



Northeast Iowa Montessori

Strategic Planning Report

MARCH 1, 2024

PREPARED BY: IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION AND
OUTREACH COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Acknowledgments

Designed and facilitated by Iowa State University Extension Community and Economic Development

Cover photos courtesy of the Northeast Iowa Montessori School

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Contents

Background	2
Schedule and Agenda	3
Participants	3
Strategic Plan Process and Summary	4
Parent and Community Survey	4
Practical Vision Workshop	5
Barriers to the Vision	7
Strategic Directions	7
First-year Implementation Planning	8
Financial Implications.	10
Plan Evaluation, Monitoring, and Updates.	11
Appendix A: Northeast Iowa Montessori School Mission and Vision Statements.	12
Appendix B: Practical Vision.	13
Appendix C: Barriers to the Vision	15
Appendix D: Summary Vision, Barriers, and Strategic Directions	16
Appendix E: Year One Implementation Plan.	17
Appendix F: Year One Implementation Plan	18
Appendix G: NEIM Online Survey Results	19

Background

Northeast Iowa Montessori School (NEIM) contracted with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Community and Economic Development (CED) to design and facilitate a strategic planning process to address the question:

How will we work together, and with the larger community, to become a strong, sustainable organization while maintaining the integrity of Montessori Education?

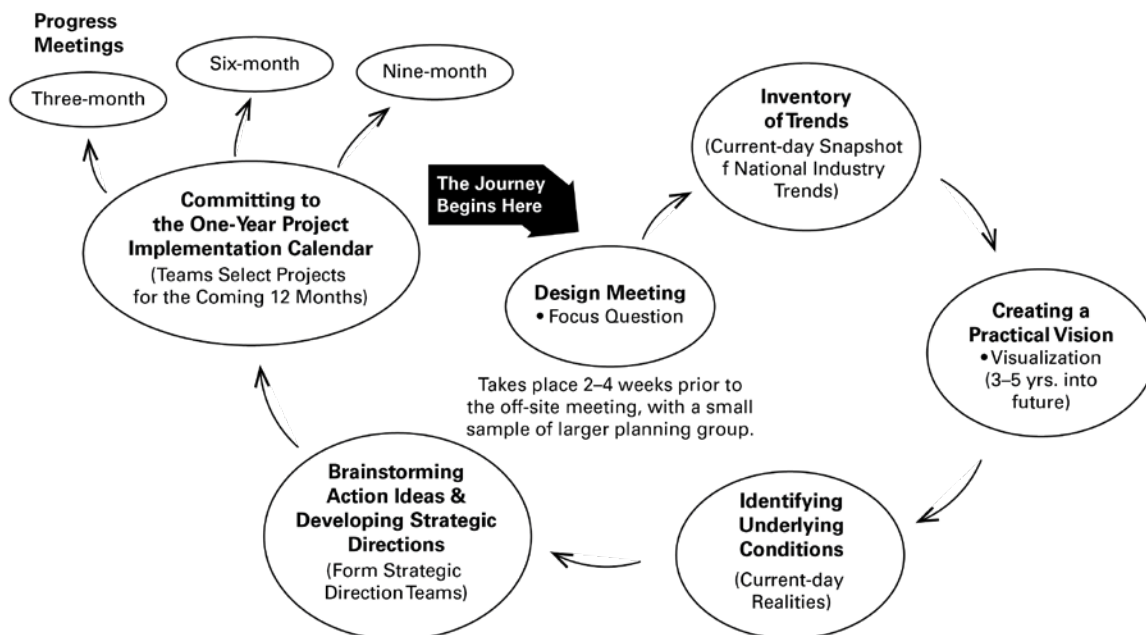
CED specialist Scott Timm facilitated the process using the [Technology of Participation \(ToP\)®](https://www.top-network.org/about-top-network) strategic planning method developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (<https://www.top-network.org/about-top-network>). This participatory process is an integrated approach to strategic planning that results in strong consensus around a realistic, achievable, and measurable plan.

As shown in figure 1, participants work together to:

1. Paint a picture of the current reality, including internal and external trends
2. Creatively visualize and come to agreement around their ideal future
3. Honestly confront their most stubborn blocks to success
4. Align around powerful, innovative shared intentions
5. Define measurable goals
6. Commit to accountable plans of action
7. Achieve consensus around a realistic, achievable, measurable plan
8. Actively manage quarterly and annual progress

Figure 1. ToP® Participatory strategic planning process

Typically a 2–3 day off-site meeting. Each step in this process takes approximately 3 hours, and includes context setting, individual and small-group brainstorm, posting and clustering ideas, naming clusters, and a brief reflection.



Schedule and Agenda

The planning retreats were scheduled on the following dates:

- Tuesday, November 7, 2023
- Sunday, January 7, 2024
- Sunday, February 18th, 2024

During the three work sessions, the NEIM board and staff followed a consensus-driven process that led the group through a comprehensive strategic planning process that addressed the following:

SHARED PRACTICAL VISION

Identify what you want to see in place in three to five years as a result of your actions.

BARRIERS TO THE VISION

Identify barriers and underlying contradictions that will get in the way of achieving the vision.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Identify two to four strategic directions that will move you toward the vision and address the barriers.

IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

Teams select projects and create timelines for focused efforts over the next 12 months. Projects, actions, and timelines directly address Strategic Directions.

In addition, the NEIM board and staff found it important to seek feedback and engagement from their broader community by distributing an online survey, results of which can be found in Appendix G. This feedback was reviewed by the group prior to creating a practical vision, and feedback was used directly and frequently in the development of a Shared Practical Vision and Implementation Planning.

