



MISSION STATEMENT

As we always do, we began by examining our mission, and ultimately reworded it to better express our focus and goals:

We prepare children to be resilient, creative and independent problem solvers. We are leaders in teaching Montessori principles and incorporate the best practices of modern early childhood education in our classrooms.

West Side Montessori School is a vibrant, collaborative community of passionate teachers, joyful children and engaged parents. Our diverse community is a reflection of the city in which we live.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPROVES REVISED MISSION STATEMENT AND 2016-2021 STRATEGIC PLAN

At WSMS we are proud to be accredited by NYSAIS (the New York State Association of Independent Schools) and AMS (the American Montessori Society). Every ten years these organizations require us to look deeply into every aspect of our school—who we are, what we do, how we do it, what can/should we do differently—all with the goal of ensuring that we continue to provide the highest quality start to the education of our young students, and support their families to ensure that this process continues after they leave us.

This year the self-study that generated our 2016 decennial assessment also provided the context for reviewing our mission statement and assessing and developing a 2016-2021 Strategic Plan.

The data collection processes that undergird our planning decisions have been extensive,

and involved a combination of focus group meetings and online surveys. In addition, our mission statement, educational program, internal and external communications, policy documents, administrative and governance structures, and physical plant have been examined.

On June 6, 2016, the West Side Montessori School Board of Trustees approved a revised Mission Statement and a new Strategic Plan to guide us for the next five years. The plan focuses on children, faculty, TEP and financial security. We are grateful to the many members of the faculty and administration, Board members, and parents and friends of WSMS who contributed their insights and enthusiasm to putting this plan in place.

Mimi Basso
Head of School

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2016–2021 STRATEGIC PLAN

The overriding goal of the new plan is **continuous improvement: to ensure our ability to provide an unparalleled early childhood education with the highest caliber faculty in the most appropriate and best-maintained facility in New York City.**

STRATEGIC GOAL #1: Enhance the experience of children.

We believe that learning is not neat and linear: it is a messy process. We expose children to a range of intellectual, physical and social activities, and we give them long blocks of uninterrupted time to work in these activities. In this way children take responsibility for their own learning. They ask questions and seek explanations and then ask more questions. They learn to make decisions, to challenge themselves, and to strategize. Our objectives for this goal address expanding these opportunities for our students.

Objectives:

- Enhance the cultural arts curriculum at WSMS
- Naturalize the rooftop environment
- Explore the possibility of providing uninterrupted work periods (2-3 hour blocks) for WSMS students
- Strengthen the bonds of WSMS alumni to their school

STRATEGIC GOAL #2: Uphold a faculty culture of excellence and growth.

We are very proud of our faculty. Our teachers are highly skilled, multi-talented, and well credentialed. Equally significant, they form a cohesive team of independent thinkers who are dedicated to and expert at helping their students experience the sense of joy and competence in their classroom work that will lead to a lifelong love of learning. We recognize the importance of attracting and maintaining strong faculty and are committed to ensuring competitive salaries as well as meaningful benefits, professional development opportunities, a stimulating work environment, and high morale.

Objectives:

- Strengthen the enduring commitment to knowledge, reflection and mutual support that is already a vital characteristic of our faculty culture
- Commit to anti-bias professional development for teachers so that they can create an environment which supports anti-bias work with children
- Develop and support a wellness initiative for teachers
- Develop and support a financial preparedness initiative for teachers

STRATEGIC GOAL #3: Explore, nurture and celebrate diversity at WSMS.

We are, by design, a culturally, racially, and economically diverse school. Our families—parents and children—and our faculty/administration reflect the ethnic, cultural, racial, and economic mix of our community. Over the years approximately one-fourth of our families have received financial assistance through the School's Financial Aid Fund. More than 40% of our families self-identify as non-Caucasian for the NYS Basic Educational Data (BEDS) form. Our faculty is also ethnically and racially diverse, including 3 African-American/multi-racial, 5 Hispanic, 6 Asian, 3 Middle-Eastern and 22 Caucasian teachers in 2016-17.

There are a number of children with identified disabilities receiving special services: occupational and/or physical therapy, speech/language therapy, vision therapy, and counseling.

We strive to build a warm, welcoming community in which children and adults find friendships and support, a place where adults and children are encouraged to ask questions and broaden their understandings of themselves, others and the world.

Objectives:

- Explore who we are as a community
- Share our diversity

STRATEGIC GOAL #4: Promote, enhance and communicate the value of TEP.

Over the past five years, WSMS has strengthened our Teacher Education Program by adding the option for an Infant-Toddler credential, partnering with Concordia College to offer a master's degree to students, and upgrading the fifth floor gym space to provide adult classroom space. TEP offers expanded career opportunities to our classroom teachers, as well as a first look at potential entry level teachers as they intern in our classrooms.

Objectives:

- Promote, enhance, communicate Teacher Education Program opportunities
- Promote, enhance, and communicate ongoing professional development opportunities
- Promote, enhance, and communicate the knowledge and expertise of TEP faculty

STRATEGIC GOAL #5: Assess and protect WSMS's long-term financial sustainability.

WSMS has been conservatively managed, has no outstanding debt, and enjoys a comfortable level of cash reserves. The Finance and Investment Committee of the Board has oversight responsibility for investments consistent with the Financial Policy and Procedures Manual adopted by the Board.

Annual income is composed of tuition, ACS funding, funds raised through the annual Auction and through Annual Giving, interest on invested funds, and the WSMS-TEP program. In the past, capital campaigns have been used to fund major projects, but there are no campaigns planned at the current time.

In these uncertain economic times we must ensure our financial ability to support our mission of economic as well as social and cultural diversity. We must actively manage our building to maintain its functional and financial viability. And we must improve our ability to deal with unanticipated cash needs and major capital commitments.

Objectives:

- Adopt an investment/risk policy
- Determine whether investment management should be outsourced or internal
- Establish baseline financial health for WSMS
- Ensure consistent financial performance
- Support financial literacy as a core competency of the WSMS Board
- Identify new sources of revenue
- Identify future capital expenditures

