



National Center for Family Math

Strategic Plan
2022 - 2027

Table of Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	3
<i>Introduction</i>	4
Needs Analysis	8
<i>Our Beginnings: The Family Math Roadmap Initiative</i>	9
<i>Our Beginnings: Field Findings</i>	11
<i>Our Planned Work: Theory of Action</i>	14
<i>Our Planned Work: Mission, Vision, and Goals</i>	16
Mission	16
Vision	16
Strategic Goals, Objectives, & Priorities	16
CAPACITY BUILDING & PARTNERSHIPS	17
COMMUNICATIONS/OUTREACH & POLICY/ADVOCACY	19
PRACTICE	21
RESEARCH	23
SUSTAINABILITY	25
<i>Field Feedback: Barriers & Opportunities</i>	26
<i>Methodology</i>	28
<i>Appendix 1: Participants</i>	29
<i>Appendix 2: Implementation Plan</i>	31

Foreword

Ask a parent to write an intro to showcase beneficiary voice.

- Family math matters and it is working in many places across the country.
- We need a national center.
- Our children are joyful, curious, and resourceful.
- Please join us in supporting their identity and ability in math.

Introduction

The current state of math achievement and our growing understanding about how mathematical skills and math self-identify are developed present both exciting opportunities and sobering challenges.

Opportunities

It may be hard to imagine, but the little one in front of you sorting rocks, comparing sizes of toys, or counting stairs is doing math. The child putting puzzles together at home or interacting with you about the numbers and amounts of groceries to buy at the store may be the one who eventually develops a new tool to help solve the climate crisis. The student who weaves rhythms and sounds together in a music class might become the next leading mathematical mind. And regardless of what they do in the future, when they are doing math today the young people in your life are building the skills and confidence they'll need to ensure that future is a successful one.

Research shows that young children's mathematical abilities are broad and deep and develop from birth into and through high school and beyond. Because math skills and knowledge develop everywhere, all the time—not just in schools—the role that families play in children's mathematical learning and development is critical. In fact, research shows that the ways that families talk to children about math, do math activities with them in the home and in the community, and connect with communities and schools around math, improves children's math outcomes.

And evidence tells us that entering kindergarten with early math skills is the best predictor of 8th grade performance regardless of race, gender, or family socioeconomic status. Indeed, early math skills predict later academic performance even more than reading abilities or socio-emotional development.

There are powerful opportunities for math educators and experts to engage with families and communities to help young people develop a positive self-identity around math, and to have equal access to and success in math activities and achievement. Conversely, those working in communities, early education, and child care can do more to embrace math as a priority and realize the promise they hold to help transform attitudes, opportunities and achievement for children and their caregivers.

Challenges

We must also acknowledge that our educational and economic systems are all too often inequitable and pose particular challenges to families whose racial, educational, and income identities are not represented in formal schooling to the extent that would be most helpful. System-level problems in our country can have profound effects on people. Millions of children in the United States lack supports for a strong educational start, putting them behind from the very beginning. Of children from low-income families, fewer than ten percent can count to 20 in

preschool, a skill that correlates to the strongest math achievement in first grade¹. Researchers also find that children who consistently struggle with math are less likely to receive a high school diploma or attend college.

Again, because early math ability is highly predictive of later academic success, it is crucial to provide young children with positive math experiences before formal school starts. And it is not just about early education. Young people will benefit from family engagement in math throughout their development² and, of course, they will eventually close the circle when they, in turn, start their own families as a doer—and teacher—of math in their own right³.

Family Math is a way to support these skills at home and in communities. And not just to prepare young people for academic success, vital as it is. Family math can help people develop a positive self-identity around using math—rather than defaulting to a sense that “I’m not a math person”—and to understand and enjoy the power of math to solve problems, support critical thinking and problem-solving, and to open doors to a successful future.

Family Math

Family math has been described as culturally-relevant math activities and interactions occurring in the informal contexts in which families engage with young children. These activities and interactions provide opportunities to introduce and enhance children’s math skills and knowledge, as well as to support positive attitudes towards math and learning. “Family math” includes not only the activities families engage in, but also their: awareness of math embedded in activities at home and in their communities; enthusiasm for and comfort with engaging in math and in supporting young children’s math learning; and access to resources for supporting early math learning and knowledge about how to use these resources.

Researchers have long confirmed that families and caregivers who spoke to their infants, toddlers and preschoolers while doing everyday tasks dramatically boosted their language and early literacy skills, setting them up for success in school and life. Now researchers have found that families that discuss math concepts while doing everyday tasks—like shopping, taking a walk, cooking, reading, or even playing together—can significantly increase early math literacy in young children—powerful skills that researchers found to be one of the strongest predictors of success in school and life.⁴ Just as over the past 30 years our nation has put in place funding, systems, policies, and processes to afford more opportunities for families to support their

¹ Geary, D. C., Hoard, M. K., Nugent, L., & Bailey, D. H. (2013). Adolescents’ Functional Numeracy Is Predicted by Their School Entry Number System Knowledge. *PloS one*, 8(1), e54651. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0054651>

² Hyde, J. S., Canning, E. A., Rozek, C. S., Clarke, E., Hulleman, C. S., & Harackiewicz, J. M. (2017). The role of mothers’ communication in promoting motivation for math and science course-taking in high school. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 27(1), 49–64. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12253>

³ Ing, M. (2014). Can parents influence children’s mathematics achievement and persistence in STEM careers? *Journal of Career Development*, 41, 87–103. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845313481672>

⁴ Duncan, G. J., Dowsett, C. J., Claessens, A., Magnuson, K., Huston, A. C., Klebanov, P., Pagani, L. S., Feinstein, L., Engel, M., Brooks-Gunn, J., Sexton, H., Duckworth, K., & Japel, C. (2007). School readiness and later achievement. *Developmental Psychology*, 43(6), 1428–1446. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.43.6.1428>

children's literacy and reading so, too, do we need a robust systems of opportunities to grow math.

