The vision of the Robert F. Kennedy Children’s Action Corps is articulated thus: "We envision a world where strong families and communities nurture and cherish their children to be contributing members of society,” In the words of Robert F. Kennedy, “...that every child in this country live as we would want our own children to live.”

We can think of no more powerful or effective way to nurture and cherish children, than through education. But to create the world we envision, that education must be exceptional. It must embrace the understanding that all learners are different and able—despite diagnosis or identified disability, their traumatic and/or disadvantaged backgrounds, or their legal classification. It cannot assume that a certain “type” of student does not need, or cannot be successful in, certain curricula. Vocational and transitional education, the arts, humanities, STEM instruction—these are all important exposures and experiences for all students in a complete education. The organization that supports and delivers this type of education must be student-centered in its orientation, committed to discovering how each student learns, and crafting pedagogically-sound differentiated instruction in response. It must be comprised of teachers and administrators who are relentless in their search for “what works” for students, and who wield an extensive repertoire of modalities to provide teaching and evaluate learning. These teachers must be equally committed to themselves as learners, in order to continually expand their offerings, and develop as professional educators. The schools that they create are at once inclusive and individualized, well-versed in a delivery model that is trauma-informed and easily adapted to multiple learning styles and strengths.

An educational agency such as this also recognizes that the student is a person in the world, and that learning, and the application of what is learned, does not stop at the classroom door. The ultimate goal of an effective educational experience is to develop habits of life-long learning; fostering inquiry, analysis, and creativity that are employed long after a student finishes attending a school. It must also then teach skills as well as content, and address the specific needs of its students. Relationship-building and the development of social skills must be taught explicitly, and are embedded in experiential and project-based learning. This is because in order to move toward the world in our vision, we must prepare our students to collectively solve the problems of their world as they grow. The challenges faced by our society will be solved through collaboration, communication, and creative critical thinking, not simply with static information. We model this for our students through our integrated and inclusive relationship with parents, communities, partners, school districts, and state agencies such as the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. This collaborative strength allows us to collectively advocate for the best possible services and outcomes for our children.

For our students to be able to execute such problem-solving themselves also requires them to first believe that they can, and should, do so. It is a primary goal of the Robert F. Kennedy Children’s Action Corps that our students perceive themselves as capable, worthy, and exceptional learners, with much to offer their families, communities, and society as a whole. This role as a productive citizen and an active participant in their own lives and learning—that
they are the architects of their own success—is at the heart of all we do. Given the excruciating histories and debilitating challenges that so many of our students experience, it would be easy for them to see themselves only as powerless victims, with no opportunity or responsibility to determine their own choices or outcomes. We strive to help students achieve their highest level of independence, and their own definition of success, and to see that it is their actions and learning that guide them there.

Lastly, the educational agency that we envision is not content with exceptional work and advocacy for the students in its own schools. To paraphrase, in order for every child in this country to learn, as we would want our own children to learn, we must share what we know about developing programming, preparing teachers, and empowering students. We must advocate for exceptional education for all students at the state and national level. We must be a voice for those with no voice, until they are able to speak for themselves.