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# BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPROVES 2011-2016 STRATEGIC PLAN

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On May 24, 2011, the West Side Montessori School Board of Trustees approved a Strategic Plan to guide us for the next five years. The plan focuses on children, faculty, financial security, and readiness to take advantage of opportunities and to deal with challenges. 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

From its earliest days almost half a century ago, West Side Montessori School has been dedicated to striving for excellence in all that we do in service to our young students. Since 1963 the academic program, the facilities, the faculty and administration, the students, and their families have consistently supported and exemplified this goal.

That said, it is important that we reexamine on a regular basis who and where we are. Since inception we have conducted Strategic Plan analyses every few years; each time we have done so, we have been gratified to observe that our progress continues to embody our values. This past year was no different.

This year's Strategic Plan supports our continuous quest for excellence in all areas of our mission and supporting operations. Our commitment is to sustain and enhance West Side Montessori School for our current population and for the generations of students and families to come.





THE INPUT FROM OUR SEVERAL PLANNING MEETINGS HAS CONFIRMED THAT WE ARE IN WONDERFUL SHAPE AS AN INSTITUTION.

- We have an excellent reputation among prospective, current, and alumni families, as well as among peer and ongoing schools.
- We have no outstanding issues or debt.
- We are maintaining our desired level of enrollment and have no shortage of applicants. Our tuition is competitive with that of peer schools, giving us some flexibility to increase it if necessary.
- Our building is in excellent condition, with recent classroom renovations and “greening” funded through a highly successful capital campaign, and building upgrades and maintenance financed through the operating budget.
- We are a well-managed institution, having earned Independent School Management’s top ratings in all categories.

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**But we are not, nor should we be, standing still.**  
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OUR PRIMARY GOAL IS CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: TO PROVIDE AN UNPARALLELED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION WITH THE HIGHEST-CALIBER FACULTY IN THE MOST APPROPRIATE AND BEST-MAINTAINED FACILITY IN NEW YORK CITY.

- We are aware that many families nowadays choose to send their children to school at a younger age than our cut-off allows, effectively limiting our pool of potential students.
- We have noticed that some families enroll their children at WSMS for just one year, thereby denying those children the full benefits of a multiyear WSMS education, making the parental commitment tangential, and complicating our efforts to know those children well enough to determine the best next schools for them.
- Because of ACS regulations, children with fall birthdays have lost funding for a third critical year at WSMS, and are thus potentially consigned to local schools that lack the academic stimulation they have benefited from at WSMS.
- We want to fulfill our mission by building our financial reserves to ensure that financial aid is available in every situation in which it is needed.
- We want to continue to reside at the cutting edge academically, and to attract and retain the best and brightest faculty and administrative talent.
- We want to be “ready”: proactive as opportunities for program or facility enhancements present themselves; prepared to manage challenges as appropriate.

# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2011-2016

**GOAL: TO IMPROVE THE LIFE OF THE CHILD, BOTH IN THE CLASSROOM AND BEYOND WSMS.**

At WSMS, we place the child at the center of all that we do. Each decision made and each action taken on behalf of an individual child is grounded in the knowledge of his or her stage of development (social, emotional, intellectual, physical, artistic) and unique learning style, in the context of our commitment to social, economic, and ethnic diversity. Our faculty members regularly examine each child's development in peer group discussions and continually engage in reflection and lively debate about our program and practices. At the close of each academic year, faculty members suggest improvements to foster the continuous evolution of successful classroom practices.

*OBJECTIVE:* Design and maintain a physical setting for children that supports the educational philosophy and expectations of excellence that define the WSMS vision and mission.

*OBJECTIVE:* Monitor and maintain the best health and safety programs possible for the WSMS students.

*OBJECTIVE:* Continue to ensure that the benefits of a WSMS education resonate beyond West 92nd Street by supporting the development of self-directed learners, flexible thinkers, creative problem solvers, empathetic citizens and resilient individuals.

**GOAL: TO SUSTAIN OUR CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE AND GROWTH AMONG OUR FACULTY.**

We are very proud of our faculty. In academic year 2010-11, WSMS teachers came from 16 different countries and spoke 17 different languages. 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. We will enable this by instituting a "program of excellence" to provide substantive professional development opportunities inside and outside of the classroom; by continuing to attract talented faculty via the TEP program and NYU; and by rewarding excellent performance.

*OBJECTIVE:* Develop and support an educational community that is defined by intelligent change and dynamic growth, especially by enhancing and integrating faculty knowledge and pedagogical skill.

*OBJECTIVE:* Sustain/enhance WSMS's leadership in early childhood and Montessori education.

*OBJECTIVE:* Nurture and enhance community and camaraderie.

*OBJECTIVE:* Ensure that teachers are being rewarded for excellent performance.



# WSMS STRATEGIC PLAN

**GOAL: TO IMPROVE THE SCHOOL'S READINESS FOR POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES BY IDENTIFYING AND PROACTIVELY EVALUATING COMPELLING, MISSION-CONSISTENT EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES THAT WILL ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF OUR PROGRAM, MAINTAIN OR STRENGTHEN OUR MARKETPLACE POSITION, AND/OR ENHANCE OUR FINANCIAL SECURITY.**

The continued success of WSMS will require ongoing, proactive review of our current programmatic resources and potential. Decisions to expand the school will require current data regarding market conditions, community sentiment and costs. Following thorough evaluation of relevant, objective, and current data, the school will be better poised to meet challenges and to capitalize on opportunities.

*OBJECTIVE:* Gather and analyze key data to evaluate and make recommendations regarding the following opportunities:

- A. expansion of the WSMS Summer Camp
- B. expansion of the WSMS Teacher Education Program ("TEP")
- C. expansion of adult programming
- D. addition of a program for two-year-olds
- E. addition of a nursery program for the children of faculty and administrative staff
- F. addition of an on-site therapeutic services program for WSMS students

**GOAL: TO FURTHER INCREASE FINANCIAL SECURITY AND FLEXIBILITY IN KEEPING WITH OUR MISSION OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY, WHILE MAINTAINING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE.**

WSMS has been conservatively managed, has no outstanding debt, and enjoys a comfortable level of cash reserves. However, in these uncertain economic times we must enhance our ability to fund our reserves in support of 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.

*OBJECTIVE:* Strengthen the school's development program by analyzing and expanding fundraising opportunities among current families, alumni and friends of WSMS, and other potential contributors (including individuals, foundations, and corporations).

*OBJECTIVE:* Focus on increasing alumni engagement as we plan our celebration of our upcoming 50th Anniversary in 2013.

*OBJECTIVE:* Increase WSMS revenues without capital investment by identifying ways to expand existing programming (such as TEP, summer camp, adult programming, etc.).

*OBJECTIVE:* Ensure that investment policies and budget decisions reflect WSMS's commitment to the ongoing availability of financial aid as needed and to the maintenance of the ACS program, while providing the resources necessary to meet opportunities and unexpected challenges.

*OBJECTIVE:* Ensure that our facility at 309 West 92nd Street continues to comply with local laws and regulations and is actively managed to maintain its status as an asset to WSMS and as a potential source of funds.

