



Strategic Direction 2020-25

Nurturing families. Discovering solutions. Advancing change.





We Believe

Clayton understands that a whole child, whole family approach to the early years is one of the most powerful ways to address societal inequities and create a thriving community.



Our Mission

Clayton Early Learning is an innovation hub that fosters thriving, equitable communities by partnering with families to **nurture** a whole child, whole family approach to the early years, **discover** what works, and **advance** systems change.



Our Vision

With the support of family and community, every child's first five years create the foundation to thrive.





78%

of children who attend preschool go on to academically outperform those who do not



90%

of human brain development occurs by the age of five



75%

of Colorado's Black and Latinx children lack access to high-quality early learning

With a 13% return in long-term societal benefits, an investment in young children and their families is one of the most powerful levers to address poverty and systemic inequities, changing the trajectory for a lifetime.

Clayton is uniquely positioned to step into this moment

With more than 30 years of front-line expertise, Clayton is uniquely positioned to become Colorado's hub for innovative work in early childhood development. Our 20-acre campus in northeast Denver is poised to meet the most urgent needs of our community while impacting the field locally, throughout Colorado, and across the country.

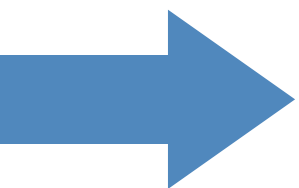
- **Direct-service programs with wrap-around supports:** 500 children who live below the poverty line, birth to age five, benefit from high quality early learning and family development at our Educare school, in home-based programming, and through community partnerships in Denver and rural Colorado.
- **Early childhood workforce development:** 500 early childhood educators improve their teaching through Clayton's coaching programs.
- **Research and evaluation:** Clayton's research and evaluation studies impact the broader field of early childhood development. Clayton also conducts Colorado Shines ratings that measure early childhood quality of providers across 39 counties.
- **Policy and advocacy:** Clayton amplifies the voices of parents and educators to advocate for state and federal policy change.

To learn more about the data, please visit: [Center on the Developing Child](#), [The Heckman Equation](#), [EdTrust](#), and the [Omidyar Network](#).

An Innovation Hub

In partnership with families, we aim to create a national model of integrated whole child, whole family development, wrap research, innovation, and continuous improvement around that model, and then share what we're learning to build the capacity of others to increase quality across the field. In short, Clayton aspires to become an innovation hub for a comprehensive, multi-generational approach to early childhood that transforms communities and addresses societal inequities.





Greater Impact

Our innovation hub will result in thriving families and communities by generating breakthrough outcomes for children and families. Our teaching clinic will produce the next generation of early childhood changemakers who are inspired by their experience at Clayton. At the systems-change level, we will catalyze improvements in quality in early childhood programs across the country and inform policymakers with research-driven, innovative solutions that are grounded in the real world.

- > > > > > **Thriving Children and Families**
- > > > > > **Early Childhood Changemakers**
- > > > > > **High-Quality Early Learning Providers**
- > > > > > **Innovations with Proven Impact**
- > > > > > **Policy Driven by Research and Practice**

Bringing the Innovation Hub to Life: Strategic Initiatives

2020-2025

Our strategic direction builds on Clayton's strong track record and connects the dots across our direct service, research and evaluation, workforce development, and policy change to ensure that we maximize impact for families and the field. We aspire with our partners to transform the way our country approaches early childhood development, recognizing the power of a whole child, whole family approach to enable families to thrive and put an end to the structural barriers to opportunity and justice.

The next five years will focus on positioning our campus as an innovation hub for thriving children and families; increasing research, evaluation, and innovation capacity; developing a leadership institute and teaching clinic for early childhood workforce innovation; and disseminating what we learn on-the-ground to impact policy and systems change. This vital work can only happen with investments in talent and infrastructure that will enable a high-functioning organization with an explicit focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Racial equity and striving to create the beloved community sit at the center of all of our work internally and externally. Our strategies to nurture thriving children and families, discover what generates optimal impact, and advance systemic change will only be successful if our solutions address the underlying systems and structures that perpetuate racism and poverty.





Nurture:

Clayton's campus becomes a hub for thriving children and families

With the support of community partners, we will create a hub for thriving families that includes a health clinic with mental and physical health services for children and their family members, developmental services for children, and connections to resources such as nutrition, housing, and career development opportunities.



Discover:

Clayton discovers what works for whole child, whole family development

Clayton will build an engine for innovation including design challenges, robust partnerships with visiting innovation fellows, next generation research, measurement, and evaluation capacity connected to our programming, and increased capacity to translate and communicate breakthrough approaches to systems leaders.



Advance:

Clayton advances systems change through people, policy and products

We will impact workforce innovation by developing a teaching clinic and leadership institute where changemakers develop skills to propel our whole child, whole family approach. We will influence systems leaders through policy and advocacy informed by our work with children and families, and the research and innovation generated from that work. Finally, we will share knowledge and tools with the field to enhance the quality of early childhood development across the country.



