



Great River School

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Strategic Plan 2024-2029

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Great River Mission and Vision

Mission: Great River School (GRS), a Montessori learning community, prepares students for their unique roles as responsible and engaged citizens of the world.

Vision: World peace through Montessori education.

Values:

Grow Independence through Responsibility.

- We manage time and responsibilities with civility and agency.
- We demonstrate an awareness of our responsibility for, and impact on, others.

Engage in Meaningful Work.

- We choose work that serves a developmental purpose.
- We make a difference in the world.

Connect with the Natural World.

- We understand and explore interdependence with other people and the environment.

Build a Community for All.

- We value all constructive contributions.
- We protect the rights of all.

Purpose of this Strategic Plan

Developing a five-year strategic plan is a crucial step in ensuring the continued success and growth of our school community. This five-year strategic plan will serve as a guiding document from 2024-2029 that aligns GRS's mission with its actions, sets clear goals, optimizes resource allocation, embraces change, involves the community, and provides a framework for ongoing evaluation and celebration of success.

Long-Term Vision and Mission Alignment

Purpose: This strategic plan will help align GRS's activities with its long-term vision and mission. It serves as a roadmap to achieve the overarching goals that reflect GRS's educational philosophy and values.

Importance: By maintaining focus on GRS's core principles, this strategic plan will help to ensure that day-to-day decisions and actions contribute to the fulfillment of GRS's broader mission.

Goal Setting and Clarity

Purpose: The plan allows us to set goals for the next five years. It provides a clear direction for the growth and development of GRS.

Importance: Setting well-defined goals provides a shared understanding among stakeholders, including staff, parents, and students.

Resource Allocation and Budgeting

Purpose: This strategic plan aids in identifying the resources needed to achieve goals, whether they be financial, human, or technological. It helps prioritize and allocate resources efficiently.

Importance: Clear allocation of resources ensures that GRS can invest in the areas that matter most to us as a community.

Adaptation to Changing Educational Landscape

Purpose: The educational landscape is dynamic, with new technologies, teaching methodologies,

and regulations emerging. This strategic plan will help GRS adapt to these changes while staying true to our principles.

Importance: By staying flexible and adaptive, GRS can remain at the forefront of educational innovation, providing students with the best possible learning experiences.

Community Engagement and Stakeholder Involvement

Purpose: This strategic plan involved input from various stakeholders, including parents, staff, and community members. This ensures a diversity of perspectives and a sense of shared ownership.

Importance: Engaging the community fosters a collaborative spirit and ensures that the strategic plan reflects the values and aspirations of all those invested in the success of GRS.

Measuring Progress and Celebrating Success

Purpose: Wherever possible, this plan establishes key performance indicators and metrics to measure progress toward GRS goals. It also outlines a process for celebrating achievements and learning from setbacks.

Importance: Regularly assessing GRS's performance allows for informed decision-making, continuous improvement, and recognition of the hard work and dedication of the school community.

Our strategic plan is organized into four strategic priorities: equity, community, academics, and school finance. Each section includes a description of the priority and specific goals to advance that priority. Each section was reviewed by various stakeholders and is intended to offer guidance from the community and the Board to the school's leadership over the coming five years.

Strategic Priority One: Equity

Statement on Equity:

GRS will urgently seek equity by translating emergent needs into ongoing action.

Equity in our learning community at GRS means that all members with marginalized identities will have access to the resources and support they need to thrive, per their own definition of thriving. In order to thrive in community, all students, staff, and families must feel safe and supported, an essential element of an equitable learning environment.

GRS acknowledges that systems of oppression both benefit students with privileged identities and harm students with marginalized identities. These marginalized identities include racial identity; religious identity; ethnic identity; nationality; physical, emotional, developmental, and/or intellectual ability; neurodiversity; sex and/or gender identity; sexual and/or relational orientation; familial status; socio-economic status; immigration status; emergent language status; personal and/or intergenerational trauma history; and educational needs.

Equity action at GRS enhances our Montessori learning environment.

Equity Priorities:

GRS prioritizes accountability from an equity lens.

GRS centers the experiences of community members with marginalized identities that are not centered under White supremacy culture. White supremacy culture is an often invisible set of norms, values, tendencies, expectations, emphases, focuses of attention, practices, processes, and products that perpetuate the idea that whiteness is superior.

GRS works to dismantle White supremacy culture in its many expressions, work which is the responsibility of members of the dominant culture.

The entire GRS community rigorously examines our present systems for areas of inequity.