Participants

The following NEIM board members and staff participated in the work sessions:

BOARD MEMBERS	Scott Searcy, President Eric Svestka, Secretary Mike Kueny, Treasurer Catherine Dyer, Member Luke Baethke, Member Matt Deeney, Member
STAFF	Rachael Buresh, Head of School Jane Busch, NEIM Guide Faith Robinson, NEIM Guide

Strategic Plan Process and Summary

PARENT AND COMMUNITY SURVEY

Participants first spent time reviewing the results of a survey distributed to parents, former students, and community members (see Appendix G for full survey results). They reflected together on the following six questions, with their responses bulleted:

What questions did this survey raise for you?

- Why did people express that they do not want more parent education opportunities?
- How could proposed partners aid as support resources and help us grow? What would that look like?
- How heavy a lift is a middle school/adolescent program?
- Do we have any data on student progress?

What insights are beginning to emerge?

- We are on the right track!
- We could improve communication—do a better job between families and the school.
- “SUPPORTED”—people who responded support what we are doing
- Love of learning is important
- What we are doing is working well
- Lots of comments on improvements, expansion

What are we really committed to?

- Children and the growth of the child
- Health and well-being of the school and staff
- Understanding who we are as a school—home in on that

What words stood out to you?

- Growth, support, safe space, resources, great, allowed for uniqueness, caring deeply

What makes you feel appreciated?

- The whole survey!

What makes you nervous?

- Getting sufficient resources to families, such as mental health and dental care
- Less interest in more parent education events than anticipated
- Expansion upward, not downward

PRACTICAL VISION WORKSHOP

Participants then worked through an exercise where they imagined what “Victory” would look like, if they were wildly successful in their planning efforts. They imagined what a reporter would notice, hear, see, and experience if they were visiting the school for an open house. The following words and phrases were envisioned by participants:



Next, the group worked through an exercise to ground that Victory in the current reality of the school, thinking about its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities if successful, and unintended consequences of success:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting back to like-minded entity • Committed admin & staff—longevity • All teachers accredited with education beyond BA • Staff are excellent communicators • Curriculum and philosophy • Adaptable—implement needs such as Spanish, art • Want students to have skills and knowledge needed when they leave • Understanding of child development • Expertise • Size of school is a strength • Sense of community • We are a great community, IN a great community • Tuition-based—it's a clear choice for families (seen as both strength and weakness) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No meals at school • Board education and growth needed • Tough to recruit teachers • Limited finances • Communication • Not currently accredited • Time • Not well-known— lack general awareness • Board structure, turnover • Montessori not well known to families • Decorah is well known for great public education—“Why choose something else?” • Childcare is the entry for most, not year-round • Limited resources in house for behavioral help for staff • Lack of endowed funds • Tuition-based—it's a clear choice for families
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS (DANGERS OF SUCCESS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase what we offer staff • Finding families that are a good fit • Partnerships—SSE, Co-op • Marketing through partnerships • New neighborhood (new building) • New branding, new location; we can re-introduce ourselves • Growth in numbers in new space • Financial—new building and accreditation, stabilize and grow budget • Current and future grant opportunities • Access to grants • Building equity in new building • Keep vision present, long-term focus on integrity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth that doesn't scale well (support, teachers) • If we lose a teacher, or need new ones—they are hard to replace • Raising tuition • Decrease in cooperation from other education groups when accredited • What are compliance obligations for student needs, how to handle? • What if we outgrow our new building? • Population threshold—how do we size the school? • Don't want to lose integrity of Montessori Method

Practical Vision

Participants worked together to identify a shared practical vision by addressing the question: **“How will we work together, and with the larger community, to become a strong, sustainable organization while maintaining the integrity of Montessori Education?”** A consensus-based process was utilized which required all members of the group to participate, brainstorm and share ideas, and create five areas of focus for NEIM’s Practical Vision, summarized below. (See Appendix D for work session notes and all brainstormed ideas.)

PRACTICAL VISION

In three to five years, as a result of our actions, we will have an accredited school that maintains the integrity of the Montessori method through:

- Fiscal stewardship
- Well-defined board systems
- Expansion of programs and facilities
- Increased staff qualifications and compensation and
- Cultivating community through partnerships and events

BARRIERS TO THE VISION

Participants then identified the following barriers to achieving the vision by addressing the question, **“What can get in the way of achieving our vision?”** (See Appendix C for work session notes.)

BARRIERS TO THE VISION

What is blocking us from moving toward our vision?

- A tight budget keeps us from increasing qualifications and compensation
- Not committing time/resources to the necessary centralization of data, timelines, and protocols to pursue a larger community footprint
- Insufficient resources prevent us from investing time into expansion
- Inconsistent income and insufficient skill sets increase the difficulty of planning, forecasting, and fundraising
- Unpublished and non-specific expectations for all board roles and responsibilities and the absence of a defined timeline for annual responsibilities