Equity:

Clayton fosters an anti-racist, beloved community aligned to our core values

Early childhood development is one of the most powerful levers to create justice, opportunity, and equity. To realize that future, we must work to transform the systems and beliefs that perpetuate racism and inequity inside our organization and in our community. We will ensure our organization is racially diverse at every level, and that our policies and practices are inclusive and equitable such that all of our staff members can thrive. We will listen to our community and strive with bold humility to improve our practices and demonstrate measurable progress toward creating the beloved community.



Infrastructure:

Clayton invests in essential infrastructure to support a high-functioning organization

We will make critical investments to ensure the quality of our team and operational excellence are defining characteristics of Clayton. We aim to make Clayton one of the best places to work in Colorado with talent development that supports a diverse workforce to thrive. We will transform our technology tools to enable operational efficiencies and facilitate the work of an innovation hub. Finally, we will build effective communications vehicles to broadly disseminate our work.

Clayton's Impact



A Foundation for Success

Ana and Miguel Rodriguez have big dreams for their four children. When the family came to Colorado eight years ago, their oldest son, Jayden, was a toddler who was behind in language development. Once enrolled in Clayton's home-based program, he received early intervention needed to develop critical language skills (both in English and his family's native Spanish) to prepare him to enter school ready to learn and thrive. The high-quality start to his education has certainly made a difference; Jayden is now at the top of his 7th grade class and dreams of someday becoming a doctor. Jayden's sisters, Camila and Sofia are also benefiting from strong starts at Clayton, and baby Miguel will soon follow in their footsteps.

"Clayton means so much to our family. The education and all of the extra resources and help bring so much needed support. We know our children are getting the best start, and have what they need to go far."



Whole Child, Whole Family

Ealasha Vaughner was raised in a large family, but somehow still felt alone when it came to raising her two young daughters, Jer'Ria and Jer'Mia. That all changed when Clayton became her second home, and she was surrounded by a caring team of professionals and an integrated package of resources and services that continues to lift the entire family. While her girls were thriving in Clayton's high-quality early education programs, Ealasha received the tools and support she needed to become a strong and confident parent, holding a full-time job while earning her Bachelor's degree, and learning important life skills to build a sustainable life.

"This environment is amazing. The parent support system at Clayton is unlike anything else. They stand beside you and build a family with you."



Excellence In Early Education

Brenda Perry, is a Clayton teaching icon. She first set foot on our campus some 34 years ago as a parent of two, and connected quickly to the early learning community. Before long she accepted a job working at Clayton, eventually becoming a lead teacher where she has impacted the lives of hundreds of children and their families. Over her long career, Brenda's natural gift for nurturing young minds has been fostered with a variety of professional development opportunities including her recent acceptance in Clayton's new place-based B.A. program. Offered in partnership with the University of Colorado Denver, this continuing education experience is designed to enhance the early childhood teaching workforce by providing a path to higher education for those already working in the field.

“As a teacher I am constantly learning. Although it has been some time since I’ve gone to school, the place-based BA program gives me an incredible opportunity to learn, improve my skills, and deepen my passion while I continue to work with children.”

Clayton's Evolution



The land we now call home was originally inhabited by the Native Arapaho people. When George Clayton arrived in 1859, Denver was emerging as a young city driven by the quest for gold. Clayton saw opportunity, and established a successful local shop to sell goods and supplies to miners. When his wife and infant child died in 1861, Clayton focused on his business and civic interests, including supporting the creation of one of Denver's first public schools while serving as a Denver City Councilman. Clayton is now regarded as one of Denver's first philanthropists.

George Clayton left his fortune to establish the Clayton Trust to build an orphanage for vulnerable white boys. His vision was realized when the Clayton College for Boys opened its doors in 1911 and provided education, shelter, and support to

600 children over the span of 50 years. Over the decades that followed, our campus has undergone a transformational shift from a place that was once limited by racial and gender exclusion, to an organization driven by an ideal of social justice. It hasn't been a rapid change, and our journey is not complete. With bold humility we are working to reconcile a past that once contributed to the inequities we are determined to address. Times have changed, and Clayton has changed, but the heart of our mission to serve the children and families in our community is stronger than ever.

1899

Upon George Clayton's death, the George W. Clayton Trust is established

1911

Clayton campus dedicated as Clayton College for Boys

1964

United States Civil Rights Act enacted

1965

Head Start established by U.S. Department of Economic Opportunity

1969

Colorado Supreme Court ruled to revise Clayton's will to include children of any race and gender

Our newly defined core values are foundational to Clayton's beloved community. At Clayton we:

- Value diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Operate with integrity.
- Demonstrate bold humility.
- Strive for excellence.
- Innovate through collaboration.



1985

The Clayton Trust transferred from the City of Denver to become the nonprofit Clayton Foundation

1991

The Clayton Foundation shifted focus to early childhood education and development

1995

Head Start programs established at Clayton

2007

Educare Denver opened on Clayton campus

2009

Clayton named Head Start Center of Excellence

2020

Clayton launched a new strategic direction



Clayton Early Learning

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