Equity Goals:

- 1) GRS will immediately begin working on creating a curriculum review cycle and adoption process that includes an anti-racist, anti-biased (ABAR) review of all materials and will institute the first year of the cycle by the 2028-29 school year.
- 2) For all five years of the strategic plan, GRS will hold as a goal diversifying our student population. We will pursue this goal through active methods such as increasing marketing in local communities and increasing the number of school activities targeted specifically to support BIPOC students.
- 3) For all five years of the strategic plan, GRS will hold a goal of diversifying our staff population. We will pursue this goal through active methods such as reevaluating how and where new positions are advertised, creating opportunities for staff of color to gather and build community, and offering multiple tracks of staff development equity-based programming.
- 4) Equity and inclusion will continue to be an annual focus for GRS professional development. All new staff will receive equity training within their first 6 months of employment from the Equity and Inclusion Facilitator and Head of School, and ongoing opportunities will be presented at least annually for all staff members. This will include training to engage with and support all the marginalized identities listed above.
- 5) School leadership at GRS will create a communication and decision making protocol that incorporates practices developed by the IDEAL Center (Science House) and group decision making practices for staff by the end of Spring semester 2024.

Strategic Priority Two: Community

Statement on Community:

At GRS, our community values common norms, joint participation, transparent decision-making, and clear communication. We put great emphasis on equity and celebrate diversity. We believe, after a global pandemic, that it is time to look outward as well as inward, and focus on healing in both the GRS community and in our larger society.

Community Priorities:

In preparing students to be citizens of a global world, GRS will combat cultural polarization by fostering an understanding of how people who see the world differently can all be right.

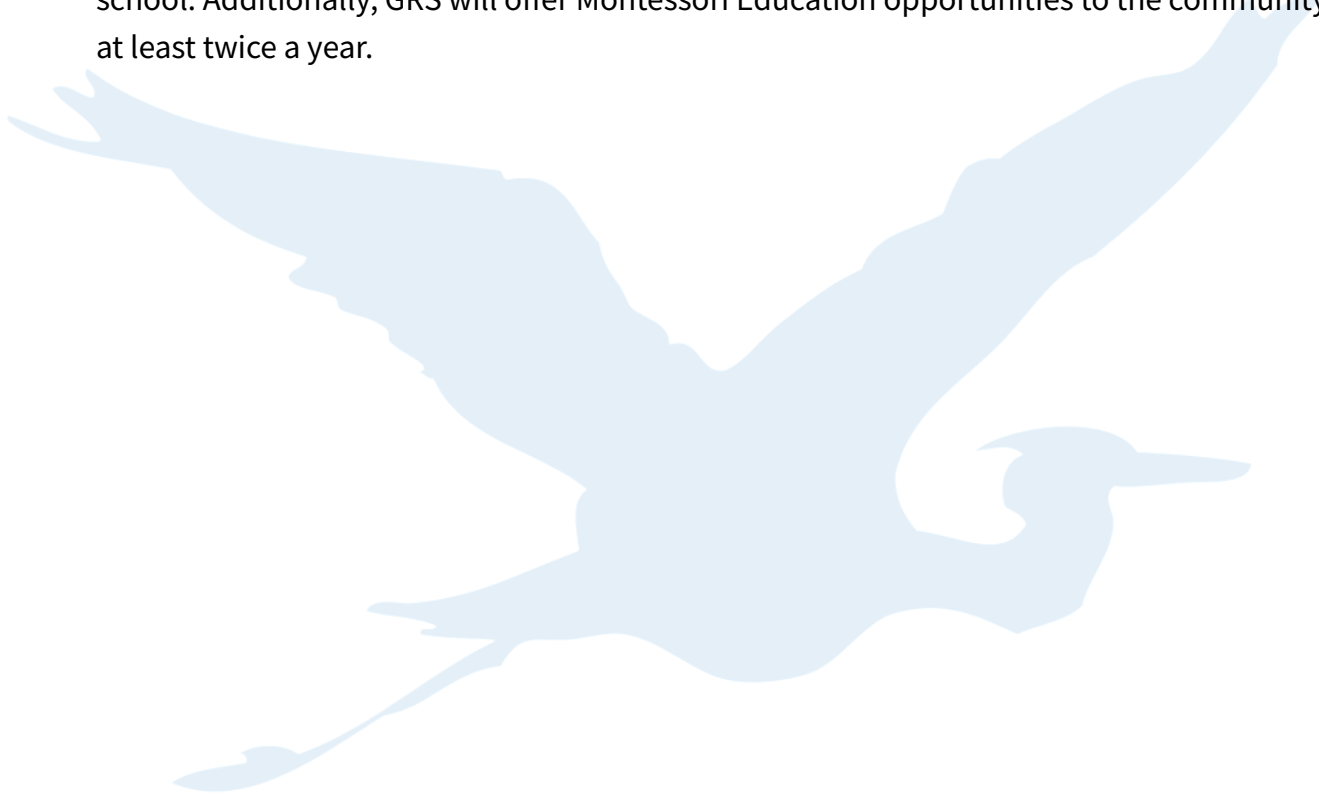
At GRS, communication is key to peace building, especially among people who may see the world differently. Living in community is not an inherently peaceful activity. Living in community means safely and productively engaging in conflict resolution and transformation.