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

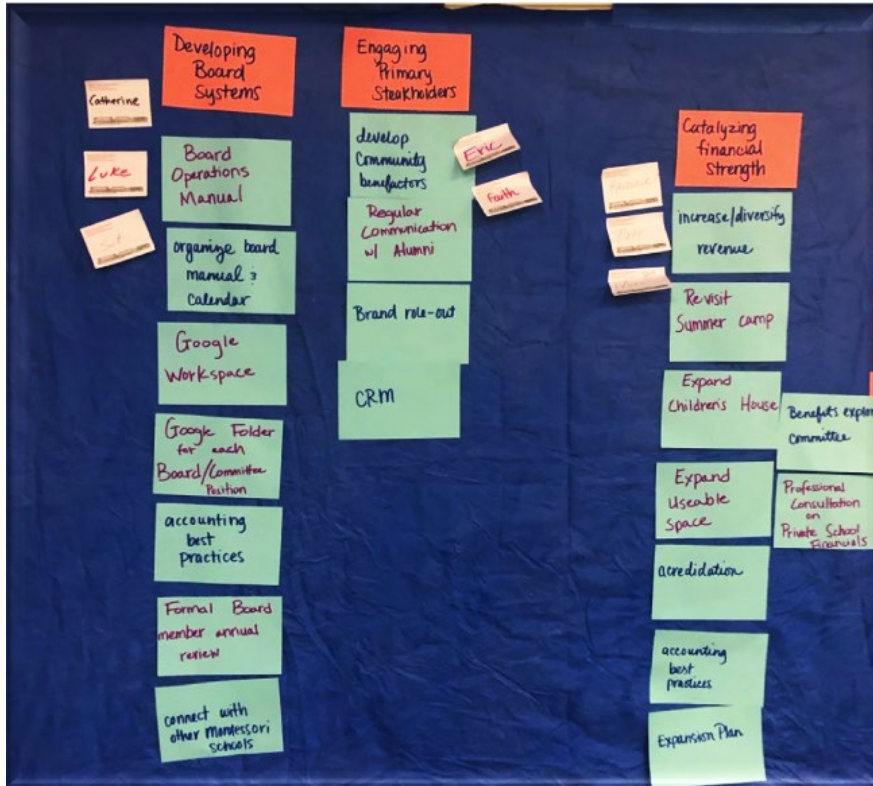
Participants then worked through a consensus-driven process that addressed the question, **“What innovative, substantial actions will deal with the underlying barriers and move us toward our vision?”** Their responses were then organized into the following three priority strategic directions. (Appendix E provides a summary of the vision, barriers, and strategic directions. Work session notes are included in Appendix F.)

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

In the next three to five years, Northeast Iowa Montessori will advance the mission and vision of the school by:

- Developing board systems
- Engaging primary stakeholders, and
- Catalyzing financial strength

Figure 2. Sticky wall consensus of strategic directions



FIRST YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

During the final work session, participants developed implementation plans for each of the three strategic directions. The group brainstormed actions that directly addressed the identified barriers, highlighting key actions which would enable progress in their three Strategic Directions. The plans include an assessment of current reality, clarification of first-year accomplishments and action steps for year one.

Figure 3. NEIM board member sharing first-year implementation plan details



Table 1. First-year implementation plan for each strategic direction

STRATEGIC DIRECTION	SUCCESS	PARTNERS	COORDINATOR	RESOURCES	LAUNCH
CATALYZING FINANCIAL STRENGTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accreditation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bookkeeping consultant & bank(s) Local contractors and regulatory inspectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board Treasurer Building Committee Chair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for bookkeeping software and consultant (\$150/mo) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Started bookkeeping software Special meeting with staff and Building Committee
DEVELOPING BOARD SYSTEMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board systems & expectations are clear & adhered to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other Montessori schools, boards Accountant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board President Board Secretary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Google Workspace QuickBooks Funds to hire accounting consultant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board Systems workshop
ENGAGING PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having annual report & sending to at least 100 people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alumni stakeholders Luther (marketing students) Parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development Chair Single-point contact person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Point person to coordinate program Canva software for outreach Website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sending our first community-wide communication

Table 2. Timeline for each strategic direction

STRATEGIC DIRECTION	MAR–MAY 2024	JUN–AUG 2024	SEPT–NOV 2024	DEC 2024–FEB 2025	LONGER TERM
CATALYZING FINANCIAL STRENGTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved bookkeeping and robust statements Develop blueprint for basement access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program expansion discussions 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create benefits exploration committee Consult professional on private school finances
DEVELOPING BOARD SYSTEMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Google Workspace Audit existing board materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create annual board work plan Identify & engage accounting consultant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline board-member review process Implement accounting recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise & complete board operations manual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish board onboarding & transition process
ENGAGING PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual report/ acknowledgment letter to benefactors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating mutually beneficial events w/our benefactors (creating relationships) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publishing quarterly newsletter for alum/families Review “give butter” at year end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing our alumni database 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing our social media presence

Financial Implications

One topic discussed at length was the direct link between attaining accreditation and revenue generation due to the recent legislation of private-school vouchers in Iowa. Gaining accreditation is of high priority with large financial implications in that it would boost enrollment and potential revenue. It was also noted that increased revenue is needed to help improve salaries, staff qualifications, and staff benefits. It was also noted that, in order to execute action items in this next year, resources would be needed for:

- Accounting software and consultation
- Canva software
- Website update

In addition, the NEIM head of school and board members developed the following strategies, that, combined with solid leadership, board direction, and a commitment to the Montessori Method, can help ensure that NEIM remains financially healthy.

DIVERSIFIED REVENUE STREAMS

The following are NEIM's diversified revenue streams:

- Tuition
- Grants
- Fundraising
- Stocks

FINANCIAL PLANNING

Sustainable expense model – Develop a comprehensive budget that is reviewed annually by the board of directors and head of school with the implementation of required changes.

Long-term tuition plan – with the help of our financial advisor, NEIM will work toward tax-advantaged savings plans such as the 529, tuition payment plans, and scholarships.

Retention Plan – Achieve a high retention rate of 80%. Engage and invest in families' involvement in the school to ensure continuous re-enrollment. Foster clear and regular communication with parents, continue to use newsletters and social media to share highlights, be transparent and positive in interactions with parents and students, and create opportunities for families to interact with each other.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Build strong community relationships that will lead to more volunteers and support. Engage parents and alumni to foster a network that contributes time, resources, and financial support.

MONTESSORI INVESTMENT

Continue to invest in the Montessori Method and our facility to attract more families and enhance the school's reputation, which will, in turn, lead to more enrollment and financial stability.

