

Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor

Strategic Plan 2023-2026

The work, development and growth called for in this RSSAA Strategic Plan is centered in our school's Mission and Guiding Principles.

Mission Statement

At Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor, we nurture children in their growth from Early Childhood through Grade 12. Our curriculum engages the head, heart, and hands, inspiring curiosity, thinking, empathy and initiative. Our graduates enter adulthood with confidence and self-knowledge, a deep interest in other people, and an understanding of the world; prepared to thrive in higher education and their adult lives.

In all that we do we take the following as our Guiding Principles:

- We recognize that children's needs, interests, strengths, and challenges evolve from their early childhood years through high school graduation. Our curriculum is consciously designed to best meet each developmental stage as children grow, providing the right experience at the appropriate time.
- We seek to work together in ways that increase the diversity of our school community and promote equity and inclusion for all community members regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, financial means, sexual orientation, sexual identity, gender, or disability status. This includes ensuring that we have a continually evolving curriculum that meets all our students.
- Relationships are what make our work possible – between students and teachers, among classmates, among faculty members, between all community members – and we consciously strive to foster and support healthy relationships in all areas of our community.
- Human beings are individuals with their own personal strengths, challenges, and interests. We seek to meet each community member with love and care, ensuring that there is flexibility and support in our classrooms, policies and practices, and community expectations.
- Children are best supported when there is partnership between home and school. We seek to provide parent support, education, and engagement, and we ask that parents collaboratively work with teachers in the same way.
- Each community member is a whole human being: body, soul, and spirit. Our faculty and staff members draw insight and inspiration from the work of Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy.
- Through our curriculum, policies, employment agreements, community expectations and services beyond the classroom we strive to fully engage all community members and create a culture of purposeful activity and joy.
- Through our community life we respect and support the inner development and growth of our community members, sharing the celebration of festivals, athletic competition, artistic work, and study.

- Collaboration and shared responsibility are the foundations of our school governance and leadership model. We work with consensus within all governance groups. We are committed to a transparent and cooperative process for all significant decisions in the school.

Our three-year school strategic plan lays out a roadmap for the growth and development of the institution. It is necessary that the work defined in the plan strengthens and sustains areas that the community is already committed to, achieves the top priorities of the three-year period, supports planning for the future, and keeps attention on areas that the community would like to strengthen going forward. This strategic plan is also realistic about the resources needed for growth and development – financial as well as faculty, staff, and board capacity – and does not commit the community to more than is able to be accomplished in the coming three years.

This Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor strategic plan sorts the work of our school into five categories that align with the standards and expectations of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) and the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS), our two accrediting agencies:

- A. Support for Students and Families
- B. Support for Faculty and Staff
- C. Developing our Educational Program
- D. Developing our Governance and Decision Making Systems
- E. Ensuring that there are Sufficient Resources for the School's Growth and Development

Within each of these five categories we have identified priorities in each of the following areas, although each category may not have all four areas.

- 1) Work already started and needing to be sustained and developed.
- 2) New work to be implemented in the coming three years.
- 3) New planning or decision making to be completed in the coming three years for implementation in the next strategic plan.
- 4) Additional priorities to be pursued if resources allow.

There are priorities and initiatives that fit in multiple areas. For instance, the development of a more competitive salary structure is relevant to both supporting faculty and staff and ensuring that the school has sufficient resources. To simplify the plan, and reduce repetition, items are listed only once in the area designated by the Board and College.

