



***FY27-FY29***

## **Together: Built for Resilience, Driven by Learning**

### **Introduction**

This strategic plan is the culmination of a productive multi-year process, which included the articulation of a Theory of Change and defining Schools for Children (SFC) as a multi-pillar, mission-based organization. With these foundational structural elements in place, SFC built a roadmap to follow for the next three years.

### **Strong Engine, Strong Schools and Programs**

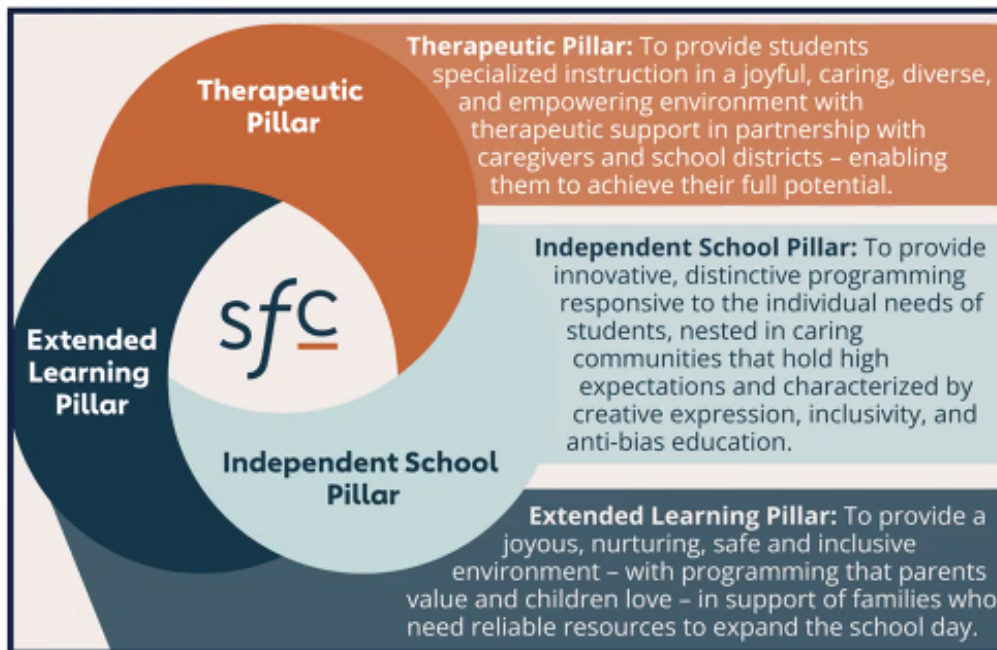
Founded in 1981, SFC has been dedicated to building educational communities that respond to the unique needs of each student. Within each school and program, students are welcomed into supportive environments where they feel they truly belong, and they leave with a transformed sense of learning and self.

SFC is the engine that powers these schools and programs. When the engine is strong, each entity has the chance to thrive.

The organization is poised to use its strong foundation to bolster its schools and programs and to enable greater impact. SFC schools and programs continue to be successful, and further the mission they were built to do, because they are strengthened by being a part of something larger. SFC protects the mission of each school and program so they can do what they do best – meeting the needs of children. Schools and programs can count on SFC for critical support to explore and pilot new opportunities for serving students, weather periods of uncertainty and surmount unexpected pitfalls.

### **Mission**

SFC is a non-profit organization that creates, operates and connects distinct pillars of independent, therapeutic, and extended learning programs and schools. Each of our schools and programs is designed to meet the unique learning needs of their students in a supportive community. All draw strength from a common foundation, with diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging resting at its center. The elements of this foundation are echoed in each pillar's mission.



## Current Situation

This strategic planning process included 18 interviews and 6 focus groups with internal and external stakeholders as well as a Board of Trustees survey. Strategic Planning and Implementation Committee meetings and smaller project team meetings were conducted regularly. SFC's value proposition is clear. The central office provides centralized resources, financial stability for schools and an organization-wide emphasis on facilitating high-quality education for diverse needs. The model allows school leaders to focus on important issues within their school or program.

