



**HILLTOP
MONTESSORI
SCHOOL**

**STRATEGIC PLAN
2017-2021**

**Hilltop
Montessori
School**



What started out as a modest nursery school, housed in a church basement and organized by a group of parents in the early 70's, has become a thriving Montessori school serving 130 children from 18 months to eighth grade on its very own 43-acre campus.

Mission

Hilltop Montessori School's (HMS) mission is for students to attain responsible independence. Specifically, the school's and staff's objectives are that:

- Students will come to an awareness of their unique task in and responsibility to the care of self, community, and the Earth.
- Students will come to realize the fullness of their intrinsic academic and creative potential.
- Students will come to maturity and integrity according to their individual rhythm, pace, and style.

Executive Summary

We are proud of what we have accomplished at Hilltop Montessori School. We value the education we provide to our students and the community of families we support. At this point in our school's development, we have a strong faculty, beautiful facilities, and solid enrollment with a diverse group of families. We want to secure and sustain this position into the future, enhancing programs when the time is right.

We want our students to learn, grow from and contribute to an increasingly diverse community -- one that meets or exceeds the demographic diversities of our surrounding communities. Hilltop's educational vision for learning and growth sits solidly upon the philosophical foundation of a Montessori education. Key goals flowing from this vision include enhancing the socioeconomic, racial and ethnic diversities among our students, families, and faculty; broadening the student experience so that graduates leave with exposure to, and confidence in, the learning of additional languages; and an investment in sustaining our campus and facilities so they continue to help our programs and families thrive.

This strategic plan is the result of surveys, interviews, and meetings with the board, staff, current and past parents, and other key stakeholders in the community. Their input regarding the strengths, weaknesses, and goals for Hilltop Montessori School was critical to identifying and prioritizing the goals for the school.