Support for Students and Families

Ongoing initiatives that need support and commitment:

- Continue to develop our school wide Parent Education and Engagement Program seeking to support families throughout the school, deepen understanding of Waldorf Education, and create connection and relationship across the community.
 - Ensure that all parents have an opportunity to participate – offering programs at various times and in different formats.
 - Annually review and develop the topics, approaches, speakers, and formats of the program to ensure that we learn from our experiences and have a progressively more effective and sustainable program.
 - Focus on ensuring that faculty from the Early Childhood Program to the High School are able to partner with the Parent Education and Engagement Program to alleviate faculty responsibility of carrying the curriculum and parent education on child development, as well as classroom support
 - Expand collaboration with the Director of Communications to develop web and Parent Square resources that provide ongoing access to parent education and engagement materials.
- Continue to focus on supporting new families as they join our community, with an emphasis on ensuring that they are integrated fully into our community life over their first year with RSSAA.
 - Support formal connections with experienced parents for new parents at all levels of the school through the deepening of our parent-buddy program. This could be achieved through the Community Engagement Director and/or the Parent Council.
 - Ensure that there are several community events designed to welcome and integrate new families (not just parents) in the summer and fall annually.
 - Develop consistent materials to support new families with integrating into our community and festival life of our school – so that they are warmly held, especially during the first year they are with our school.
- Expand the ongoing faculty conversation to include parents and students around the development of our curriculum with a focus on our diversity and inclusion goals. *(Also listed under Educational Program.)*
 - Continue to support our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, and seek to grow its membership annually.
 - Develop a process in which all community members can offer feedback on what aspects of creating a more inclusive curriculum are working and where attention is needed.
- Expand our Eurythmy program from the current part-time role (our Eurythmist is budgeted as a full-time employee, but they also carry responsibility for some High School Humanities blocks) to a full-time Eurythmy position to teach the Early Childhood Program through the High School. *(Also listed under Educational Program.)*
- Continue to deepen faculty and staff capacities (individually and within groups) surrounding an understanding of racism, bias, and cultural sensitivity. *(Also listed under Support for Faculty and Staff.)*

- Complete the Alma Partner Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work by the end of Summer 2023
- Develop a way for new faculty and staff to gain the insights that the Alma Partner program has bought us in the coming 18 months.
- Ensure that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work is one focus of study at all levels of the school, including the College and the Board.

Work to be implemented in the coming three years:

- Development of Community Service work across the school as a central focus of our work not an added extra. *(Also listed under Educational Program.)*
 - Develop opportunities for students to regularly participate in community service.
 - Create a structure to support parents in service work with their children – such as river clean-ups and other group activities.
 - Ensure that the High School students actively lead community service, including choosing what to do and with whom.
- Invest in a strategy to recruit, support, and retain Black, Indigenous, and families of color; designate funds towards these efforts and bring the lens of equity, inclusion, and diversity to all work within the school.
 - Identify outside support that can help us create this strategy and find the funding (through development work) to make an investment within the first 12 months of this plan.
- Prioritize student programs and services to meet the learning needs of students with more on-site educational support services. *(Also listed under Educational Program.)*
 - Ensure that there are dedicated student support staff on both campuses.
 - Provide literacy and numeracy specialist(s) at key developmental levels – especially grades 1 – 6.
 - Provide appropriate school counselor(s), or counseling service to all students in the High School, with additional access for both High School and Lower School parents to consult on appropriate care and support for their children. Services should include both mental health counseling and College Preparation Support.
 - Invest in an Educational Support/Extra Lesson teacher(s) who can support Grade 1-5 teachers and students in the classroom along with capacity building activities.
 - Expand school resources in this area – library of materials, referrals, and parent support.
 - Implement a regular schedule of student assessment at key points in the school – including Early Childhood, Grade Two and Grade Five. Assessments will include child development, skills development (literacy and numeracy)
- Develop clear conflict resolution and awareness practices throughout the school for all families and students.
 - Expand existing policies to encourage the sharing and resolution of smaller conflicts, before they become extremely difficult to manage.
 - Integrate conflict resolution lessons into our middle grades to prepare them for the challenges and opportunities of high school community life.
- Conduct a school audit of policies, practices, and procedures to find barriers to a more diverse community.

- Use the Spring 2021 Community Audit as a starting place, but building upon it, as time has passed and the school has changed through the pandemic
- Explore working with other Michigan Independent Schools, or similar sized Waldorf Schools to develop strategies for change, as we are all doing this work and might be able to strongly support each other.

