



La Escuelita Arcoiris is a non-profit, community-based Spanish language immersion school dedicated to serving the learning needs of early-childhood aged children and their families. It is the only Spanish language immersion school in Pittsburgh, and has been in continuous operation for over a decade serving both a native speaking and non-native speaking population.

La Escuelita began in September of 1999 in the home of founder Megan Rooney with the goal to share the benefits of second-language learning at an early age. What began with six children in the founder's home has grown to a six-classroom school involving over 50 families including a toddler class, preschool, kindergarten, after school programs and summer camp.

Through its mission and core programs, La Escuelita Arcoiris provides the greater Pittsburgh community with a unique and important educational and cultural resource that improves and enhances the lives of young children.

After more than 10 years in operation, the organization has undertaken its first-ever strategic planning initiative to ensure a more sustainable future.



Our Strategic Planning Goals

1. Understand who we are and what we want to be
2. Identify a shared vision for La Escuelita
3. Create an effective, strategic road map for moving forward

WHY WE'RE DOING THIS NOW

Escuelita has remarkable success to build on, but is operating at the limits of its capacity for number of students, staff and space. Taking a strategic look at our organization offers the opportunity to actively address our challenges and other key issues, including:

- The need to better define our role in the community
- Own and leverage our successes after ten years
- Increase capacity and stability
- Redefine internal roles & responsibilities
- Continue to evolve and grow the organization
- Remain a unique community-based independent school serving a diverse population
- Finding a permanent home

OUR STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In September of 2010 Escuelita, in partnership with The Forbes Funds, issued an open Request for Proposals to consultants. The Pittsburgh-based firm of Jackson/Clark Partners was selected to work with La Escuelita Arcoiris and undertake a strategic planning process. The process incorporated a review of existing organizational materials and budgets, one-on-one interviews (including board members, staff, former parents, and community stakeholders), an organizational capacity assessment with board and staff, and the facilitation of a collaborative visioning session with participants from the organization and the community.

Where We Are ORGANIZATIONAL ASSETS & OPPORTUNITIES

Escuelita's first ten years have been made possible through visionary leadership, dedication to innovation and excellence in education. The organization has created a unique place in Pittsburgh's early childhood education community by defining and shaping a niche in childhood cultural immersion education. Over the past decade, Escuelita has built a self-sustaining business model that has powered success to date. These strengths and an established market demand for Escuelita's services provide a sound basis for extraordinary success in the coming years.

MISSION / VISION

Escuelita is unique as it is the only independent Spanish immersion school in Pittsburgh serving the early childhood needs of children and families; there is a real opportunity to revisit, refine, and redefine the school's mission and vision as it reflects strategic planning work and outcomes.

PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY

Escuelita has a strong board and advisory board willing to contribute their contacts/network; fundraisers and community events are popular and effective means for generating revenue; organization is well poised to partner with organizations to help them achieve their planning goals.

LEADERSHIP & TEAM

Founder/director is a creative visionary who brings pedagogical expertise to curriculum serving as an excellent mentor to staff, viewed as an asset by parents; staff is knowledgeable in state-mandated education standards and certification processes; current board is diverse, and its members are active in supporting the organization. There is an opportunity to build dynamic teaching staff to better meet the expectations and challenges of Escuelita's curriculum and develop relationships with supporters across specific areas of expertise to grow the board.

OPERATIONS

Solid, professional relationships between Director, administrative staff, and Board of Directors; upgraded accounting system and on-going interest in further developing professional practices in creating budgets, accounting, and general financial planning. There is an opportunity to cultivate relationships with service-orientated organizations such as CORO, AmeriCorps, and PULSE to assist in achieving planning goals and grow capacity in a cost-effective way.

SPACE

The school is centrally and conveniently located; staff is creative in using indoor and outdoor space to create fun activities and environments; gardens provide opportunities for learning and recreation. Opportunity to develop new and strategic partnerships around the need for a new space; use the need for a new space as focus in a communications plan and outreach to general community.

COMMUNICATIONS

Escuelita has a strong grass-roots networking system within the school that reaches into the broader community; Board has wide net of professional and personal connections; Director and staff cultivate meaningful relationships with families and children.

SUSTAINABILITY

Director has recently created a curriculum development team to focus on further developing/enhancing the Escuelita curriculum; organization committed to creating a knowledge base; Board of Directors and school founder/director are in agreement that a transition plan is an important short term goal. Use successful models/best practices from other Early Childhood Education centers, schools, and immersion programs to inform on national trends and advancements; cultivate relationships with university partners to provide efficacy for Escuelita's curriculum and programs.



Where We're Headed REVISING OUR MISSION & VISION

La Escuelita Arcoiris is committed to providing safe, creative, challenging, hands-on learning opportunities for children. The 'little rainbow school' is a community within a community; through partnerships and collaborations, we create bridges to people, ideas, cultures, and lives, providing dynamic opportunities for children to connect with the world around them.

CREATING A MISSION REFLECTIVE OF ALL THAT WE ARE

Escuelita is a Spanish immersion pre-school and kindergarten, but it is also:

- the only Spanish language immersion pre-school and kindergarten in Pittsburgh
- a community-based school
- provides pedagogy based on creative, free play; comprehensively integrating the arts into all areas of instruction
- committed to pedagogical excellence
- committed to creating and supporting a culture of ethnic, racial, cultural and socioeconomic diversity in the school
- a resource for the Latino community
- provides a quality, affordable language immersion program to early childhood learners and their families
- provides professional opportunities for Early Childhood educators/researchers to develop curriculum, best practices, create new models

OUR REVISED MISSION:

The mission of La Escuelita Arcoiris, a Pittsburgh-based Spanish language immersion school, is to serve young people and their families through a culturally diverse, creative, child-focused learning environment.

OUR VISION:

We provide pedagogical excellence through dynamic, child-centered learning programs using the principles and philosophy of Emergent Curriculum. By providing authentic and diverse educational and cultural experiences, La Escuelita Arcoiris is Pittsburgh's best and most creative early childhood language immersion program.



Where We're Headed ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS & FOCUS

Over the next 3 years, we have set two strategic goals for our organization:

- 1. Professionalize & sustain operations**
- 2. Become prepared to meet increased demand for our services**

To support our goals, we will organize and take specific action within each of the following strategic focus areas.

Partnerships & Community

Build and leverage external relationships, identifying the very best partners to help Escuelita deliver its mission to the larger community.

Leadership & Team

Attract and retain the most talented individuals to fulfill multiple positions within the overall organization including staff, management, board, and volunteers.

Operations

Strengthen & stabilize operations. Create, implement and sustain core operational systems that allow the organization to run more efficiently and sustainably.

Space

Procure a creative, environmentally responsible space that supports and enhances curriculum, inspires children to learn and contributes to the betterment of the host community and its members.

Communications

Move from communications and marketing that focus principally on the founder and the early development of the school to communicating and marketing our shared vision, mission & goals, and the story of creating an educational community that fosters cultural diversity through language.

Sustainability

Provide for improved accountability, expanded revenue and resources, and procedures to ensure organizational stability in the event of key personnel transitions, ensuring Escuelita's continued success and sustainability.

GET INVOLVED!

To learn more about Escuelita, please visit our website or contact us via phone or email.

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