COST MANAGEMENT

Keep an eye on expenses and finding ways to reduce costs without compromising the quality of the Montessori Method.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Offer scholarships that can help make school accessible to a broad range of students, which will increase enrollment and community support.

Plan Evaluation, Monitoring, and Updates

The planning group decided to check in with updates and progress made on the implementation plan quarterly for the first year, with the Board President responsible for adding this item to meeting agendas. In addition, each year the board and staff will review the plan in July, which coincides with new board member orientation. The “Launch” action item for Stakeholder Engagement is to share a community-wide communication, distributing this Strategic Plan and sharing future plan progress with the full NEIM community annually via e-mail and website.

Figure 4. NEIM board and staff working hard on strategic direction elements



Appendix A

Northeast Iowa Montessori School

Mission and Vision Statements

OUR MISSION

NEIM is a nurturing environment that cultivates each child's intellectual and creative potential while instilling a sense of individual and global responsibility. We directly follow the philosophy, principles, and methods of Dr. Maria Montessori.

NEIM VISION

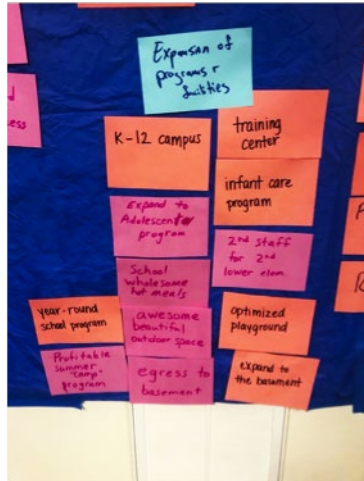
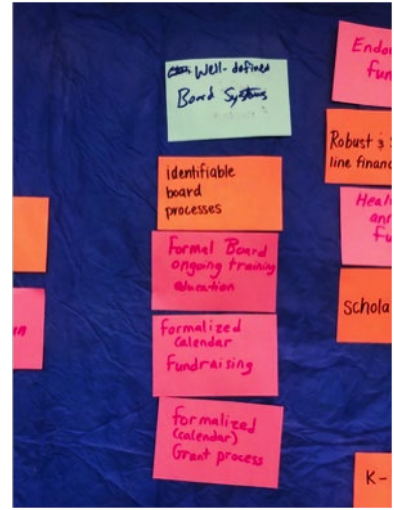
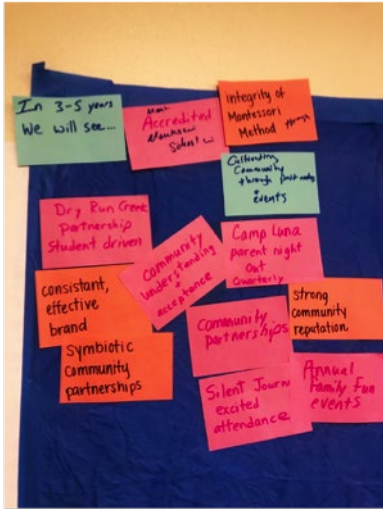
NEIM believes that children learn by doing. Purposeful work that is spontaneously chosen is carried out with profound satisfaction. Northeast Iowa Montessori encourages independence, respect to self and others, critical thinking, and a responsibility to the world around them.



Appendix B Practical Vision

NORTHEAST IOWA MONTESSORI BOARD & STAFF PRACTICAL VISION				
<i>“In three to five years, as a result of our actions, we will have an accredited school that maintains the integrity of the Montessori method through...”</i>				
FISCAL STEWARDSHIP	WELL-DEFINED BOARD SYSTEMS	EXPANSION OF PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES	INCREASED STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPENSATION	CULTIVATING COMMUNITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS AND EVENTS
New fundraiser ideas	Identifiable board processes	K-12 campus	Level professional standards	Dry Run Creek partnership—student driven
4-5 grants per year	Formal Board ongoing training and education	Expand to adolescent program	Training abroad	Consistent, effective brand
Endowment fund	Formalized calendar and fundraising	School wholesome, hot meals	Competitive salary	Symbiotic community partnerships
Robust and streamlined financials	Formalized (calendar) grant process	Awesome, beautiful outdoor space	Staff benefits	Community understanding & acceptance
Healthy annual fund		Egress to basement		Camp Luna parent night out—quarterly
Scholarships		Year-round school program		Strong community reputation
		Profitable summer camp		Annual family fun events
		Training center		
		Infant care program		
		2nd staff for 2nd lower elementary		
		Optimized playground		
		Expand to the basement		

PRACTICAL VISION WALLBOARD – ALL IDEAS



Appendix C Barriers to the Vision

The barriers work session addresses the question: ***“What is blocking us from achieving our vision?”***

NEIM BOARD & STAFF STRATEGIC PLANNING BARRIERS			
A TIGHT BUDGET KEEPS US FROM INCREASING QUALIFICATIONS & COMPENSATION	NOT COMMITTING TIME/RESOURCES TO THE NECESSARY CENTRALIZATION OF DATA, TIMELINES & PROTOCOLS TO PURSUE A LARGER COMMUNITY FOOTPRINT	INSUFFICIENT RESOURCES PREVENT US FROM INVESTING TIME INTO EXPANSION	INCONSISTENT INCOME AND INSUFFICIENT SKILL SETS INCREASE THE DIFFICULTY OF PLANNING, FORECASTING, & FUNDRAISING
Quality training takes time, money, relocation, and loss of staff member	No brand/name recognition	Not enough usable money or staff	Specialized skill sets needed
No foundation (benefits)	No <u>consistent</u> events (community or school)	Too many priorities—no hierarchy	As funds diminish, we don’t have a formalized system to see/understand where we are
Not accredited	No community education events	Balance between supply and demand	Tight budget
Scheduling conflicts	No dedicated community partnerships	Retention/attrition	Human resources needed for fundraising is a lot
Tight budget	No alumni (students, parents, staff)	No benefactors	Enrollment-driven revenue
Scholarships	Time and skill to commit to effective education of the above		“Unaccredited” school is a disadvantage to enrollment
	No centralized database for aggregation of this info		