Planning or decision making to be completed in the coming three years:

- Consider whether our school's name – Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor – needs to be changed for enrollment, DEI, public awareness, or other reasons.
 - Complete the review and discussion of this by Spring of 2024.
 - If the decision is to change our name ensure that we are complete with the planning process for the transition by Spring of 2025 for implementation with the next Strategic Plan.
 - Ensure that there is community support for this decision, to avoid the school having to revisit it for at least six years (two strategic plan cycles).

Additional priorities to be implemented if resources allow:

- Expand our Eurythmy program from one full-time Eurythmist to include a second Eurythmist to implement a full eurythmy program from the Early Childhood Program to Grade 12. *(Also listed under Educational Program.)*

Support for Faculty and Staff

Ongoing initiatives that need support and commitment:

- Continue to actively work to ensure that the circle of teachers is healthy and well connected.
 - Support teachers through rewarding and nurturing weekly faculty meetings that include:
 - Deepened curriculum study and anthroposophical study.
 - Biography work to strengthen bonds among faculty and staff.
 - Artistic work together
 - Increase support for the Class Teachers of grades one to eight.
 - Ensure that there is weekly dedicated meeting time for the Grade 1 – 4 teachers and for the Grade 5 – 8 teachers.
 - Create more preparation and resource time during the work week for Lower School Class and Specialist Teachers
 - Prioritize creating schedules that allow necessary school faculty and college committees to meet within the working day.
 - Reconfigure our Spring and Fall workweeks to support collaboration and work between teachers rather than practical work.
 - Work with faculty to decide if teacher workdays during the school year would provide support and allow work to be more collaborative.
 - Continue work at the Lower School to identify practical support that can reduce the burden on the Class Teachers – especially around cleaning, room prep and care, fieldtrip and overnight trip planning, and daily teacher tasks (copying etc.)
 - Find ways to reduce the total number of active committees by reallocating or consolidating committee responsibilities to decrease the workload on current faculty and staff.
- Continue to deepen faculty and staff capacities (individually and within groups) surrounding an understanding of racism, bias, and cultural sensitivity. *(Also listed under Support for Students and Families)*
 - Complete the Alma Partner Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work by the end of Summer 2023
 - Develop a way for new faculty and staff to gain the insights that the Alma Partner program has bought us in the coming 18 months.
 - Ensure that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work is one focus of study at all levels of the school, including the College and the Board.
- Continue to expand professional development resources and engagement across the school and encourage all faculty and staff to participate and strengthen their own self development and learning.
 - Annually review whether funding is sufficient, and whether the changing profile of our faculty is modifying the needs for such funds.

Work to be implemented in the coming three years:

- Invest in a strategy to recruit, support, and retain black, indigenous, and people of color within our faculty and staff ; designate funds towards these efforts (including teacher training); to support this bring the lens of equity, inclusion, and diversity to all work within the school.
 - Base this strategy in the work currently being done with Alma Partners.
 - Document the efforts made to expand the diversity of the applicant pool for all job postings, and track any impact on the pool.
 - Review and adjust the strategy annually until our applicant pool is as diverse as our local community.
- Develop and implement a 3-5 year plan to create a competitive overall compensation structure (salaries, wages, and benefits) for all full and part time faculty and staff in keeping with the school's foundational principles.
 - The Personnel Committee is charged with initiating this work and to collaborate with the Finance Committee around the financial aspects and implications.
 - Ensure that faculty across the school and at all levels of employment are invited into the conversation.
 - Ensure that a review of Health Insurance options that might reduce costs, while still providing a strong program for our employees, is included in this work.
 - Ensure that a review of tuition remission is part of this work – looking at whether there are ways to expand some remission to part-time faculty and staff, and if there are less expensive ways to continue to fully support full-time employees in this area.