Family math has been going on for many years in many communities and has historically been led by parents and parent advocates themselves. They have, in turn, been increasingly supported by family-facing practitioners, community-based organizations, and interested researchers. Family math is now poised to bring in additional partners, advocates, funding, and visibility—all without losing its grounding as a movement centered on, guided by, and benefitting a diverse array of families representing varied cultures and geographies.

Developing a Strategic Plan

The National Center for Family Math has been established to be a national home to support this developing movement. Its work is framed by the field—parents and family representatives, practitioners, educators, nonprofit leaders, researchers, policymakers, and others have convened to develop its strategic plan. And, in action, its impact will be the result of the aligned activities of its partners; the Center is committed to fostering collaborative action rather than trying to stand alone in a growing ecosystem of education and child care.

This document lays out the seminal strategic plan for the National Center for Family Math, tracing its development:

- from our beginnings—leveraging the findings of the prior Family Math Roadmap Initiative and then conducting an initial set of landscape interviews with stakeholders, partners, disciplinary experts, and other leaders to assess key needs and issues
- to our planned work—hosting a set of framing discussions by a strategic planning committee, identifying priorities and specific field-recommended activities through the deliberations of more detailed working groups, and facilitating focus group and individual interviews to pressure test their recommendations
- to articulating our intended results—along the way the Center has been simultaneously developing a point of view about what outcomes matter the most for young people and the families, communities, and educational systems that support them—and about how best to proceed to get there.

The following sections provide additional detail on the process and results of the Center's planning phase. Our story starts with a sustained discussion among the first movers in Family Math who launched a Roadmap Initiative to network together, compare lessons learned, assess gaps, and identify major areas of work—a discussion that ended up with a call to establish a national home for the movement.

Our Beginnings: The Family Math Roadmap Initiative

Math, of course, is vitally important across one’s entire life—from preschool to the kindergarten-high school span to post-secondary education to work and life-long learning and, for many people, to becoming parents themselves and serving as their own child’s first guide to the power, excitement, and everyday uses of math.

Starting in 2016, several foundations began collaborating to address in a targeted way those issues surfacing at the start of this spectrum: early math opportunity gaps. They decided to promote the emerging field of “family math.” This group of funders comprised the CME Group Foundation, Robert B. McCormick Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Heising-Simons Foundation, and Overdeck Family Foundation.

Initially, these foundations—assisted by the consulting firm, Education First—supported background analyses and reflection among stakeholders, including:

- hosting a 2016 convening of early and family math stakeholders
- issuing a request for proposals to fund specific projects that could move the field of family math forward
- holding a two additional field convenings in 2017 and 2018
- supporting a landscape scan of the field, which included interviews with a wide range of family math researchers, practitioners, family engagement specialists, funders, and policymakers, as well as a formal literature review.

This work resulted in a solid base for creating a common definition of family math and the launch of a [Family Math Roadmap Initiative](#) that included the establishment of workgroups. The Roadmap empaneled these groups to draft preliminary outcomes, goals, and strategies. As they met, shared, learned, and reflected, the funders and stakeholders recognized first and foremost that the growing field of family math needed greater unity and coherence to provide opportunities for families to support children’s math learning, address the systemic challenges facing low-income families, and families of color in particular, and help close opportunity gaps.

One important determination of the Roadmap Initiative was that the development and coordination of an advocacy and policy agenda for family math needs a national “home” capable of paying dedicated attention to integration of family math into the larger early learning, early childhood, family engagement fields. Participants recommended that this “home” could be a stand-alone organization or could live within another organization and should: “own” the field-building agenda; convene stakeholders regularly to review and assess progress against a three-year agenda; as well as identify partnerships to support development and expansion of the work.

Spurred on by this recommendation, the Heising-Simons and Overdeck Family Foundations released a request for proposals to find a host for the new national family math home which would be committed to continuing the Roadmap’s values of authentic stakeholder input while developing a strategic plan to be operationalized in 2022. The National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE) was chosen by parent, family, and family math practitioner representatives to house the nascent Center. NAFSCE has gratefully built upon the seminal work of the Roadmap, honoring the contributions of its many participants and deliberately treating the past as prologue.

Our Beginnings: Field Findings

As one of its first roles, NAFSCE sought to engage in a strategic planning process for the Center. The goals of the process were first and foremost to learn from and be guided by those in the field. Therefore, in preparation for strategic planning, NAFSCE commissioned interviews with a wide cross-section of professionals and beneficiaries to ask about the key issues any plan should address. Many hours of feedback have been condensed into the overall summary field findings that follow.

