



2018-2023 STRATEGIC PLAN



FOSTERING A LOVE OF LEARNING THROUGH
EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY

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MONTESSORI REGIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS



Montessori Regional Charter School (MRCS) took a community based approach to Strategic Planning. The goal was to engage teachers, families and community members to better understand common goals, the strength and sustainability of the mission, areas of opportunity and the level of community awareness. We looked for areas of alignment and misalignment between groups to ensure the plan works to bring groups together towards one vision for the school. Over the course of five months the following was conducted:

- Two Teacher focus groups with a total of 13 participants
- Two Family focus groups with a total of 18 participants
- Board Retreat with 7 Board participants
- Ten Interviews with community stakeholder
- Six Strategy sessions - Strategy team included:

Tim Czech, Parent

John Mott, IT Manager

Kristi Leighton, Title One Instructor

Kelly Zimmerman, Dean of Students

Bethany Norris, Dean of Students

Jane Binder, Chief Operating Officer

Mark Zielinski, Chief Academic Officer

Dr. Robin Quick, Board of Trustees

Geoff Ginader, Board of Trustees

Craig Palmer, President Board of Trustees

The Strategic Planning process was facilitated by
Emily Wachter
Focused Consulting LLC.

LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

In 2004, the Montessori Regional Charter School (MRCS) opened its doors with an ambitious but clear mission:

To provide a superior Montessori program of study that will develop lifelong learners and students who are prepared academically, emotionally and socially by creating a love of learning through meaningful and fulfilling educational experiences.

Every organization that seeks to improve and thrive must look inward from time to time and truly evaluate whether or not their values and mission are being fulfilled. For the past 14 years we have followed the MRCS mission from our humble beginnings of 120 students at one campus to our current enrollment of over 550 students at two campus locations. The growth and progress would make Maria Montessori proud.

Now entering our fifteenth year of operation, the Board of Trustees recognized it was the right time to review our mission and our direction, and to set a new vision for the future.

In the Fall of 2017, we began a strategic planning process that started with a survey to all of our families. We know that the success of the school and our students depends on a strong, positive relationship with our community. Such a relationship can only advance by listening to feedback from our student's families, teaching staff and other key stakeholders. We learned that we had work to do, particularly with improving communication within the entire Montessori family.

In the Spring of 2018, we began a more formal strategic planning process with the help of FOCUSED CONSULTING. As part of that, we reached out to over 100 members of the Erie community starting with MRCS families and teaching staff. We also engaged current and former Board members, local politicians and opinion makers, academics and district superintendents. This data and feedback provided the foundation for a planning committee comprised of MRCS academic and operations staff as well as MRCS board members and parents.

The Montessori Regional Charter School 2018-2023 Strategic Plan you are holding is the result of many hours of thoughtful discussion about how we can best serve our students, their families, and the community. The vision outlined in the plan recognizes our goal to be a top academic performer and elementary school of choice for the Erie Region. Our dedication to the Montessori philosophy and teacher excellence makes us who we are today. We must capitalize on these strengths and the opportunities before us, and implement meaningful strategies that will ensure a sustainable and vibrant future for MRCS. Student centered decisions will be at the core of this action plan.

I often hear families, teachers, operations staff, and Board members talking about being a part of the "Montessori family". I'm beyond proud to be part of that family and on behalf of the Board of Trustees, we wish to thank you for your ongoing support of the Montessori Regional Charter School. We are excited about working with our entire Montessori family to bring this vibrant plan to life. Go MUSTANGS!

Sincerely,

Craig H. Palmer
President, MRCS Board of Trustees

MONTESSORI REGIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL INTRODUCTION



Montessori is a method of education that is based on self-directed activity, hands-on learning which enables students to be both independent and self-reliant and fosters a love of learning. The Montessori Method views the child as one who is naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in a supportive, thoughtfully prepared learning environment. It attempts to develop children physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively. Montessori classrooms are beautifully crafted environments designed to meet the needs of children in a specific age range. Dr. Maria Montessori discovered that experiential learning in this type of classroom led to a deeper understanding of language, mathematics, science, music, social interactions and much more.

In Montessori classrooms, children make creative choices in their learning, while the classroom and the teacher offer age-appropriate activities to guide the process. Children work in groups and individually to discover and explore knowledge of the world and to develop their maximum potential.

Montessori Regional Charter School opened its doors as a tuition free charter school in the fall of 2004 serving 120 Kindergarten through 6th grade students, reaching 9 districts in Erie county and located at 2910 Sterrettania Road in Millcreek. Now entering its 15 year, the school is recognized as the premier Montessori program in the region, with a highly trained Montessori teaching staff and an array of programs, including childcare and afterschool activities, to serve our 550 students and their families.

