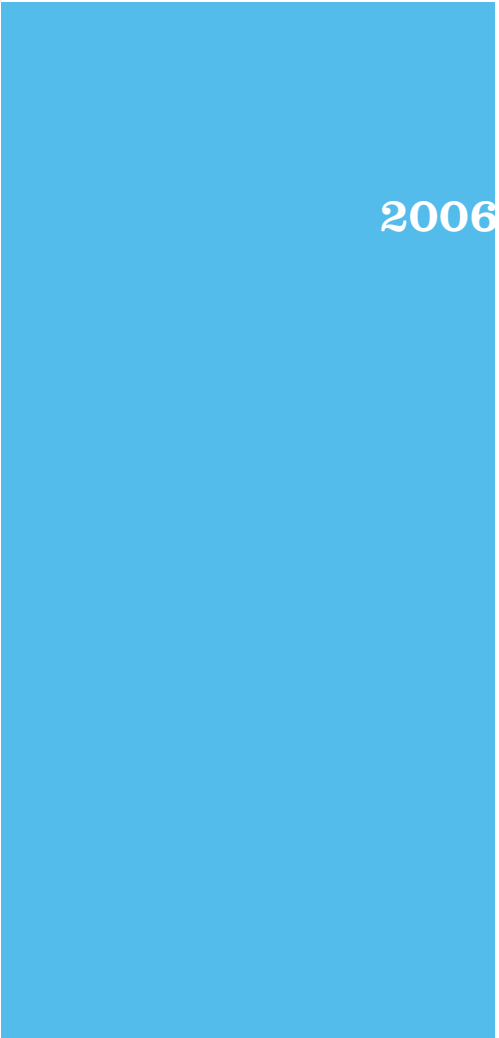


marin
country
day
school



strategic plan



2006



Our school is a community that

Inspires children to develop a love of learning,

thoughtful perspectives and a diversity of skills;

Nurtures in each of them a deep sense of respect,

responsibility and compassion; and

Challenges them to envision and work

toward a better world.

marin country day school mission



Strategic Commitment

For fifty years, Marin Country Day School has provided a distinguished education based on distinctive values, aspirations and practices. Students at MCDS enjoy the benefits of innovative teaching, enhanced understanding of how children learn, tools for clear and creative expression, and an increasingly diverse student body. We continue to advance the vitality of our program and the warmth and vibrancy of our school community.

Our mission guides us as we strive to prepare our students to participate thoughtfully and meaningfully in the changing world of the 21st century. Fundamental shifts in population demographics, combined with changes in the environment and global economy, will confront our students throughout their growth as individuals and citizens of their communities. By mid-century, increasing globalization, population growth and shifts in racial and ethnic diversity in America will be dramatic. Increasing numbers promise to raise overall human capabilities and advancements, while providing a more competitive and diverse work force. Added population will also strain the global environment. Human practices—industrial manufacturing, energy production and consumption, building design, and transportation—must adjust in this century to become environmentally sustainable.

Our students will need flexible skill sets as they grow in a world that is more competitive, technologically integrated and ever-changing. MCDS is committed to fostering their growth as inquisitive, competent, eager and purposeful participants in a rapidly evolving world of opportunity and challenge. Over the next five years we will concentrate on developing the skills needed for leadership in an increasingly diverse, environmentally vulnerable and interconnected world. We will:

- (1) Examine our program to ensure that our curriculum develops skills, attitudes and perspectives important for global citizenship
- (2) Prepare our community to support development of these competencies
- (3) Enhance and maintain our facilities to effectively promote the school's mission and program
- (4) Make financial plans that reflect creative and responsible stewardship of the school's resources.

This plan will guide the school's direction for the next five years and establish a strong, sustainable foundation for the long-range future.

Examine Our Program

MCDS offers a distinctive education. Our faculty and professional staff deliver excellence daily. They engage in continual professional development and refine classroom and curricular practices. In addition, the school regularly undertakes a thorough assessment and enhancement of teaching standards and the scope and sequence of curriculum. Over the next five years, our faculty and staff will embark on a comprehensive program review, assessing not only how best to deliver our core curriculum, but also our auxiliary programs (including after-school and summer programs) and new curricular initiatives identified in this strategic plan.

