



Strategic Plan 2018-2021





Mission

St. Joseph Montessori School (SJMS) is a Catholic Montessori community committed to a learning environment that respects the uniqueness of each child in reaching his/her full potential.

Vision

To be a school of choice sought out by central Ohio families attracted to the power of the Montessori method of educating children applied in a diverse, engaging, and compassionate community.

In 2017, the St. Joseph Montessori School Board of Trustees launched a collaborative initiative to create a new strategic plan to drive the future of our school and ensure a solid foundation for large and ambitious goals, all in service of providing the best education possible for our students.

Founded nearly 50 years ago, SJMS has a long history of strategic collaboration. The Sisters of Notre Dame founded SJMS in 1968 as a Montessori preschool preparation program. Within a few years, parents and families recognized the value of Montessori education, and worked with the Sisters to expand into elementary grade levels. Following on this success, another expansion occurred in 1977 and transitioned SJMS to a private, pre-kindergarten through eighth grade Diocesan school, with non-profit status and an elected Board of Trustees. In 1985, SJMS moved to its current location on Hamlet Street in Italian Village in the heart of Columbus.

With strong Montessori foundations, SJMS continues to set itself apart from other private schools by offering a whole-child approach that values and focuses on the cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of each child. It is a safe, friendly, and welcoming community where students can confidently develop all aspects of their intelligence and their character. We guide children to develop sound values, to be respectful of and caring to all, to problem solve, to relate to others peacefully, and to develop a strong sense of responsibility for themselves and the world around them.

Starting in Fall 2017, a small leadership team was nominated to organize, outline, and lead the development of a new strategic plan. This leadership team collected the thoughts, opinions, and perspectives of a diverse set of our community's stakeholders, using surveys, interviews, meetings, and the important contributions of a diverse advisory committee. With this wealth of information, the team drafted a plan for final review, comment, and approval by the school community in Spring 2018. This plan represents the core principles of our community, and remains true to our roots. It was a truly collaborative effort that includes faculty, staff, board members, parents, and alumni.

By the end of this process, three areas of focus emerged for SJMS for our next three years.

1

Educational and Program Excellence

Ensure and enhance continued educational excellence in support of our students, teachers, and families, guided by the Montessori method.

2

Financial and Environmental Excellence

Leverage our solid financial health to strengthen our facilities, support our faculty and staff, and plan for future growth.

3

Strong Community and Profile

Nurture our community and build knowledge and awareness of the strengths and benefits of Montessori education, both internally and externally.

Educational and Program Excellence

Ensure and enhance continued educational excellence in support of our students, teachers, and families, guided by the Montessori method.

Providing a comprehensive, rich, and exemplary academic program for our students, guided by the educational philosophy of Maria Montessori, is the highest goal for our school. We will foster an environment in which children love learning, aim high to reach their potential, and become curious and caring members of their communities. To achieve this goal, we will continually strive to improve the quality and breadth of the education our students receive.

Many elements contribute to fostering this goal. A strong academic program, an outstanding faculty, and a diversity of perspectives and experiences nurtured in the classroom are all vital. But even more, we must embrace an expectation that everyone — students, teachers, staff, and family members — are active participants in a process of continual educational development and enhanced knowledge about the Montessori method.

Key Objectives

Strengthen Curriculum and Grow Curriculum Leadership

Develop and deliver exemplary curriculum that fulfills the potential of all students, and addresses the needs of the whole child and our diverse community. Create a new curriculum leadership structure to provide additional support and resources to faculty, and improve curriculum coherence and collaboration across the classrooms and age levels. Build upon a professional culture that supports all teachers, and inspires collaboration and innovative ideas. Seek ways to extend learning outside the classroom through outdoor education as well as resources across central Ohio.

Continue a Commitment to Professional Development and Continuing Education

Cultivate the strongest Montessori faculty in central Ohio by strengthening and expanding support and funding for frequent professional development opportunities for all faculty, including on- and off-site and state and national conferences. Nurture a culture of learning by providing ongoing education for all community members on the benefits of a Montessori education and the support everyone can provide our students.

Expand Opportunities for Service Learning

Infuse our Catholic identity and Maria Montessori's transformational vision throughout the curriculum by expanding and enriching opportunities for service learning at all levels. Provide opportunities for our students and our school community to connect and serve the broader Columbus community and beyond.

Enhance Special Subjects, Summer Camp, and Extended Day Programming

Strengthen our special subject curriculum including but not limited to providing opportunities for collaboration and cross-curricular studies with classrooms. Invigorate extended day and summer programming by exploring increased curriculum diversity and seeking new opportunities for development and growth. Further incorporate Montessori methods into special subjects, extended day, and summer camp curricula.