Developing our Educational Program

Ongoing initiatives that need support and commitment:

- Continue the strengthening of the Middle School experience to attract and retain middle school students, increase retention into high school and support teacher sustainability.
 - Ensure that we hire a Fourth Lead Teacher for the Middle School by Fall 2024 – keeping this a priority position.
 - Strengthen connection between the Middle School program and the High School (see details under Enrollment Growth Initiative under Sufficient Resources Below)
 - Ensure that activities and programs around the classroom (sports, clubs, trips, etc.) are well planned, structured and engaging for middle school students and their families.
 - Work within the Parent Education and Engagement Program to ensure that community connections within and between class parent groups in the middle school are nurtured and supported.
- Ensure that the core values of Waldorf education are at the center of our ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion related curriculum work – and that the focus is always on child development as we implement the changes and developments.
 - Fully implement the existing braided curriculum and specific curriculums, ensuring that teachers are provided with the resources and support to do this without becoming overwhelmed with the challenges of this work.
 - Ensure that our focus is on developing appreciation, understanding and openness to all cultures, religions, and communities.
 - Ensure that joy and celebration is deeply woven into our diversity work in the early years, and that this continues while the more challenging and difficult aspects of human history are introduced in the middle and high school.
 - Broaden and expand viewpoints and human experiences in our curriculum to include all cultures, races, and experiences – shifting the focus to the full span of human achievement – including main lesson block content, reading material, and choice of artistic work.
- Ensure that movement, singing, spatial dynamics, art, and story is central in our grade program as we emerge from the limitations of the pandemic.
 - Prioritize re-establishing programs that are not fully re-implemented in the 2022-23 School Year – Lower School Singing and Eurythmy across the school.
- Expand the ongoing faculty conversation to include parents and students around the development of our curriculum with a focus on our diversity and inclusion goals. *(Also listed under Support for Students and Families.)*
 - Continue to support our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, and seek to grow its membership annually.
 - Develop a process in which all community members can offer feedback on what aspects of creating a more inclusive curriculum are working and where attention is needed.
- Expand our Eurythmy program from the current part-time role (our Eurythmist is budgeted as a full-time employee, but they also carry responsibility for some High School Humanities blocks) to

a full-time Eurythmy position to teach the Early Childhood Program through the High School.
(Also listed under Support for Students and Families.)

Work to be implemented in the coming three years:

- Prioritize student programs and services to meet the learning needs of students with more on-site educational support services. (Also listed under Support for Students and Families.)
 - Ensure that there are dedicated student support staff on both campuses.
 - Provide literacy and numeracy specialist(s) at key developmental levels – especially grades 1 – 6.
 - Provide appropriate school counselor(s), or counseling service to all students in the High School, with access for Lower School parents to consult on appropriate care and support for their children.
 - Invest in an Educational Support/Extra Lesson teacher(s) who can bring support to classrooms and support class teachers in Grades 1 – 5 with in-class support and capacity building activities.
 - Expand school resources in this area – library of materials, referrals, and parent support.
 - Implement a regular schedule of student assessment at key points in the school – including Early Childhood, Grade Two and Grade Five.
- Implement an Environmental Curriculum Program.
 - Ensure that we have a strong gardening and grounds care program for students on both campuses.
 - This should include food production, native planting, and removal of invasive species on both campuses.
 - Funding for specialist teachers for both campuses is essential.
 - Work to develop our Farm Trip experiences for third and ninth grade classes and develop links between the two classes.
 - Implement the Environmental Curriculum in our Middle School – with both Main lesson blocks and community service.
- Implement a Forest Kindergarten Class in the 2024-25 School Year.
 - Create a Forest Parent Child program in 2023-24 to support enrollment in the next year.
 - Develop the necessary structures and practical materials for this program during the 2023-24 school year.
- Strengthen transitions (K-1, 5-6, 8-9) across our school to support students, families, and enrollment levels.
 - Develop and strengthen relationships between classes by expanding the current Grade 1 and Grade 12 connection to other supportive relationships between specific classes.
 - Ensure that we support the development of anticipation about what is to come with regular performances, activities, and presentations from older students to younger.
 - Find ways to connect parents of older students to those of younger ones, so that an understanding of the ways in which students are supported throughout the grades can grow in the parent body.
- Build capacity in the High School to support student-to-student conflict resolution processes.
 - Ensure that skills are being taught from first grade, so that students are ready to manage the more complex relationships of High School.