Appendix D Summary | Vision, Barriers, and Strategic Directions

NEIM BOARD & STAFF STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY		
VISION	BARRIERS	STRATEGIC DIRECTION
<i>In three to five years, as a result of our actions, we will have an accredited school that maintains the integrity of the Montessori method through:</i>	<i>What is blocking us from achieving our vision?</i>	<i>What innovative, substantial actions will deal with the underlying barriers and move us toward our vision?</i>
Fiscal stewardship	A tight budget keeps us from increasing qualifications and compensation	Developing board systems
Well-defined board systems	Not committing time/resources to the necessary centralization of data, timelines and protocols to pursue a larger community footprint	Engaging primary stakeholders
Expansion of programs and facilities	Insufficient resources prevent us from investing time into expansion	Catalyzing financial strength
Increased staff qualifications and compensation	Inconsistent income and insufficient skill sets increase the difficulty of planning, forecasting, and fundraising	
Cultivating community through partnerships and events	Unpublished and non-specific expectations for all board roles and responsibilities and the absence of a defined timeline for annual responsibilities	

Appendix E Year One Implementation Plan

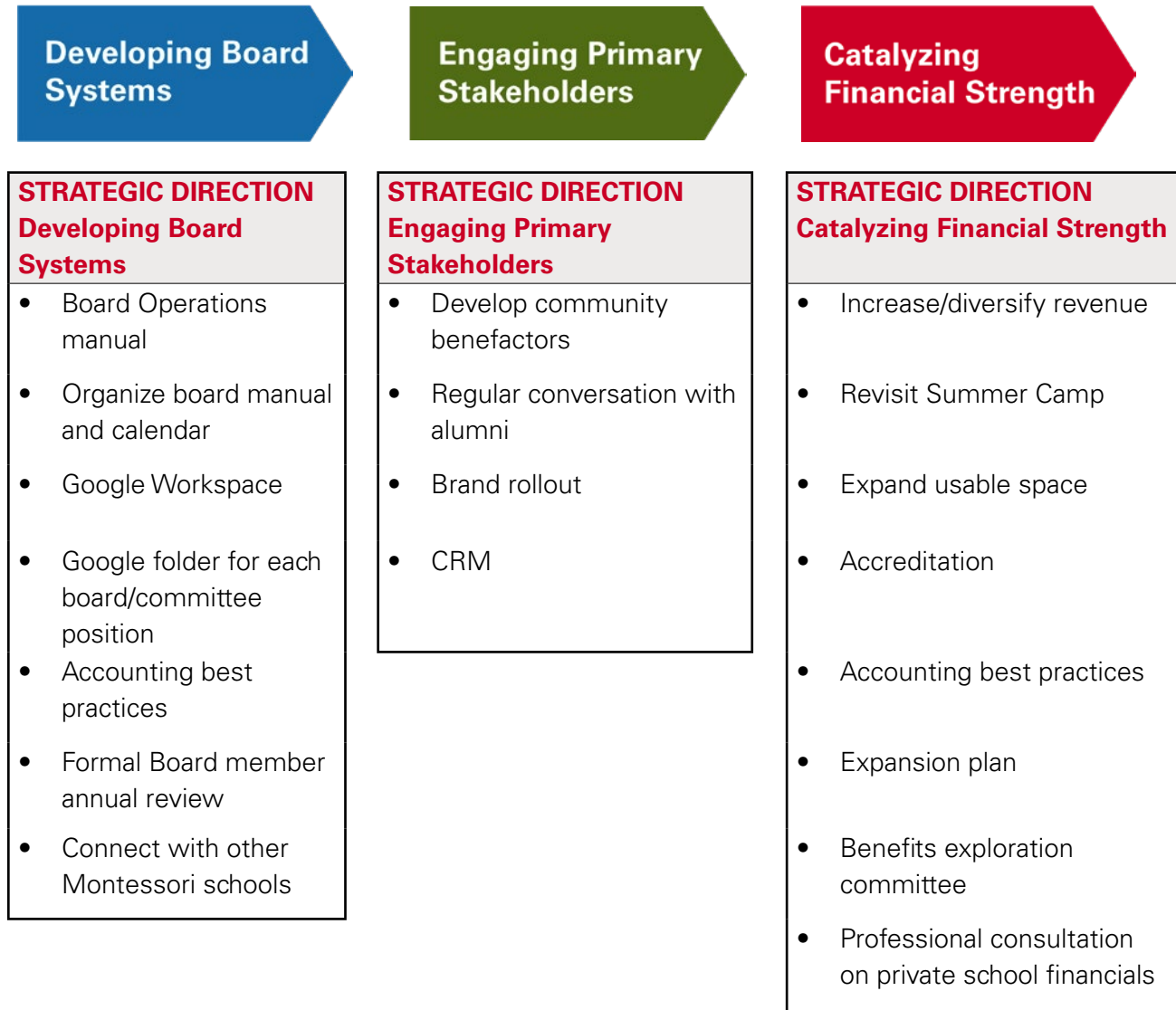
Once implementation teams are formed, they will create first-year plans that identify success in the first year, the board’s role, what will launch the year, resources needed, the coordinator, and the actions identified by quarter. The teams then place their plans on one calendar (as shown below) to coordinate and leverage timing, effort, and resources across the three strategic directions.

