



A Bridge to the Future

The New England Center for Children, Inc.
Long-Range Plan

2009 – 2015



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I. Overview – A Bridge to the Future 2009 – 2015

During the period 2004 – 2009, The New England Center for Children (NECC®) achieved dramatic advances, while remaining committed to highest quality in all of its services for children with autism and with research and advocacy programs. During this five year period, NECC:

- Built and opened the Michael S. Dukakis Aquatic Center as a critical, program-driven facility on the Southborough campus;
- Developed the computerized, Autism Curriculum Encyclopedia (ACE®) as both a state-of-the-art tool for our professional staff and an extension of NECC's accumulated knowledge to other practitioners and audiences;
- Planned, built, and launched NECC's second comprehensive center, a new school in Abu Dhabi;
- Reduced NECC's long-term real estate debt;
- Increased consulting services and partner classrooms;
- Expanded professional development programs, most notably through a joint Ph.D. program with Western New England College;
- Greatly expanded its philanthropy programs, completing a first-ever capital campaign and increasing contributions to NECC's Annual Fund.

Not content to rest on this extraordinary progress, NECC intends to use the 6-year period, fiscal years 2010 to 2015, to build the platform which will position NECC to achieve its long-term vision: to be the premier leader world-wide in the treatment of autism, supported by demonstrated, documented success and the empirical research to support its methodology—and sharing its knowledge and expertise on a global scale to help even greater numbers of children and families.

The themes of the Long-Range Plan include:

- Strategic Growth
- Diversification of revenue sources
- Leveraging NECC's intellectual capital
- Building NECC's reach and brand; and
- Positioning NECC for a full flowering of its potential

NECC's Long-Range Plan is organized around five principal goals:

1. Ensure the highest quality in all NECC Programs
2. Extend the network, reach, affiliations and brand of NECC
3. Ensure growth by leveraging the intellectual expertise of NECC
4. Provide adequate resources for all programs
5. Build toward long-range sustainability

Major initiatives of the Plan period include:

- Completing the ACE project and piloting it and bringing it to scale, potentially with external partners;
- Building a new Training Institute on the Southborough campus, both to house NECC's growing research and training programs and to free up urgently needed space in the current building;
- Exploring modes of expansion through increased consulting and partner classrooms, market research, and pilot projects and programs with identified school districts;
- Launching a new capital campaign in support of plan objectives—at a level two or three times greater than the successful prior campaign—while maintaining a strong Annual Fund in support of key ongoing programs and seed funding for new initiatives;
- Improving NECC's financial position by increasing current assets and reducing long-term debt.

Founded on ideals of service, inquiry, social conscience and commitment to highest quality, NECC is poised to fulfill its extraordinary promise to help more children create productive lives.

II. Description of the Long-Range Planning Process

The planning process was designed to be both efficient, because of the need to complete the plan in a timely manner, and participatory, to allow all segments of the community to provide input into the plan. The process was commissioned by NECC Senior Management and Board of Directors, led by a Strategic Planning Committee and its Co-Chairs Harry and Laura Slatkin and Glenn Tso and facilitated by The Wayland Group.

During the spring of 2009 The Wayland Group conducted 15 interviews of individuals who have a connection to and understanding of the work of NECC. Interviewees included faculty, parents, volunteers, representatives from colleague institutions, client agencies and schools. The notes from these interviews were included as part of the raw material informing the plan.

The staff of NECC was engaged in the planning process in several ways. Initially staff were informed about the process through a presentation at an “all-school” meeting in the spring, at which they were encouraged to participate in an on-line survey. Several staff members participated in the interview process; others participated in the LRP Committee and Work Groups. In addition, two focus groups of approximately 30 staff members each were held to solicit opinions and ideas for the Long Range plan.

In May, the Parents’ Organization hosted a presentation on the plan and participated in an exercise to provide their input. The wider parent community was invited to participate in an on-line survey.

Students were also encouraged to participate in the plan through the student governance structure..

The Board of Directors and Board of Advisors were both engaged in the process through presentations and feedback exercises held during their meetings in the spring of 2009. Members of both Boards were active on the Long-Range Planning Committee and in work groups.