- Develop stronger ninth grade integration and orientation programs for students and parents – to ensure that the community focused aspect of our school is fully understood and supported.
- Development of Community Service work across the school as a central focus of our work not an added extra. *(Also listed under Support for Students and Families.)*
 - Develop opportunities for students to regularly participate in community service.
 - Create a structure to support parents in service work with their children – such as river clean-ups and other group activities.
 - Ensure that the High School students actively lead community service, including choosing what to do and with whom.

Additional priorities to be implemented if resources allow:

- Expand the Golden Eagle teacher role to a full-time position.
 - As this becomes possible, consider looping the new first grade teacher into the Golden Eagles program in some way.
- Expand our Eurythmy program from one full-time Eurythmist to include a second Eurythmist to implement a full eurythmy program from the Early Childhood Program to Grade 12. *(Also listed under Educational Program.)*

Developing our Governance and Decision Making Systems

Ongoing initiatives that need support and commitment:

- Continue to strengthen Board/College and Board/Faculty relationships.
 - Work to expand relationships beyond the current Board/College focus, to include faculty from across the school.
 - Develop two to three activities annually designed to help both aspects (Board and Faculty) to understand and appreciate each other's roles and responsibilities more deeply.
- Reinvigorate our continuous improvement process.
 - Conduct review about what is working and what needs attention and development.
 - Consider what else should be in this process annually.
 - Find tools to help us manage this more successfully and efficiently.
- Ensure that there is transparency on how committees are formed and what decisions are made there.

Work to be implemented in the coming three years:

- Develop an accessible and transparent document and resource depository for all levels of our community.
 - Ensure that all committees are supported with a long-term archive of documents and decisions.
 - Increase accessibility to school policies and documents to all community members.
 - Reduce duplication and difficulty in finding the most up to date and final documents.
 - Include Scope and Sequence in this – with a better way for teachers and parents to understand the details of our curriculum.
 - Consider whether spending some funds annually might provide a better structure than is currently available through OneDrive or Google Docs.
- Invest in succession planning for all key leadership roles.
 - Plan needs to include how to nurture and support internal candidates, specifically around building leadership skills and capacities.
 - Plan needs to include an understanding of how to integrate a new employee in one of these roles into our community, and what first year support would require (financially and practically).
 - Included roles:
 - School Administrator
 - Board Chair
 - College Chair
 - Level Coordinators
- Develop support for full-time Faculty Chairs or develop another pedagogical leadership model at each level.
 - Ensure that these roles are manageable and do not create overwhelming workloads.

- Look at expanding the Pedagogical Coordinator role at each level and potentially replace the Faculty Chairs with the Pedagogical Coordinators – ensuring that the faculty experience is not replaced with an administrative perspective.
- Review the role of the Curriculum Support Committee in relation to the DEI Curriculum and classroom experiences; consider meeting frequency and define responsibility for documenting program innovations and integrating them into the scope and sequence.

Planning or decision making to be completed in the coming three years:

- Investigate moving records storage to an electronic format.
 - Any new approach needs to be manageable financially and in terms of workload.
 - Consider potential of moving forward without going back and bringing past documents into an electronic format.
 - High School has fundamentally made this change over the past three years, although past records are still on paper.

