

**Oak Grove Montessori School  
Strategic Plan  
2011**

Nurture • Love • Learning



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2011

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## 1 Introduction

Oak Grove today is an authentic Montessori school with an established mission and strong values. Our school's strength is reflected in commitment to the needs of each individual child, its growing enrollment, and the quality of its teachers and staff. We have the added benefit of an impressive and well-maintained school facility with expansive grounds.

This document is an initial guide to our work as we continue to improve our strategic planning process. It will help drive our decisions and focus our priorities for the future. In order to identify and assess our major strategic initiatives and set priorities, we used the following key questions to guide our decision making:

- Does this initiative best serve the child and his/her overall development as we have envisioned it?
- Does this initiative serve and support authentic Montessori education and the faculty and staff that deliver it?
- Will this initiative produce a stable, well-resourced and sustainable community?
- Does this initiative support the needs of the families we serve today and in the future?

Our initial strategic planning efforts identified the following six major strategic initiatives:

- Nurture and Enrich Oak Grove's Montessori Educational Program
- Preserve Teacher and Staff Quality and Strengthen the Work Environment
- Increase the involvement of parents in Oak Grove activities.
- Build a strong and diverse community
- Foster a strong financial future for Oak Grove
- Sustain a beautifully prepared learning environment

High level action steps for each of these initiatives are discussed later in this document. Detailed action plans will be created to efficiently coordinate our efforts to implement the initiatives and to provide an effective tool for communication the results of our ongoing improving efforts. Ongoing feedback and assistance will be requested from staff, students, and parents. In 2011, we will launch a more formal strategic planning process that will include committees comprised of parents and staff to further enhance our improvement efforts

Above all, Oak Grove Montessori will remain committed to the pedagogical and instructional philosophy, values, and curricular emphasis of Maria Montessori while creating a climate of trust to facilitate open, honest internal communication.

## **1.1 Mission Statement**

At Oak Grove Montessori School our mission is to nurture and guide the whole child to become an independent, responsible learner.

We strive to provide each child with a loving and supportive environment that is thoughtfully prepared each day with real objects, materials, lessons, and experiments offering all of the key experiences needed to engage the child's intelligence and body. Each child is treated with kindness and respect while given uninterrupted time to freely explore with the hands and mind working together. While absorbing an intense amount of knowledge of our world, both past and present, students develop a strong sense of responsibility realizing they contribute to the success of a diverse school community. Our emphasis is on the development of the child as a whole, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically and intellectually.

## **2 Strategic Initiatives**

### **2.1 Nurture and Enrich Oak Grove's Montessori Educational Program**

Our top priority at Oak Grove Montessori is to maintain excellence across the Montessori curriculum in language arts, mathematics, history, geography, science, cultural studies and practical life. The curriculum will be enhanced to further support awareness and appreciation for individual and cultural differences. Students at Oak Grove will be given every opportunity to explore their creative, intellectual, and personal growth. We will encourage students to develop their talents and rise above their shortcomings, and will offer a balance of leadership opportunities, team projects, and a variety of extracurricular opportunities.

Students will learn peaceful resolution of personal and group conflicts. They will be expected to demonstrate good citizenship both in and out of school. Students with special learning needs will be given the support they need.

### **Action Steps**

1. Implement a continuous process of institutional self-reflection and improvement
  - Maintain the highest standards of Montessori education and remain true to its principles and practices.
  - Conduct the self-study required by the AMS accreditation process which will help us identify opportunities to improve our program and to reflect on our educational approach.
  - Continue to look critically at our own work as educators and be open to new ideas and proven practices that will enable us to more effectively implement Montessori philosophy at Oak Grove.
  - Continue to consult with Montessori experts: individuals and organizations.

