

WSA SCHOOL REPORT

the
waldorf
school
OF ATLANTA

PRE-K
TO 8TH
GRADE

MISSION STATEMENT

The Waldorf School of Atlanta develops in its students the will to become life-long learners by fostering in each student the ability to think with clarity, feel with compassion, and act with purpose in the world.

The Waldorf School of Atlanta

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Chapter I: Introduction

MISSION, VISION, VALUES

OUR MISSION

The Waldorf School of Atlanta develops in its students the will to become life-long learners by fostering in each student the ability to think with clarity, feel with compassion, and act with purpose in the world.

OUR VISION

The Waldorf School of Atlanta embodies the ideals of Waldorf Education:

The sanctity of childhood,
An abiding sense of wonder,
An evolving quest for truth.

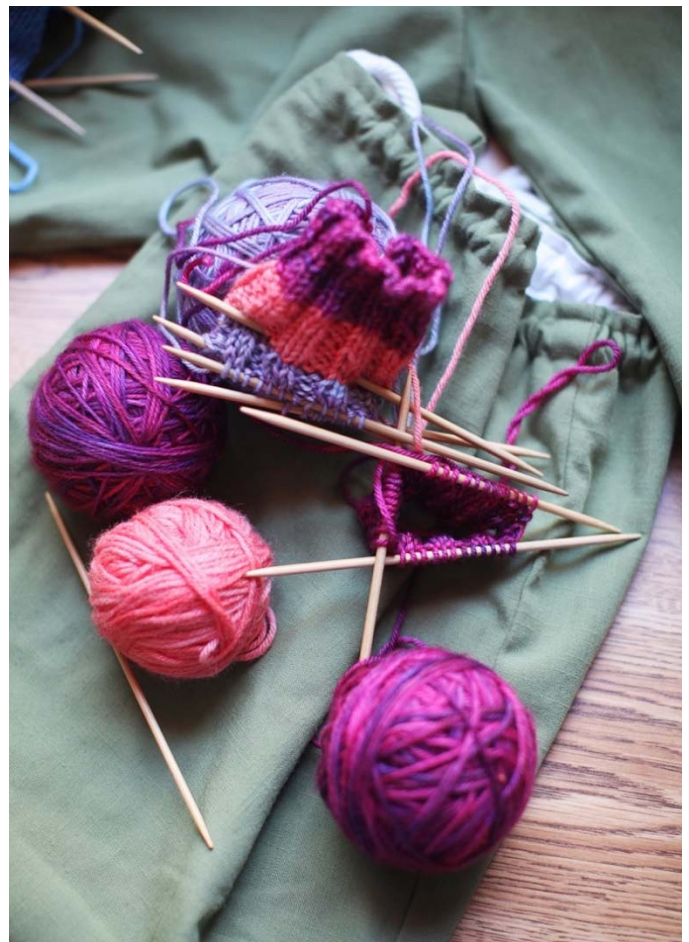
OUR VALUES

We teach a hands-on, integrated curriculum that is developmentally appropriate and grounded in artistic and practical work to create an optimal environment where children develop intellectual curiosity, social sensitivity, and physical stamina.

We explore with students the beauty, possibility and resilience of the human spirit, bestowing upon them the tools to become thoughtful, clear-thinking adults, able to act with courage and social responsibility.

We provide a safe and inclusive learning environment rich in natural esthetics, where the interests and strengths of all students are honored and encouraged through artistically expressed practical life skills.

We rely on a commitment from all members of the community to work cooperatively to build strong long-term collaborative relationships using open, clear, and direct communication.



INTRODUCTION TO WALDORF EDUCATION

“Fostering in children their innate ability to think with clarity, feel with compassion and act with purpose in the world.” ~ Rudolf Steiner



By virtue of the underlying principles of Waldorf Education, developed in Germany early in the 20th century, and borne out over nearly 100 years of practice and research, The Waldorf School of Atlanta hews closely to the developmental picture of the growing child as described in the foundational works on Waldorf Education. This developmental picture is unique among educational philosophies in that it encompasses not just the physical development of the child, but three other

“bodies”: the etheric, the astral, and the ego bodies. With this picture in mind, the incarnating child is learning with and through their physical body and by imitating those around them around the age of seven, then by living into the imaginative pictures offered by the teachers up until puberty, and only then, in a more full command of the physical, etheric, and astral bodies, in high school takes up an authentic education of their ego. Starting in the earliest years, an appreciation for nature and the powers within it are cultivated; stories of saintly, then courageous personalities impress into the children the potential of the individual human spirit. Additionally, students often work together in small groups, helping each other accomplish tasks or find solutions to problems, continually reinforcing the exponential possibilities of individuals working together. Underlying this method is the strong conviction held by teachers of a divinely woven cosmos, macrocosm/microcosm — “As above, so below.” Students gradually come to experience this phenomenon through their own explorations in science, poetry, and literature, and in the reading of the biographies of outstanding individuals throughout human history.

Waldorf Education requires both parents and faculty to see each child as evolving over time, advancing through the subtle milestones of childhood. The whole school community supports this education, not just of the intellect, but also of social sensibilities and the willingness to attend to worthwhile tasks. This unique approach to learning requires that parents provide the children with a healthy rhythmic and supportive home life, while the Board and Faculty leadership develop strategic resources for an esthetically appropriate school environment, which in turn supports the work of teachers in presenting an engaging and thought-provoking curriculum. Waldorf schools are, by definition, collaborative in decision-making. As a

fundamental principle in Waldorf schools, teaching faculty make decisions regarding curriculum content and presentation. This view requires participation in regular weekly department and full-faculty meetings, study and reflection on Waldorf philosophy and methods, and individual professional development.

BRIEF HISTORY OF WSA

The seeds for what became The Waldorf School of Atlanta were planted six years before the School actually opened its doors in 1986 as *The Children's Garden*. In 1992, the school's first Grade 1 class was formed and taught by Susan Jones. In 1992, the School's name was changed to The Waldorf School of Atlanta to reflect its growth, its reach throughout the metropolitan community, and its aspirations for a full lower school in the future.

Since 1992, the school's growth has been steady and stable, slowly but surely taking on more students and their families, more faculty and staff, and more real estate. The school graduated its first eighth grade class in 2000. Following this positive trajectory, the school successfully attained the joint AWSNA/SAIS-SACS accreditation in 2006 and again in 2012.

Since that time, the school has successfully collaborated with Columbia Presbyterian Church (the landlord) by establishing a long-term lease (through June 2029), which includes a joint account to make improvements to the building. In addition to the leased space, which we have occupied for approximately 20 years, the school also owns two adjacent houses and six acres of land. When these properties were acquired almost 15 years ago, one of the houses was renovated for our administrative offices and the other for our early childhood program.

A satellite preschool, serving 2 to 4-year-olds, was opened four years ago in the city of Atlanta, five miles from our Decatur site. Enrollment has grown from 7 to 22 students at that location. The goal was to make inroads on the east side of Atlanta, and to provide two to three new Kindergarten students for the Decatur program each year. We have done better than expected and have had five to six students enter the Decatur program in recent years. We were delighted to recognize that five of our current first graders were enrolled in the program at Inman Park the year it started.

Additions to teaching/student support staffing include a full-time (previously part-time) Pedagogical Chair position (currently vacant), full-time Educational Support Coordinator (new), and a half-time Educational Support Specialist (new) to combine with the half-time School



Counselor to comprise the Educational Support Department, a half-time Gardening teacher, and increased hours to full-time for the Middle School Math teacher position.

Administratively, WSA is currently in an Administrator transition and working with an interim Administrator for the 2018-2019 school year while the Board of Trustees begins a search to identify the ideal candidate for the evolving needs of our school. Other administrative shifts involve the part-time positions of Marketing Coordinator and Development Director being combined into a new full-time Marketing and Development Director.

GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

The Waldorf School of Atlanta uses a three-fold leadership model, which includes the school Administrator, the Community Chair, and the Pedagogical Chair.

During the 2010-11 school year, the WSA community spent the full year exploring a new leadership model that balances the necessary administrative (Administrator) and fiduciary responsibilities with pedagogical leadership (Pedagogical Chair) and with Community stakeholders (Community Chair). The process illuminated that while the areas of responsibility



are clear, the Leadership Team works with a collaborative decision-making model to ensure a cohesive voice from school leadership. Working in concert the Leadership Team demonstrates a clear commitment to the ideals of Waldorf Education, and upholds the vision and mission in all its decisions. As with other school models, the Leadership Team (as “Head of School”) works with the Board of Trustees and the Core Faculty to form the governance structure of the school.

Waldorf schools are, by definition, collaborative in decision-making. A fundamental principle in Waldorf schools maintains that teaching faculty make decisions regarding curriculum content and presentation. This view requires participation in regular weekly department and full-faculty meetings, study and reflection on Waldorf philosophy and methods, and individual professional development.

The Board of Trustees

The Board carries the legal and financial responsibilities of the school. Its functions include budget review/approval, fundraising, site planning and development, and accountability for the Leadership Team. The Board is comprised of parents, faculty, and community members who meet monthly.

Committees of the Board of Trustees:

- Governance Committee
- Site Committee
- Marketing Committee
- Development Committee
- Finance Committee
- Executive Committee

The Leadership Team

The Board of Trustees has delegated the day-to-day management of the School to a three-member group known as the Leadership Team (the “LT”). The LT consists of the School Administrator, the Pedagogical Chair, and the Community Chair. The LT has hiring, review, and firing responsibilities for the administrative staff and works in conjunction with the Core Faculty (the “Core”) in the hiring, review, and firing of all teaching positions.

Generally, the School Administrator sees to the “sound administration of the school”; the Pedagogical Chair provides leadership of the faculty, and the Community Chair monitors and seeks to strengthen the health and engagement of current and prospective parents and the wider community.