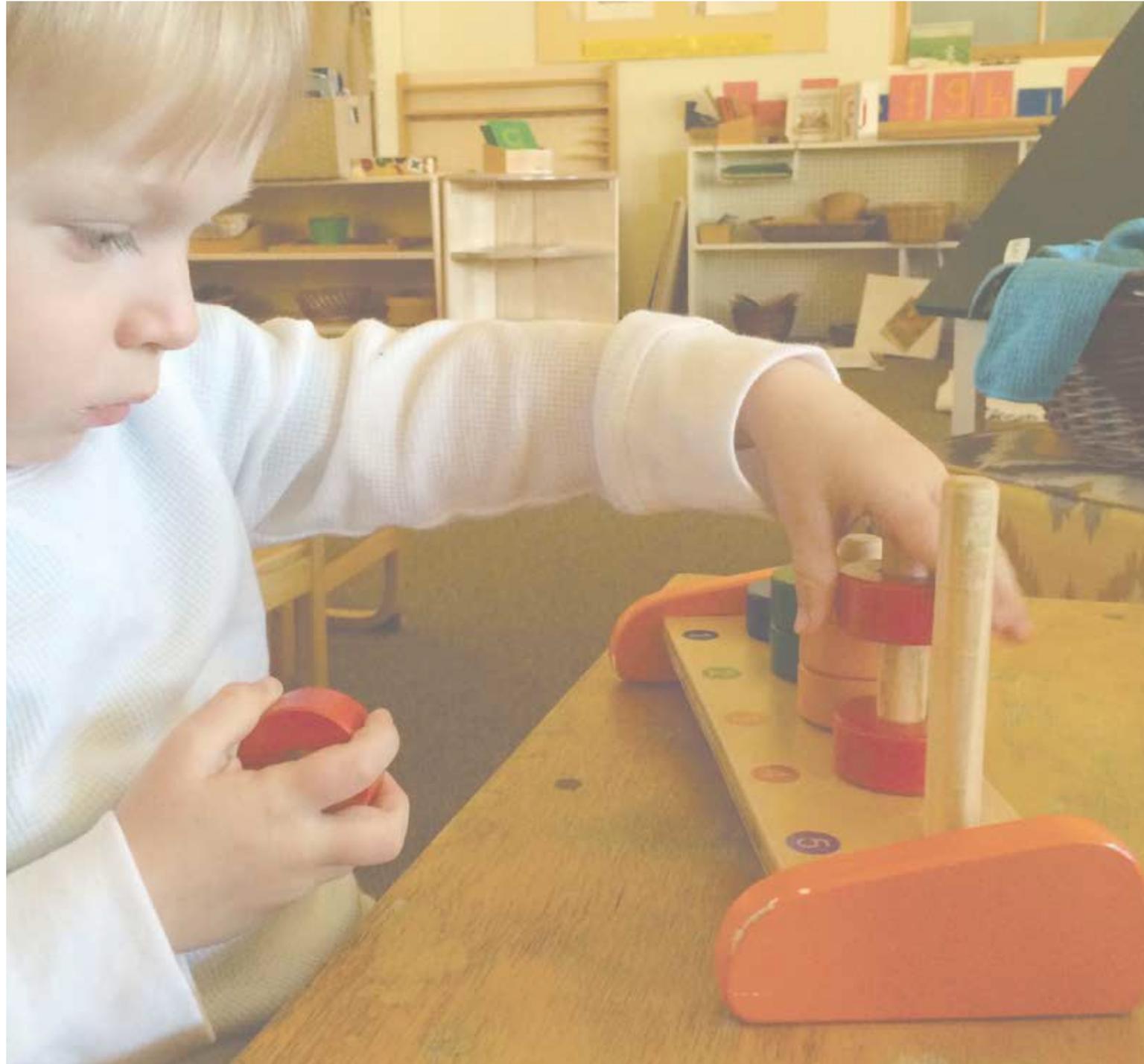
Primary Strategic Initiatives

- **Sustainability:** Secure our financial standing and the future of our physical campus
- **Equity:** Increase equitable access to our school
- **Identity:** Solidify and leverage our Montessori identity

Secondary Curricular Initiatives

- To increase students' exposure to additional languages
- To integrate technology while adhering to Montessori pedagogy





Key Initiative

Sustainability: Secure finances and facilities through an endowment

Objective: To sustain Hilltop's wonderful successes it is important to: maintain the current facilities, support staff with health care benefits and professional development, keep the school affordable for current students, and enhance the school's diversity through increased financial aid to lower-income families. True financial security will allow Hilltop to weather the ebbs and flows of enrollment while ensuring the state of the campus, the well-being of the faculty and staff, and the ability of many families to continue to access the invaluable education we provide. A stable endowment is the only way to truly achieve these goals.

Outcomes:

- Support faculty with competitive salaries, benefits and professional development
- Increase financial support to an economically diverse population of students
- Improve budgeting and planning for maintenance
- Plan proactively for potential expansion if/when it becomes appropriate

Strategies:

- Launch an endowment campaign
- Complete a facilities master plan for the entire campus
- Develop capital reserve fund goals

Measures:

- Endowment campaign results
- Interest from endowment provides sufficient funds to maintain the campus and support the faculty's and families' needs

Key Initiative

Equity: Increase Equitable Access to Hilltop Montessori School

Objective: The results of the parents' survey and interviews with the board clearly articulate a desire for more economic, racial, and ethnic diversity within the faculty and student body. Diversity is a core element of equity, and at Hilltop a commitment to equity also includes striving for social justice in our school and local communities. Hilltop will enhance its commitment to increasing the diversity of its learning community in a sustainable way. As is encouraged by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), Hilltop embraces "differences within the community such as gender, learning style or ability, race, age, ethnicity, family background, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and religious practice, and actively responds to students' and adults' positive or negative experiences."

Hilltop has already created an economically diverse student population under certain measures. Approximately 20% of Hilltop families earn less than \$50,000 per year and almost 10% of Hilltop students come from families that earn less than \$30,000 per year. More than 50% of Hilltop students receive some form of tuition reduction in the form of pre-K funding, vouchers, or school grants. In addition to these measures, Hilltop will strive to be inclusive of families that are near or below the poverty level in order to expand access to a Montessori education. We can accomplish this goal, and maintain financial viability, only through detailed and intentional planning and growth of our endowment. We also need to identify members of the community who will need additional support to function in a pluralistic environment.