Regarding overall strategy, interviewees reinforced NAFSCE's commitment to listening to the groups the Center is trying to engage, urging **authentic engagement** with beneficiaries and partners both in co-creating the Center and conducting its work, focusing on the importance of direct interaction with families, whose essential role has been highlighted recently during the COVID-19 pandemic. They also wanted to make sure that the plan would build in lots of opportunities for flexibility, course correction, and feedback loops to ensure that **the strategic plan is a living document**. Lastly, they recommended that the Center establish the most vulnerable children, those most at risk and those in poverty, as the target audience for its work, and that it **pay special attention to issues of race** given that there are wide disparities prior to school starting.

That **family math is important** was unquestioned. Some interviewees noted there is data indicating that math is more important than reading literacy and that the nation's equity agenda is not complete without all children having equal access to math education and developing strong ability. Flipping the coin, interviewees thought that the common and early development of the attitude that "I'm not a math person" was hugely detrimental at a national and personal level and an important issue to address. The general consensus was that there is currently **not a lot of awareness** of the importance of family math, even within the family engagement community, although that is starting to change among some national organizations.

Interviewees judged the most effective work in the field to date to be **what families themselves are doing** as well as **peer-to-peer networking** and planning as well as **researcher networking**. In particular, there was broad agreement that engaging people of color is essential and a strategic opportunity to even further inform the current priorities of the field. Issues included **better engagement** of the early education field, more robust understanding and engagement of communities and community-based organizations to communicate more effectively with families—both more adaptively and at greater scale.

Interviewees felt that math needs to be presented in its real-world applications and not just for its academic impact, which risks being driven by school testing and not by core principles; this is especially important given the pervasive **fear and distaste for math** many people—including educators— have, often as a result of their own first experiences.

Regarding equity, interviewees were clear that **lack of access, variation of programs, and low level of support** were enormous problems for under-resourced communities, which often feature deep poverty, and the effects of systemic racism. Further, despite crediting the field with paying deliberate attention to equity issues, feedback reflected concerns that families do not feel well-enough connected, that parents are not fully integrated into decision-making and that, as one respondent put it, it “could be really tempting to just get input and then have white people go and make the decision.”

Advice for Developing a National Center

Interviewees were asked to weigh in on how a new Center could improve the field. Intriguingly, some advice included thinking of the field to be improved as **not just national** but as local—market to market, region to region—and developing a much better, deeper **understanding of parents and caregivers** and what they want and need to know. A consensus agreement emerged on the potential of a **communications** campaign that would generate demand and that could be supported by a coordinated **policy** strategy that improves the level of attention and funding for family math. The field needs to engage a **wider constituency** of those who deal with early childhood as well as the educational world according to many who were interviewed. Several cited the field’s need for **collaboration** and to take a more systemic approach that accounts for the complex ecosystem in which families live, from community organizations to formal schooling, from research and evaluation to policy, and a host of child- and education-focused work, including related state and local regulations.

Some of what experts expect regarding field improvement lies in the realm of tools and practice. Interviewees suggested focusing on driving **excellence in practice**, fostering more creative community engagement, and attending to **equity**, including those often excluded from resources and supports, such as families with disabilities or in poverty.

Interviewees mentioned existing, successful organizations and initiatives as potential models or partners. For example, the early childhood movement has grown considerably and may be a model for movement-building as well as a valuable partner in reaching families. Similarly, there are an increasing number of math materials and outreach available, but they are often traditional, sometimes culturally insensitive, scarce in early childhood and early grades, and lack robust **implementation guidance**—which was seen as a potentially important role for the new Center that would go beyond aggregating resources to improving their contextualization and effective use.

Experts saw the launch of a family math center to bolster a new movement in and of itself as different and valuable; a center can “set the table” and be a major force for convening. It will be vital to develop into the “**go-to, one-stop shop**” for everyone and anyone interested in family math and to get others intrigued and involved. Yet, interviewees had recommendations for how a Center could add other, unique value. For example, it would be helpful to **define “equity”** in the field of math. To rise above a simple aggregation of present activity, interviewees highlighted the importance of **movement building**, especially in the context of a system. While promoting established and agreed-upon best practices and **elevating the field**, the Center should seek to transition from a role as a translator and convener to being **action-oriented**.

Specific field reactions to the plan's Goals, Outcomes, and Priorities, which were solicited in a second phase of field outreach are provided under each appropriate Strategic Pillar.

Our Planned Work: Theory of Action

After garnering the recommendations of the field broadly, NAFSCE recruited and empaneled a leading group of seventeen people to form a dedicated Strategic Planning Committee (see Appendices for participants) that reflected a rich cross-section of the field. An initial, facilitated Committee meeting was held to determine an appropriate mission, vision, and core set of main “strategic goals” for the Center. Then the Committee formed Working Groups for each goal, adding external expertise where necessary (see Appendices for participants) to recommend objectives and priorities for initial action. Together, these elements form the core strategy of the new national home for family math.

The National Center for Family Math embeds this strategic plan in an overarching theory of action that lends both coherence and directionality to a necessarily broad array of goals, objectives, and priorities. Simply put, this theory outlines the Center’s assumptions, the inputs to its process, the activities it will pursue, the outputs of that work, and the measurable outcomes it expects to see as a result; it also defines the clear impact the Center ultimately aims to help achieve. In practice, this theory action will rest on two deep commitments: collaboratively helping align the impact of its partners, and elevating equity.