This review will ensure a comprehensive, integrated program from kindergarten through eighth grade, with particular attention to capabilities essential for navigating the complexities of the future. Foundational to preparing students to thrive is a continued focus on skills and habits of mind for lifelong learning, with a rigorous grounding in core curricular disciplines. On this solid base of skills and knowledge, students will build character and leadership skills, including respect for themselves and others, and a sense of personal and social responsibility. Finally, we strive to equip students to envision and work toward a better world, developing respect and compassion for people of diverse backgrounds, world cultures and the environment.

Core Curriculum Review

MCDS has a rich and well-considered core curriculum that builds upon the content, skills and experiences from one grade level to the next. As it evolves, we will strive to make our curriculum still more interrelated and dynamic. MCDS will continue to embrace a progressive educational tradition, including child-centered, hands-on "learning by doing." A focus on how children learn, incorporating the latest in learning-developmental science, will guide our curriculum development. Review of the core curriculum is an ongoing initiative that will include assessing best practice recommendations from faculty, from other benchmarked schools, and from the California Association of Independent Schools, National Association of Independent Schools and National Content Standards.

Goal: To maintain and enhance the quality of the curriculum and instruction at MCDS. Over a five-year period, all faculty will participate in a review and dynamic mapping of core curriculum to ensure alignment with the school's mission and philosophy as well as with best educational practices, and to assess effectiveness and integration with strategic goals.

Review of Auxiliary Programs

MCDS offers a vast array of auxiliary programs, from after-school recreation and enrichment activities and music (ASAP and Forte) to summer programs: Beyond Borders (a multicultural exploration and arts experience for fourth-sixth graders) and the Turtle Rock Institute (with a focus on creative fun and adventure for pre-kindergartners through eighth graders). Our review of auxiliary programs will explore the many facets of these programs for alignment with the core curriculum, bringing the benefits of these programs more directly into the core and vice versa. Our goal is to develop consistent year-round and summer programs that will both draw from and contribute to the educational experience.

Goal: To develop and enhance auxiliary programs that are consistent with the school's mission and educational philosophy. Potential programs include enhanced music, drama, sports, language, and outdoor and environmental education. Program development and review should include consideration of potential for revenue generation.

Enhancement of Technology

Facility in the use of technology is fundamental to the skills of 21st century citizens. MCDS is committed to providing increased opportunities for technology to enable, enhance and expand our mission, strategic goals and core curriculum. Technology at MCDS will provide tools for a wide variety of learners to explore multiple avenues of understanding and expression, including communication, global perspectives, connection with local and global communities, research skills, and environmental sciences and ecoliteracy. An integrated technology plan for MCDS will address curriculum, standards, access, teacher training and resources.

Goal: To provide every student with age-appropriate access to computers, software, the Internet, and other necessary technology at school and at home, and to expand technology within classrooms to facilitate learning. The program will facilitate access, on an ongoing basis, to an individual computing device for each Upper School student for use at school and at home. In addition to computers, MCDS will extend access to and use of other kinds of technology, including mechanical, visual and auditory tools (e.g., robotics, video and music recording).

The technology plan will include teaching standards and an accompanying K-8 scope and sequence for developing integrated technology skills. The plan will further integrate technology into the core curriculum and provide training and adequate support to teachers for skills development in computers, including software applications and hardware troubleshooting.

Environmental Sustainability

We want our students to experience joy and wonder in the natural world, and to practice sustaining healthy air, soil, water, plants and animals—and healthy bodies. By encouraging students to think critically and apply solid scientific skills, we aim to nurture an appreciation of the interconnectedness of life on our planet and an understanding of the impact of personal decisions on the common good.