Outcomes:

- Increase the flexibility of tuition so that more families can afford to enroll their children at Hilltop
- Grow the endowment to have the interest cover the difference between the flexible tuition being paid and the annual tuition increase

Strategies:

- Increase the endowment to \$5 million and use a portion of the interest for flexible tuition
- Solicit input regarding how to better serve the diversity that currently exists within the Hilltop community and implement as many ideas as possible
- Improve communication regarding the diversity at Hilltop - publish statistics and stories about Hilltop's commitment to creating an equitable learning community

Measures:

- Increase the amount of money available for tuition reductions
- By 2021, the proportion of HMS community members from measurable racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, family makeup, socioeconomic status, and religious groups (as obtainable from the United States Census Bureau or other available sources) will reasonably reflect the proportion in the communities that primarily make up the Hilltop community
- Favorable results on parent survey



Key Initiative

Identity: Solidify and leverage Hilltop's unique identity as a true Montessori school

Objective: This plan calls for Hilltop to better leverage its Montessori tradition by pursuing Montessori accreditation. Hilltop differentiates itself from other local independent schools in its commitment to a true Montessori education. This is reflected in its staff, culture of respect, mixed-age classrooms, and social curriculum. As an additional measure, through the American Montessori Society accreditation process, we will examine each aspect of our programs and administration to ensure their alignment with the Montessori philosophy. The accreditation is also a third party certification of the authenticity of our Montessori school. Furthermore, accreditation will allow us to fully capitalize on our identity as a true Montessori school through communications, marketing, public relations, and branding.

Outcomes:

- Hilltop will be an accredited Montessori school by 2021
- Parents will better understand what a Montessori philosophy entails
- The greater community will have a better understanding of our identity and values

Strategies:

- Pursue the self-study and accreditation process through the American Montessori Society
- Develop and improve communication regarding what Montessori means, including more parent education
- Share more articles in the newsletter to increase marketing and public relations
- Increase the number of community events sponsored or hosted by Hilltop

Measures:

- Parent survey results
- Number of parent education events and attendance at these events
- Number of articles shared in the newsletter and any response to them
- Number of articles about the Montessori approach in the local press
- Number of articles about Hilltop events which include community members and Montessori philosophy in action or practice

Curricular Initiatives

Second Language Exposure

Objective: The community at Hilltop is comprised of families who are multinational, multicultural, and multilingual, and this diversity creates learning opportunities within and beyond the classroom. In line with our mission to educate global citizens who are able to skillfully communicate across cultures, Hilltop is committed to increasing students' exposure to second languages within our authentic Montessori classroom environment.

Outcome:

- Increase students' exposure to second language

Strategies:

- Hire multilingual staff who can expose students to a second language in an organic way through play, music, daily interaction, mealtimes and after school programs
- Explore the use of a computer-assisted language curriculum for extra-curricular activities

Measures:

- Results of parent surveys of students who have second language exposure
- Number of students enrolled in extracurricular language learning activities
- Number of multilingual individuals on staff/faculty

Technology Integration within Montessori Pedagogy

Objective: Given the trend towards increased use of technology in education, the board considered how our school can continue to remain true to its Montessori roots and also prepare students to operate in a world increasingly reliant upon technology. The board affirmed the importance of integrating technology into the curriculum and providing extracurricular technology instruction. It also supported increasing guidance to parents regarding age-appropriate use of technology.

Outcomes:

- Students will gain confidence in approaching and working with new technologies
- Students will acquire skills in selecting and appropriately using the best technology tool for each task or project
- Parents will have access to workshops and guidance about helping their children use technology appropriately and responsibly
- Students will grapple with issues of digital citizenship in a supportive learning environment

Strategies:

- Create and implement an age-appropriate technology curriculum for each program (lower elementary, upper elementary, middle school)
- Incorporate digital citizenship topics into middle school health curriculum
- Host parent education workshops on social media, student use of technology, and responsible digital citizenship

Measures:

- Teacher and student use of technology for learning and projects
- Number of parent education workshops offered that address children and technology
- Number of attendees and response from families on parent education workshops
- Number of students and response from families enrolled in technology-related extra-curricular activities

Summary

Hilltop Montessori School is at a critical time in planning for the future. In order to secure the financial and physical stability of the school, we need to build a solid endowment that will enable us to increase and support the diversity of our school community. Further developing our strong Montessori identity through accreditation will also solidify the vast progress the school has made since its founding in 1972. The curricular goals of second language exposure and technology integration will further enhance the strength of our existing programs. The board believes this plan will bolster Hilltop's strong foundation and allow it to thrive as it approaches its 50th anniversary in 2022.