In addition, the LT’s responsibilities include:

- Upholding the Mission and Vision of the School in conjunction with the Board and the Core;
- Making decisions regarding the day-to-day sound management of the School;
- Overseeing annual Operating Goals and longer-term Strategic Planning;
- Serving in an advisory capacity to committees of the School;
- Supporting communication between the Board, faculty, parents, and students;
- Supporting communication between the School and the larger community aimed at the positive experiences and healthy engagement of parents; and
- Commitment to working out of Anthroposophy.

The Core Faculty

The Core Faculty is a smaller group representing the full faculty and staff who, out of a commitment to Anthroposophy, take on a special responsibility for the school’s care and guidance. The Core meets weekly and works by consensus. Their responsibilities include deepening the cultural and spiritual life of the school, hiring and terminating faculty, creating new faculty positions, and developing pedagogical programs. All of these responsibilities are carried out in collaboration with other school leadership groups.

Committees of the Core:

- Professional Development Committee
- Festivals and Fairs Committee
- Social Inclusion Coordinating Group
- Diversity and Equity Committee
- Safety Committee
- Assembly Committee
- Teacher Search Committee
- Accreditation Steering Committee



SCHOOL PROFILE

Childhood First

Experts in child development are now confirming what Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf schools, understood one hundred years ago: children learn both eagerly and naturally. Every detail of Waldorf Education places the development of the individual child as the focal point. Our curriculum – rich in every branch of academics and enlivened with the arts and practical skills – honors children at each stage, nurturing their current capacities and preparing them for new learning to come.

From early childhood through high school, Waldorf classes go beyond routine dispensing of academic information. They also develop the nimble, humane, and discerning minds these young people will need. Our teachers steadily build each student's individual capacity for sensitive engagement, original thinking, clear reasoning, and the ability to translate thoughts into action.

The Waldorf School of Atlanta is an independent and non-sectarian school founded in 1986 by a group of parents. It is one of over 1,000 Waldorf schools worldwide based on the work of Rudolf Steiner. The Waldorf School of Atlanta serves children from age 2 through Grade 8. The school is aligned with the nearby Waldorf High School, Academe of the Oaks, offering grades 9-12.

Student Population

- Morning Garden parent/toddler program: 14 families
- Grade levels: Morning Garden, Preschool to Grade 8
- Total number of students: 242 (does not include Morning Garden)
- Early Childhood (satellite location): 22
- Early Childhood (Decatur campus): 50
- Grades 1 to 5: 114
- Grade 6 to 8: 56

Last updated: 9/21/2018

There are approximately 250 students enrolled, from age two through Grade 8, representing families with international, ethnic, socioeconomic, and religious diversity. Our student body is comprised of the following percentages of students of color:

- 16% Multi-racial American
- 13% Latino/Hispanic American
- 11% African-American

Middle Eastern American, Native Alaskan/American Indian, and Asian American students constitute less than 2% of the student body.



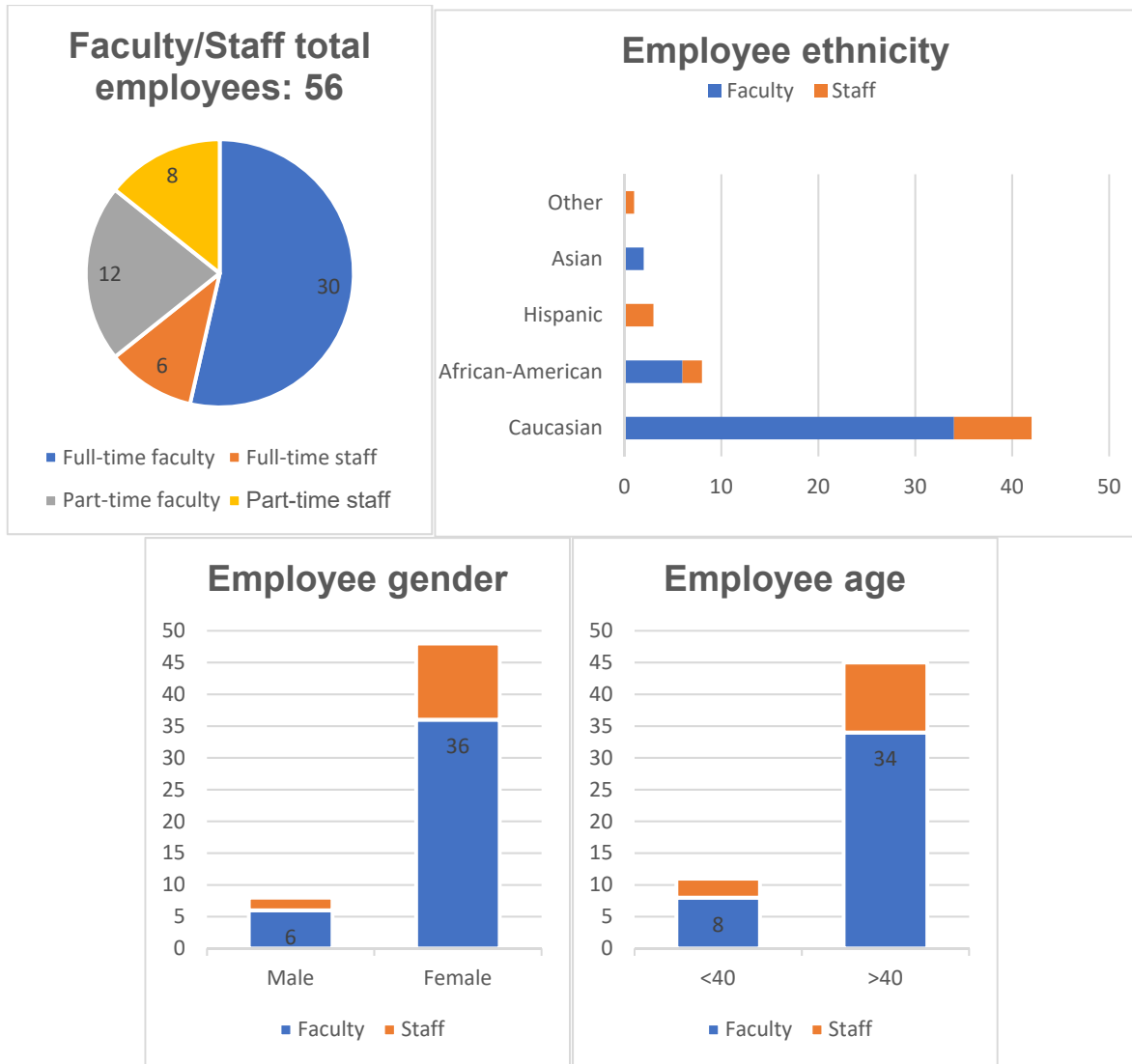
Approximately 35% of our students receive tuition assistance.

Faculty

We have a total of 56 employees at WSA. Thirty-six (64%) are full-time and 20 are part-time. Forty-three (77%) are faculty, and 13 are administrative staff.

Of the total employees, 48 (86%) are female and 8 are male. Forty-five (80%) are over 40 years old and 11 are younger than 40 years old. 42 (75%) are Caucasian, 8 are African-American (12%), two are Asian, three are Hispanic, and one are Other.

The faculty at WSA is fully certified by accredited Waldorf teacher training institutes (two years beyond the bachelor's degree) and is committed to participating in continuing education programs annually. Most academic subjects are taught by the class teacher, who typically moves up each year with his or her students. Specialty teachers also support student learning and development over several years, instructing students in Spanish, music, handwork, woodwork, movement, and Eurythmy (expressive movement inspired by music, poetry, and meaning).



Class Size

Preschool/Kindergarten classes range from 7 to 18 children in size, with a lead teacher and an assistant teacher for each class. Grades 1 - 8 range from 16 to 26 students, with certain subjects, such as gardening, Eurythmy, handwork, and writing, split into smaller groups to ensure a better grasp of the subject.

Campus

The Waldorf School of Atlanta has a main campus located at 827 Kirk Road, in Decatur, GA, and a satellite campus five miles away at 1015 Edgewood Avenue, in Inman Park, Atlanta. The satellite campus has two of the early childhood classes while the remaining early childhood classes and all the grades classes are held in Decatur, on the main campus. The main campus

is comprised of leased space in Columbia Presbyterian Church, as well as two houses we own on five acres of land.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum at WSA is a richly creative, developmentally appropriate blend of academic studies (including Spanish) and the fine, performing, and practical arts. All subjects are taught experientially and artistically, as well as intellectually.

Early Childhood Program

At WSA, our Early Childhood program nurtures a sense of wonder and curiosity in the young child, while encouraging reverence and joy for the goodness of life. The warmth and beauty of the classrooms, the mixed-age groupings, and a home-like and rhythmic atmosphere, provide an opportunity for children to develop independence while playing and learning in a loving, creative, and safe environment.



Elementary Grades (Grades 1 – 5)

In the elementary grades, WSA engages children in the world of traditional academics through an experiential, movement-based, multi-disciplinary approach that supports each child's unique development. Speaking, writing, reading, and mathematics are introduced and reinforced through imaginative, cultural stories, including fairy tales, animal fables, Native American legends, and ancient mythology. Good work habits and positive social skills are developed and supported by a team of teachers — a class teacher who stays with his or her class for multiple years, and specialists who round out each child's education with subjects such as Spanish, handwork, movement, choral, and instrumental music. Elementary main lessons include punctuation, grammar, cursive writing, parts of speech, book reports, research projects, map-making, and math skills.



Middle School (Grades 6 – 8)

WSA promotes a courageous exploration of the self and the community during the middle school grades, the phase of adolescence wherein students begin to understand themselves and their place in the world. A human-centered and artistic approach to education engages the student's will to persevere and approach the world with flexibility and creativity. A class teacher and a team of specialists offer a strong academic and multi-faceted fine and practical arts program, further developing each student's observational and abstract thinking skills. Middle school main lessons include history, geography, literature, creative writing and research papers, business math, algebra, geometry, technology, physics, geology, astronomy, physiology, chemistry, and anatomy.