The scope and site of our campus, surrounded by the Bay, marshland and Ring Mountain nature preserve, provide unique opportunities for outdoor learning as well as the potential to support responsible stewardship through alternative energy sources, division-level gardens, expanded recycling and composting programs, etc. MCDS will elevate the importance of environmental sustainability in its program, facilities and operations, including a broad commitment to “green” institutional practices as well as a curriculum that nurtures ecological literacy.

MCDS seeks to instill and nurture in the school community a sense of stewardship for the environment, grounded in a foundation of science and ecology, and to develop an understanding of complex environmental issues to enable participation in solving problems.

Goal—Curriculum: To develop an integrated ecological literacy curriculum for all grade levels. The curriculum should encourage facility in scientific methods and reasoning, conservation and sustainability concepts, local environmental knowledge and an understanding of human impacts on the environment.

Goal—Institutional Practices: To develop a green practices action plan that describes cost-effective campus-wide initiatives to make MCDS facilities and daily practices ecologically sustainable. Possible and/or continued initiatives for consideration, in concert with the campus master plan, include:

- Green certification of new MCDS buildings
- Energy efficiency and use of renewable energy
- Use of biodegradable materials
- Water and waste reduction, reuse, and recycling
- Organic kitchen and grounds-keeping practices
- The study of transportation including vehicle and fuel use.

Global Awareness and Engagement

MCDS has a longstanding commitment to reach beyond our campus to the broader community, recognizing that we have much to learn as well as much to offer. We strive to equip students to envision and work toward a better world, including developing respect and compassion for people of diverse backgrounds, world cultures and the environment. Global engagement encompasses an understanding of and connection to the student's local and national, as well as global, identity. Efforts to make connections in the broader world begin with celebrating differences and working together to build an inclusive school community.

Goal—Diversity: To advance ongoing efforts to build and nurture an inclusive school community that welcomes a diversity of people, ideas, cultures and principles of equity and justice. This will include augmenting the work of the Diversity Committee to build a more inclusive MCDS community (such as current efforts to ratify a diversity vision statement, determine an administrative structure for support of diversity initiatives, and facilitate the work of affinity groups and the Community Diversity Circle). Attention will be given to broadening opportunities for all community members to connect to and participate more fully in the life of the school (e.g., volunteering, events, education and service opportunities). Continued focus will also be given to admission and retention of students; recruitment, hiring and training of faculty and staff; and enhanced opportunities for service learning.

Goal—Globalism: To encourage students, faculty and staff to participate effectively as world citizens, including developing "global classrooms," as appropriate, to encourage students to network across international boundaries, interrelate and work to solve common problems. This work will be integrated with the review of core curriculum and auxiliary programs. Specific initiatives will include assessment of the framework of the language program, including the practicality of more language options (e.g., the possibility of offering Mandarin in the curriculum and/or auxiliary programs) and options for connecting digitally with classrooms in other countries to enhance the MCDS curriculum and engage in global community connections.

Prepare Our Community

To support the growth of these programmatic initiatives, the school will need to provide training and professional development for faculty and staff, and to enhance parent education so that the entire community is aligned and prepared to support education for 21st century competencies.

Teacher Development

Fundamental to MCDS's distinctive education is the excellence of our teachers. Providing teachers with cutting-edge teaching skills and curricular approaches is a centerpiece of this strategic plan. To accomplish this, we envision an approach that will not only strengthen our own faculty but also extend the experience and competencies of MCDS teachers to the broader educational community by: (1) ensuring that our teachers have the substantive skills and teaching approaches necessary to advance our curriculum and to support our strategic priorities in environmental sciences, technology, and community and global interconnections and (2) exploring an on-site Teacher Development Institute at MCDS that would provide opportunities for our teachers to train others as well as to enrich their own pedagogy.

A Teacher Development Institute would further promote the professionalism of MCDS teachers and administrators and advance our public purpose goals. Historically, a number of MCDS parents and faculty have been involved in helping to start or support the development of new schools in the area. The Teacher Development Institute would extend that practice of connecting to the broader educational community while enhancing our own teaching program. The Institute would provide ongoing professional development courses for more experienced teachers in addition to a destination for aspiring teachers to receive training and earn credit toward their teaching credential. MCDS would partner with a university and/or public school in order to deliver best practice content and have access to a pool of teachers seeking training. The Institute might also open courses to parents that would complement the Community Education program at MCDS.

