

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School



Strategic Plan 2024 – 2027

Defining our Future

CMES BOARD OF DIRECTORS / Fall 2024

Our Mission:

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School's mission is to support children from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds living in or near St. Paul's East Side through a rigorous and high-impact Montessori program that empowers them to make positive decisions, develop self-discipline, and create a true sense of responsibility for themselves and others in their community.

Our Vision:

The vision of Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School is a world-class, cross-cultural elementary learning community featuring the powerful and highly differentiated Montessori curriculum, which comprehensively prepares children to achieve at elevated level and to excel as leaders in the 21st century. It will provide the highest quality education to all children, regardless of their socio-economic or cultural backgrounds.

CMES Board of Directors

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Julaine Roffers-Agarwal (Chair) | Jean Melancon (Vice-Chair) | Carolyn Ganz (Treasurer) |
| Rohan Chougule | Sarah Stocco | Rachel Droogsma |
| Jess Goff (Secretary) | Alyssa Schwartz, Head of School | |

2019-2024 CMES Strategic Plan: what we achieved

During the 2020-2024 timeframe the school board and leadership successfully navigated the impact of Covid-19 and focused on stabilizing school operations, safety for students and staff while advancing high priority strategic initiatives including the four areas of our 2019-2024 Strategic Plan:

ACCESS

- Offered a general education summer program and extended school year for students as funding allowed.
- Implemented school-based mental health program and additional classroom support to address learning loss and mental health impacts resulting from the pandemic.
- Established an innovative Federal Setting Three special education program for eligible children, integrating the Montessori approach with special education services for children with complex disabilities.
- Researched requirements for adolescent (7th-8th grade) program establishment, including:
 - MN state and Montessori curriculum design
 - MN state requirements for licensed staff
 - Physical space needs
 - Administrative support
 - Programmatic structure necessary to support a given adolescent program size
 - Budget and timeline requirements for all aspects

The Board ultimately determined that CMES is not currently positioned to establish an adolescent program but we leave open the possibility of an adolescent program in the future.

COMMUNITY

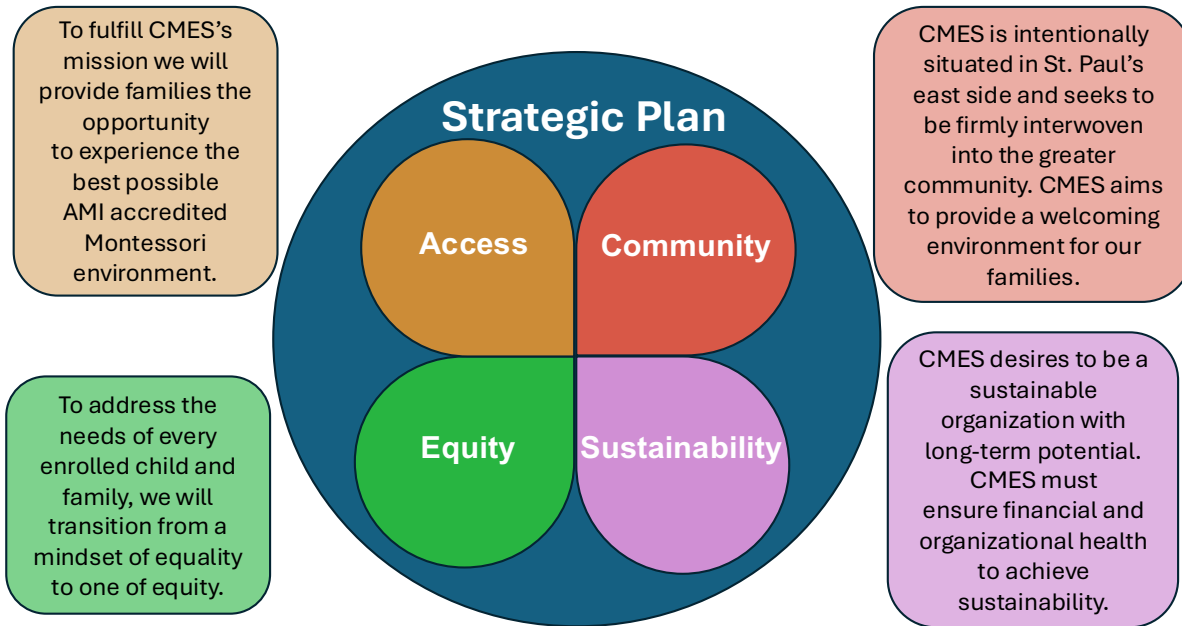
- Provided students with events led by community organizations which provided relief for staff overburdened by the demands of providing remote learning options and gave students opportunities to interact with wider community members.
- Employed acting Heads of School as necessary during leaves of absence to ensure continuous staff support.
- Maintained membership with the East Side Area Business Association to evolve relationships with ESABA members especially those providing services to east side families and thus better connect our families with those services.
- Provided newsletters to donors, alumni families, and board members keeping them current on Cornerstone activities.