The Long-Range Planning Committee was composed of Board members, staff members, donors, friends and NECC parents and grandparents. The Committee was charged with the following responsibilities:

- Developing broad-gauge five-year goals;
- Addressing overriding institutional issues;
- Monitoring the progress of the plan;
- Representing NECC’s constituencies;
- Recommending the plan to the Board for approval.

In early June the Planning Committee met and launched three Work Groups to address each of three broad areas: People, Program and Resources. Each Work Group was co-chaired by senior staff and volunteers and was composed of faculty, staff,

volunteers, parents, and professional educators. The Long-Range Planning Committee met periodically throughout the spring and summer of 2009 to review the progress of the planning process, receive and comment on reports from the work groups, and prepare to recommend the plan to the Board for approval.

The Work Groups each held two meetings to discuss their specific assigned topic areas. Each Work Group reviewed strengths and weaknesses, identified resource requirements and data necessary for further discussion, and helped develop preliminary goals and objectives.

Summaries of proposed incremental expenses for recommended goals and objectives were developed later in the planning cycle. A business plan detailing the financial implications of the strategies outlined in the plan was developed.

In late July, the Senior Management Team was presented with a synopsis of all interviews, minutes of all Work Group and Long Range Planning meetings, survey responses and all other material generated by the planning process. The Senior Management Team then held a series of meetings to compile the preliminary draft that was reviewed and affirmed by the Long Range Planning Committee and submitted to the Board of Directors for approval.

III. Mission and Vision

MISSION

To transform the lives of children with autism worldwide through education, research, and technology.

VISION

To be a global leader in the provision of effective, evidence-based educational services for the millions of underserved children with autism and their families.

- We will educate teachers and parents around the world so that they may benefit from the knowledge and methods developed at NECC.
- We will use the power of technology to help teachers and families transform the lives of children with autism.
- We will define our future success by the numbers of children being served by our curriculum.
- We will bring help to hundreds of thousands of children and their families, and give hope to millions.

IV. Goals and Objectives

1. Ensure the highest quality in all NECC Programs

- a. Continue quality control efforts for all student services
 - i. Develop the Autism Curriculum Encyclopedia (ACE) to ensure the highest quality program for our students
 - ii. Continue to improve the effectiveness of the clinical and educational program offered to our students through development and/or refinement of best clinical practices; best instructional practices; professional development; research; working with families;
- b. Ensure the highest level of quality for all of NECC's external programs
- c. Continue to develop a strong internal management capability

2. Extend the network, reach, affiliations and brand of NECC

- a. Serve and solidify relationships with all NECC constituencies
- b. Undertake a more proactive effort in marketing and public relations
- c. Design and implement a long-term marketing strategy to improve internal and external communications, marketing, and positioning of NECC's brand and message
 - i. Identify and develop strong relationships with key organizations and lawmakers who may play influential, strategic roles in the field of autism, advocacy and special education policy
 - ii. Influence and participate in those organizations that have an impact on autism education and policy
 - iii. Assign key staff to external constituencies, organizations and leaders and follow cultivation activities through a tracking system
 - iv. Further define how progress will be measured (e.g., number of times we are quoted, cited, etc. on the internet, journals, blogs, etc.)

3. Ensure growth by leveraging the intellectual expertise of NECC

- a. Continue to develop and disseminate the ACE to users outside of NECC
 - i. Continue to engage the expertise of technology consultants in developing a plan for the dissemination of the ACE
 - ii. Identify and integrate additional refinements to the ACE that will broaden its applicability to include an independent life of work, leisure, recreation, etc.
 - iii. Establish a group or groups of advisers to help develop a business model, and to assist in the development of marketing and outreach efforts for the ACE
- b. Broaden the research agenda in support of the ACE to address the needs of individuals with autism of all ages
- c. Plan and carefully manage strategic growth by identifying and evaluating future expansion opportunities based on market research, NECC's institutional capability, results of successful pilot programs, and available financial and personnel resources