After-school Activities

The after-school activities offered during the 2017-2018 school year were:

- PlayBall (for Grades 1 through 3)
- STEM FUNdamentals with Legos (for Grades 1 through 4)
- Cooking (for Grades 1 through 4)
- Hiking Club (for Grades 3 through 5)
- Theatre (for Grades 1 through 5)
- Theatre (for Middle School)
- Math Club (One for Grades 3 through 5, one for Grades 6 through 8)
- Ultimate Frisbee (for Middle School)
- Basketball (for Middle School)
- Soccer (for Middle School)
- Track (for Middle School)
- Robotics (for 7th and 8th graders)

ACCREDITATION

The Waldorf School of Atlanta is accredited by:

- Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS)
- AdvancEd
- Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA)

Chapter II: Progress report

OVERVIEW

WSA is committed to ongoing self-reflection and organizational renewal. This continuous improvement effort is focused in part around recommendations made by the accreditation visiting team during our periodic accreditation visits. Below is a summary of updated responses to the visiting team recommendations from our accreditation visit in 2012. Recommendations have been consolidated and organized into the following three categories:

- Governance and Leadership
- Pedagogy and Teaching
- School Community

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

Reinstate standing committees of the Board of Trustees

The Board has several standing committees, including: Executive, Governance, Finance and Development. Two additional committees that were listed in the 2012 Bylaws as ad-hoc committees have also been reinstated as standing committees: Site and Marketing.

Recommendation 2:

Attract non-parent board members to serve on the Board of Trustees

For the past several years, the Board has made a conscious effort to recruit at least one member who is not a current parent at WSA. This has provided a helpful perspective for the Board, and the hope is to continue and this practice into the future.

Recommendation 3:

Determine what responsibilities can be delegated to the Parent Association

The school no longer has a Parent Association. This group disbanded in 2015 due to low meeting attendance and a duplication of already existing parent volunteer structures and input loops, including Class Parents and an active BOT/committee structure with extensive parent involvement. The Community Chair works actively to recruit and support parent volunteers and engage parents in numerous ways in the life of the school. Class Parents meet monthly to share and discuss ideas related to parent leadership and increasing parent volunteerism.

Recommendation 4:

Clarify how the Faculty Chair position of the Leadership Team is accountable to the Board

Since our 2012 Accreditation, the school has created a full-time Pedagogical Chair position to replace the part-time faculty chair position previously in place to oversee the educational program. The Core Faculty led an extensive process to update areas of responsibility and oversight for this position. The Board recently updated the Bylaws and Governance/Policy Manual to reflect this expanded role. The Pedagogical Chair is reviewed by the Board and the Core as part of the Leadership Team annual review and final approval for hiring and dismissal of the Pedagogical Chair remains at the Core level, subject to Board approval.

Recommendation 5:

Study the term of Board service to determine if a change would be beneficial

The Board of Trustees discussed this recommendation and decided to amend the Bylaws to allow for extended periods of service to support better continuity and stronger leadership at the Board level. Our Board president from 2012-2018 recently stepped down from this role after 6 years of service, but he will remain on the Board in an advisory capacity for one more year. Having the flexibility to extend terms in this manner has been very helpful.

Recommendation 6:

Study the term of the Faculty Chair for continuity in the leadership team

The Pedagogical Chair is not currently designed as a rotating position, so this recommendation is no longer relevant. When the updated job description was created, it was decided that the school would be best served by continuity of leadership in this role.

Recommendation 7:

Continue to recalibrate the balance of form and freedom in the leadership/followership model

The Core Faculty, Board of Trustees and the Leadership Team are in agreement about the necessity for clear processes, comprehensive job descriptions and constructive feedback protocols. The school is actively working to address leadership challenges identified over the past few years, and we are in a period of transition as we seek a new school Administrator and Pedagogical Chair to guide the school into the future. The Board and Core have identified several strategic goals in the area of leadership, and our interim leadership plan provides stability and accountability for the community until these open positions are filled.

Recommendation 8:

Evaluate the role of the Community Chair position and allocate hours accordingly

A new Community Chair was hired in August 2013 as a full-time 10-month employee with full Board of Trustees support. The role currently holds coordination of all parent engagement and

voluntarism, Adult Education/Community Enrichment programming, Festivals and Fairs committee chair including our annual Holiday Fair and Grandparents, Family & Friends Day, attends all group Open Houses/Tours with the Enrollment Director, serves on the Executive committee of the BOT and participates in the work of the Leadership Team. Further development/evaluation of the Community Chair position is being looked at this year as part of the overall leadership model review by the governance committee of the BOT under the strategic plan goals.

Recommendation 9:

Consider creating an appeal process for personnel decisions made by Core Faculty in line with independent school best practices

The Core faculty has approved an internal grievance policy and this process is reflected in the Faculty Handbook in the WSA Internal Communication Policy.

PEDAGOGY AND TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

Reduce student attrition

While there have been specific plans to reduce student attrition over the years, the reality is that attrition varies from year to year based on many different factors. Three years ago, our attrition was at a high of 20% due to a lack of faith in school leadership. The Board and Core recognized the challenges and started to implement changes then that would positively impact retention, including a special school meeting that fall and a monthly community letter to improve school communication. Ultimately, the decision was made to dismiss the Pedagogical Chair and eventually, the School Administrator. As a result of these changes and increasing confidence among our parent body, attrition has gone back to our more typical percentage of 15 to 16%. Approximately 60% of the families who left at the end of the 2017-18 school year relocated out of the Atlanta area and/or left for financial reasons. We are fortunate to have a \$10,000 grant that assists with tuition assistance for families who are faced with unexpected crises during the school year that impacts their ability to pay tuition. This grant is fully utilized every year and we still have families who end each year in arrears. In order to have more quantitative data about why families leave WSA, we hired a consultant this summer who will be conducting parent exit interviews. This information will inform any strategies moving forward.

Additionally, while we have continued with the monthly Community Letters, we continue to explore the challenge of communicating in a way that is effective, timely and meaningful for our community. Our Marketing Committee is excited to conduct focus groups this fall with members of our current parent body, specifically around teacher and school communication, to explore this issue further. We also understand that it can be challenging for new families to integrate into our community so last year, the Community Chair and Enrollment Director started hosting small

group meetings with new families shortly after the school year has gotten underway. The purpose of these gatherings is to share information about upcoming school events, find out about families' initial experience at WSA and address any questions or concerns. We hope that these strategies, and others we may employ, will positively impact student retention in future years.

Recommendation 2:

Create additional kindergarten classroom spaces

The school has added two additional, mixed-age early childhood classrooms at an offsite location in the Inman Park neighborhood of east Atlanta. These programs have healthy enrollment. The school has a renewable three-year lease on the site.

Recommendation 3:

Ensure a vibrant middle school program with happy, healthy middle school students

Middle school classes have healthy enrollment: 8th grade: 16, 7th grade: 18, 6th grade: 22. We have added a new program called Healthy Relationships, coordinated by our school counselor with support from class teachers. The Social Inclusion section of our practical arts instruction evolves every year to better nurture our middle school students' capacities to reflect on and respond to social challenges. Connections with buddy classes in the younger grades and service projects for the school help the middle school students feel connected to the broader school community. Middle school-only events like the back to school pool party, middle school dance, and extended middle school game nights allow them to feel the privilege and responsibility of being the "elders" of the school. After-school programs (ultimate frisbee, basketball, track, theatre, robotics, etc.) offer further opportunities for middle school students to explore their interests and connect with their peers. Class trips for middle school classes are designed to bring experiences that both challenge and affirm the students. The foundation of courtesy, politeness, and respect established in the lower grades and early childhood programs carries into the middle school even as the students are working out how to express individuality and friendship as adolescents. The mood of the middle school is a positive one, and feedback is strong.

Recommendation 4:

Expand the practical and academic curriculum to include programs such as biodynamic gardening and additional service-learning programs

The school now has a part-time gardening lead teacher, and an assistant teacher, who provide a weekly gardening program in grades 3-6. Seventh and eighth grade students spend two class periods per week in service learning as part of the Community Service through Practical Arts program. Students are divided into three groups: the Student Action Committee (Social Inclusion); Heart, and Hands (handwork); or Building our Community (gardening). Each class includes working with younger children in our community out of a strong social impulse. Also offered as 8th grade electives are glassblowing, jewelry making, and blacksmithing.

Recommendation 5:

Explore adding a 2nd Non-Native Language

The school is not currently considering adding an additional foreign language due to financial and scheduling restraints.

Recommendation 6:

Expand list of high school acceptances

We are proud of the high school acceptances that our students continue to receive from *Academe of the Oaks*, the Waldorf H.S., as well as other private and public magnet and charter schools. Our students are typically accepted into the schools of their choice and have desirable options upon leaving WSA. As is typical for our school, we will survey the parents of the graduating students to solicit their feedback so we may improve aspects of our school program as needed.

Recommendation 7:

Continue to examine and develop an evolving approach to meeting the needs of students in early adolescence

Academic

In 2013, the middle school faculty took on an extensive study of the middle school schedule that included shadowing students for a day. Much was learned about the adults' expectations of students in this exercise. Modifications to the schedule resulted from this exercise.

Improving science instruction has been a major focus since 2013. Jim McClurkin, a master teacher on our faculty, established school benchmarks for our science program and taught science blocks in many middle school classes. He also mentored other middle school teachers. His untimely death in 2017 was a great blow to our school, but the middle school faculty have honored his legacy by continuing to develop their teaching of science. Amalia Gray, an experienced middle school teacher, came to teach science to Mr. McClurkin's class and mentor the middle school teachers on science instruction. Three current faculty are enrolled in an intensive course with Michael D'Aleo, a leading educator in the field of phenomenological science instruction.