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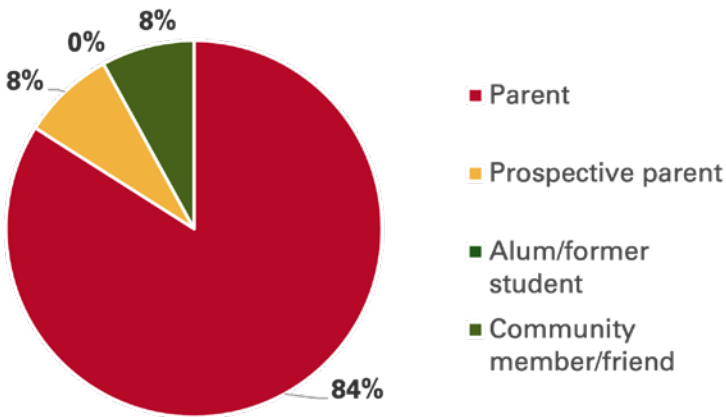
The strategic directions work session addresses the question: ***“What innovative, substantial actions will deal with the underlying barriers and move us toward our vision?”***



Appendix G NEIM Online Survey Results

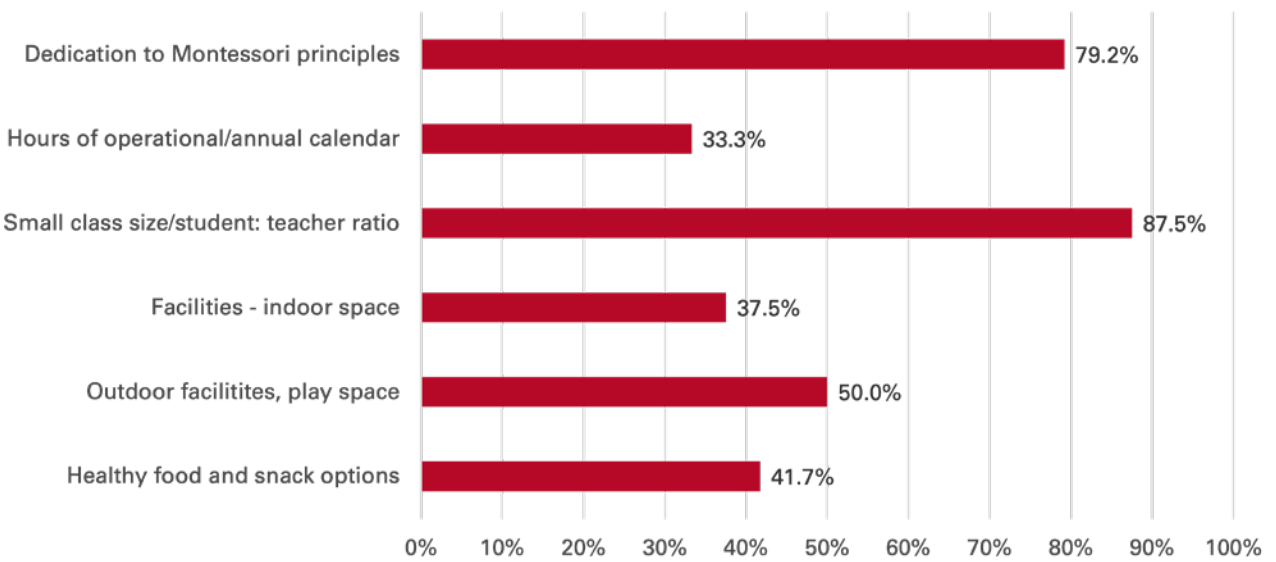
Which best describes your connection to NEIM?

(25 responses)



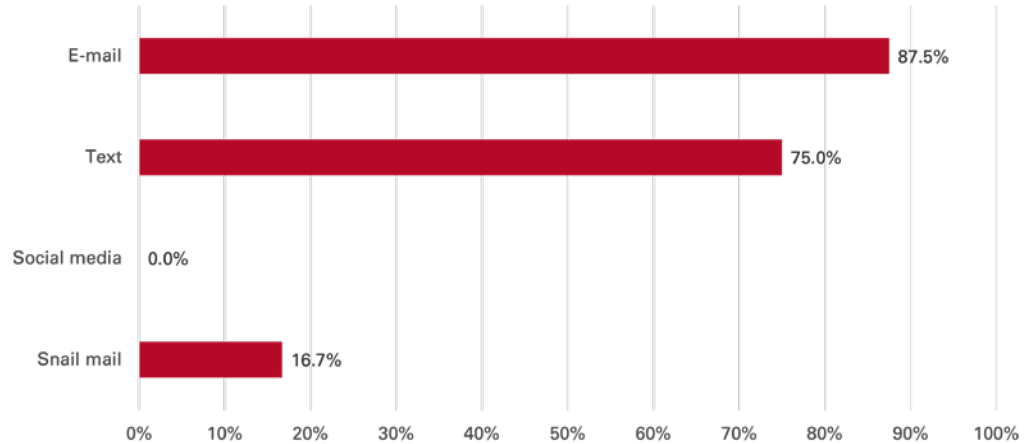
Which aspects of an early childhood and elementary program are most important to you? Choose all that apply.

