

The Society for Research on Child Development Strategic Plan

Introduction

As global interest and involvement in the welfare of children increases, the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) must continue to play a leading role in research on the development of children and contributing to evidence-based policy. To take advantage of emerging opportunities and challenges, SRCD is in the process of refining its goals and vision for the future, emphasizing the importance of culturally-sensitive, interdisciplinary, international research.

Early in 2004, SRCD began a strategic planning process to clarify its mission and define a strategy for the future. The Governing Council (GC) hired Cambridge Concord Associates (CCA) to assist in the process. In late January 2004, members of GC, SRCD staff, invited guests, and facilitators from CCA met for a two-day planning retreat in Ann Arbor, MI. Prior to the retreat, Elaine Kuttner of CCA conducted telephone interviews with members of GC and SRCD staff to hear individual perspectives and to identify issues. The process was continued at the March and October 2004 GC meetings.

GC believes that this strategic plan will lay a strong foundation for SRCD's continuing role at the forefront of developmental science research and for its ability to contribute to knowledge-based policy and practice. Moreover, strategic planning should be an ongoing part of the organization's activities. During the coming months, GC will consider strategies and organizational structures to reach the goals that have been set and will evaluate progress toward reaching those goals. The broad goals outlined in the strategic plan will serve as guideposts for decisions about future directions to be taken by the Society.

Mission Statement

The Society for Research in Child Development promotes interdisciplinary research on infant, child, and adolescent development in diverse contexts and across a life-long trajectory; fosters the exchange of information among scientists and research consumers world wide; and fosters applications of research-based knowledge.

SRCD is a professional organization for scientists, practitioners, and students in the field of child and adolescent development. The study of development entails understanding biological, interpersonal, and societal processes affecting physical, social/emotional, and cognitive change, including health, educational, clinical, and other perspectives. This mission statement highlights the Society's commitment to a broad definition of development across a wide age range; to incorporating such cultural contexts as race, ethnicity, class, income level, and country of origin for understanding development; to creating a professionally and geographically diverse community of scholarship and application; to disseminating research findings to a wide range of research consumers;

and to contributing to the formulation and implementation of developmentally-sound policy and practice through communication among scholars, policy-makers, and practitioners. SRCD accomplishes these goals through its symposia, meetings, journals, and other publications, and it will expand these tools as needed.

Goals

To realize its mission, GC has outlined five primary goals to be pursued during the next five years. These goals represent a broad vision of SRCD and a commitment to the long-term planning that is required to meet the challenge of an evolving organization in an evolving world. Attaining the five goals will entail some degree of cultural and attitudinal shift for SRCD as well as maintaining the strengths that have led to the Society's current success.

1. SRCD will be a central professional organization for researchers and practitioners in all aspects of infant, child, and adolescent development.
2. SRCD will be recognized for its dissemination of research-based knowledge to inform research priorities, public policy, professional and educational practice, and the broader public.
3. SRCD will reflect the fact that an understanding of development requires the perspectives and methods of multiple disciplines.
4. SRCD will incorporate cultural and contextual diversity in all aspects of the Society's organization, activities, and membership.
5. SRCD will incorporate international perspectives in its organization, activities, and membership.

1. SRCD will be a central professional organization for researchers and practitioners in all aspects of infant, child, and adolescent development.

As a professional organization, SRCD's first priority will be building and strengthening a multi-faceted community of researchers and practitioners in the field of child development. This goal is a re-affirmation of the central role that SRCD has played throughout its history, offering support, resources, and a forum for a diverse array of scientists and other professionals to come together and learn from each other. It is also a call to increase the Society's effectiveness as a professional organization, so that in coming years, SRCD will continue to stand out as a place where researchers and practitioners interested in child development and its implications across the lifespan will establish a home. Developing new leaders in the field is an important generative component of this goal.

2. SRCD will be recognized for its dissemination of research-based knowledge to inform research priorities, public policy, professional and educational practice, and the broader public.

SRCD will strengthen and expand its methods for disseminating research-based knowledge on infant, child, and adolescent development. These methods currently include journals and other publications, biennial meetings, supporting and training SRCD Fellows who bring research expertise directly into policy-making venues, and the activities of the SRCD Office for Policy and Communications in Washington. This information will be communicated in an accessible manner to a wider audience so that policy, practice and education decisions will benefit from state-of-the-art scientific information and the public will be better informed on findings from developmental research. Complementary efforts will be made to increase exchanges between researchers and practitioners that can generate improved research by incorporating applied knowledge and questions.

3. SRCD will reflect the fact that an understanding of the development of children requires the perspectives and methods of multiple disciplines.

SRCD encompasses psychology, human development, sociology, family studies, biology, education, pediatrics, psychiatry, social work, public health, economics, anthropology, and other disciplines that are relevant for an understanding of development. It embraces the rich diversity of quantitative and qualitative methods associated with these specializations. As the scientific world leans increasingly towards division and compartmentalization, SRCD's role in encouraging a multidisciplinary perspective for understanding human development becomes increasingly important. SRCD will increase its efforts to provide a forum in which scientists of various disciplines can share research and interdisciplinary scientific methods and to promote a receptive climate for truly transdisciplinary research that will advance understanding of the complexities of child and adolescent development.

4. SRCD will incorporate cultural and contextual diversity in all aspects of the Society's organization, activities, and membership.

SRCD has long been committed to the principle that a full understanding of development requires inclusion of cultural, racial, ethnic, national, or other contexts as influences on individuals and the families and communities in which they live. SRCD will increase its efforts to encourage theory and research that incorporate diverse cultural contexts, and to provide a venue for scientists who represent a range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. SRCD will also seek additional ways to contribute to increasing the number of developmental scientists from underrepresented ethnic and racial groups. Sensitivity to culture and context and an increase in the number of scientists trained to study cultural context will enhance the quality and usefulness of research, provide a

broader and more ecologically valid understanding of child development and help SRCD contribute to important issues of policy and practice.

5. SRCD will incorporate international perspectives in its organization, activities, and membership.

Although incorporated in the United States, SRCD is an international organization with a strong commitment to the value of international scientific exchange. By expanding its international activity, SRCD will increase membership from outside the United States, encompass a broader range of research, have more diversity in its meetings and journals, and reach a broader audience with its dissemination of knowledge. SRCD will increase communication among scientists from different countries and promote collaborations across national lines. SRCD will increase mutually beneficial contacts with professional organizations and researchers outside the United States that share the goals of promoting developmental science.