Aligned Impact

First and foremost, the Center will operate as a backbone institution, supporting and nurturing a collaborative field that will grow to include additional partners, and adding value to its partners by amplifying through collective action their work beyond what any one individual or organization could achieve alone. Targeted areas of work will foster the input and insight, materials and programs, research and evidence, and messages and outreach necessary for greater participation in family math by both the education and family engagement fields and lead to a strong sense of identity, ability and love of math in young people—particularly those traditionally least well-supported in the United States. Ultimately, the Center aims all of its work toward supporting family capacity and helping them foster the academic, economic, and personal success of their children.

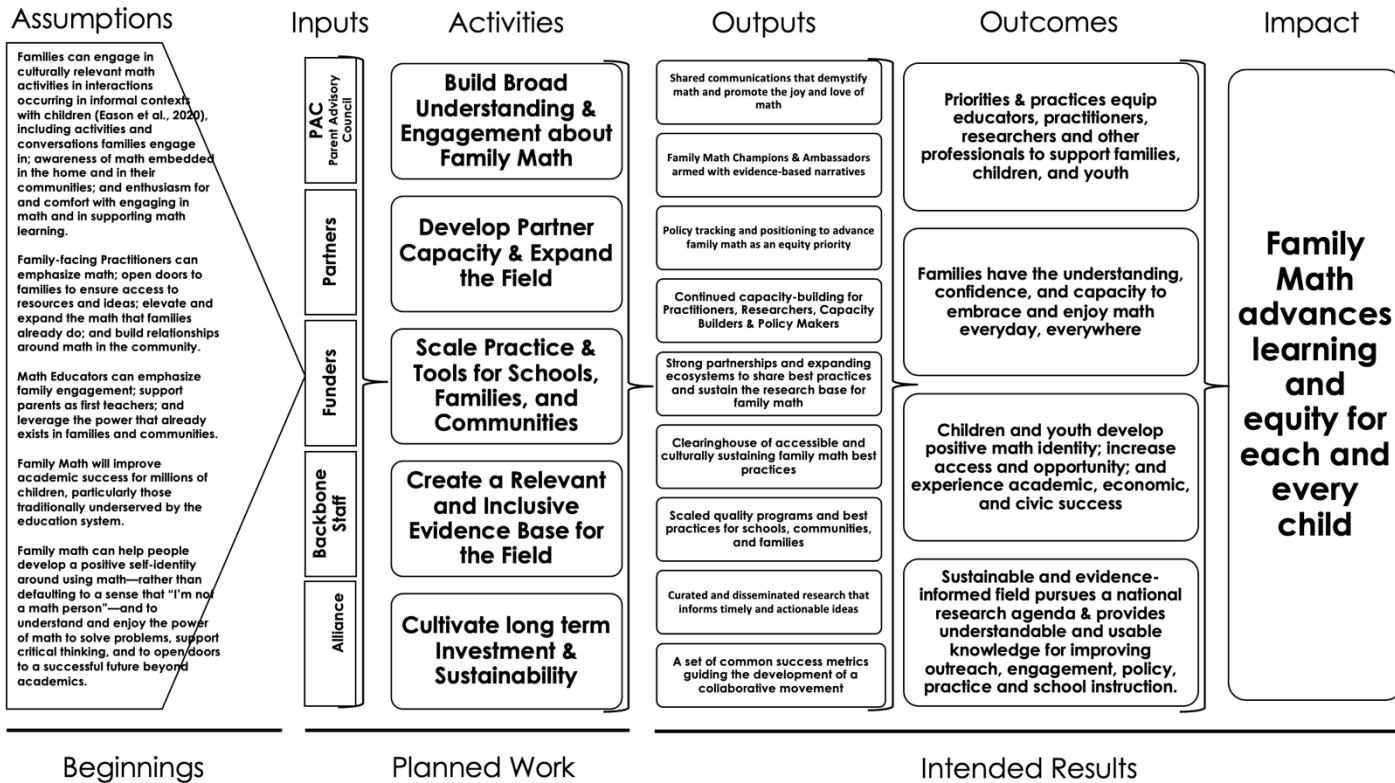
Equity

Importantly, everything the Center does will be designed to elevate equity—from the partners it works with to the beneficiaries served. The importance and usefulness of math undergirds a robust future for individuals, communities, and the nation; and conversely, lack of access, opportunity, and skills erects serious and under-appreciated barriers to academic, economic and life-long success. Each and every child has a right to a positive identity and a powerful ability around mathematics and everyone working to help them should value the capacity that already exists in their families and community. One of NAFSCE’s core partners, the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium (MAEC) has outlined an equity improvement cycle that will frame the Center’s approach:

- Facilitating and co-constructing inclusive decision-making

- Centering on the needs of critical stakeholders
- Building and affirming asset-based relationships
- Distinguishing between the power of systems versus individuals

Below is a graphic that summarizes the central elements in the Center’s theory of action.



To flesh out this theory, the Center’s mission, vision, and core areas of work are outlined in more detail below.

Our Planned Work: Mission, Vision, and Goals

Mission

Advancing research, policies, practices, and partnerships, and systems that inspire, harness, and amplify the power and love of math through family and community engagement.

Vision

A world where family math advances learning and equity for each and every child.