EQUITY

- Dedicated necessary funds to improve equity-focused programming including:
 - Hired firm to conduct an equity assessment using input from staff, parents, and students and began implementation of suggested changes.
 - Partnered with MCM to enroll two CMES staff and one CMS staff in year-long leadership residency.
 - Implemented year-long professionally-facilitated staff cohort programs and identity groups.
- Established a standing Equity Committee to examine practices, policies, and communications with a perspective on diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Supported staff diversity and provided professional development opportunities to staff at all levels.

SUSTAINABILITY

- Maintained a sound fund balance while utilizing all Covid-related funds available via state and federal programs.
- Developed multi-year financial scenarios to ensure the school's viability throughout the pandemic.
- Provided salary and benefits to ensure high staff retention.
- Enlisted services of a grant writer to apply for funds specific to the school's mission.
- Established a strong relationship with our new charter school authorizer, the University of St Thomas, resulting in UST renewing our contract for an additional five years, the MN maximum allowable contract duration.
- Continued to review and refine all school and board policies to ensure compliance with MN statute updates.
- Conducted ongoing education for board members on good board practices and enlisted speakers and other methods to become more informed about initiatives being addressed by the board.



2024-2027 CMES Strategic Plan: looking ahead

While much was achieved in 2019-2024, the COVID pandemic necessitated that the Board and school leadership refocus and readjust priorities to respond to the needs of the school as they arose. The board conducted retreats in fall 2023 and 2024 to discuss strategy and identify strategic initiatives. To expand on this, we consulted with a smaller pool of staff, current and alumni parents to ensure that the previously identified areas were still those of greatest need and will continue to engage with the families and staff when researching initiatives. Because we have not completed all of the previously defined goals, the 2024-2027 strategic plan will support the same four areas, Access, Community, Equity, and Sustainability, further extending strategic initiatives.

ACCESS

1. Identify a strategy to attract and retain enrolled children and families in accordance with our mission.
 - a. Examine opportunities for new programming and extracurricular activities.
 - b. Establish a long-range vision for the size and grade level offerings, particularly focusing on the interface of CMES's kindergarten with the Montessori Center of Minnesota's early childhood program.
2. Utilize physical space creatively to meet the dynamic needs of the children, staff, and program.

COMMUNITY

1. Invigorate parent/family involvement within the school community.
2. Collaborate with the Montessori Center of Minnesota to provide an equitable experience for staff and families of Cornerstone Montessori Schools.
3. Explore strategic relationships with local organizations for programming and community enrichment.

EQUITY

1. Implement an equity plan that establishes a framework for individuals, the organization, and the community, including supporting personal and professional growth around topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
2. Increase staff diversity, retain exceptional personnel, and provide opportunities for professional growth and leadership development.

SUSTAINABILITY

1. Develop supplementary revenue sources through strong relationships with funding partners.
2. Ensure engagement of staff in commitment to Montessori pedagogy and the mission of CMES.
3. Emphasize Montessori practice and the value of charter school models in our marketing and community engagement activities.
4. Maintain best practices for school governance.