- Continue to fund teacher participation in national Montessori and other conferences.
2. Support and strengthen our core curriculum based on current educational research
    - Add a Health and Life Skills component to the core curriculum along with essential teacher training.
    - Develop and enhance fine arts curriculum.
    - Further refine our peace curriculum.
    - Continue and possibly expand the offering of other languages through after school enrichment programs.
    - Evaluate and, where feasible, teach sustainable practices and green concepts throughout the Montessori curriculum.
    - Continue efforts to articulate a curriculum that is grounded in an understanding of children's social, emotional, and physical growth.
  3. Maintain current and initiate new school accreditations
    - Design and execute an accreditation plan that coordinates Oak Grove's ongoing efforts to meet and exceed accreditation requirements from multiple accreditation agencies.
    - Continue following AMS accreditation steps.
    - Identify and pursue other relevant accreditations such as Georgia Accrediting Commission or Southern Association of Independent Schools.
    - Qualify as a Student Scholarship Organization in order to receive donated funds from the Private Tax Credit program.
  4. Ensure that classroom and library have necessary reference and reading materials to support curriculum needs.
    - Survey faculty to determine materials needed within classrooms, library, other educational areas, and outside areas for the upcoming school year.
    - Incorporate this process within the budget setting process and include related expenses in the operational budget.
    - Coordinate fund raising efforts to more effectively help meet the identified resources
  5. Improve Oak Grove's ability to serve enrolled students with special needs.
    - Assess current capacity to accommodate special needs students and compare that to the volume and range of those currently enrolled.
    - Develop a consistent, written format or protocol for tracking and documenting plans/ goals of special needs students.
    - Capture special needs early in the admission process to ensure that Oak Grove has the necessary staff and materials available before the student with special needs begins school.

6. Expand parent's understanding of the Oak Grove Montessori philosophy and curriculum in a manner that enables them to support and enhance their children's learning.
7. Develop and implement a consistent approach to student transitions between the divisions.

## **2.2 Preserve teacher and staff quality and strengthen the work environment**

OGM's teachers and staff provide carefully prepared environments as an essential element in which our students learn and grow. As guides and life-longer learners, our staff encourages all students to be motivated, purposeful and confident in their abilities.

Oak Grove will continue its practice of hiring superior faculty. In addition to a strong respect for children, the faculty will demonstrate exceptional mastery of Montessori pedagogy and curriculum. Faculty members will embrace opportunities to extend their learning, which will be offered in an ample variety of formal and informal avenues. Salaries, benefits and working conditions will combine to ensure minimal faculty turnover and a consistent experience for students. Faculty will be involved in helping to determine the policies of Oak Grove and in fostering the school to home relationship that supports the Montessori approach from infancy through pre-adolescence

### **Action Steps**

1. Support, encourage and recognize professional development
  - Support faculty and staff interested in assuming leadership roles in the school.
  - Continue to strengthen the existing program of faculty evaluation and professional growth.
  - All lead teachers will be expected to be Montessori certified, or be working towards completing their certification.
  - Professional development will not be limited to Montessori training - it will include approved training that strengthens the ability of our faculty and staff to deliver the complete curriculum and to conduct the operations of the school.
  
2. Ensure that teaching staff receives appropriate Montessori training and continuing education to enhance their effectiveness.
  - Continue to provide in-house opportunities for faculty to attend continuing education programs and renew skills for continuing education unit requirements.
  - Ensure that staff development programming, over time, is responsive to faculty needs across the academic spectrum
  - Continue to encourage Oak Grove faculty to visit other Montessori schools and provide coverage with qualified substitute teachers.
  - Increase staff participation in Montessori related conferences.

3. Utilize tools for supporting faculty development.
  - Develop a formal, structured mentoring program for new teaching staff.
  - Create and implement a formal, comprehensive performance evaluation for faculty and staff.
  - Develop a “best practices” guide to assist teachers in promoting a consistent standard of quality and program delivery within each class.
  - Create an individualized staff development plan with each faculty and staff member.
4. Assure a competitive and appropriate faculty and staff compensation package.
  - Continue the commitment to raise salaries of faculty and staff and explore the efficacy salary ranges competitive with area schools.
  - Improve communication with staff, as necessary, in regards to changes in benefits.
5. Continually improve Oak Grove’s as a desirable place of employment.
  - Conduct a formal survey of faculty and staff to monitor trends in morale, and identify / prioritize issues.
  - Develop and implement a length of service recognition program for faculty and staff.
  - Provide for teacher preparation and planning outside of the classroom.
  - Devise and implement team building activities to enhance trust and respect among faculty and staff.
6. Develop cooperating student teacher / intern programs with local universities.
  - Survey local universities to determine and develop their interest in this type of effort.
  - Create an internship program that meets the needs of Oak Grove faculty, students, and interns/colleges.
7. Develop and implement a student educational support services plan.