Strategic Goals, Objectives, & Priorities

The Center’s mission will be lived out through work conducted in five, interrelated priority areas of activity—referred to as Strategic Goals:

- Capacity-Building & Partnerships
- Communications/Outreach & Policy/Advocacy
- Practice
- Research
- Sustainability⁵

As it developed the Center’s inaugural strategic plan, the Planning Committee was united by a common purpose: to develop strong and shared objectives that would guide a Center that supports a growing field and movement and, in turn, enjoys the active support of the field.

To empower families and grow a movement, the strategic planning committee recognized the importance of supporting capacity-building and partnerships; developing a common communications strategy including tools for outreach; helping practitioners, both families and professionals; and engaging with the policy community and assisting advocacy work—all informed by a strengthened evidence base.

The plan is intended to frame the Center’s work in its first five years of operation from 2022 - 2025 and, explicitly, to evolve over time to react to a dynamic field. Below, each of the Strategic Goals is described in more detail—including concrete, consensus Objectives and Priorities.

⁵ The Center’s planners deliberately postponed convening a sustainability discussion until consensus strategic objectives and priorities were established so that work on organizational structure and fundraising would stem from a disciplined plan rather than risk being driven by external fundraising or policy priorities. Focused work on sustainability issues will accompany operationalization of the Center in 2022.

CAPACITY BUILDING & PARTNERSHIPS

The focus of this strategic goal is on systems-level partnerships and capacity-building rather than addressing direct service, and all work will begin with a careful landscape mapping. First, the Center will pursue a “two lane” approach that builds the capacity of the family engagement field to integrate family math into their ongoing work and, conversely, build the capacity of the mathematics field to understand and promote the importance of working with families and communities in mathematical development. Second, the Center will work to help policy advocates champion math as an equity issue—just as has been done in literacy/reading—as they seek reforms that promote educational justice. Lastly, the Center will endeavor to build the capacity of capacity-builders themselves by serving as a catalyst for discussing and sharing innovative practice across the country, rather than simply playing a clearinghouse role—this includes a commitment to not positioning any one effective practice(s) as “the model” for different audiences or geographies and, also, to shape capacity-building based on partners’ authentic needs and goals for themselves and the field. Parents, math teachers, and administrators will be a core target for support from the field and the Center’s emphasis will include diverse learners and those focused on racial equity.

Objective 1: Build the capacity of existing partners and expand the range of family math partnerships.

Field-Recommended Priorities:

- Landscape mapping: identify who is in the ecosystem.
- Leverage NAFSCE’s current partners to support capacity development for their own existing partnerships to broaden the field.
- Help create new partnerships for capacity-building.
- Create a clearinghouse of capacity-building supports for each component of the two lanes approach (for example, parent-facing organizations, educator capacity, etc.)

Objective 2: Sharpen the policy community’s capacity to make math an equity priority.

Field-Recommended Priorities:

- Landscape mapping: identify organizations at the nexus of equity/justice/education conversations, including parent organizers.
- Initially prioritize working with the most experienced and influential organizations.
- Engage with partners about their awareness and interest, paying attention to process (i.e., listen to them about their capacity needs and identify their gaps as well as inform their development on areas they prioritize).

- Identify policy platforms and opportunities that get beyond policy research to build advocacy tools to “mobilize and inspire.”
- Make the parent voice explicit in policy (i.e., build on previous partners’ work—and go further—to understand parent/family needs regarding what policy would accomplish at various levels of the system).
- Support capacity as appropriate for partners’ internal adoption, and external advocacy, including understanding of parent/family perspectives, use of common language, and shared understanding about commitment and roles.

Objective 3: Identify gaps in practice, elevate good practice, and support partners’ capacity--both internally and across the field.

Field-Recommended Priorities:

- Landscape mapping: Gather qualitative and quantitative input from practitioners, communities, families, and students about the state of capacity-building and their needs, challenges, and desires related to family math, including the alignment between school-based math instruction and home support and how it intersects with daily activities or routines.
- Landscape mapping: Identify related education practice movements that might support family math, such as culturally responsive curriculum/pedagogy.
- Work with partners to create a coordinated campaign to raise awareness about existing family math programs, resources, and practices and to increase the reach of family math workshops, webinars, and other existing capacity-building opportunities.
- Act as an intermediary to fundraise and distribute funds to enable family math organizations to scale their impact, both independently—expanding their own offerings—and as field-supporting partners in building infrastructure, communications, and partnership capacity.
- Help test effective practices with different audiences and in different geographies.

COMMUNICATIONS/OUTREACH & POLICY/ADVOCACY

This strategic goal is focused on both communications, partnership, and policy strategies to help build broader support for and engagement in family math. The strategic planning process identified that the audience for the Center’s outreach work is not as broad as “the general public” but rather is focused on core audiences:

- Families (parent leaders, parent advocates, and family leaders)
- Educators (primarily early educators at first)
- Community Organizations (those that provide supplemental/primary support)
- Policymakers (those who can leverage the Center for trusted resources to gain insight, perspective, and guidance).

Thus, the target beneficiaries of outreach are parents, families, and other adults who support children. The goals and objectives below outline the best thinking of the strategic planning committee, and will continue to be refined as the Center completes its value proposition and branding work.

Objective 1: Communicate the power of math and its every-day usefulness, demystify math, and promote the (love or joy) of math.

