



**VISION**  
**2011 - 2016**

**Oak Meadow Board of Trustees**  
*Strategic Planning Committee*  
September 26, 2011



## **MISSION STATEMENT**

*Oak Meadow Montessori School is dedicated to the child-centered Montessori philosophy which fosters academic excellence, personal growth and cultural awareness while nurturing children's spirits. A diverse community of life-long learners, we cultivate confident, independent and compassionate human beings by providing the tools and experiences needed to embark on rich, meaningful journeys as responsible citizens of the worlds.*

**VISION**  
**2011 - 2016**

*Drawing on our Montessori legacy, Oak Meadow will be a recognized leader among schools, solidifying its institutional capacity in order to attract and retain the finest faculty while supporting the development of innovative best practices for 21<sup>st</sup> century learners.*

# **STRATEGIC ROADMAP**

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## Preamble

American education is at a crossroads. Most schools are still based on the traditional educational model that was designed to prepare students for the needs of the industrial revolution. The traditional instructionist model, based on the notion that teachers transmit a prescribed set of facts and procedures to students, must be replaced by a new educational paradigm if we are to successfully prepare students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The new educational model will need to be one that teaches 21<sup>st</sup> century skills utilizing the knowledge and understandings that are available through recent brain research and other educational developments.

Oak Meadow is uniquely positioned to be a leader under the new educational paradigm. At the heart of our Montessori educational approach is the understanding that education is not the transfer of information from teacher to student, but rather is the nurturing of young minds and spirits. Our faculty is strong and our administrative structure is sound. Our facilities have grown to meet the needs of a larger student body that extends successfully through middle school. We are well along the path from good to great.

In the fall of 2010, we began a year-long Strategic Visioning Process involving all of the school's adult constituencies – faculty and staff, parents and Board of Trustees – in an intensive effort to investigate issues at the heart of what it means to be a Montessori school in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We set out to explore our educational program in ways that could and should be ongoing – intending to generate a Strategic Vision that reflects not so much tasks to be completed as ways of thinking and behaving that define who we are as a school. Through the process of defining who we are and how we behave as a school – issues that at their heart involve the question of what is the nature and purpose of education – and through continued striving to provide excellence in education, we would also address the issues surrounding institutional and financial sustainability.

In order to gain insight into the forces that are shaping the new paradigm in education, our community read two books - 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills: Learning for Life in Our Times by Bernie Trilling and Charles Fadel and Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home, and School by John Medina. The themes in these books resonated with Montessori education and offered us opportunities to innovate as educators. During a series of five day-long retreats throughout the year, we uncovered ways in which Oak Meadow is already a 21<sup>st</sup> century school and we discovered ways that we could be more intentional about providing a 21<sup>st</sup> century education while remaining true to our Montessori core.

This new Strategic Vision and Roadmap will guide us to continue our explorations of what it means to be a Montessori school in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It will lead to continuing to wrestle with the following questions. How do we continue on the path of becoming a great school with an educational program second to none? How do we articulate what separates us in the marketplace in ways that will resonate with parents? How do we build a financial model that assures institutional sustainability and the ability to compensate our faculty and staff appropriately?

## **Design Principles:**

### ***Ideas to Guide our Thinking and Actions***

#### ***Advancing Our School through an Emergent Process***

We live in a dynamic and rapidly changing world where fixed plans may undermine our ability to react to evolving situations. We believe that constructing our school's future is best served by taking a responsive "strategic posture" based on a five-year vision and supported by research data and thoughtful analysis in our approach to planning.

#### ***Cultivating the Collaborative Community***

The benefits of cooperative work hold mutual advantages to the individual and the community as a whole. Working jointly taps the unique resources of each individual and the outcome is greater than that of any single contributor. Our aim is to embrace the value and teach the skill of collaboration at all levels and across all our constituencies.

#### ***Encouraging Active Inquiry***

At the heart of learning is our human capacity for curiosity. Preserving and nurturing this innate inquisitiveness is central to a successful learning experience. As a community of life-long learners we cultivate and support active investigation into all facets of learning by students and adults as part of our educational program.

#### ***Prioritizing Generative Thinking***

Generative thinking employs creative and imaginative thought processes to address complex challenges while allowing new ideas to emerge without rushing to solution. Encouraging generative thinking allows for deeper and more meaningful exploration of significant school challenges and may reveal further questions to be explored and/or actionable solutions.

#### ***Supporting Individual Creative Potential***

Establishing a climate where the ideas of each student and adult are both sparked and respected is essential to a vibrant educational community. Allowing space for the unexpected and encouraging inventive ideas are basic components of a worthwhile education. By recognizing and honoring these opportunities as they emerge we support courageous learners to reach and go beyond their perceived potential.