### **2.3 Increase the involvement of parents in Oak Grove activities.**

Our goal is that parents choose OGM because they understand the Montessori approach to education and believe the methodology closely aligns with their family's ideals and parenting style. Parents will participate in all aspects of the operation of the school, from planning committees and advisory roles to volunteering in the classroom. All parents will understand that their involvement is crucial in creating a healthy and affordable educational environment. In addition, all parents will participate in educational programs designed to help them better understand the Montessori method and how it can best be supported and implemented in their role as parents. We seek to build a strong partnership between each family and the school. A high percentage of parents will contribute to giving opportunities like the annual fund, demonstrating to other potential funding resources, the depth of commitment of Oak Grove parents.

#### **Action Steps**

1. Establish and maintain excellent internal and external communication.
  - Coordinate clear and concise communications from school, classroom teachers, room parents and Parent Advisory Committee so that parents do not feel overwhelmed with information.
  - Maintain an appropriate forum and process to resolve parent grievances.
  - Encourage parents to promote Oak Grove with their employers and friends.
2. Create a Parent Advisory committee to increase the quantity and quality of parent involvement as well as facilitate the school's ability to satisfy parent needs.
3. Increase opportunities for parent education.
  - Develop an effective parent education program to support the Montessori philosophy and the school's mission and vision for an "outstanding community."
  - Improve attendance and content of curricular meetings, when possible, involving the children.
  - Develop an annual orientation program of Montessori philosophy and encourage all new parents to attend upon enrollment at Oak Grove.
  - Offer seminars that speak to current parenting, child development, and educational issues.
  - Research the development of a parent-infant class.
4. Increase level of parental involvement with Oak Grove activities.
  - All parents participate with their child at school at least once.
  - All parents attend at least one of the parent education, teacher-parent conference, or social events.

- All parents help their child work on achieving their goals at home.
- >50% attendance at parent education meetings.
- >50% attendance at teacher-parent conferences.
- >50% of the families contribute to the annual fund.

## **2.4 Build a strong and diverse community**

Developing a strong sense of community for children, their families and the staff is a primary goal of the daily function and long-term planning at Oak Grove Montessori. We seek to preserve this community by attracting and retaining students, families and staff who are committed to the School's mission and philosophy. In order to further enhance the educational experience of the student and faculty body, we aim to create a culturally, ethnically and socio economically diverse community, that fosters a culture of tolerance and understanding.

As we prepare students for success in the world beyond Oak Grove Montessori School, we also seek to foster stronger bonds with our growing community of alumni/ae and their families, who represent the history and tradition of the School.

### **Action Steps**

1. Build a diverse and multicultural community.
  - Define what diversity and multiculturalism mean to the Oak Grove community.
  - Explore the feasibility of initiating exchange programs and other partnerships with culturally and socioeconomically diverse schools and institutions.
2. Expand and strengthen the relationship between Oak Grove, its families, and the wider community.
  - Become a leading source for educational lectures and workshops for parents and other community members.
  - Provide meaningful and rewarding opportunities for more members of our community, including parents and alumni/ae, to share their talents, experience, and energy with the School.
  - Facilitate connections between Oak Grove students and their families and diverse organizations whose mission and values are consistent with those of Oak Grove.
3. Actively seek ways to connect alumni to Oak Grove and to strengthen their bond with the school.
  - Create new opportunities for alumni/ae families to attend and/or participate in Oak Grove traditions and other School events.
  - Develop and maintain a comprehensive, regularly updated database of alumni/ae and their families.

## **2.5 Foster a strong financial future for Oak Grove**

Although the inherent quality of Oak Grove will attract and retain students, it is imperative that we raise community awareness of both OGM and Montessori throughout Carroll County.

It is critical that we foster enrollment growth from within by increasing rates of retention at critical points of transition. Continue parent education of the Montessori pedagogy and the three-year cycle, while continuously improving academic programs and increasing financial aid resources will affect retention rates. It is critical that we develop a strategic marketing plan that promotes what is unique about Oak Grove.

Fundraising plays a significant part in the financial stability of a private school. It is time for secure funding that can be used to offer the Montessori method to a more diverse, socio-economic population.

Financial stability at a private school depends not only on healthy enrollments but also on fundraising. Oak Grove has a successful history of voluntary support for both small capital projects and annual operating needs. It is now time for the School to secure funding for a substantial endowment, which will provide income that will allow the administration to undertake new strategic initiatives with confidence.