- d. Establish a Training Institute that will support the ACE, research, graduate and professional education, and national and international internship program
- e. Grow consulting services to evolve the NECC program into key public schools both to expand the dissemination of NECC's work and to increase earned income
 - i. Conduct systematic market research among public schools to identify what consulting support or products public schools need and develop and package products and services that meet those needs
 - 1. Develop a marketing research plan to gain feedback from public school superintendents regarding curriculum instruction (using the knowledge base of our consultants)
 - 2. Launch additional pilot programs to be run by the consulting department
 - 3. Expand programs that prove to be successful and effective
 - ii. Add partner classrooms
 - iii. Evaluate establishing consulting offices in key cities/markets to facilitate growth
- f. Seek key strategic partnerships for both program development and strategic growth

4. Provide appropriate resources for all programs

- a. Improve physical space for existing program
 - i. Improve and expand student and staff space
 - ii. Provide adequate space for training, graduate education, and research
 - iii. Improve/refurbish residences
 - iv. Develop and implement a solution for current parking limitations
- b. Upgrade NECC's information technology and integrate state-of-the-art technology tools in all of NECC's programs
 - i. Increase accessibility to computers and data for all students and staff
 - ii. Improve systems and workflow
 - iii. Increase staff competence and student use of learning technology
 - iv. Upgrade hardware and software
- c. Develop a technology plan that will provide the resources to deploy the ACE to serve students external to NECC, with a goal of 10,000 students served
- d. Provide for personnel to sustain quality and ensure growth
- e. Consider other investments that will ensure effectiveness and quality (e.g., market research, public relations, campaign counsel, other consultants)

5. Build toward long-term sustainability

- a. Continue to develop and strengthen the development program
 - i. Continue to grow the Annual Fund
 - ii. Continue to develop institutional and volunteer leadership
 - iii. Evaluate the size, scope and timing of a prospective capital campaign through a feasibility study
 - iv. Prepare for and conduct a capital campaign to meet the objectives of the Long Range Plan

- b.** Leverage philanthropic support to fund the Training Institute and other capital objectives
- c.** Explore a variety of business models and seek new financial partnerships to help with further development of the ACE
- d.** Plan for the creation of a long-term endowment
- e.** Explore new sources of revenue through the development of NECC's intellectual property
 - i.** Explore new sources of revenue to fund services for Early Intervention and for all individuals
 - ii.** Identify and develop new sources of support for advocacy efforts to fund services for all individuals, including public funds and private insurers
- f.** Strengthen NECC's financial position by reducing debt and increasing cash through prudent fiscal management

V. Financial Assumptions

The New England Center for Children, Inc. **Projection for Fiscal 2009 Through 2015**

A six-year financial model (FY10-15) has been developed to support the goals, objectives and implementation of NECC's Long-Range Plan.

The Statement of Operations includes the following assumptions:

- The vast majority of projected revenue is generated by tuition for services. NECC has based its revenue projection on tuition rates being level funded in 2010 and with annual inflationary tuition increases amounting to 3% for each year thereafter.
- Fundraising income is only projected in an amount to cover direct fundraising expenses, as net income from fundraising is allocated to plan initiatives.
- Expenses that are subject to inflation include annual inflation adjustments at the rate of 3% for each year.
- The projections do not include any growth in Program Income generated by new programs or program growth.
- No borrowings or major acquisitions are included in the projections.

The Statement of Plan Initiatives & Funding Sources includes the following assumptions:

- NECC will construct a new building on the campus to meet the growing space needs identified in the Plan.
 - The assumed building size is 30,000 square feet.
 - The cost for the building, furnishings and related renovations to existing space is estimated at \$10M.
 - The \$10M will be funded through a capital campaign.
- NECC will complete the development of ACE during the first three years of the Plan.
 - Estimated cost of completing development of ACE is projected at \$1.5M.
 - The funding will be provided by a combination of projected grant revenue of \$1M and from operations in the amount of \$500K.
- NECC will acquire additional property to meet the growing parking needs of the campus.
 - While NECC has yet to identify property to meet this need we have projected a capital outlay of \$2.5M.
 - This capital outlay will be funded though long-term borrowing.