## **Strategic Theme I:** ***Solidifying Our Institutional Leadership and Capacity***

Oak Meadow has the opportunity to demonstrate the power of Montessori education to the larger educational community and to reveal the efficacy of Montessori as the sought-after new paradigm in education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In order to establish and be recognized as a leadership school, steps must be taken to assure that Oak Meadow is a financially sustainable institution that can attract and retain the finest educators and that can continue to move forward to develop the finest educational program. Marketing efforts that generate an excess of demand for admission must be a priority.

### **Main Goal:**

- To strengthen our position as a recognized leader among schools.

### **Sub Goals:**

- To establish a financial model that ensures long-term institutional sustainability.
- To strengthen our school identity and marketing efforts in order to achieve consistently strong enrollment.
- To explore technology innovations on an institutional level including communications, office systems and facility upgrades.

### **Related Questions:**

- How do we balance our desire for affordable tuition levels given the demographics of the surrounding towns with our desire to be a leadership school that compensates its faculty and staff appropriately?
- What is the balance of enrollment revenue variables (number of students, tuition level, and financial aid) that will optimize Oak Meadow's ability to fulfill its mission?
- What opportunities exist for non-tuition revenue?
- How do Oak Meadow's expenses compare to peer schools, and are there economies that we can adopt?
- What does Oak Meadow offer that differentiates it from other school options and that resonates with the needs and desires of parents?
- How does Oak Meadow create compelling messages about educational excellence and use those messages to reach the broader community?
- How can new or innovative program components strengthen Oak Meadow's mission and financial sustainability?
- What is the viability and value of adding the following program components?
  - An infant/toddler program
  - A 9<sup>th</sup> grade program and/or a high school program
  - Maximizing facility use and program expertise over summer months

## **Strategic Theme II: *Sustaining the Finest Faculty, Administration and Staff***

In order for Oak Meadow to achieve its goal of leadership as a 21<sup>st</sup> century Montessori school, it must focus on attracting and sustaining the finest faculty, administration and staff. This will require offering viable and competitive salaries and benefits. Equally important is the need to develop a school culture in which collaborative, creative and critical thinking are nourished, valued and engaged.

### **Main goal:**

- To attract, support and retain the finest faculty, administration and staff.

### **Sub goals:**

- To address monetary and non-monetary needs of our faculty/staff.
- To create a culture of collaboration, creativity and teaching excellence through professional development and renewal.
- To support faculty and staff in inquiry and innovation on the integration of Montessori education and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.
- To support individuals in their quest toward teaching excellence.

### **Related Questions:**

- What does teaching excellence at Oak Meadow look like?
- What are current best practices used by our peer schools to retain, renew, compensate, and inspire faculty, administration and staff?
- How do peer schools provide time and structure for peer collaboration?
- Is there a correlation between compensation and job performance and job satisfaction?
- How do we identify and assess the quality of Oak Meadow school culture?

## **Strategic Theme III: *Innovation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

In order to grow as a 21<sup>st</sup> century educational institution Oak Meadow will critically explore and evaluate Montessori practices and the needs of today's learners. Key areas of focus will be in adopting new technologies in a meaningful way, highlighting and expanding our focus on creating global citizens, and developing a keener sense of environmental stewardship within an increasingly collaborative school community.

### **Main Goal:**

- To integrate innovative best practices for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning into Oak Meadow's program.

### **Sub goals:**

- To study the relationship between Montessori practices and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning needs using Brain Rules and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills as a foundation.
- To cultivate a learning environment that promotes understanding and use of new educational technologies.
- To pursue an expanded understanding of environmental awareness and nature-based learning.
- To create global citizens, with socio-cultural awareness who engage in the worldwide community.

### **Related Questions:**

- What are current best practices used by our peer schools in the integration of technology into the curriculum?
- How do we best introduce technology into the curriculum as an experience rather than for the sake of the technology?
- How does the use of blogging or global engagement aid the school in developing its brand as a 21<sup>st</sup> century school?
- How does technology help students become critical learners?
- How can we create a technology savvy school community where the entire OM community can be involved?
- What is the best way to ensure student success in a 21<sup>st</sup> century world?
- What does it mean to be a global citizen today?
- What does nature-based learning mean?
- How can we foster collaboration skills at every level of our community?
- What is being sacrificed when we add something new to the curriculum?
- What is the right balance between seemingly opposing goals: 1) experiential and virtual learning 2) academic rigor and play 3) technology based and nature based learning?
- What is the need for and purpose of a school-wide Curriculum Coordinator position? How could this specialist support across level program coordination, flow and innovation?
- What is the appropriate balance of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) related subjects in our overall school program?