A Teacher Development Institute at MCDS would offer multiple benefits:

- Enhancing renewal and retention of existing teachers by providing them with opportunities for leadership, research, mentoring and extended professional development
- Providing opportunities for mid-career teachers to reflect on their own practice through interchange with an apprentice
- Extending the unique characteristics and competencies of MCDS teaching in the broader educational community
- Augmenting the pool of talented educators in an era of continuing teacher shortage.

Goal: To develop plans to (1) ensure MCDS faculty and staff have the skills to implement curricular and auxiliary program initiatives, and (2) assess the viability of, and potentially launch, a Teacher Development Institute that would become a center of teaching excellence among independent schools. The Institute would enhance the skills of our teachers while calling upon them to train aspiring and early career teachers.

Parent Education

Home/school partnership is an essential component of an MCDS education. Through the Community Education program, parents should be provided with opportunities for their own education and participation in shared experiences to reinforce and enhance student learning.

Goal: To extend our current Community Education program to include at least one event per year (community read and discussion, speaker, etc.) with a focus on an initiative in *Strategic Plan 2006*. Parent education opportunities should be designed to include an aspect of developmentally appropriate student involvement.

Enhance Our Facilities

As MCDS enters its 50th year, our facilities need thoughtful attention. While we conduct routine maintenance every year, our aging buildings—many built for a useful life of less than their current age—require more extensive renovation or replacement. And, as our programs and school community have expanded, space shortages increasingly impact the educational experience and constrain our aspirations for the future. Our previous *Strategic Plan 2000* recognized these needs and called for a thorough master planning exercise. We have now completed a 25-year campus-wide master plan, which will enable us to position MCDS to continue as an educational leader in the 21st century.

The campus master plan is an essential tool for shaping MCDS's physical evolution, both buildings and landscape, in support of our mission and strategic aspirations. Thoughtful reflection was given throughout the process of developing the plan to ensure that any future improvements would be consistent with the school's values. For example, MCDS is first and foremost about people—our students, faculty, staff and families—and not about physical buildings and "monuments." Facilities improvements will be grounded in enhancing the learning and working conditions of the people who use the campus every day. Also integral to the MCDS experience is the simple nature of our buildings and their strong connection to their natural surroundings. The master plan carefully and consciously maintains the modest nature and human scale of our current campus while retaining and maximizing the use of open space.

The planning exercise identified several acute needs: larger classrooms and a more clearly defined "center" for Upper School; an improved library and technology center; additional space for art and music; enhanced areas for outdoor education and environmental sciences; and a new "front door" for the campus (relocation of the administrative offices to an expanded lower floor of the fifth grade building).

Goal: To ensure that MCDS facilities are up to the task of continuing to deliver a distinctive education, we will begin campus-wide improvements based on the recently adopted master plan to address acute space shortages and enhance our facilities to support curricular and auxiliary programs. Consistent with our mission and values, any new building construction should meet high standards for environmental sustainability.

Ensure Responsible Financial Stewardship

Vigilant attention to fiscal responsibility is a hallmark of MCDS. We operate with a balanced annual budget and have built an endowment of \$ 15 million. Our financial performance regularly receives unqualified statements from our auditors. Fundraising is exemplary, with consistent participation in the annual Parents Fund by nearly every family in our community. As *Strategic Plan 2006* launches our 50th year, it is imperative to ensure that tuition revenues, fundraising and endowment income continue to support the full cost of the current program and also desired future enhancements to our facilities and curriculum.

As we explore the possible disparity between MCDS's aspirations and its financial resources, we are committed to developing new ways, consistent with our school culture and values, to generate earned income in addition to fundraising activities. Going forward, we intend to develop auxiliary programs that generate significant revenue (this will include evaluation of the costs and revenue potential of existing after-school and summer programs). These programs will serve both MCDS students and the broader community.