(24 responses)



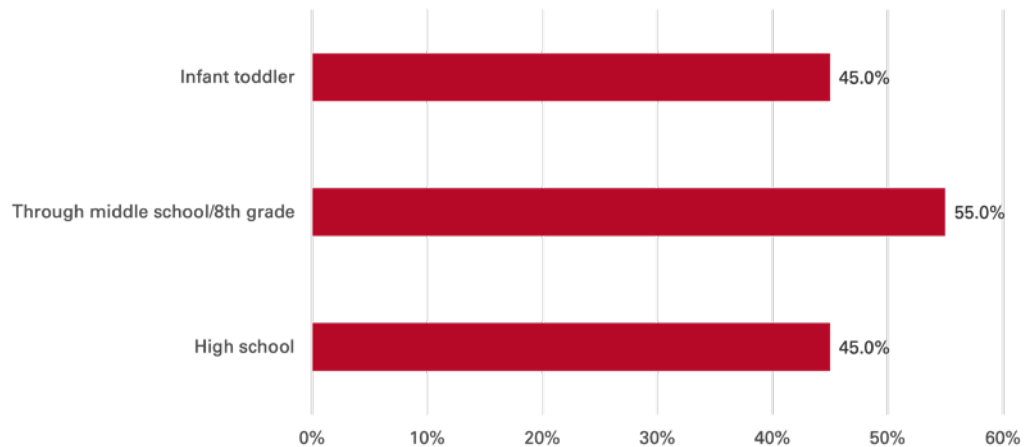
How would you like to receive/send communication from/to school?

(24 responses)



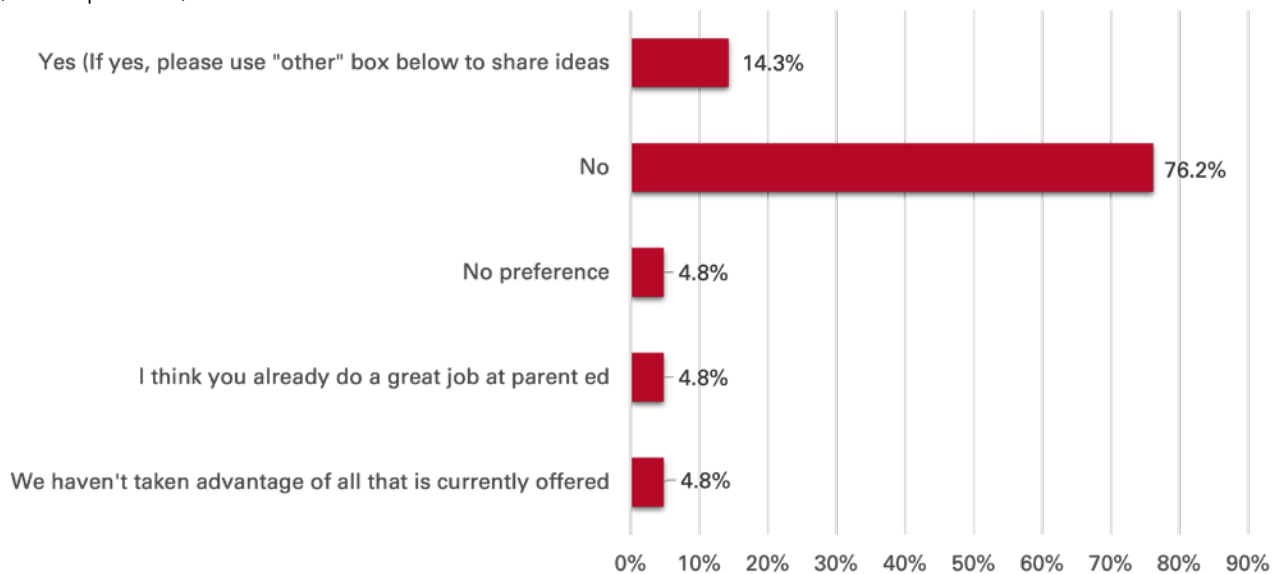
If NEIM were to consider program expansion, where would you be interested in enrollment that is not currently offered?

(20 responses)



Would you like to see more parent education events than are currently offered?

(21 responses)



Do you feel there are adequate support resources available to students? What resources have you taken advantage of, or would be interested in (e.g., speech or occupational therapies, a dyslexia consultant, or services through Keystone Area Education Agency)?

(20 responses)

- Yes
- I would like to see some data to show where my child is at with understanding concepts compared to standards.
- N/A
- Dyslexia consultant
- Speech
- I am not sure of all the resources available.
- We have not taken advantage of any resources, because haven't felt a need for them at this point.
- Yes, terrific customized support from Miss Jane was one of the big gifts of NEIM.
- A dyslexia consultant and/or dyslexia specific teaching curriculum.
- Occupational, counseling, speech therapy
- We have used speech therapy
- I think so, but we haven't needed to utilize any of these.
- Dyslexia consultant
- Yes – speech through Keystone
- We really appreciate the speech therapy offering. Txxxx also loves working with Julie!
- None
- We have not dealt with any of those
- Yes, there seem to be adequate support resources available. Having said that, we have not yet seen what our child may need as she grows.
- I don't think I've taken advantage of other resources

NEIM interacts with community partners such as the Decorah Public Library, Vesterheim Museum (Barnetinem, Outdoor museum spaces), Spectrum Kitchen, and Helping Services. Are there community partners you would like to see the school connect with?

