



CHIARAVALLE MONTESSORI
STRATEGIC PLAN | 2030

INTRODUCTION

Chiaravalle Montessori was founded in 1965 in Evanston, Illinois, with eighteen students in a church basement. Today, Chiaravalle provides a comprehensive Montessori education to 350 students from toddler through eighth grade in a beautiful, historically significant building with a modern, LEED-certified integrated arts addition.

For nearly sixty years, Chiaravalle and its community have been helping students develop the knowledge, skills, resilience and strength of character necessary to thrive in an increasingly complex and challenging world. Chiaravalle graduates are confident, creative, and independent thinkers who know how to use their talents and gifts to create positive change in their communities.

As Chiaravalle enters its seventh decade, we believe now more than ever that Dr. Maria Montessori's vision of an education that fosters respect for humanity, a sense of purpose, ethics, and personal shared responsibility is vital to creating a more peaceful world.

In keeping with the values and ideals of the Montessori method, Chiaravalle's community of educators, students, and caregivers are dedicated to developing global citizens who have an awareness and understanding of their place in the wider world. Chiaravalle students are not just academically accomplished; they also possess the knowledge and skills to take an active role in helping to make our planet more peaceful, sustainable, and just.

"Adults must defend children. We adults must see the real humanity in children, the humanity which will take our place one day, if we are to have social progress. Social progress means that the next generation is better than the one before."

— Maria Montessori





Our plan outlines four primary strategic goals to enable Chiaravalle to advance its mission and vision:

Empower

Lifelong
Learners Who
Thrive in an
Evolving World

Develop students who possess a commitment to lifelong learning, a strong sense of self, and resilience in the face of a challenging and changing world.

Innovate

Education
through Modern
Montessori

Deliver an innovative curriculum and programming rooted in Montessori philosophy and values that incorporates evidence-based advances in education.

Nurture

an Inclusive
Culture of
Dignity, and
Belonging

In deep partnership with families and caregivers, foster a community where people treat each other with dignity.

Invest

in Operational
Resilience and
Sustainability

Cultivate and invest in the long-term sustainability of Chiaravalle as an institution that nurtures learning.

EMPOWER

HUMANS WHO THRIVE IN AN EVOLVING WORLD

Chiaravalle is dedicated to cultivating agile thinkers who know how to navigate complexity, maintain their moral compass, and act as catalysts for positive change. As our world navigates increasing economic and social inequality, political polarization, and environmental and technological change, Chiaravalle will deepen its commitment to developing students who have the confidence and sense of purpose necessary to thrive in environments full of risk and uncertainty.

Chiaravalle strives to give its students the skills necessary to be their best selves, work with others, and actively engage as global citizens. Chiaravalle students and alumni understand their relationship to the world and the necessity to cherish, respect, sustain, and live harmoniously within it. To accomplish this, Chiaravalle nurtures the unique individual potential of each student to advocate for responsible, equitable actions that help create a more ethical, peaceful, and sustainable future for all.

A Chiaravalle education is designed to cultivate social-emotional, technological, and higher-level cognitive skills, empowering students to learn how to learn from an early age. Chiaravalle's programs support self-awareness, communication, and leadership skills built around collaboration and teamwork at all program levels. Students are also provided the knowledge and skills necessary to understand and adapt to technological and environmental change.

Independence, responsibility, critical thinking, and creativity are at the heart of the modern Montessori approach, sparking a lifelong commitment to learning and fostering strong executive functioning, resilience, and adaptability that will serve students well long beyond their time at Chiaravalle.





PRIORITIES

Global Citizenship, Social Justice, and Service Learning

- Create stewardship opportunities through Chiaravalle's curriculum and programs in service of developing future leaders who will effect change for a better world.

Environmental Stewardship

- Accelerate environmental stewardship programming that prepares Chiaravalle students to understand and address the impacts of environmental and climate change now and in the future.