Ensuring that there are Sufficient Resources for the School's Growth and Development

Ongoing initiatives that need support and commitment

- Continue to develop and support a culture of giving and investment across the school.
 - Hire a new Development Director to be working by summer 2023.
 - Work with Parent Education and Engagement Program to expand community understanding of the value of giving in our community.
 - Expand community awareness of grants we receive and use.
- Continue to expand and grow the annual fund each year.
 - Support ongoing work to expand the alumni student and parent engagement in the annual fund donations.
- Implement the Enrollment Growth Initiative approved by the Board of Trustees in January 2023 which is made up of the following initiatives:
 - Full review and subsequent redesign of our advertising approaches.
 - Include print, electronic, and social media aspects of our advertising and promotion.
 - Complete this through a short-term Community/Board task force.
 - Full review and subsequent honing of the school website.
 - Goal is to maximize the site's ability to draw people in and support potential new families, while not reducing the usefulness of materials for current families
 - Complete this through a short-term Community/Board task force.
 - Expand access to the Middle School for new students who have not had a Waldorf K-5th grade experience.
 - Needs to include support for students who have not had World Language, Music, and Art instruction over the years, and need developmental classes to be successful in our program.
 - Needs to analyze what other barriers exist and have practical plans to reduce and remove them.
 - Complete this through a short-term Faculty/Administration task force with input from recently arrived current middle school families.
 - Expand High School International Student Enrollment
 - Create a plan for direct outreach to countries we have existing connections with.
 - Create a plan for outreach to international families within the Southeast Michigan Region who might be interested in welcoming family members into American High School Education.
 - Complete this through a short-term Community/Board task force.
 - Increase our student retention throughout the school.
 - Expanded Student Support from EC to Grade 12 is central to this and will be the first part implemented.
 - Conduct exit interviews for all families leaving at the end of the 2022-23 school year and use that information to expand strategies in this area.

- Complete this through a short-term Faculty/Administration task force.
- Strengthen High School enrollment through a focus on developing support for the High School throughout our community.
 - Develop a stronger understanding and positive attitude in Lower School Faculty.
 - Ensure that the financial challenges of High School enrollment are as reduced as possible.
 - Work within the Parent Education and Engagement Program to ensure that Middle School Parents understand what the High School offers their children.
 - Work on this from the EC program and up, but prioritize for Grades 5, 6, and 7
 - Do not wait until Grade 8 to begin this process with parents.
 - Complete this through a short-term Faculty/Administration task force.
- Add in the review process and how right sizing the school might be necessary.

Work to be implemented in the coming three years:

- Make a schoolwide commitment to achieve and maintain full enrollment; define the ideal enrollment number and engage all school leaders, staff, teachers, and parents in strategies towards achieving that goal.
 - Build upon the Enrollment Growth Initiative already underway.
 - Consider bringing in outside support to help us fully analyze what is needed to achieve the following level of enrollment.
 - Early Childhood – 62 students (with current number of classes)
 - Grades 1 – 8 – average of 24 students per class – total of 192 students
 - High School – average of 28 students per class – total of 112 students
 - Total enrollment across both campuses of 366 students
- Actively work to reduce the school's debt load with a focus on the refinancing of our mortgage in 2024.
 - Maximize Gift funds towards our mortgage reduction as refinancing takes place.
 - Research the ways to refinance in October 2024 most affordably and ensure that a plan is in place by April 2024. Planning or decision making to be completed in the coming three years:
- Actively explore new ways to fund the school to reduce our dependence on tuition.
 - What resources do we have that can create income?
- Consider Early Childhood satellite campuses.
 - Within the three years of this plan, we should consider the question of such expansion and either choose to invest with a detailed plan or remove from consideration for at least the next five years.
- Consider hiring an outside professional to evaluate the entire marketing plan and advise on the most effective strategy to support enrollment growth and increase the number of inquiries from prospective families.
- Consider a review of the current distribution of various HR duties to reduce redundancies and create greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Additional priorities to be implemented if resources allow:

- Increase reserves in all areas except Building Reserve Fund