Solidify Academic Benchmarks

Recognize that Montessori education is connected to the broader educational world by demonstrating our alignment with key Montessori, state, Diocesan, and national educational standards. Continue current and explore additional accreditation processes. Explore ways to further validate Montessori learning methods.

Fiscal and Environmental Excellence

Leverage our solid financial health to enhance our facilities, support our faculty and staff, and plan for future growth.

Educational and program excellence must be supported by careful and diligent stewardship of our school's finances. From the strength of our current financial position, we will focus on the efficient use of all available resources to deliver on the school's daily environmental needs while also building toward the needs of the future.

We will make forward-thinking and broadly beneficial investments to improve program excellence, increase retention and enrollment, attract and retain superior faculty and staff, and enhance socio-economic diversity in our school community. Through a variety of methods, we will continue to strengthen our financial position, including but not limited to exploring grants and technology enhancements, and growing our endowment funds.

Key Objectives

Enhance Facilities

Establish a consistent process to maintain and improve both interior and exterior facilities to create an environment that fosters learning, ensures the well-being of students, and supports the mission of the school. Support improvements to the prepared environment in each classroom by updating Montessori materials and investigating new opportunities for technology in ways consistent with Montessori pedagogy. Explore innovative ways to use existing interior and exterior spaces to best support Montessori learning. Reinforce routine processes for a facility safety audit to ensure the well-being of all students.

Examine Long-Term Improvements to Facilities

Research and develop a plan for facilities that will support a growing enrollment, the needs of faculty and students, and the expectations of current and prospective families. Consider bold enhancements at all levels and include study of a new Children's House building and a high school.

Support Faculty and Staff Recruitment, Growth, and Retention

Continue to build and strengthen competitive compensation packages that attract, retain, and develop a superior faculty and staff. Routinely evaluate staffing needs in order to ensure adequate budget support of our school's operational and strategic initiatives. Review existing evaluation processes to set expectations and ensure that staff and faculty receive clear, supportive, and regular feedback.

Develop Short- and Long-term Fundraising Goals

Establish fundraising goals that support strategic initiatives as well as short- and long-term needs for classrooms, educational programs, and school infrastructure. Continue to cultivate new fundraising methods. Evaluate endowment funds and explore options for growth.

Strong Community and Profile

Nurture and grow the knowledge, awareness, and appreciation of the benefits of Montessori education both in our community and beyond.

Montessori education and a strong community set SJMS apart from other schools. To nurture our community and strengthen the position of the school, we will find more ways to share knowledge of the rich Montessori learning that goes on in our classrooms. Programming, communications, and marketing will establish SJMS's Montessori leadership and advocacy, all toward the goal of a stable, full enrollment every year.

Our approach must be both internal and external. Internally, programming and communications should solidify families' commitment to SJMS by highlighting the benefits of Montessori education from preschool through eighth grade, and forging a strong community. We must ensure parents are consistently and accurately informed of the specifics of their child's learning and development at SJMS.

Externally, our programming, communications, and marketing should promote a growing, diverse enrollment, and establish SJMS as the school of choice in Columbus for preschool through eighth grade. We will raise SJMS's profile in the community by seeking strategic partnerships, sharing academic data, and finding opportunities that broaden awareness of the value of Montessori education.

Key Objectives

Improve Family Satisfaction and Retention

Increase retention rates by designing programming and communication plans that build commitment and community, and consider the diverse needs of families at all levels. Communicate academic data, current research, and success stories with current parents. Establish consistent, accurate, and effective communications to families from both teachers and staff members.

Grow Enrollment

Develop targeted strategies to recruit a diverse student population, maintain stable and full enrollment at every level, and ensure SJMS is the school of choice for preschool through eighth grade in Columbus. Leverage academic data, current research, and success stories to increase awareness of the benefits of Montessori education.

Establish Montessori Leadership

Position SJMS as a Montessori leader and advocate by creating opportunities that increase community awareness of the value of Montessori education and highlight our Montessori leadership. Broaden our connection to the Montessori network by developing relationships with Montessori schools and associations that share our mission and vision.

Deepen Community Support and Identify New Funding Sources

Build relationships with Columbus and central Ohio leaders to establish a strong foundation of support for growth and enhance SJMS's profile as a leader in academics. Continue to grow and strengthen our alumni database as a means of procuring financial support and increasing awareness of SJMS across Columbus and Ohio.

2018-2021 Strategic Plan Development Teams

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