Our full-time middle school math specialist has added math clubs for younger and older students, including an opportunity for middle schoolers to compete in a national math competition. Middle school faculty also sponsor a robotics club that competes with other groups around Atlanta. A technology that focuses on computer programming has been added to our 8th grade curriculum, quite an innovation in a Waldorf school. This block has continually evolved to make use of technology that is engaging and instructive for the students. Our Educational Support Department includes a learning specialist that focuses on middle school math.

Our middle school faculty have reviewed our teaching of geography to better reflect our school's commitment to diversity and equity and have shifted the curriculum to include more thorough studies of Africa and Asia.

Our teacher evaluation process and newly revised looping policy offer the opportunity to closely examine the skills and talents of each 5th grade teachers as he or she considers the move into middle school and the school considers him or her as a middle school teacher. Continuing with a class into middle school is not a given.

Social

Opportunities for social development, both as instruction within the school and extracurricular activities, have been strengthened. Our Practical Arts program has added a segment on Social Inclusion, which involved explicit instruction to our 7th and 8th graders on Kim John Payne's methods of community building and conflict resolution. Along with this instruction, we have added units on healthy relationships (about understanding and communicating boundaries in all kinds of relationships) and cyber civics (about how to be a responsible citizen online).

Our sports program has grown significantly since 2012, adding co-ed ultimate frisbee and soccer and girls' basketball to our lineup. After-school theatre classes offer another opportunities for middle schoolers to explore their interests. Several of our family game nights throughout the year offer extended hours for middle school students, and since 2016, we have had an annual middle school dance.

Our Educational Support Department offers social support for middle school students. Since 2014, we have employed a part-time school counselor. Our learning support coordinator also offers support for emotional health and development by bringing extra lesson activities to classes and individuals.

Rites of passage to honor the development of the middle school students have become a more consciously cultivated part of our middle school experience. Since 2016, our 6th graders have gone through a rigorous process of self-reflection and community service to prepare for and participate in a knighting ceremony as part of our middle ages block. In the 2017-18 school year, 8th grade projects were introduced into our curriculum. These independent projects give 8th graders the opportunity to independently study an interest with an outside mentor and present their work to the school community.

Through conscientious ongoing study and collaboration, our faculty is working creatively to meet the needs of our middle school students.

Recommendation 8:

Build foundations and support for practical computer usage, technological literacy, and keyboarding proficiency

The MS math specialist has taught a three-week block on introductory computer programming for the past four years. In this Technology Block, students discuss the history of computers and explore introductory Linux scripting as well as Python programming. An emphasis is placed on organization of files and programs in proper directories, as well as documenting programs. Students expand their previous work on basic circuitry and electronics with signal and switch electronics using a Raspberry Pi microcomputer. They also simulate a brute-force crypt attack on a coded message, and take an experiential look at “touch technology” and the programming and circuitry behind it. Students also disassemble parts of a PC and then reassemble it.

In addition to this Main Lesson, the students continue their work in Cyber Civics, a curriculum that encourages good digital citizenship. This is a nice overlap with the Technology Block, as we guide them in safe on-line behavior as well as enhancing their practical understanding of how technology works.

Students are encouraged to practice keyboarding over the summer months between 7th and 8th grades. In 8th grade, there are more web-based research opportunities and word processing of some assignments.

Recommendation 9:

Strengthen and diversify extra-curricular offerings and support for hands-on learning opportunities to enhance experiences

After-school offerings include a dynamic sports program including basketball, ultimate frisbee, soccer, track, and volleyball for middle school students, based on interest and participation. We also offer Engineering FUNdamentals with Lego® for 2nd -5th grades, Theatre, Flamenco Dancing, Play Ball, and Robotics for 7th and 8th grades. The Choral Director has introduced opportunities to participate in local and state-wide individual events. These offerings are reviewed and modified regularly. The extended day director oversees these programs, with approval from the Core. With the additional resources generated by the afterschool activities the school was able to purchase two 14 passenger busses.

In addition to after-school offerings, the faculty organizes class trips aligned with the curriculum to support hands-on learning opportunities. Third graders spend a week on a north Georgia Biodynamic farm, caring for animals, planting, and harvesting. The creation of a part-time garden teacher has allowed for six gardening classes for grades 3-6 and support for campus beautification by the Middle School students through the Practical Arts program.

Recommendation 10:

Explore models for interdisciplinary teaching teams and potential looping in the middle school years

Currently, the Middle School has three, Waldorf trained Class Teachers in 6th, 7th and 8th grades with specialists in the areas of Math, Spanish, Movement, Eurythmy, Woodwork, and Handwork. The school feels that having a Middle School Math Specialist meets many of the needs of the Middle School students, and shows a commitment on the part of the Core Faculty to enliven the middle school experience. To some extent, these Specialty and Class teachers incorporate common themes in their lessons to deepen concepts in an interdisciplinary way. Our Middle School teachers have also engaged in an intensive science training over the last year to deepen the way they approach the science blocks in the Middle School.

WSA has a Looping Policy whereby teacher's ideally stay with a class for several years before 'looping' back to a lower grade. This has happened in the middle school years several times.

Recommendation 11:

Establish realistic goals/guidelines for accommodating students with needs beyond regular parameters (i.e. social/emotional & learning)

The Educational Support Department consists of a group of trained specialists and provides support for students who are experiencing difficulty learning in the regular classroom setting. The team is comprised of the Educational Support Coordinator, the School Counselor, an Extra Lesson/Remedial therapist, and a team of reading and math specialists. Members draw on Rudolf Steiner's indications on child development, Waldorf pedagogy, relationships to the wellness community, and their own study of relevant topics to inform this work. The Team takes up studies to deepen and broaden the group understanding of these issues and completes in-depth child observations.

This team holds an overview of all students receiving accommodations and is responsible for developing processes to support student learning in all classes. Our expanded student support program enables the school to better assess and support students in need of additional support. In addition, the Educational Support Coordinator reviews applications for new students prior to acceptance and works with Class teachers to ensure that all students' needs are met.

SCHOOL COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

Develop an Extensive Adult Education and Outreach program

Under the umbrella of the Community Chair, the Community Enrichment Committee has continued their work in supporting a diverse range of adult educational opportunities for parents to attend both social and educational adult gatherings in our community. By reconfiguring our

mid-year Parent Evenings and opening them up to all parents school-wide, we created three additional separate opportunities for parents to attend educational talks on a variety of topics including “Movement as a Foundation for Learning” and “Literacy Development” in the early grades of Waldorf Education. We continue to have regular offerings to support parents with media-lite living including hosting the movie, Screenagers, with a follow-up panel discussion and how to stay low-media during the holidays with guides for low-tech gift selections. Our Diversity and Equity Committee hosted several adult education evenings last year with plans for two more this year. In partnering with the local Anthroposophical Branch there are additional opportunities for deeper study with visiting lecturers through the collective learning community of the Anthroposophical Resource Center. These classes and workshops are advertised in our weekly Breeze newsletter. This year also promises development of a new series for Parent to Parent Education surrounding Family Wellness.

Recommendation 2: Create an Active and Engaged Parent Association

The 2013-14 school year started off with a 3-person leadership model for the parent association, supported by the school's Community Chair. The Parent Association leadership group was comprised of parents with particular interests in promoting parent involvement and parent education. Each volunteer had a slightly differing picture of how to accomplish those goals. The original concept was to have monthly open meetings of the association. Concurrently, there were monthly meetings of the Class Representatives. Many of the people chosen as class reps were also those attending the Association meetings; by the end of the year, it became clear that the class reps were the most interested and involved sub-set of parents. For the 2014-15 year, two of the Parent Association leadership group stepped off and two people stepped forward. This group worked to discern any gaps in current parent engagement regarding supporting teachers and staff, fundraising, and providing a channel for parent communications with the school. After further decline of attendance/interest at formal ‘Parent Association’ meetings, the group dissolved as a separate entity in 2015 as further review led to the awareness of a significant duplication of already existing parent volunteer structures and input loops, including an active BOT/committee structure with extensive parent involvement.

Recommendation 3: Create better target marketing and refined messaging, and create individual room signage to go along with new building signage

During the 2012-13 school year, the Marketing Committee led a rebranding initiative for the school. This campaign highlighted three distinct entry points for the school: Early Childhood, Lower Grades and Middle School. In May 2013, the school adopted a new logo and all students received a school t-shirt, new car magnets and a shopping bags for parents. During the following school year, the second phase of the rollout was accomplished: a new web-site home page (www.waldorfatlanta.org), new signage and letterhead, a new brochure, a remodel of our

visitor entrance and Open House formats, along with various ad campaigns. New road signs and site directional signs have also been created for the campus and the education buildings. Signs on the classroom doors are printed in the main color of the branding book: eggplant. The school bus was wrapped with a very colorful logo design, and is now being driven around an 8-mile bus route every morning: truly, a moving billboard. The two part-time positions of Development and Marketing has been combined into one full-time position.

Recommendation 4:

Utilize the newly organized parent association to market and promote the school to the greater Decatur-Atlanta area to help increase new enrollment

The formal 'Parent Association' dissolved in 2015 due to low meeting attendance and engagement which has mainly been attributed to a duplication of already existing parent volunteer structures and input loops. As part of our Parent Engagement form included with registration, we asked interested parents to join our Enrollment Director and Marketing Coordinator in their work promoting WSA through Open Houses and local festivals. Currently, 18 families have signed-up to participate in events for the 2018-19 school year to help with marketing and outreach. We also have a steady base of parents on social media that *follow, like* and *share* our WSA Facebook posts and articles which is another avenue for our parents to market not only our school, but Waldorf Education and its ideals and principles, to friends and family near and far.