Field-Recommended Priorities

- Establish a communications agenda and capacity for the Center to spread the message about family math.
- Encourage family engagement practitioners and math instructors to engage in family math
- Encourage the community to embrace the mission of the Center.
- Develop a marketing campaign promoting the (love or joy) of math and changing mindsets and dispositions by demystifying math.
- Facilitate better understanding among key policymaker constituencies of the importance of early math, and math in general, as part of children’s healthy growth and development.

Objective 2: Galvanize contributions of partner-stakeholders to advance family math.

Field-Recommended Priorities

- Co-elevate and integrate family voice.
- Showcase/highlight everyday people in communications strategies.
- Cultivate champions and ambassadors of family math.
- Launch a communications campaign, including a story bank, to destigmatize and demonstrate family math in inspirational and practical ways.
- Galvanize stakeholders and the general public to amplify Family Math nationally.
- Reach, engage, and inspire families to amplify family math.

- Show and amplify math from a variety of cultural perspectives and backgrounds (movement, storytelling).

Objective 3: Engage in the national policy conversation to advance equitable policy where it is needed to advance access to and inclusion in family math.

Field-Recommended Priorities

- Become part of the national policy conversation with Congress and the Administration as well as with Federal Departments.
- Leverage the national conversations around early learning and STEM education.
- Harness research to connect family math to policy (e.g. similar to the Student Experience Research Network).
- Harness policy and advocacy to tackle systems inequities in math education.

PRACTICE

This strategic goal is focused on families as the end recipients with greater roles as informants and as savvy consumers. Work is targeted at the individual and organizational level to capture the field-level excitement around--potential of--elevating and improving practice per se. Other strategic pillars, such as Capacity-Building/Partnerships, are more focused on systems-level actors. We define family math broadly as those culturally sustaining and relevant practices that families engage in in the house and in the community with children and youth that spark curiosity and learning around math during everyday routines. For family math practitioners, family math is the practice of reaching out to families, raising up their voices and every day strengths in mathematics and expanding the opportunities that exist within their communities for expanded family math.

Objective 1: Identify and expand, and co-design, impactful and accessible and culturally sustaining family math practices.

Field-Recommended Priorities

- Engage NAFSCE Practice Network, and review Roadmap practice working group recommendations, for relevant additions to this targeted goal.
- Support other organizations to add value to, learn from, and promote early math concepts as a key outcome for family engagement activities (potentially in conjunction with the the Center’s Communications strategy)
- Establish a national clearinghouse to help document and elevate practices and ensure families have exposure to and connect with high-impact practices in community spaces and acquire skills.
- Establish an Innovation Hub for emerging/future practice and tools development (something about co-design/human-centered design thinking with researchers, families, and practitioners, here continuous improvement)

Objective 2: Ensure quality and scale travel hand-in-hand.

Field-Recommended Priorities

- Engage NAFSCE Practice Network, and review Roadmap practice working group recommendations, for relevant additions to this targeted goal.
- Foster a culturally responsive and sustaining conversation between funders, providers, and communities about appropriate adaptation and reinvention of promising practices developed for one audience/geography to others to ensure they: respect cultural authenticity and support linguistic diversity.
- Establish and promote a national re/definition of “quality” as: co-designed with beneficiaries (practitioners and families) to promote a strong math identity, reflect family routines, are relevant to community context, respect culture, center the family/caregiver role, aligned with core values, and embody a growth mindset rather than a deficit model.

Objective 3: Elevate, Nurture, and Support Practitioners' knowledge, skills, and mindset in family math and family engagement.

Field-Recommended Priorities

- Engage NAFSCE Practice Network, and review Roadmap practice working group recommendations, for relevant additions to this targeted goal.
- Conduct a landscape analysis of who are family math practitioners (e.g. teachers, community educators, etc.) -- -and how they are trained/prepared and by whom--and if/as appropriate influence preservice pathways across the entire ecosystem.
- Support a collaborative network and a community of practice to (a) help family math providers connect, share resources, and develop ecosystem capacity re: both mathematics and family engagement, (b) help community-level providers (broadly defined, including for example, libraries, afterschool programs, parks, etc.) share resources with families and each other and facilitate seamless enrollment, and (c) foster connections between school-based and community-based providers to increase school capacity and collaboration.
- Establish and promote a family math credential that attracts existing practitioners--including those who do not have formal pre-service pathways--and family/home-based and community members that is centered on such capacities as: anti-bias reflection, local advocacy skills, and others.

RESEARCH

Family math addresses core issues in the nation’s traditional opportunity gaps and mindset gap around mathematics. A robust evidence base matters to policymakers, practitioners, families, and youth alike. The focus of this strategic goal is to identify, coordinate, and foster an ever more robust field and system of mathematics learning right from the start of the Center’s work, with families as influencers and leaders in children’s mathematics learning. First, the Center will help ensure the relevance of the research base across the field and help attract additional financial support. Second, it will work to ensure that research is inclusive, paying special attention to translating the evidence base to be usable to a broad range of stakeholders; this might be better thought of as “science communication” rather than “translation” into various language groups (the Center’s audience is the general public, practitioners, and families.) Additionally it will work to ensure that research attends to differences in culture, location, and circumstance. Last, but by no means least, the Center will foster growth in the number of researchers and institutions working on the family math evidence base, recognizing the need to expand the research field in this vital area.