### **Action Steps**

1. Strengthen admission's marketing, student retention and the school community.
  - Conduct a school-wide communications audit that identifies deficits in our current procedures and opportunities for improvement. The audit should make recommendations identifying how we can be consistent in our communications from each facet of our community. Equate Montessori practices with real-world language for better understanding by parents and the broader community.
  - Work to create a sense of Oak Grove as one community – one school rather than a collection of program levels and classrooms.
  - Continue to develop an exciting and meaningful parent education program that begins with the admission process and continues with focused events to educate families about the Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary programs.
  - Implement a program of internal marketing.
  - Use financial aid strategically as an enrollment tool when appropriate.

2. Provide professional development to enhance development skills of staff and administration.
3. Develop a strategic marketing and public relations plan that will highlight Oak Grove's achievements while promoting enrollment and donations.
  - Define and understand the School's target audience and their perception of the School and its competition.
  - Effectively promote the School's strengths and differences while educating families about the benefits of the Montessori approach and related research substantiating these benefits.
  - Maintain "targeted" communications including brochures, advertisements, and people-to-people contact.
  - Maintain and expand membership in community agencies.
  - Upgrade and update the Oak Grove web site.
  - Investigate possible need and cost of a public relations consultant.
4. Manage student enrollment and maximize student retention.
  - Improve student recruitment program and materials.
  - Initiate community outreach and education program to improve student recruitment.
  - Supply promotional materials to local real estate agencies and corporate HR offices.
  - Develop enrollment-advertising plan for in school and within the local media.
  - Make presentations to surrounding neighborhood associations and civic organizations.
  - Develop process for facilitating students moving up to subsequent program. Include interview and educational process for parents.
5. Strive to achieve the highest possible participation rates by Oak Grove constituents in all fund raising campaigns.
  - Keep records of contributions according to all giving categories.
  - Educate target audiences to establish a culture of giving with a goal of 100% Parents, and Faculty/Staff.
  - Educate constituents on planned giving opportunities via target communications.
  - Conduct annual structured campaign aimed at grandparent community.

6. Plan for adequate funding of new programs and facility improvements/additions.
7. Maintain secure tuition and non-tuition based revenue sources.
  - Research opportunities for corporate partnerships with local companies.
8. Establish competitive tuition rates.
  - Survey tuition schedules form local schools

## **2.6 Sustain our functional and aesthetically pleasing campus**

OGM is fortunate to own a large piece of property in a convenient location with beautiful, well-maintained buildings, and wooded acreage with ample space to explore and discover. As our programs grow and evolve, it is critical the facilities continue to meet the changing needs of all programs. In particular, the composition of the elementary program must be managed carefully to ensure that the needs of these grade levels are addressed.

In recognition of our role as stewards of the earth and its precious resources, we must continue to implement and improve environmentally sustainable practices as we reflect Maria Montessori's concern for the long-term condition of our planet.

### **Action Steps**

1. Develop a Master Plan for facilities expansion, maintenance and improvements.
  - Facilities plan for maintenance and improvements.
  - Recommendations to make our facilities increasingly green.
2. Assess whether the existing facility will continue to meet the needs of students for the foreseeable future and, if not, what changes must be made.
  - Address space allocation needs.
  - Analyze ability to handle increased enrollment.
  - Improve ability to meet requirements of special needs students.
3. Address routine maintenance needs.
  - Create a master list of outstanding maintenance issues and resolve.
  - Document and schedule routine maintenance activities. Where possible, modify maintenance processes to become greener.
  - Analyze and update routine maintenance funds allocated within the operational budget.
4. Increase environmental friendliness and sustainability of the facility.
5. Improve the use and care of the outdoor areas.
  - Increase the number of active sustainable practices.
  - Further develop a gardening and permaculture plan.
  - Become a recognized community leader in environmental stewardship, green practices, and curricular integration.
  - Provide more shade in all outdoor work and play areas.

- Develop the trails to provide additional educational and physical fitness opportunities for students, staff, families, and community partners.
  - Improve signage.
  - Consider marketing advantages when developing outdoor areas and activities.
6. Provide adequate technology to support the curriculum and school operations.
- Inventory school's computer equipment.
  - Asses school technology needs and create a technology maintenance/upgrade plan.
  - Document technical architecture.
  - Implement standard processes for computer maintenance, disaster recovery and security best practices
  - Update operational budget to include funds for upgrades and replacements.