Recommendation 5:

Strengthen coordination with *Academe of the Oaks*

The leadership of the Waldorf School of Atlanta and *Academe of the Oaks* meets on an as-needed basis throughout the year. Collaboration between the schools varies each year depending on what benefits the students. Every year, the high school supports a day in the fall when the eighth grade students and their parents have the opportunity to visit *Academe's* campus and hear more about their program. We promote this at the lower school as we hope that parents will consider completing their child's Waldorf Education through the high school years. Both schools communicate frequently about our school calendars, doing our best to avoid conflicts that will negatively impact our respective families, and about adult education opportunities that we promote through our newsletters. For many years, *Academe* students would come to WSA weekly to collaborate on Kim John Payne's social inclusion model. This became onerous several years ago and the schools took a break from this collaboration. It has been enthusiastically renewed this year but rather than a full class of *Academe* students being transported to WSA, a small group of select students come each week, with their school counselor, to work with our middle schoolers. This program just got underway for the year but we are excited about having our middle school students supported by their high school peers. Also, the WSA gardening teachers are interested in bringing some of their classes to *Academe* to visit their gardens and livestock. We also work together in the community to present a full Waldorf Education (kindergarten through 12th grade) by having adjacent booths at private

school fairs and neighborhood festivals and sharing each other's school information with prospective parents and other visitors. Finally, the delegates from our two schools are working together to mentor a developing Waldorf school in Puerto Rico. We are grateful to have a local Waldorf high school and anticipate that further collaborations will develop as the school year progresses and as interests and time allow.

Recommendation 6:

Emphasize outreach efforts for alumni and consider creation of a set annual visitation day

Last year, our new Development Director assumed responsibility for the area of alumni relations. She hired a part-time contractor to research and update our alumni database. This person also started posting more regularly on our Alumni Facebook page and posted a survey to collect data from alumni. After one year, the Development Director left to take a position with a local college. We are currently hiring a new Development Director and expect this staff person will continue to develop goals around the development of our alumni program. One of our efforts last year was a panel of alumni students, coordinated by a parent who leads our school's media-lite efforts, to speak with current parents and students about the benefits of a media-lite childhood. The panel was not well attended for various reasons but the students were brilliant!

Chapter III: Self Study

OVERVIEW

The Association of Waldorf School of North America (AWSNA) has seven guiding principles that provide inspiration and direction for the policies and practices of Waldorf schools. As part of our ongoing AWSNA accreditation, WSA is asked to reflect upon how these principles are living, how they are the basis of innovation, how the school is addressing any compromises to these principles, and plans and priorities to guide our selection of Areas of Improvement for the school. Given that our entire program is aligned with these principles, it seemed most natural to organize our Self-Study process around these seven areas of reflection.

Over the past year and a half, the faculty and staff participated in a three week rhythm of reflection, discussion/study, and visioning for each of these AWSNA Principles. The Board of Trustees also provided feedback around the principles aligned with Board-related work. The following chapter includes the reflections and insights gleaned during our discussions, as well as feedback gathered from current and alumni parents in our 2018 Value Narrative survey. Although our Self Study work was largely focused around the Waldorf Principles, we have organized the information according to the SAIS standards below:

SAIS STANDARD 1: Mission

The school commits to a mission that leads to continuous improvement for teaching and learning.

SAIS STANDARD 2: Governance and Leadership

The school provides a governance, leadership, and organizational structure that promotes its mission.

SAIS STANDARD 3: Teaching and Learning

The school provides a curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement of all students in support of its mission.

SAIS STANDARD 4: Stakeholder Communication and Relationships

The school develops and maintains effective communication and relationships to further its mission.

SAIS STANDARD 5: Resources and Support Systems

The school has the resources, services, and policies necessary to support its mission.

MISSION (WALDORF PRINCIPLES 1 & 2)

Waldorf Principle 1

The image of the human being as a spiritual being informs every aspect of the school.

The Waldorf School of Atlanta seeks to strengthen each student's capacity to think with clarity, feel with compassion, and act with purpose in the world. This mission guides all decision-making, resource allocation, and community-building efforts for our school. As a Waldorf School, we work actively with insights from Rudolf Steiner about the incarnating human being. One core insight is that the human being is a threefold being of body, soul, and spirit. Waldorf Education enlivens the physical, emotional, intellectual, social, artistic, and spiritual capacities of the human being as the individual moves through the phases of life. Our community is committed to Waldorf Education and to the Anthroposophical understanding of child development — in both word and deed — ensuring that it permeates all aspects of the life of the school.

The ideals outlined in our mission statement and the core principles of Waldorf pedagogy inform everything we do at WSA, including our policies and practices. As a Waldorf school, we are part of a worldwide movement dedicated to supporting the healthy development of children, and our policies are designed to meet the developmental stages as indicated by Rudolf Steiner. Examples include our school media guidelines, student behavior guidelines/discipline policy and the dress code policy. In general these policies carry a gesture of protection for the youngest children in reverence to their spiritual openness, a gesture of loving authority for grade school children acknowledging their need for adult guidance, and for the adult community, including parents, teaching and administrative faculty, a gesture of individual freedom with the necessary agreements of the community. We have found that clear guidelines go a long way to helping support parents in keeping their children healthy and happy.

Our mission statement is also reflected in all aspects of our school culture; its fullest expression can be seen in our festival life. Our festivals are an essential component to the life of the school and are manifested through the working hands of the entire community. In recognition of a harmonious connection to all living things, Waldorf Education embraces the significance of annual festivals. Festivals can bring one consciously to what is experienced instinctively in daily life, the awareness and wonder of the changing cycles of the seasons, and of life itself. Festivals can become a source of healing for the individual and society, a harmonizing community-building power. Through festivals, communion, and responsibility toward each other and the world are acknowledged and celebrated. Observing seasonal turning points is one way the school establishes a yearly rhythm for the children. Festivals of the year are celebrated as conscious nourishment for the soul, expressed with beauty and reverence, through art, music, stories, and poems. The festival themes are woven into the classroom experience at all grade levels, featured in main lesson and eurythmy, through artwork and games, and in preparation for plays and the festivals themselves.

Our experienced faculty encourages a deep understanding of the spiritual image of the human being. The school has been fortunate to maintain consistent and strong specialty programs throughout the grades from pre-K—8 in Eurythmy, Spacial Dynamics, Handwork, Gardening, Music, Spanish and Extra Lesson/Therapeutic movement. These practices extend to faculty meetings and are part of our parent education program. Both the curriculum subjects taught and their timing are of primary importance. Each grade's work is closely tied to the development of the human being at that age. Subjects are intended to meet the students' spiritual, emotional and academic needs at the most beneficial time in their development.

Exploring Strengths and Innovation

In addition to strengthening our policies and practices, many innovations related to our mission are regularly being made within the school community. WSA is committed to strengthening clear and direct communication among all the members of the community and encouraging dialogue as the preferred mode of communication: student to student, parent to teacher, teacher to parent, administrator to the school community. To address this commitment, the school has made an effort to fully recognize the needs of our current community of students and families by finding additional ways to improve communications and relationships within the community. In addition to the weekly *Breeze Bulletin* sent by the school office, The Leadership Team writes a monthly community letter that provides an overview of any updates, changes, or decisions taking place in the school.

One of the more recent innovations has yet to be proven in action, yet has been met with upbeat enthusiasm and great optimism. This is our new Department Chair leadership structure that now provides a direct link from our Core faculty to each department of the school. Without a full-time pedagogical leader connecting each department, the various faculty groups were left to their own devices and although the work was conscious, striving, informed and practical, it was also done on an island and disconnected from the whole. Now we have a plan to start from the whole and work to the parts. Each Department Chair is also an active Core member responsible for enlivening and holding the vision and mission of the school. This message is then carried forth by the Chairs into each departmental meeting, which is then disseminated to each faculty member and classroom. The Core agendas, department agendas and full faculty meeting agendas will be aligned consciously for the first time in recent memory. This innovation, though yet unproven here at WSA, has great promise to align the faculty, staff and community alike through our efforts to serve humanity.

At WSA, active and lively parent education efforts support our desire for a community unified around common goals. This parent work happens both at the class and at the community level. Each class teacher conducts three to four parent meetings each year that include discussion of developmental and curricular issues relevant to the children and parents in the class. A new multi-grade parent evening was recently developed where a theme is presented by faculty for multiple grades (reading and language arts with Grade 3-5 teachers; science and math with the math specialist and Grade 6-8 class teachers; developmental movement with the Eurythmy,

Spacial Dynamics, Extra Lesson, and the Early Childhood and Grades 1-2 teachers). These speakers bring the image of the human being as a spiritual being as a matter of course, thus sharing this message with our wider parent community. This format provides an opportunity for parents to widen their social circles while also learning about the developmental aspects and three-fold nature of the curriculum throughout those grades.

Facing Challenges and Making Compromises

Both the Core Faculty and Board work to balance the legal and financial obligations of the school with the educational program while holding the image of the human being as a spiritual being. At times this can be a challenging balance and limited resources can force us to make difficult choices at times.

In our work as a faculty, we face challenges of spatial logistics, finding clarity in policies, practices, and communication, and balancing our work lives. We often find ourselves feeling overworked due to the amount of committee work and the stress of our school calendar. We are still seeking clarity in what we desire in our leaders and how our concerns are channeled appropriately through each leadership role. At times, this can cause confusion with our chain of command and different groups taking up authoritative decisions. These challenges are directly related to our communication strategies, which need to be refined with boundaries around expectations of whom to go to, how to share in an objective way, and respect for the amount of communication we participate in. We find ourselves struggling with the ability to turn our focus outward as we continue to find ways to engage in direct communication and find supporting policies that are up to date with consensus. Our space can be challenging when it comes to finding places to gather and meet, and when holding events with parents. All of these challenges are a part of the bigger picture as we continue to refine how to present ourselves, our philosophy, and our intentions in a meaningful way to our community.