Social-Emotional Growth

- Infuse social-emotional learning opportunities throughout Chiaravalle's curriculum and programs to develop student self and situational awareness and resilience.

Technology and Innovation

- Leverage evolving technology and innovation to enhance student learning and preparation to become responsible digital citizens.

INNOVATE

EDUCATION THROUGH MODERN MONTESSORI

Given the pace and complexity of global change, Chiaravalle will design programming that cultivates learners and leaders who possess the creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking skills necessary to develop and implement innovative solutions in an uncertain world. Guided by the enduring principles of Montessori education and supported by current evidence-based research, Chiaravalle will advance an interdisciplinary program for its students that promotes academic excellence.

Montessori is a time-tested philosophy and practice that fosters self-motivated growth for children and adolescents in all areas of their development, nurturing each child's natural desire for knowledge, understanding, and respect. Much as Dr. Montessori continued to grow and evolve the Montessori curriculum throughout her lifetime, Chiaravalle continues to embrace science, growing and innovating its programs through its modern Montessori approach, incorporating key evidence-based advances in education to prepare students for the evolving needs of the world in which they live.

Chiaravalle works to meet the developmental needs of the whole child, taking into consideration both social and emotional well-being and academic growth. Students are evaluated using qualitative and quantitative assessment methods that provide a comprehensive view of individual student progress and enable the continuous improvement of teaching practices.

Differentiated instruction and student-initiated learning are encouraged within an integrated, progressive Montessori curriculum. Within the classroom, students are provided with uninterrupted blocks of work time that enable deep learning and collaboration. They are given the opportunity to explore, research, and present to their peers on a wide variety of topics. Multi-year classrooms provide opportunities for students to mentor and learn from each other. Choice and hands-on materials increase each learner's engagement and mastery of skills and concepts.

Montessori accommodates a wide range of learning styles. Chiaravalle's differentiated curriculum enables accelerated learners to pursue skills and interests at a pace that suits their needs and curiosity. Additionally, Chiaravalle's robust Learning Resources team provides supplemental support to students with diverse learning needs.

Students learn about, celebrate, and respect other cultures and backgrounds, as well as their own. Chiaravalle's integrated anti-bias curriculum provides them with the knowledge and tools they need to respect and embrace differences and to take action against bias and injustice as they prepare to learn and lead in a diverse world.





PRIORITIES

Montessori Leadership

- Maintain Chiaravalle's position as a leading practitioner of Montessori pedagogy while continuing to pioneer modern Montessori infused with proven evidence-based strategies.
- Continue to reinforce Chiaravalle's history and reputation as a standard-setter for Montessori education.

Curriculum and Program Enhancement

- Review and refine engaging, culturally responsive academic curriculum across all areas to ensure alignment with Montessori philosophy, developmental benchmarks, updated content, technological advances, and current educational best practices.
- Continue developing Chiaravalle's programs to provide an aligned, transformative journey from toddler through adolescence that prepares students for high school and beyond.

Student Growth and Evaluation

- Hold Chiaravalle and its students to high, developmentally appropriate standards across all program levels.

Strength-Based Instruction

- Foster student curiosity and exploration in areas of interest within and beyond the standard curriculum, providing resources and support as needed.

Learning Resources and Student Support

- Increase Chiaravalle's capacity to deliver Learning Resources across programs and tiers.

Professional Development

- Invest in faculty and staff development to model the pursuit of life-long learning and to promote a culture of collaboration, innovation, and excellence.
- Train and support teachers in leveraging evidence-based instructional strategies that center student strengths.

NURTURE

A CULTURE OF COMMUNITY, DIGNITY, AND BELONGING

Chiaravalle will continue to foster a community and culture centered on human connection and belonging that celebrates diverse identities and human dignity. By creating an environment where relationships are made between individuals inside and outside of the classroom, Chiaravalle is a model for the strength of community and belonging even in the most challenging times.