www.hilltopmontessori.org

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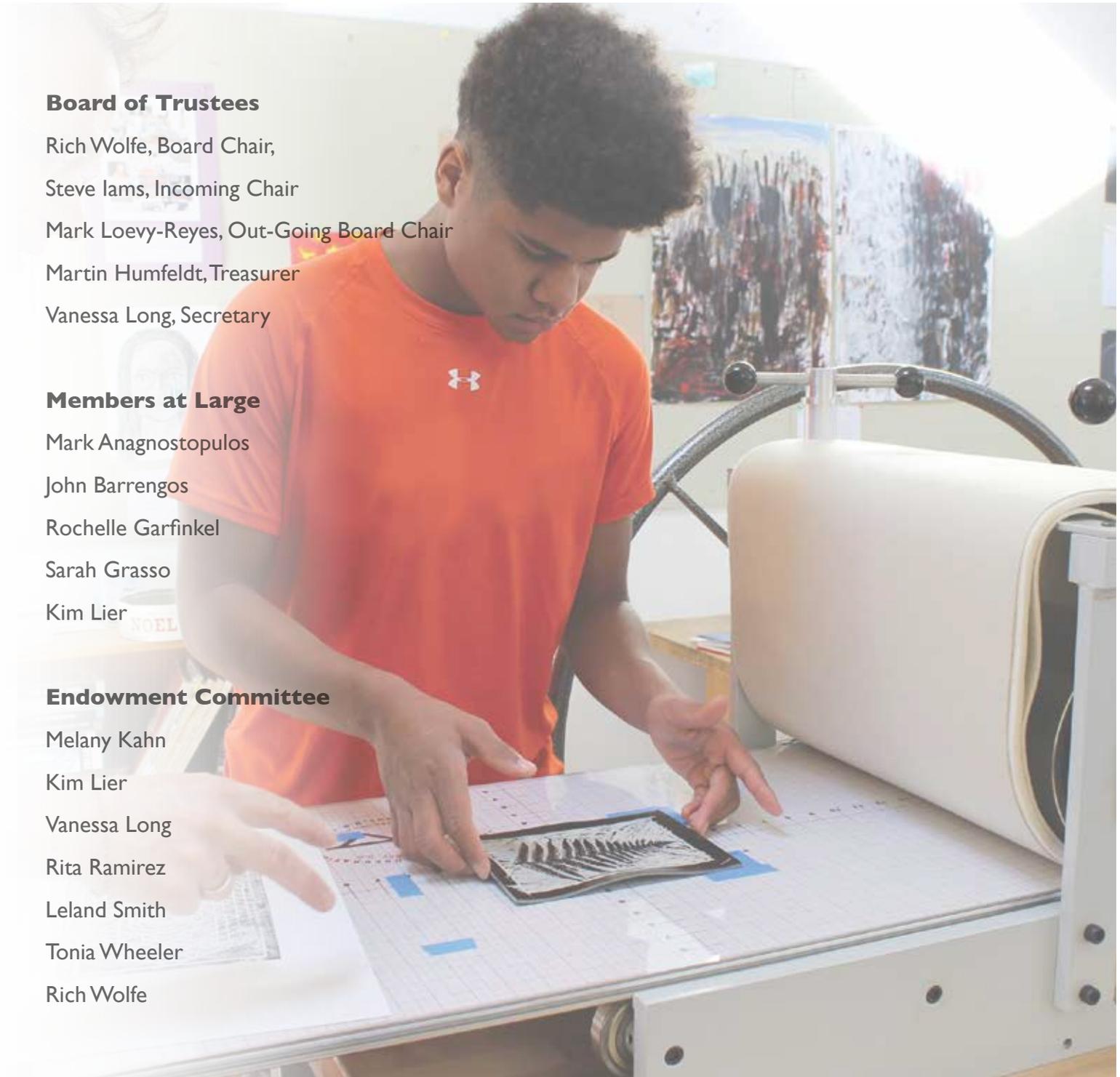
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Rita Ramirez

Leland Smith

Tonia Wheeler

Rich Wolfe



99 Stafford Farm Hill
Brattleboro, Vermont 05301
802 257 0500

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