While WSA has been addressing internal leadership challenges over the past few years with courage, resilience, and transparency, the faculty has expressed a need for a strengthening of the foundation of collaboration and shared leadership in order to continue building relationships and trust among all school constituencies. There is a need for focused work on collaborative working relationships; work that allows time for group collaboration, sharing of expertise and resources, and deepened study around collegial communications and work

Strengths and Innovations

- Our mission is supported by all facets of our school community and our faculty, staff, and Board of Trustees work tirelessly to uphold the ideals of Waldorf Education with limited resources and support
- New Department Chair leadership structure representing Early Childhood, Lower Grades, Middle Grades, Specialty Teachers, Educational Support

- New Multi-Grade parent evening to deepen our connection to each other and the curriculum
- Staff and faculty are consistently encouraged to think outside the box and each take up their role as servant leaders

Challenges and Compromises

- Lack of decisive school leadership in recent years has caused frustration and confusion and made it difficult for committees to align their work with strategic, mission-driven goals
- WSA Internal Communication Policy is not consistently followed among faculty and staff, which has led to lack of trust between some colleagues as well as a habit of not acknowledging individual growth and change
- Our space can be challenging when it comes to finding places to gather and meet when we consolidate our two campuses, and hold events with parents

Priorities

- Continue to address our school leadership challenges and our commitment to ensuring that annual goals are clear and transparent to all constituents of the school
- Continue to develop our shared leadership model that includes Department Chairs and a collaborative agenda and goal-setting effort
- Create a more effective system for the management of documents and institutional knowledge
- Continue to educate the school community about the WSA Communication Policy so that the protocols for communication and transparency of educational and organizational operations is clearer
- Engage in further biography work to challenge us to grow in knowledge of both self and other as well as increase our pedagogical study during faculty meetings to deepen our understanding of the developing child
- Recommit to the Facilities Visioning work done in 2016 and develop a comprehensive plan to address our space needs in the coming years

Waldorf Principle 2

Waldorf schools foster social renewal by cultivating human capacities in service to the individual and society

In keeping with our mission, The Waldorf School of Atlanta fosters individual development so that, throughout their lives, our students will be motivated to serve humanity with strength of will, depth of feeling, clarity of thought, and the ability to work with others. Our educational program is designed to strengthen these fundamental human capacities in our students in a multitude of ways. Paramount of these is a well-trained faculty of teachers wholly committed to working together as colleagues to bring a conscious Waldorf curriculum to the children.

Our teachers weave together lessons that focus on the child as an integral part of humanity and the world itself from early childhood through the early grades and into the middle school. A robust movement curriculum centered around full-time Eurythmy and Spatial Dynamics “Games” programs bolster an already solid focus on the child in the world. Our blossoming Educational Support Department supports the child’s ability to learn successfully – by strengthening the foundations of thinking, feeling and willing, on which higher learning capacities are based. The Social Inclusion program’s focus is on cultivating conversations around healthy relationships through diversity in an ever more complex world. Our Cyber Civics program works to educate the children on becoming active and responsible digital citizens in a rapidly evolving society and social structure. Our middle school science program focuses on the cultivation of key observations in order to find patterns and relationships in the world around us. All this points to the fact that we are actively and appropriately striving to connect the children to themselves, their world and their role in it.

We have ever more work ahead of us, however. We continue to strive to create balance in our daily schedule for the students so that a healthy breathing and rhythm is in place. Likewise, we recognize our students could have a more active role in the greater community through service and outreach. Can we also inspire them to make a more personally responsible commitment to our own campus as we attempt to deepen our role as a “green” school? Our faculty has only begun their training in diversity and equity and this needs to deepen and expand in order to fully realize its meaning and impact on our school and on Waldorf Education in the 21st century.

Exploring Strengths and Innovations

We consider ourselves lucky to be part of such an open-minded and diverse group of thinkers and workers in our school community. Staff and faculty are encouraged to think outside the box and to each take up their role as servant leaders. We all play a part in support of the school community by guiding our colleagues, students and parents alike.

WSA envisions a community that is socially resilient, respectful of others, empathic, and able to navigate interpersonal conflict in a constructive manner. A healthy social life is vital to the development of the child and to the functioning of a community. As a community, an important role is to assist students in resolving conflicts and learning from their social interactions. Waldorf pedagogy aids in the social development of students and works implicitly through developmentally appropriate stories, movement, drama, and art. Teachers cultivate an expectation on campus of politeness and courtesy. When social conflicts occur at school, teachers and/or the School Counselor intervene to ensure safety and to facilitate appropriate resolution. WSA uses a school-wide initiative developed by Kim John Payne, M. Ed. called The Social Inclusion Approach. This approach draws upon the pedagogy and traditions of Waldorf Education and is closely aligned with principles of Restorative Justice.

More innovations include the practical nature of our Social Inclusion and Healthy Relationships Program. Our approach has gone through many changes over the past 7 year cycle as we have worked to cultivate the essential for the sake of the students and their families. We have employed various and practical refinements of our program throughout the school, always with an eye to the developmental differences in each grade. For instance, a primary effort of our Social Inclusion program focuses on our 7th and 8th graders in our Practical Arts curriculum. Here, students are split into three groups of mixed ages and shuffled evenly between the Gardening, Handwork and Student Action Team over the course of three trimesters during the year. The Student Action Team (or S.A.T.) meets as a closed group for a period to receive Social Inclusion training before splitting up to bring that work to the 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade students in the form of play and storytelling. A more recent development has been to include more personal and teacher led social inclusion work with grades 5 through 8 separate from the strict Social Inclusion program. This "Healthy Relationships" curriculum focuses on the interpersonal boundaries between students specifically and human beings in general. This program has also grown to include a new program for the 6th, 7th and 8th graders called Cyber Civics where the focus expands to include healthy relationships online and what it means to be a responsible and engaged "digital citizen" in the age of information and virtual reality. Additionally, the School Counselor provides small group or whole class Social/Emotional support focusing on the issues currently living in the classroom or among students. These programs are non-static and continue to be adapted year by year for the changing students and ever evolving world of technology and society in general in the hopes that we can cultivate an engaged, informed and healthy student of the 21st century.

Further innovation throughout the school is evident in each and every department and includes but is not limited to: the school wide celebration of the International Day of Peace or World Peace Day every September 21st; our Pen Pal program that engages students in grades 3-6 in corresponding with students their own age in both Germany and Canada; the adaptation of our second grade "Saints" curriculum to include various "Good, Kind, Strong" individuals the world over from various backgrounds and faiths; the invitation of graduating 12th grade seniors from *Academe of the Oaks* to visit and assist our Kindergarten classes; the parent led Media Lite Living initiative that supports the parent community in navigating media and its many uses by

leading conscious and thoughtful discussions; the combining of classes for the second Parent Evenings of the year for grades 1-8 to include broader topics such as Discipline, Math and Science in the Middle School, Social Inclusion, the Waldorf method in general as well as Anthroposophy. These shared meetings also incorporate specialty subject teacher presentations; and lastly, the start of a school wide conversation around healthy and effective communication between faculty, staff and parents led by our Marketing Committee. These innovations are again just a sample of the numerous areas our faculty and staff take up consciously each school year to better improve our educational program in order to foster and strengthen the capacities of thinking, feeling and willing in our students, faculty and community in service to the individual and society.

Facing Challenges and Making Compromises

Although we do focus many efforts on fostering social renewal through service, there are also challenges and compromises that arise in this work. While our teachers are conscious of the tendency towards a Euro-centric curriculum, there is still a need to create more depth in our work of bringing about perspectives from around the world through our stories and use of gender roles. There is work to be done with enlivening our festivals and creating more diversity in our festival life. We have come a long way with working with diversity, yet there are still questions about how to work with parents and how to bring the presentation of these topics through age-appropriate discussions to students.

We are proud of the variety of Specialty subjects that are offered and how those teachers are integrated into main lessons, yet this creates a full schedule that can be difficult to balance both pedagogically and logistically. The concerns of the outer world in addressing academic success can overshadow the holistic intentions of the curriculum and we often ask ourselves how we can still bring human capacities in a world that, in and of itself, is a challenge.

In our work with the students, we see a need to expand their awareness in regard to the care of our campus. We continue with our attempts to find ways to encourage the middle school students to become more involved with the community through acts of service. We have made steps in bringing our students together to share their lessons through two annual Sharing Assemblies, but would like to consider expanding these experiences by having them more frequently.

Our school continues to put efforts towards addressing the challenges and compromises. We have created a Diversity and Equity Committee that brings open conversations and sessions to our faculty during meetings. We Have an active Social Inclusion Committee that organizes and implements programs for our 2nd through 8th grade students through our Practical Arts Program, Healthy Relationships, and Cyber Civics classes. We are currently in the process of re-establishing our ties with our sister high school, Academe, through the Social Inclusion program by having the high school students visit with our middle school students on Monday afternoons. The school participates in several annual school wide events including International

Peace Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Gathering, and two Sharing Assemblies. This coming year, we plan to send our 7th and 8th grade students to the Dortmund School in Germany as ambassadors to celebrate Waldorf 100 through a musical exchange opportunity.

Strengths and Innovations

- The Social Inclusion program focuses on cultivating conversations around healthy relationships through diversity in an ever more complex world. This program also engages students in service to others
- Our Cyber Civics program works to educate the children on becoming active and responsible digital citizens in a rapidly evolving society and social structure
- Our middle school science program focuses on the cultivation of key observations in order to find patterns and relationships in the world around us. All this points to the fact that we are actively and appropriately striving to connect the children to themselves, their world and their role in it

Challenges and Compromises

- We have come a long way with working with diversity and equity, yet there are still questions about how to bring the presentation of these topics from around the world through our stories and use of gender roles through age-appropriate discussions with more depth
- We recognize that our students could have a more active role in the greater community through service and outreach and we need find ways to cultivate these opportunities
- We are proud of the variety of Specialty subjects that are offered and how those teachers are integrated into main lessons, yet this creates a full schedule that can be difficult to balance both pedagogically and logistically

Priorities

- Organize faculty conversations and trainings to deepen relationships and help strengthen diversity throughout our curriculum
- Review and explore scheduling changes to support a healthy balance for student learning
- Explore ways for our students to become actively engaged in our wider community through community service

TEACHING AND LEARNING (WALDORF PRINCIPLES 3 & 4)

Waldorf Principle 3

An Anthroposophical understanding of child development guides the educational program

The Waldorf School of Atlanta strives to permeate our educational programming with an Anthroposophical view of child development for today's child in our community and in our world. We use Rudolf Steiner's indications for the curriculum in all grades, kindergartens and specialty classes. We work together as a team of educators to study Waldorf Educational principles and to deliver them in our approach with each age group. Striving thus, we aim to set the example of a community of teachers engaged in a life-long love for learning directed by compassion for each other and the world around us.