Chiaravalle deliberately and intentionally builds student connection by providing opportunities for them to act as mentors and lead in their own classrooms and across program levels. This real-world experience equips Chiaravalle students with the confidence, flexibility, and resilience necessary to collaborate with others and foster a sense of ownership in their community.

The interconnectedness of the Chiaravalle community extends far beyond the classroom, bringing together students, teachers, staff, and families for social events, activities, and traditions that celebrate the diversity of the school's community and help them feel like they are part of something larger than themselves.

The school engages in efforts to increase the diversity of its student and faculty populations and create a safe and welcoming environment where people can be their authentic selves. Chiaravalle aspires to build an inclusive community that embraces diversity of age, national origin, immigration status, ethnicity, race, physical ability, family structure, gender and gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background.





PRIORITIES

Culture

- Continue Chiaravalle's work towards creating a culture of belonging by nurturing an environment where everyone feels valued and included.
- Strive to cultivate a community of diverse voices where people can see themselves and each other.
- Foster ongoing dialogue and deepen understanding between community members through initiatives that bring people together to learn and share perspectives.

Community

- Increase our engagement with alumni and the local community.
- Offer regular platforms and social events that promote interaction and dialogue between current families, alumni, and the local community, fostering a strong bond and shared vision for the school's future.
- Strengthen existing affinity and alliance groups to support the development and retention of students and staff/faculty with diverse identities.

Dignity and Belonging at Chiaravalle

Community building is woven into programs at every level, creating and nurturing strong and lasting connections and a profound sense of belonging and inclusion that is at the core of the Chiaravalle journey.

Chiaravalle is a place where students feel heard, seen, and respected and where everyone knows and supports each other.

Teachers and staff serve as models for community-building and engagement.

Additional priorities related to Chiaravalle's culture and community are woven throughout the other strategic goals of this plan.

INVEST

IN OPERATIONAL RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Chiaravalle will build on its existing financial strategies, which are dynamic and responsive to shifting needs and the unpredictability of today's world. Chiaravalle's financial planning takes into account known risks, such as the ongoing impacts of changes to the environment and evolving safety and security needs. Most importantly, Chiaravalle will continue to be a place where students flourish and thrive. Families will feel confident that the school is honoring its commitments, offering a resilient program, and supporting students throughout their journey.

Chiaravalle is proud of its dynamic and robust responses over the past six decades to financial and operational challenges through the global pandemic, a national teacher shortage, increased threats to physical security, and growing risk from climate impacts.

As more families face economic uncertainty, Chiaravalle will continue to strive to become more financially accessible. Maintaining focus on retention and sustainable increases in enrollment will reinforce financial and program stability. Chiaravalle will continue building philanthropy within its community, providing everyone with the opportunity to contribute their time, talent, and treasure in meaningful ways.

To attract, retain, and nurture the best talent, Chiaravalle will continue to prioritize investment in its employees. Additional resource allocations for infrastructure and capital improvements will ensure that the school environment remains a safe and secure place that promotes learning and community. Stewardship of these long term strategic priorities will be overseen by an active and engaged Board of Trustees that continues to represent the diversity of Chiaravalle and its community.





PRIORITIES

Employee Retention and Well-being

- Hire and retain the best teachers and staff by fostering a culture of respect, life-long learning, shared responsibility, and collaboration.
- Invest in competitive employee compensation and professional development.
- Recruit and retain talent that is representative of the diversity of our student body and the broader Evanston community.

Enrollment Management

- Increase retention by highlighting the power of the Chiaravalle journey to prospective and current families, students, and alumni at all program levels.
- Increase enrollment at a sustainable rate that aligns with the school's strategic financial model and program capacity.

Financial Sustainability

- Formulate a long-term financial plan, ensuring resources for future capital projects, program expansions, and the overall health of the school.
- Explore sustainable opportunities to raise funds for tuition assistance.
- Establish robust risk management plans to address potential challenges in areas like technology, privacy, emergency responses, and facilities.