(17 responses)

- Luther College
- None I can think of
- N/A
- No
- Luther College's early education department – students; Seed Savers; Winneshiek County Conservation (recycling, natural resources); Aase Haugen and/or Eastern Star.
- Dunno
- Nursing homes, veterans
- Decorah Parks and Rec

- Seed Savers Exchange - obviously the distance might make this difficult.
- Luther College, community music teachers, Winneshiek County Conservation
- Law enforcement
- Just ideas: health care, Seed Savers, Driftless Yoga, Luther?
- Humane Society, ArtHaus, Kinderhaus, Sunflower
- Nothing currently comes to mind. These are great partnerships.
- Can't think of any

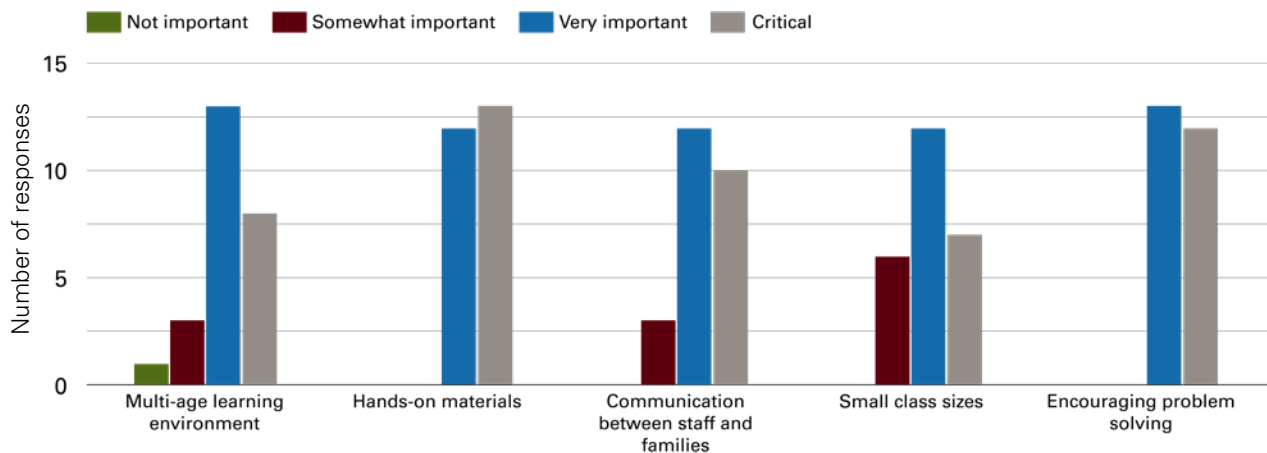
If you are a parent, how has the school supported your child's development (e.g., social, emotional, academic growth, etc.)?

(21 responses)

- A Montessori education has fostered my daughter's independence, creativity, and love for learning, laying a foundation for lifelong curiosity and self-driven exploration.
- Both of my children that have attended NEIM have grown immensely in the area of self-confidence and being comfortable with themselves in many situations. I also feel the academic environment has been positive for both of them.
- N/A
- My child has great social and emotional qualities thanks to the school while still making academic success a priority. The whole child.
- Academic growth
- Yes, I feel our child is very supported and I feel the staff goes above and beyond to make sure of this.
- NEIM has supported our child's growth through many ways, beginning with Children's House, where he first learned to love learning. We appreciated the learning in core academic areas (reading, language, math, science, art) but also in other nontraditional areas like life skills. Throughout the last four years we have seen tremendous growth in his personal and academic skills and we credit this a lot to the Montessori Method of having students of multiple ages and abilities learning in the same classroom.
- Incredibly well. Both our students have thrived and grown so much in the elementary program.
- It has supported them in ALL ways!
- In all ways!
- We have see growth in all areas listed above!
- Huge social and emotional growth! As well as letter recognition and writing growth.
- All of the above.
- We have noticed a big difference with Txxxx's speech development and his ability to recognize letter and their sounds. He also has improved with his numbers.
- In all ways (social, academic, responsibility)
- Provides an opportunity for him to grow and puts the ownership on him
- Allowed for uniqueness of my children to shine, peers are always a supportive and encouraging family for each child.
- Social, emotional, academic growths for sure! Creating a safe space where creativity can bloom at each student's pace. Community is a giant factor for our family, being from out of town and also emerging from the isolation of COVID.

- NEIM has supported our children’s social and emotional growth. It has provided plenty of academic options too, though we did not feel as though our children needed particular encouragement or attention in this area.
- In everything

What aspects of Montessori feel especially important?



What does NEIM do really well?

(20 responses)

- Provide a warm and cozy learning environment.
- They care for the child while allowing them to understand that the learning process does involve failure and that is OK. Finding out what does work and what doesn’t work is important as well as understanding the “why” behind doing what they are working on is very important as well.
- Support the whole child
- NEIM is great at fostering a love of learning!
- Caring deeply for children. Each staff member demonstrates a great level of patience and heart for young people. We feel that our child is well cared for and safe when we leave him in the morning.
- Lots of outdoor time. Independent guided activities. Fosters a safe and nurturing environment for kids. So much more.
- Follow the student, and foster and support the child’s own curiosity/desire to learn (as well as provide the child with the environment/instruction/support/tools to learn!
- Longevity of staff
- Help a child increase confidence in themselves
- Foster the joy of learning and independent thinking
- -Working with mixed ages
 - hands-on learning
 - encouraging students’ interests
 - fostering community-oriented behaviors and thinking
 - avoiding the “junk time” that is sometimes wasted in public school settings”

- avoiding screen time/computer use in early grades
- avoiding labeling students or putting them into "boxes" based on their learning style or development stage
- Parent communication, new hands-on materials out for the kids, conflict resolution with the kids, and loving our kids!
- Providing a safe, caring environment that enables my child to learn at a pace he is comfortable with
- Making school enjoyable for the children.
- Create a space where children feel safe and encouraged to grow
- Provide small classroom environment with personalized teaching
- Allows the child to guide their own growth.
- The guides are incredibly inspiring and knowledgeable. I think the community building is special to us, and encouraging students to work together to help each other along their respective journeys is truly awesome. The environments in which the work can take place is so impressive and important to us.
- NEIM does a very good job of using a student's strengths as a means to get them into a new academic area. NEIM is also very good at getting students to grow socially and emotionally.
- Protect the happiness of the children's childhoods

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