Instruction at all levels is informed by the developmental stage of the children. Our early childhood program works with the child's developing will, using rhythm and repetition throughout the day to create a framework for the child's imaginative play. Through their play and the daily activities and stories brought by the teachers, the children have experiences in the classroom, in the social realm, and in the natural world that form the foundation for concepts they will encounter in later years. In the grades, the feeling life is at the center of instruction, bringing each lesson with an artistic approach that allows children to sing, dance, recite, draw, and listen to and retell rich stories. In addition to artistic work in main lesson, a weekly schedule typically includes time for music, painting, form drawing, and clay or beeswax modeling. Reliable daily and weekly schedules, along with festivals and traditions that measure out the rhythm of the year, continue to nurture the children's will and the social fabric of the school.

Literacy instruction exemplifies the principle of working from the whole to the parts: students work with beautiful language from the time they are in kindergarten, and often their first written work is a beloved verse written out in its entirety. Phonetic reading instruction and grammar lessons follow this whole-language experience. As the children move into middle school, their developing capacity for critical thinking is also nurtured, through daily reviews that call upon the children's analysis and through phenomenological science instruction. This hands-on approach allows students to experience a physical phenomenon through keen observation before working with the teacher's guidance to discern the underlying scientific concept or principle.

Exploring Strengths and Innovation

The WSA Faculty includes Waldorf trained kindergarten and grades teachers and a full complement of specialty subject teachers, including: Spanish, eurhythmy, movement, music, woodwork, handwork, gardening, math, and Extra Lesson.

Our school uses a three-fold Educational Support process that looks at the social/emotional, developmental, and academic health of our students. These three “streams” of student support provide a structure for understanding each individual situation and enable us to better assist students who are having academic, social, or behavioral difficulties. The school’s three-year old Educational Support Department (ESD) consists of a full-time Educational Support Coordinator who is a trained Waldorf teacher and Extra Lesson/Remedial teacher. The department also includes a part-time reading and Language arts Learning Specialist, a part-time Math support specialist, and a part-time school counselor who works with the social needs of individual students and/or groups. The ESD addresses students in need of care of the soul—an integration of their physical and spiritual being. The various programs of this department strive to reconcile the students’ earthly condition with their inherent spirituality.

The Educational Support coordinator oversees the support efforts for all referred students. In addition, the coordinator oversees the rising 1st grade assessments as well as the 2nd grade assessments. For all new applicants in the grades, the coordinator screens applications for possible concerns. The effects of these efforts are apparent in the earlier grades that benefited from the services of the ESD from the beginning. We expect to see a continued balance of students with needs in classes as teachers learn more effective techniques of helping to support students in the classroom and as students receive the supports provided by the school and external resources.

For added flexibility in meeting the developmental needs of today’s children, WSA has used a Moveable Classroom optionally in grades 1 and 2 for the last three years. The Moveable Classroom, utilized by a number of Waldorf and other independent schools around the country, uses benches and cushions in place of fixed desks and chairs to support the movement that is inherent in the Waldorf curriculum. The Moveable Classroom approach requires cultivation of the class teacher’s inner flexibility to conduct the class in a manner that supports students, Specialty Teachers and the overarching pedagogy.

In the middle school grades, we have approved current and rising class teachers to take part in science teaching training led by a Waldorf Master Teacher. This training will support their knowledge, insight and experience, as well as provide the school with a stronger core of class teachers who can pass on this science experience to other rising MS class teachers.

Other developments in our programming that push the innovative edges include: creating a Technology block for 8th grade students, creating a Robotics team for 7th and 8th grade students in our after-school programming, providing before and after care for pre-K aged students, and continuing to provide a varied middle school sports programs despite challenges in finding field and gym availability.

Facing Challenges and Making Compromises

Many of the school’s challenges related to this principle are a direct reflection of impulses and pressures emerging from our society. Pressure from parents to bring more academic work in

earlier grades, a lack of rhythm in the home life, and continually increasing media exposure at home make working with the children in a developmentally appropriate way more and more difficult. Parent education plays a large role in mitigating these challenges. Our early childhood teachers set a strong foundation of explaining our understanding of children's needs and supporting parents in making changes at home to complement the work of the school, and that work continues when the children move into the grades.

The drive to fill days with structured activities from an early age presses in upon our vision that children need unstructured time for imaginative play and to "digest" their experiences from the day. The desire to always do more creeps into our school in our festival calendar, after-school offerings, and even the extracurricular music lessons we require for all students playing string instruments. We work to stay awake to the impulses and address them consciously. We will begin a study of the festivals and rhythm of the year next year in order to clarify our picture of what is essential in our festival calendar. To combat the drive for busy afternoons for young children, our afternoon kindergarten maintains a simple, breathing rhythm for the children who stay at school later in the day. Our after-school offerings for grades students are carefully considered to ensure that that are brought to the children at the appropriate ages. We make space for as many lower grades students as possible to have their music lessons on Thursday afternoon, our early dismissal day, to avoid having these run later in the evening.

The effects of media use are apparent in all ages at our school. More and more children have movement challenges and difficulty attending in class. To address these challenges, therapeutic movement work, with the support of our Extra Lesson/Remedial teacher, is consciously incorporated into circle work and other movement opportunities throughout early childhood and the grades. Significant time is given for outdoor play, and the guidelines for behavior on our playgrounds takes into account the need to have big movement that stimulates all the senses, as well as the safety of our students. Consciousness around pacing lesson activities and ensuring there is movement woven into academic lessons helps to address the difficulty with focus on a whole class level. Our Educational Support Coordinator offers guidance to teachers on working in this way and addressing the needs of individual students as well as providing small group Extra Lesson and Remedial support of the 12 senses and reflex integration.

Parents and members of the faculty have also raised a question at our school about when and how to bring direct conversations about diversity, equity, and social justice to our students, and opinions vary widely about what is consistent with our understanding of child development. The fact that these conversations are so heated in the world at large and touch on deep personal pain of many individuals increases the challenge of having them in a way that is thoughtful and guided by Anthroposophical understanding. Our school has taken up faculty study, led by both colleagues and external experts, around topics of diversity to increase the level of understanding and allow for more informed conversations. Teachers have discussed in full faculty and section meetings about how to bring new understanding into the way they work with their students. Some programs have been brought directly to students, both by teachers and by

outside experts, and reviewed in the appropriate group afterwards. This is still an area of discussion, growth, and development in our school.

Finally, a challenge that significantly affects our ability to bring the needed movement and artistic work to our students lies in the facilities at our school. Lack of a gym, a wide open field space, rooms for developmental movement and other small group work, art supply storage space, and sinks in the classrooms are obstacles in bringing the curriculum as we would like to. We try to meet these challenges by making arrangements with nearby organizations to use their spaces and by creatively using the spaces we have.

Strengths and Innovations

- We provide a hands-on, developmental curriculum that integrates artistic, academic, and practical life skills and we work together as a team of educators to study Waldorf principles in education and deliver them in our approach with each age group
- Developments in our programming that push the innovative edges: Technology block, Robotics Club, the Middle School Sports program, the Moveable Classroom
- Spending multiple years with a single teacher allows a deep relationship between a teacher and student to develop which informs assessment and interventions
- Our Lead Teachers have all completed, or are currently finishing, Waldorf training and are experienced in their fields; we have a full complement of Waldorf Specialty teachers: movement, eurythmy, handwork, gardening, music, Spanish, woodwork, math and Extra Lesson
- Our Educational Support Department is an enormous asset in both admissions and in support of current students
- Our Middle School teachers are currently participating in an in-depth, multi-year science training

Challenges and Compromises

- Faculty could benefit from utilizing our collective knowledge and experience in more internal mentoring and study, and to inform our calendar priorities
- We encounter some difficulty implementing our ideal educational program due to space constraints in our rented classroom building
- Some class teachers struggle with the number of students in their classes who need a variety of additional educational support

- Some Specialty teachers struggle to use the Moveable Classroom productively and effectively

Priorities

- Continue our study of the festivals and rhythm of the year during faculty meetings to clarify our picture of what is essential in our festival calendar
- Continue to strengthen the rhythm of renewal and learning for faculty by prioritizing pedagogical sharing, biography work, child/class study, book study, and artistic work during our meetings
- Explore additional indoor and outdoor learning spaces, including a science lab, kitchen, amphitheater, Extra Lesson/Developmental Movement room, and more centralized Early Childhood spaces
- Continue to refine and communicate the ESD process of referring and supporting students with additional learning needs
- Support Specialty teachers who are struggling with the adjustments that teaching in the Moveable Classroom can demand by peer observations and mentoring

Waldorf Principle 4

Waldorf schools support freedom in teaching within the context of the school's shared agreements.

The educational program of a Waldorf school is founded on Rudolf Steiner's insights about the growing child, informed by the teachers' ongoing study of anthroposophy and their professional development in Waldorf Education. The WSA faculty works collaboratively and cooperatively to develop, refine, and periodically review the educational program and academic benchmarks to support student success. Individual teachers work creatively with curricular, pedagogical, and assessment components of the program to serve their individual students, the class as a whole, and the school community. This work reflects and respects the shared educational understandings and agreements of the faculty.

