire, engaged in education consulting on the topics of administrator training and strategic planning, and presented at numerous conferences, seminars, and workshops. Chris holds multiple degrees in education, including a Ph.D. in Curriculum, Instruction, and School Administration from Boston College, a Master of Education in School Administration and a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, both from Bridgewater State University.

## Former CEOs

**Name****Term**

Margaret Blood

July 2001 - Sept 2012

Ms. Carolyn Lyons

Sept 2012 - June 2014

## Senior Staff

**Amy O'Leary****Title**

Campaign Director, Early Education for All

**Experience/Biography**

## Staff Information

**Full Time Staff**

5

**Part Time Staff**

0

**Volunteers**

389

**Contractors**

3

**Retention Rate**

67%

### Staff Demographics - Ethnicity

<b>African American/Black</b>	0
<b>Asian American/Pacific Islander</b>	1
<b>Caucasian</b>	4
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	0
<b>Native American/American Indian</b>	0
<b>Other</b>	0 0

### Staff Demographics - Gender

<b>Male</b>	2
<b>Female</b>	3
<b>Unspecified</b>	0

### Formal Evaluations

<b>CEO Formal Evaluation</b>	Yes
<b>CEO/Executive Formal Evaluation Frequency</b>	Annually
<b>Senior Management Formal Evaluation</b>	Yes
<b>Senior Management Formal Evaluation Frequency</b>	Annually
<b>NonManagement Formal Evaluation</b>	Yes
<b>Non Management Formal Evaluation Frequency</b>	Annually

### Plans & Policies

<b>Organization has a Fundraising Plan?</b>	Under Development
<b>Organization has a Strategic Plan?</b>	Under Development
<b>Years Strategic Plan Considers</b>	N/A
<b>Management Succession Plan?</b>	Under Development
<b>Organization Policy and Procedures</b>	Yes
<b>Nondiscrimination Policy</b>	Yes
<b>Whistleblower Policy</b>	Yes
<b>Document Destruction Policy</b>	Yes
<b>Directors and Officers Insurance Policy</b>	Yes
<b>Is your organization licensed by the Government?</b>	No
<b>Registration</b>	No
<b>Permit?</b>	No

### Awards

**Awards**

<u>Award/Recognition</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Year</u>
Excellence in Advocacy Award	Massachusetts Nonprofit Network	2014

# Board & Governance

## Board Chair

<b>Board Chair</b>	Mr. Paul O'Brien
<b>Company Affiliation</b>	The O'Brien Group Inc.
<b>Term</b>	July 2001 to 0
<b>Email</b>	pobrien@obriengrp.com

## Board Members

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Status</b>
Mara Aspinall	Ventana Medical Systems	Voting
Margaret Blood	Strategies for Children Inc.	Voting
Ms. Wendy Fox	Blackbaud, Inc.	Voting
Paul O'Brien	The O'Brien Group Inc.	Voting
Kitt Sawitsky	Goulston & Storrs Counsellors at Law	Voting

## Board Demographics - Ethnicity

<b>African American/Black</b>	0
<b>Asian American/Pacific Islander</b>	0
<b>Caucasian</b>	5
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	0
<b>Native American/American Indian</b>	0
<b>Other</b>	0 0

## Board Demographics - Gender

<b>Male</b>	2
<b>Female</b>	3
<b>Unspecified</b>	0

## Board Information

<b>Number of Full Board Meetings Annually</b>	3
<b>Board Meeting Attendance %</b>	83%
<b>Written Board Selection Criteria?</b>	No
<b>Written Conflict of Interest Policy?</b>	Yes
<b>Percentage Making Monetary Contributions</b>	75%
<b>Percentage Making In-Kind Contributions</b>	13%

Comments

**CEO Comments**

As we evolve SFC from focusing on the needs of children birth through five to birth through eight, we are simultaneously undergoing a review of current resources at both the staff and board levels. Attracting board members who are eager to be innovative and understand the importance of aligning state level policies with ground level educational practices is a high priority over the next few years. We seek board members with the following backgrounds/skill sets: 1) campaign marketing; 2) fundraising; 3) K12 leadership experience; 4) business leadership and networks; 5) venture philanthropy; 6) public policy; 7) children's health/pediatrics.

# Financials

## Fiscal Year

<b>Fiscal Year Start</b>	July 01, 2015
<b>Fiscal Year End</b>	June 30, 2016
<b>Projected Revenue</b>	\$664,000.00
<b>Projected Expenses</b>	\$650,160.00
<b>Endowment?</b>	No
<b>Credit Line?</b>	No
<b>Reserve Fund?</b>	Yes
<b>Months Reserve Fund Covers</b>	0

## Detailed Financials

### **Revenue and Expenses**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	\$490,980	\$846,914	\$503,213
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$782,929	\$1,004,620	\$1,103,142

### **Revenue Sources**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>
<b>Foundation and Corporation Contributions</b>	--	--	\$335,000
<b>Government Contributions</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Federal</b>	--	--	--
<b>State</b>	--	--	--
<b>Local</b>	--	--	--
<b>Unspecified</b>	--	\$0	--
<b>Individual Contributions</b>	\$450,460	\$822,375	\$165,400
<b>Indirect Public Support</b>	--	\$0	--
<b>Earned Revenue</b>	\$39,882	\$22,581	\$1,412
<b>Investment Income, Net of Losses</b>	\$638	\$1,958	\$1,401
<b>Membership Dues</b>	--	\$0	--
<b>Special Events</b>	--	\$0	--
<b>Revenue In-Kind</b>	--	--	--
<b>Other</b>	--	\$0	--

### Expense Allocation

Fiscal Year	2014	2013	2012
Program Expense	\$590,831	\$787,869	\$893,980
Administration Expense	\$87,052	\$117,854	\$131,543
Fundraising Expense	\$105,046	\$98,897	\$77,619
Payments to Affiliates	--	--	--
Total Revenue/Total Expenses	0.63	0.84	0.46
Program Expense/Total Expenses	75%	78%	81%
Fundraising Expense/Contributed Revenue	23%	12%	16%

### Assets and Liabilities

Fiscal Year	2014	2013	2012
Total Assets	\$376,839	\$684,113	\$829,234
Current Assets	\$376,606	\$683,413	\$823,122
Long-Term Liabilities	\$0	\$0	\$0
Current Liabilities	\$32,669	\$47,994	\$35,409
Total Net Assets	\$344,170	\$636,119	\$793,825

### Short Term Solvency

Fiscal Year	2014	2013	2012
Current Ratio: Current Assets/Current Liabilities	11.53	14.24	23.25

### Long Term Solvency

Fiscal Year	2014	2013	2012
Long-Term Liabilities/Total Assets	0%	0%	0%

### Top Funding Sources

Fiscal Year	2014	2013	2012
Top Funding Source & Dollar Amount	--	--	--
Second Highest Funding Source & Dollar Amount	--	--	--
Third Highest Funding Source & Dollar Amount	--	--	--

### Capital Campaign

Currently in a Capital Campaign?

No

### Comments

#### Foundation Staff Comments

Financial summary data in charts and graphs are per the organization's IRS 990s.