Philanthropy

- Leverage the expertise of families, trustees, and alumni to build a culture of philanthropy that includes service learning and fundraising initiatives.

Facilities

- Continue to create an ideal green and active school environment that nurtures learning and promotes community and health.
- Invest in upgrades that will enhance our facility's climate resilience and be beneficial to students, faculty, and staff.
- Use materials that support environmental sustainability and follow practices that reduce the school's carbon footprint.

Safety and Security

- Improve the school's physical safety and security in ways that are consistent with the needs of our students and its values as an institution.
- Plan for the financial implications of future safety and security needs.

Board Engagement

- Identify and engage with trustees to drive initiatives in fundraising, enrollment, and community relations.
- Actively cultivate potential Board leaders who will foster connection and belonging, modeling Chiaravalle's sense of community.

MISSION



Provide a modern Montessori education that inspires independent, compassionate, and innovative thinkers.



VISION



Develop future generations of life-long learners who effect change for a better world.



CORE VALUES



Collaboration

We enable learners to gain the essential life skills to effectively work, play, and create with others.

Compassion

We practice kindness, empathy, and care for ourselves, our community, and our Earth.

Equity and Inclusion

We uphold ideals of interdependence, dignity, and social justice through our words and actions.



Experiential Learning

We believe a prepared environment promotes deep understanding through purposeful movement, hands-on materials, project-based interdisciplinary learning, and exploring the world as our classroom.

Responsibility

We balance freedom and responsibility, fostering ownership and accountability for our learning, our community, and our environment.





DEVELOPING OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

Chiaravalle's Board of Trustees appointed an eight-person Strategic Planning Committee at the beginning of the 2023-24 school year to collaborate with school administrators, faculty, students, and members of the school community to develop a comprehensive strategic plan to guide the school's growth, sustainability, and continuous improvement in alignment with our mission and values.

The strategic planning process included the following activities:

- A review of the school's progress on goals and strategies outlined in the 2017 Strategic Plan
- A review of peer institutions' strategic plans to benchmark Chiaravalle and assess market dynamics in the operating environment
- A review of the identified plans and priorities in the school's 2022-23 Self-Study Report
- Recommendations provided by the 2024 ISACS and AMS Accreditation Visiting Team
- Gathering input and strategic direction from the Board of Trustees to inform key priorities
- Four focus group discussions with more than two dozen parents and caregivers representing families at all stages of the Chiaravalle journey
- A review of surveys of the school's faculty, staff, and student body
- Using Participatory Narrative Inquiry to gather nearly one hundred stories of lived experiences from the school's board, faculty, staff, parents, and alumni, then facilitating group sensemaking sessions with these stories to develop a shared understanding of what "community" means at Chiaravalle

The group developed four primary strategic goals based on input from the Board of Trustees at its April 2023 retreat, October 2023 retreat, and the Self Study Report. These goals were shared with the board for feedback and refinement in December 2023.

Subsequent drafts of the plan were shared with the Board's Executive Committee, Head of School, and administration for feedback. The Board of Trustees reviewed and provided feedback on a draft version of the plan at its April 2024 retreat. Additional feedback was provided at various points between January and May by administrative staff and select community stakeholders from the staff, faculty, and families.

The Chiaravalle 2030 Strategic Plan was approved by the Strategic Planning Committee on May 8, 2024, and by the Chiaravalle Board of Trustees on May 15, 2024.

Committee Members

George DeMet, Chair

Kaitlin Fahey

Becca Groothuis

Amy Kontrick

Robyn McCloud-Springer

Cheryl McIntosh-Lombardo

Sara O'Mara

Natalya Sanghvi, '10



CHIARAVALLE
MONTESSORI

425 Dempster Street
Evanston, IL 60201
847.864.2190

www.chiaravalle.org