- NECC will continue to improve and develop its in-house technologies.
 - NECC has projected the cost of technology over the six-year period at \$2.4M.
 - These costs will be funded through projected annual fund revenue.
- NECC will renovate its group homes over the period of the plan.
 - Estimated cost of group home renovation over the six-year period is \$1.5M.
 - These renovations will be funded by projected Annual Fund revenues.
- The six-year plan calls for many additional special projects and initiatives.
 - The Plan assumes \$800K of funding needs for these projects and initiatives.
 - The \$800K in seed funding and working capital will be funded from annual fund revenues.

The Statement of Combined Operations & Six-Year Plan Initiatives combines the Statement of Operations and the Statement of Plan Initiatives & Funding Sources.

- 80% of NECC's long term debt is represented by tax exempt Bonds. These bonds have a fixed interest rate of 6%. Current conditions do not make refinancing these bonds prudent due to the following:
 - Current market conditions for tax exempt bonds have not resulted in large reductions in interest rates.
 - The bonds currently have a 3% pre-payment penalty which is eliminated in November, 2011.

Continued positive financial results from operations over the next two years could result in NECC's Bond rating being improved resulting in a lower interest rate. If this happens, as well as the upcoming elimination of the pre payment penalty, it is possible that refinancing the bonds during the six year plan may be beneficial to NECC. To be conservative, NECC has not included any such possible interest expense saving in these projections.

- The Plan calls for a reduction of debt over the 6 years, but also projects possible borrowings to fund acquisition of property for parking. This appears to be contradictory, but you will note that even with the additional projected borrowing, the attached projections indicate a reduction of long term debt amounting to \$3M or 20% over the six year period.

VII. Long-Range Planning Committee

Co-Chairs: Harry and Laura Slatkin; Glenn and Peggy Tso; Vincent Strully, Jr.

Bill Ahearn	Kirk Hartman	Kent Plunkett
R. Scott Barnes	Cam Johnson	Meghan Reidy
Jason Bourret	Peter Johnson	Maura Reilly
John Brown	Dennis Kearney	Stuart Rose
Jim Burling	Diane Kim	Sharon Ruatto-Steadman
Judy Cunniff-Serio	Srinivas Kotamreddy	Bob Ruzzo
Heather Davis	Ilene Lainer	Bob Sheridan
Ken Deveaux	Susan Langer	Jean Sheridan
Mark Doten	Bert Lannon	Harry Slatkin
Michael Downey	RoseAnn Lovely	Laura Slatkin
John Drew	Becky MacDonald	David Steadman
John DuPré	Lisel Macenka	Vincent Strully, Jr.
Kathy Foster	Mark J. Macenka	Nancy Tarulli
Richard Foxx	Reneé Mansfield	Glenn Tso
Barbara Frey	John Marston	Peggy Tso
Toby Frey	Rich Martin	Cathy Welch
Amy Geckeler	Angela Masiello	Mindy Wilensky
Marvin Geller	Bethany McCann	Dina Wosk
Dana Gershon	Mike McKenna	Matthew Wosk
Jim Gildea	Shawn Murphy	Anne Yas
Jeannette Gould	Ben Niedermeyer	David Yas
Richard B. Graff	Amy Null	Joe Ziska
Steve Grossman	Julianne Pemberton	Becky Zorovic
Kurt Hanson	Jonah Pesner	

Individuals Interviewed

External:	John Kim	NECC Staff:
Dr. W. Gerald Austen	Ilene Lainer	Bill Ahearn
Peter H. Bell	Jim Major	Amy Geckeler
Dr. Richard Foxx	Harry and Laura Slatkin	Daniel Gould
Mark Fuller	Douglas Suliman	Sue Langer
Frank Gagliardi	Monica Synnott	Cathy Welch
James Gildea	Glenn and Peggy Tso	
Tom Hollister	Dr. Janice Ware	

Staff

RoseAnn Lovely
Joe Ziska
Jim Kitendaugh, The Wayland Group
Jennifer Rice, The Wayland Group
David Kitendaugh, The Wayland Group