The school was born of Montessori Children's House of Erie a private, nonprofit school that had operated in the region since 1978. As a private elementary school, there were limited opportunities to provide these unique, hands on, quality education as a choice for the Erie region. When Pennsylvania charter school law was introduced in 1997, the teachers, families and board of the Montessori Children's House saw this as an opportunity to expand their reach into the community and break the economic barriers. The Montessori community applied for a charter which was approved in the fall of 2003.

Led by a Board of Trustees and guided by a faculty that hold both Pennsylvania teaching credentials and rigorous Montessori training, the school is committed to contributing to the Erie regions high quality academic choices.

MONTESSORI REGIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL MISSION



Our mission is to provide a superior Montessori program of study that will develop lifelong learners. Our children will be prepared academically, emotionally, and socially by creating a love of learning through meaningful and fulfilling educational experiences.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES ARE:

- To encourage independence and self-reliance
- To honor, respect, and value individual differences
- A commitment to multi-age, multi-ability, and multicultural classroom environments
- To provide safe, prepared environments, filled with developmentally appropriate, tactile materials
- To maintain a highly qualified staff and administration
- Recognize parents role in our educational process
- To be a resource for our community as a center for Montessori training, observation, and awareness

MONTESSORI REGIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL VISION

MRCs will be recognized as a top academic performer and elementary school of choice for the Erie Region, and will be recognized within the Montessori community for its dedication to the Montessori philosophy and teacher excellence. We will be a positive and engaged part of the Erie Community helping to strengthen our region through education and outreach.



MONTESSORI REGIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL VALUES

ACHIEVEMENT

We celebrate and recognize individual and team successes to foster a culture that embraces high performance and being the best we can be.

DIVERSITY

We encourage, embrace and celebrate individuality, diversity, and creativity in the classroom and school community.

ENTHUSIASM

We inspire and foster a love of learning through our passion, spirit and energy inside and outside of the classroom.

HONESTY

We give and receive honest feedback and opinions in a graceful and open manner.

MONTESSORI PHILOSOPHY

We believe and practice an independent focus for each student and prepare our teachers through advanced education to foster a love of learning.

RESPECT

We value, honor and recognize that each individual perspective and contribution from students, staff members, families and stakeholders is well intentioned and worthy of thoughtful consideration.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Providing a safe, secure and healthy environment for students is a top priority.

STUDENT CENTERED

Decisions are first made with regard to how they will impact our students and the goal to foster independent thinkers who love to learn.

TEAM/COMMUNITY FOCUSED

Internally and externally we work to bring people together and foster collaboration towards one vision.



MONTESSORI REGIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL STRATEGIES



STRATEGY 1

Define what excellence means to MRCS and develop a plan that supports and fosters achievement.

SUB STRATEGIES

- 1.1 Using the Montessori philosophy MRCS will develop a plan that continues to improve the curriculum to ensure that every student makes progress year over year, exceeds state standards and addresses the holistic child.

- 1.2 MRCS will develop a plan that continues to improve operations and provides the best environment for our students to succeed.

MONTESSORI REGIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL STRATEGIES



STRATEGY 2

Develop and implement a comprehensive community involvement strategy designed to expand the community's knowledge and awareness of MRCS.

SUB STRATEGIES

- 2.1 Develop a family engagement initiative that fosters community.
- 2.2 Identify areas of the community we want to be better represented/understood.
- 2.3 Find opportunities to be a resource/expert to community influencers.
- 2.4 Work towards developing a positive view of charter schools.

MONTESSORI REGIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL STRATEGIES



STRATEGY 3

Create a unified campus that expands educational opportunities for our students.

SUB STRATEGIES

- 3.1 Identify key physical space requirements that would accommodate our growth projections and provide the specifications to meet or exceed desired educational program expansion
- 3.2 Develop financial capacity plan
- 3.3 Identify local resources to assist with search for location

MONTESSORI REGIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL STRATEGIES



STRATEGY 4

Develop and expand the MRCS foundation to support MRCS through financial enterprise.

SUB STRATEGIES

- 4.1 Develop a strategy to market the foundation.
- 4.2 Identify additional enterprises to support MRCS.

MONTESSORI REGIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL STRATEGIES



STRATEGY 5

Develop and implement a strategy to tell our story to the region in order to attract future students, expand our presence in the community and promote a positive image.

SUB STRATEGIES

- 5.1 Identify and research who our key audiences are and what is of value to them.
- 5.2 Conduct comparison of community education alternatives so we can more effectively assess our differentiators.
- 5.3 Develop a go to market strategy that outlines how to effectively reach each audience.
- 5.4 Determine methods for tracking/measuring enrollment and awareness initiatives.
- 5.5 Train employees, family and board on how to communicate the MRCS brand.



Montessori
Regional Charter School

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