Objective 1: Support, encourage, and/or stimulate research that informs timely and actionable ideas for policy, practice, and professional development.

Field-Recommended Priorities

- Elevate and lead the call for assets-based family math research.
- Learn from families about the richness of their mathematical experiences.
- Bring together researchers and practitioners, those who work with families, policy makers, etc., to break down existing silos—own including across the Center’s strategic pillars.
- Review and determine priorities for advancing the Roadmap Initiative’s research agenda.
- Build/Seed the field of math research.
- Conduct research to influence policy makers.
- Conduct research to influence practitioners.
- Ensure research informs educational faculty about family engagement in mathematics (pre-service and in-service).
- Fund research internships to bring together students and mentors.

Objective 2: Curate, communicate, and disseminate research that differentiates the benefits of family math practices and programs for different groups under different circumstances.

Field-Recommended Priorities

- Become familiar with what is out there so as not to reinvent the wheel by launching a thorough literature review as necessary to expand on the Roadmap research review.
- Update and advance a research agenda, incorporating the Roadmap research agenda.

- Define and inform the work of the Center with regard to raising funding for and executing research.
- Set up a working group, supported by staff, to curate existing research, ensuring rigor and accessibility.
- Become a clearinghouse for family math research.
- Provide research supported tools/tips for families, ensuring that these are vetted and that families are getting the research in the context of what works in ways helpful to them.
- Ensure translation and dissemination as a core function, or facilitate it by others—especially for those outside the research community.
- Understand the cost drivers of existing math education and family engagement efforts and where funding has been historically sourced, and with what limitations.

Objective 3: Identify, and Build, partnerships that can strengthen and sustain the research base for family math.

Field-Recommended Priorities

- Integrate research into the broader activities of NAFSCE and keep other key organizations up to date on research work.
- Partner with DREME Network.
- Avoid duplication of research work by building strong research partnerships and identify those core partners.
- Create evidence-based resources, such as joint practice briefs, with partners.

SUSTAINABILITY

TBD

Field Feedback: Barriers & Opportunities

Any new initiative will find early wins that capitalize on existing opportunities and, just as surely, will face barriers—both unexpected ones and ones that are entirely predictable in a nation that has not yet developed a clear-enough agenda or sufficiently robust funding to ensure a fair, early start for all its children. While not going as far as conducting a formal Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, Center planners asked field experts what blind spots should be attended to in implementation.

One interviewee suggested the Steering Committee step back to assess the previous work of the Roadmap Initiative as a way of **identifying blind spots to date** in the field, querying, “What has been missing from the work that the Roadmap group has been doing? Where are their blinders?” Another asked, “Has there been a needs assessment? Did the Roadmap project do this?” Given the attention being paid to the disruptions of the pandemic, it was suggested that emerging data about parents’ COVID learning needs be mined.

Interviewees were struck by the historical lack of attention to **youth voice**, asking, “How will the Center engage youth themselves?” It was noted that the movement must be informed by their desires and needs and that cultivating youth ambassadors will also help ensure that young people are available to speak on panels or talk to public and private funders. There are existing models for adult roles to coordinate and support youth engagement at the local level. Personal voice and agency were determined to be vital for young people’s lifelong success and to be elements that can be developed at a much earlier age than is generally appreciated.

Given the relatively low awareness of math in the larger family engagement arena and the paucity of funding for programs, research, and more, it was suggested that strategic planning pay strong attention to **policy**, which is essential to signaling, funding, and supporting movement-building.

Some interviewees called for **broadening the conversation** about partners and models, since any successful family math work will take place in a very interdisciplinary space. One asked, “How would others [outside family math] see the value proposition for the Center? Determine how it fits into their work and what they can do?” It was pointed out that formal educators and others working during the school day are important to math success and are often missing from these conversations—of vital import given the challenges of **bridging** the school and family/community. Even more broadly, it was recommended that organizations that touch young families need to be included to broaden the reach. (Such micro-systems with which a family typically engages include home visiting, health care and pediatrics, nutrition, child care, and after school and summer programs among others). If the aperture is not widened, warned one respondent, the field is likely to miss important potential participants and not build a sufficiently robust movement. The family math movement was deemed to be good at getting to family math organizations in particular but anemic with regard to getting to organizations that

reach families but do not yet prioritize or do math. This general theme extended even to exploring the best practices of successful national centers in other fields and one interviewee called for a “focus on what activities the Center should do and what has been effective for other national centers in other movements and fields.”

Beneficiaries and experts in the field especially urged the Center to be clearer about what it means by **defining “equity”** with actionable specificity, to engage in policy-related work without politicizing family math during a contentious moment in the nation’s history, to approach connections to local communities with humility, respect, and attention to potential power dynamics, and to learn from and engage with prior movements, such as early literacy and financial literacy. Field experts reflected that many potential partners may feel that their plate is already full, that family math is just one more thing to do, and that they lack the expertise to support the movement—all of which will require a close connection between partnership and capacity-development and an effective messaging effort by the Center.

Lastly, some interviewees did not think that the field has been rigorous enough in setting a **value proposition** or communicating its **desired outcomes**—the “so what” of a Center or of family math for parents and communities. One noted, “That message must resonate with folks and you need to clearly articulate it.” One asked an eminently practical question for working in an increasingly crowded field: “What will keep the Center’s emails in your in-box?”