To support the goals and objectives of *Strategic Plan 2006* and phased implementation of the 25-year campus master plan, we will continue to refine our long-range financial and development plans. We will preserve our ability to attract and retain outstanding teachers and professional staff, provide the funding required for the resources and environment necessary to support our programs, and maintain our commitment to keep the school accessible to an economically diverse spectrum of families. In addition to the school's ongoing attention to annual fundraising for operating support and growth of the endowment, an important component of integrated financial and development planning will be equitable allocation of responsibility for the school's financial well being across generations of MCDS families and affiliates. Capital campaigns are a proven tool for the funding of major school initiatives and have contributed enormously to the current financial health of MCDS. This strategic plan calls upon members of the MCDS community for renewed generous investment as the school strives to prepare children for the challenges and opportunities they will have as 21st century citizens.

Goal: To develop and implement a long-range financial plan to attain the goals set forth in *Strategic Plan 2006* and to communicate those plans to the MCDS community.

Conclusion

The school's founders stressed that elementary education "shapes the character, attitudes, skills and habits that serve people throughout their lives." The unique learning experience afforded today's students is in large measure the result of the vision and commitment of our founders and successive MCDS generations. Our legacy is a spirit of both possibility and promise—a community that sets to work not only for the benefit of their own children and students, but also to plan and invest in a still more exceptional education for those who will follow.

As we translate our desires for our students into effective strategies for their future and the future of those to come, history cannot be our only guide. This plan endeavors not only to outline the critical new challenges our children will face, but also to propose strategies for meeting them. It is our hope that the goals and ideals embraced by this plan will enable our students—and the school—to evolve and maintain a leadership role in the world they will inherit.

Throughout its history MCDS has been and remains a wonderful place to go to school. While we honor its rich traditions, and savor its present excellence and vitality, we have ambitious goals to make our school even better and more effective in the years ahead. *Strategic Plan 2006* preserves the school's character as a healthy, joyous and distinctive learning community, while envisioning new initiatives to advance our mission, reinforce our strengths and expand upon our commitment and connection to the greater community. The successful implementation of this plan will result in a superior education for MCDS students, now and in the future.

The Strategic Planning Process

Healthy schools regularly undertake strategic planning to provide vision and goals toward which the institution will work. This rigorous and thoughtful planning is a strong tradition at MCDS. With Lucinda Lee Katz in place as Head of School and the successful completion of *Strategic Plan 2000*, the Board of Trustees undertook in spring 2005 a comprehensive strategic planning process and, concurrently, a campus master-planning process to support the educational program of the school over a period of 25 years.

Parents, alumni, faculty and staff were surveyed to identify key issues facing the school and needs for the campus. At its spring retreat, the Board considered the survey responses, information from the CAIS/WASC self-study and accreditation, demographic trends, and National Association of Independent Schools documents to identify key strategic issues to address for the next five years. A Strategic Planning Steering Committee was created along with a number of task forces to study how best to enhance the school's program and address future challenges. Ultimately over 90 parents, faculty, staff members and community leaders were involved in this work throughout the 2005-06 school year. A separate Master Planning Committee worked with the master planning architects and the Board to look at critical space issues and opportunities for programmatic enhancement and innovation supporting the evolving strategic plan. The Board's Long-Range Resource Planning Committee began developing a new five-year financial model to support the school's goals.

Community meetings were held in fall 2005 and early spring 2006 to apprise parents, faculty and staff of the planning process and opportunities for further input, and, by spring, of the main ideas to be incorporated into the new plan. Articles in the parent and MCDS community newsletters, *The Piper* and the *Kite*, were additional communication tools, as was the school's website.

At its spring 2006 retreat, the Board of Trustees agreed in principle to the key points to be included in *Strategic Plan 2006*, and delegated final writing responsibilities to a small committee. The plan was formally adopted by the Board in August 2006 and distributed to the MCDS community in September.

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