It is through community that we at GRS are able to build trust, resiliency, and a sense of belonging for a group of people who may not be like-minded. Montessori education is predicated on what happens when we engage in work, both side-by-side and together.

Community Goals:

- 1) GRS will strengthen its commitment to community by establishing biannual community celebrations that include students, staff, and members of the larger community. To support these events, GRS will establish a clear process for event planning and volunteer opportunities by 2025 and expand to three annual events by 2027.
- 2) GRS will maintain a system of Key Experiences for each year of the school curriculum beginning in Upper Elementary; a progression of Key Experience learning goals will be developed by the end of the 2024-25 school year. Information regarding the philosophical importance of Key Experiences will be developed, given to all incoming Great River families at intake meetings and/or school orientations, and posted on the school website.

- 3) New teaching faculty at GRS will be paired with a mentor and given time to meet at least once a month by 2025. By 2026, all faculty will be trained on how to be a supportive mentor.
- 4) By 2025, GRS will establish a family mentor program to welcome new families to the school. Additionally, GRS will offer Montessori Education opportunities to the community at least twice a year.



Strategic Priority Three: Academics

Statement on Academics:

GRS provides rigorous and holistic learning experiences so that all students will have the skills and knowledge necessary to realize their own goals as they move through a globalized world.

The Montessori philosophy and the International Baccalaureate diploma program inform the curriculum and pedagogy, inspiring deep questioning and peaceful action. We are a place of holistic education and our academic values incorporate more than traditional academics.

Academic Priorities:

A Montessori Prepared Adult both learns how to use Montessori materials for self-guided learning, and more importantly, examines their own prejudices, ideas, and training around educating the child. The Prepared Adult, as Montessori said, “looks for the child who is not yet there.” At GRS we keep in constant focus every child’s potential while simultaneously developing a deep understanding and appreciation of the Prepared Environment. The Prepared Environment at GRS is meticulously crafted to facilitate the independent learning of each child.

At GRS, we cultivate immersive and student-centric learning environments designed to ignite curiosity, promote independent learning, and nurture effective problem-solving skills. These environments are carefully structured to provide a substantial and suitable academic challenge, accompanied by robust support systems for every student. Our commitment is to empower all students to reach their maximum personal potential by delivering diverse and pertinent instruction. This includes incorporating differentiation techniques and addressing a spectrum of learning styles and needs.

Collaboration is integral at GRS. We actively work together to eliminate obstacles hindering students' learning and active participation. Our approach involves tailoring instruction and support to align with each student's unique requirements. Through individual and collaborative reflection, we continuously refine our teaching practices, ensuring an inclusive and effective educational experience for all.

Academic Goals:

1. By 2029, GRS will have a set of curricular goals for each level, which are based on the Minnesota State Standards and the International Baccalaureate principles and are designed to guide our practice and inform the community.
2. GRS will develop benchmarks corresponding to Montessori's Planes of Development and school curricular goals to reflect on student growth in academics and social emotional learning. By 2029 we will have evaluated the effectiveness of these benchmarks and will have established a baseline measure of our students.
3. By 2029, GRS will have a highly trained staff as measured by the following indicators:
 - a. Professional development will include at least one Montessori-based strand per school year.
 - b. All elementary classroom guides will have completed or be engaged in an accredited Montessori training program.
 - c. 75% of adolescent classroom guides will have completed or be engaged in an accredited Montessori and/or IB training program.
 - d. All adolescent guides will have an introduction to Montessori (or equivalent) within the next five years and each year the school will make an offer of support to an adolescent guide to engage in an accredited Montessori Program.

Strategic Priority Four: School Finance

Statement on School Finance:

Financial stability at GRS means that we fully support Montessori Learning and our IB program, enable GRS's innovative learning methods through Key Experiences and an enriching, student-friendly prepared environment, and build and maintain a solid financial base to support our mission.

Financial Priorities:

Build the financial health of GRS through making wise financial decisions and seeking to use our resources effectively while staying true to our mission and values.

At GRS we strive at all times to offer all staff compensation that fairly values their work and pays a livable wage.

At GRS we commit to working in partnership with the Foundation to support the mission of GRS and to strengthen our financial future.

Financial Goals:

- 1) With an ultimate goal of achieving a 20% fund balance, GRS will achieve a fund balance of at least 17% of our annual budget by the end of FY29.
- 2) GRS will incorporate long-term needs (such as building and facility) into our annual budgeting process to understand our current and future financial commitments and needs. GRS will complete a capital improvement plan during SY25, a building decarbonization plan during SY25, and a long-term grounds plan during SY26.
- 3) GRS will coordinate with our Foundation in order to increase effectiveness, offering staff support to the Foundation as approved by the Head of School.
- 4) GRS will partner with the Foundation with the intention of creating and building an endowment for the school over the coming five years.
- 5) GRS will actively explore options during SY24 and SY25 to expand or replicate the school, including the creation and support of a board working-group to explore CSP Replication funding, outside grant funding, and bond refinancing.