Methodology

In the spring of 2021, the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE) contracted with Third Sector Strategy LLC, and its collaborator Insignia Partners, to support a strategic planning process for the launch of a new national home for family math. The planning process was underwritten by the Heising-Simons Foundation and the Overdeck Foundation.

The process included the following major components:

- An initial round of interviews with beneficiaries, leaders, and experts across the country to surface the major opportunities, barriers, and concerns that the strategic plan should address. This feedback, along with the other data points collected during this landscaping process—especially including a review of the work conducted by the prior Family Math Roadmap Initiative—served as the foundation for strategic discussions regarding the scope of the need for family math, the size of the current field, and the relationship between equity and the comfort, identity, opportunity, and skills young people develop in math. This process gave NAFSCE and the consultants valuable insight into the nascent Center’s needs moving forward.
- Recruitment and empaneling of a group of seventeen people to form a Strategic Planning Committee (see Appendices for participants) that reflects a cross-section of the field.
- An initial, facilitated Committee meeting to determine an appropriate mission, vision, and core set of main “strategic goals” for the Center
- The Committee formed Working Groups for each goal, adding external expertise where necessary (see Appendices for participants).
- The Working Groups each met two to three times, facilitated by the consultants, to generate top-level Objectives and supporting Priorities for each Strategic Pillar.
- Together, the Strategic Planning Committee and additional Working Group members convened for a facilitated day-long meeting to review and approve the mission and vision, to reflect together on the Objectives and Priorities that were developed, and to meet the Center’s newly hired Director.
- A second round of interviews, along with several focus groups, were then conducted to garner feedback from the field on the draft Goals, Objectives, and Priorities. Focus groups included parents and family leaders; family-facing practitioners; school and district leaders; community-based organizations; and state policy administrators and family engagement centers.
- The Working Groups then each met an additional two to three times to reflect on feedback garnered from the field and received from their peer Working Groups to finalize Objectives and Priorities.
- During the May 2021 – January 2022 process, the consultants and NAFSE staff conducted regular logistical and strategic planning calls.

Appendix 1: Participants

Editors Note: double-check the names and titles to be SURE we didn't miss anyone (note that a couple of SPC members did not participate in the WGs)

Capacity-Building & Partnerships

- Margaret Caspe, Research Consultant, National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement—*NAFSCE Staff Liaison for Community-Building and Partnerships*
- Rosazlia Grillier, Co-President, POWER-PAC IL, Chicago Foundation for Women
- Darcy Hutchins, Director of Family Partnerships, Colorado Department of Education
- S. Kewsi Rollins, Vice President for Leadership and Engagement, Institute for Educational Leadership
- Helen Westmoreland, Director of Family Engagement, National PTA

Communications/Outreach & Policy/Advocacy

- Pam Johnson
- David Park
- Adam Croglia
- Errika Moore Stem Funders Network
- Sara Morrison Choice for All
- Veronica Marion BPS
- Jeffrey Capizzano
- Melissa Bradowski
- Donna Traynham
- Dawn Ellis USDOE
- Gloria Corral Piqe
- Vito Borrello, National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement—Strategic Planning Committee member and *NAFSCE Staff Liaison for Communications/Outreach & Policy/Advocacy*

Practice

- Barbara Boone, Director, Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center, Ohio State University
- Kenneth Braswell CEO, Fatherhood Incorporated
- Kimberley Brenneman, Program Officer, Education, Heising-Simons Foundation
- Maggie Caspe, Research Consultant, National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement—*NAFSCE Staff Liaison for Practice*
- Maile Hadley, Executive Director, Zeno
- Kathy Hirsch-Pasek, Professor & Stanley and Debra Lefkowitz Distinguished Faculty Fellow, College of Liberal Arts, Temple University
- Gemma Lenowitz, Program Officer, Overdeck Family Foundation

- Sarah Lytle, Executive Director, Playful Learning Landscapes Action Network
- Zully Rodriguez, Student, Central New Mexico College
- Susan Shaffer, President & Co-Founder, Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium (MAEC)

Research

- DéJon Banks, Sr., Parent Voices California, California Child Care Resource and Referral Network
- Marta Civil, Roy F. Graesser Endowed Professor, University of Arizona
- Eric Dearing, Professor, Applied Developmental & Educational Psychology, Carolyn A. and Peter S. Lynch School of Education and Human Development, Boston College
- Reyna Hernandez, Director of Research and Policy Development, National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement—*NAFSCE Staff Liaison for Research*
- Tarana Kahn, Education Research and Evaluation Analyst, PBS SoCal (KOCE-TV)
- Susan Levine, Rebecca Anne Boylan Professor of Education and Society, Department of Psychology, University of Chicago
- Elena Lopez, Research Consultant in Education
- Jennifer McCray, Principal Investigator, Early Math Collaborative, Erikson Institute
- Jamie Annunzio Myers, Chief Operating Officer and Senior Vice President, Education and Engagement, Public Media Group of Southern California

Rebecca Berlin, Chief Learning Officer, Start Early

Susie Grimm ???

Andrea Prejean, Director of Teacher Quality, National Education Association

Appendix 2: Implementation Plan

Aligned Contribution details.

Sequencing of priorities.

Success measures & Data sources landscaping.

Budgeting and fundraising.