There are also elements of the current context that highlight the advantages of a model like ours, including rapidly rising costs, challenges facing smaller, independent schools and the declining school-aged population in Massachusetts. Now more than ever, schools and educational programs are facing uncertainty and challenges that are mitigated by this model.

During this strategic planning process, the growing Board of Trustees reaffirmed SFC's value and also grappled with difficult questions, including what growth means for SFC, what are the appropriate next steps for fundraising and development, and how best to strengthen the SFC brand. The result of these discussions culminated in the following four priorities where the organization will focus its attention over the next three years.

## Priorities

Schools for Children will pursue financial sustainability, where each school and/or program offers measurable, high-quality education and is strengthened by being a part of SFC. The following priorities invest in the SFC engine in the areas of finances, education, growth and central operations.

- I. Achieve Financial Sustainability and Resilience
- II. Ensure Measurable, High-Quality Education
- III. Build Process for Implementing Change
- IV. Strengthen the Role of Central Operations in Support of the Schools

In the following section, strategies are provided for each priority.

While accountability has been designated, an important caveat is that for the entirety of this plan, the Strategic Planning and Implementation Committee will be accountable in the following ways:

- Year 1: monitoring progress and supporting committees if issues arise
- Years 2-3: monitoring implementation of strategies and tactics

## **Priority I: Achieve Financial Sustainability and Resilience**

Schools for Children both powers schools for greater impact and protects schools from risk. A stronger financial foundation will strengthen SFC's ability to help each school succeed – amplifying SFC's mission and impact in our communities. As SFC's financial position stabilizes, SFC seeks to make strategic financial decisions to support organizational goals.

### *Strategies:*

- Determine shifts in budget/funding model to increase organizational stability and adaptability
- Develop a fundraising and development strategy
- Develop a plan for prioritizing and balancing short-term financial needs and longer-term capital and maintenance

## **Priority II. Ensure Measurable, High-Quality Education**

SFC is looking to do what the organization does even better. Defining metrics, supporting data collection, closing any gaps and consistent communication with the board are key. A shared framework for data and metrics will help SFC to understand where we can enhance impact. Data leads to insight and action - making sure that resources are invested where they matter most for our students.

### *Strategies:*

- Define "high quality" and make sure it is measurable for each entity
- Regularly collect data on agreed-upon dimensions
- Facilitate the sharing of data between the schools/ programs and board
- Develop plans to address opportunities for improvement highlighted by data

## **Priority III. Build Process for Implementing Change**

SFC is building a mindset for implementing initiatives that enhance its mission and impact, and being responsive to market opportunities. Two key elements of this are supporting the vetting and development of initiatives. Within a clear process, both big and small ideas will be identified, assessed and, if accepted, prioritized, piloted and executed. Over time, the organization will be adept at testing and rolling out new ideas.

### *Strategies:*

- Clarify goals for change
- Identify opportunities that are aligned with the mission (board-level)
- Define formal process for piloting new programs

## **Priority IV. Strengthen the Role of Central Operations in Support of Schools**

SFC adds unique value to its schools and programs. There are opportunities to both continue core operations and explore how to add more value for SFC entities. In addition, from parents of new students, to school districts, to the professionals within SFC – improving communication and connection in all directions will make SFC’s value more impactful.

### *Strategies:*

- Hire new Executive Director
- Proactively identify opportunities to support the whole SFC community
- Increase connection, marketing and communication (internally)
- Increase connection, marketing and communication (externally)
- Strengthen customized relationships with each school and between schools

## **Conclusion**

As detailed above, this strategic plan includes priorities and strategies for accomplishing agreed upon goals. While this is a three-year strategic plan, it rests upon SFC’s strategic foundation.

“If your plan is for one year, plant rice. If your plan is for ten years, plant trees. If your plan is for a hundred years, educate children.” — Confucius

Always dedicated to educating each child, the priorities outlined in this plan are designed to strengthen the SFC engine. A stronger engine means each school can continue to thrive – amplifying our mission and impact for future generations.