Our weekly departmental and full faculty meetings facilitate collaboration and freedom in our teaching. Early Childhood, Lower school (Grades 1 – 5) and Middle school (Grades 6 – 8) teachers meet once per week for department work, curriculum review, and study. These department meetings are essential collaborating and mentoring opportunities for all teachers. All full-time staff and faculty also attend weekly faculty meetings where we engage in study, preparations for school events and festivals, and have the opportunity to share pedagogical insights. Additionally, the Core faculty engages in weekly Anthroposophical study, which is open to all teachers, and many teachers study anthroposophy individually and in area study groups.

All Lead teachers at WSA have completed, or are currently working towards, a Waldorf teaching certificate.

Each year, teachers are encouraged to take summer practicums and professional and personal development courses in order to deepen their knowledge of child development in the grade they will be teaching. Through these trainings and their own research and mentoring, they also familiarize themselves with Steiner's curriculum indications for that grade. Each teacher assimilates that information, along with the knowledge of their students, and transforms the indications into lessons that they see will meet the needs of each child and class. Each teacher strives to bring the curriculum in a way that best suits individual students as well as the needs of the class as a whole. Any teacher who wishes to introduce a block that is not currently part of our curriculum, but that potentially meets the archetype of the indications for that grade must submit a formal proposal to the Core faculty for approval.

WSA has a strong and active Professional Development Committee that supports all teachers in mentoring and evaluation processes. Each September, every teacher completes an *Annual Teaching Goals and Aspirations* form to indicate their goals for the year. The PDC reviews these forms and endeavors to support any teacher who requests it. Teachers in their first year(s) of any grade level are assigned an internal and external mentor to guide their development and ensure alignment with the principles of Waldorf Education. The PDC also manages the rhythm of teacher evaluations each year. The school's curriculum benchmarks serve as shared agreements that still allow teachers to have significant freedom to develop creative and individualized lessons to meet their students.

Assessment is also a key component of our educational program where teachers have flexibility. Early Childhood and Lower Grades teachers primarily assess student performance through observation to determine if they are meeting the school's stated benchmarks and to determine any support individual children may need. In the middle school, the Class Teachers and Specialists continue to use observation to support student assessment, but also give grades for each block and/or subject they teach. These grades are based on each teacher's rubrics, which have been developed in collaboration with their fellow teachers. As part of our ongoing communication with parents, each teacher provides a written mid-year progress report, and end-of-year report, as well as feedback at October and February Parent-Teacher conferences.

Exploring Strengths and Innovation

At WSA, we strive to meet the ever-evolving needs of our students and their families. In recent years, collaboration between our teachers has resulted in several new programs that have been discussed previously. These innovations include: the Grade 8 Technology Block, the Grade 7 and Grade 8 Robotics after-school club, the Grades 1 and 2 Moveable Classroom, Grade 6 Chinese History Block, MS Cyber Civics classes.

WSA recognizes there are inherent challenges when trying to balance individual freedoms with the need for professionalism and consistency between classes. We work hard to create a dynamic, living model of education where new ideas are celebrated and embraced without compromising the foundations of Waldorf Education. The faculty undertakes a yearly rhythm of a class study of each grade during faculty meetings to deepen our understanding of the children we have before us today.

Over the past two years, we have built up our Educational Support Department (ESD) to include a full-time Coordinator who is a trained Extra Lesson/Remedial teacher, a School Counselor, a Language Arts/Reading Learning Specialist and a Math Support Specialist. Our teachers work with the ESD to identify and remediate any student hindrances and is responsible for providing intervention strategies for students who are struggling or for students with special needs. We continue to explore ways to support these students and teachers through consultation, teacher education, observation and assessment, and outside support services and our local public school. The ESD has worked to identify processes and policies to support student needs and as the work continues to mature in response to monitoring and evaluation of these strategies, the Department has expanded and strengthened.

In our effort to build a common understanding around student behavior and conduct, the faculty has spent considerable time on our approach to behavior and discipline in recent years. The result of this work is a model closely aligned with the principles of *Restorative Justice*. A review of faculty committees is also done annually to determine whether the current committees continue to meet the needs of our school. As a result, two new committees have been added in recent years. The *Diversity and Equity Committee* has the goal of helping teachers look inward to reflect on biases that may impact their teaching and the *Safety Committee* grew out of an increasing concern for our preparedness in the event of an emergency.

Facing Challenges and Making Compromises

In recent years, WSA has seen a decrease in Waldorf-trained teachers from national training centers applying for teaching positions. Over the past four years we have hired several teachers who grew out of our own community. With growing interest, we were able to begin a Foundation Studies Course at WSA taught by experienced teachers from our faculty, but finding qualified, Waldorf-trained teachers is still an annual source of concern for our school.

The ESD has worked closely with the admissions process over the past year to review all applicants thoroughly but there is still a need to refine the process in order to help teachers determine if we have the resources to meet the student's unique needs. Some classes have a number of students with diverse learning needs, which can be a challenge for some teachers, and/or other students in the class. The goal of the ESD faculty is to clearly communicate with parents of enrolled students about observations and strategies used by our teachers, so that if challenges do arise a foundation of support will already be in place before more formal accommodations are made. While the department continues to address the needs of current

students as well as proactively addressing hindrances faced by new students, there is a need to continue refining and sharing best practices with faculty and parents about if and how a student can be supported developmentally, behaviorally and academically.

It can be difficult to identify and work with individual learning needs in a proactive manner given some of our large class sizes. To improve clarity for parents around academic progress, our grades teachers recently developed rubrics from our benchmarks that are now included in our year-end progress reports. These rubrics are designed to refine our observations and align progress with grade-specific learning goals. To further ensure that the wealth of information gained from our observations is not lost or reduced to a series of checkboxes, there is still a substantial narrative portion to the reports. We also utilize a variety of assessment strategies at specific grade levels, designed to identify movement challenges, highlight individual learning needs, and track overall progress in the academic areas. Historically, WSA has given two standardized, nationally-normed assessments in Grade 5 to compare our students' progress to their peers nationally. The Core faculty will review the timing and type of assessments given to our students in an effort to explore whether these continue to meet the needs of our school.

Strengths and Innovations

- The faculty works closely and collaboratively to enhance the effectiveness of the curriculum, while maintaining the freedom required to differentiate teaching each class while using the Benchmarks in our Curriculum Guide which outline learning goals for all subjects and grade levels
- All Lead teachers have Waldorf certification and receive financial support for ongoing education, including lectures, conferences, and other training opportunities
- The WSA Professional Development Committee (PDC) is strong and manages all internal and external mentoring, as well as the teacher evaluation process
- We have an established Educational Support Department; all student applicants are reviewed by the Educational Support Coordinator to help determine if we can meet the needs of the student; all students are assessed for learning needs with the First Grade Readiness and Second Grade assessments, reading and math assessments, and Extra Lesson assessments. Developmental movement and academic support groups are provided based on the results of the assessments

Challenges and Compromises

- Occasionally we face challenges hiring experienced teachers who are not willing not willing/able to relocate to the Atlanta area
- Some classes have a large number of students with individual learning needs and at times this can present challenges for the teacher and/or other students in the class

- Student assessment communication can be inconsistent or vague and our standardized testing in Grade 5 needs review
- Some teachers have felt that new ideas are not always embraced with openness and at times there is a rigid/critical approach when innovations are proposed

Priorities

- Continue to explore teacher identification and recruitment locally, regionally and nationally
- Utilizing the experience and depth of knowledge of our Educational Support Department, provide continued education for teachers on how to work with and support students who have diverse learning needs and continue developing, formalizing, and communicating Educational Support services school-wide.
- Continue to use our revised academic benchmarks to provide parents with a better understanding of the curriculum goals expected at each grade, support more effective parent conferences and deepen teacher report writing and curriculum planning
- The Core faculty will explore revisions to our current practice of administering standardized assessments in Grade 5

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS (WALDORF PRINCIPLE 5)

Waldorf Principle 5

The conscious development of human relationships fosters individual and community health

Enduring human relationships between students and their teachers and between the children themselves are at the heart of Waldorf Education. The teacher's task is to work with the developing individuality of each student and with each class as a whole, within the context of the entire school community. These relationships gain in depth and stability when they are cultivated over multiple years. Alongside these student relationships, strong relationships with and among parents and colleagues are essential to the well-being of the school. Members of the community are invited to join in developing meaningful, collaborative, transparent forms for working together. Each individual's self-development is encouraged since it is key to the well-being of the whole.

At WSA, fostering healthy relationships is truly a cornerstone in all we do, from the daily interactions with students and families at morning drop-off or in the carpool lane, to the countless hours our parent volunteers devote in service to the school. Beginning with our

youngest students in our mixed-ages Early Childhood (EC) classes, birthday celebrations, home visits, field trips, outside playtime with other EC classes and the simple sharing of stories at meals that connect the teacher's personal history to the children and helps foster healthy relationships. These working relationships, and the social skills supporting them, continue to flourish in the grades with the practice of a teacher remaining with a class of students for multiple years. Every moment is centered around developing relationships, starting with the individual greeting and handshake between the student and their class teacher each morning and at dismissal each afternoon.

In addition to our Class Teachers, our specialty subject teachers serve the children throughout the grades, and this relationship and familiarity with each student supports the teachers in our practice of using assessments based on observation vs. arbitrary standards/tests, as well as our highly individualized end-of-year reports, all contribute to consciously fostering and actively supporting teacher/student relationships.

In the social and emotional realm, our dedicated Social Inclusion Coordinating Group (Social Inclusion Committee) is tasked with keeping the impulse of Kim John Payne's work active within our community. This group gathers all students from EC – Grade 8 for a story and songs in honor of International Peace Day, as well as coordinating our annual school wide MLK, Jr. assembly, supporting the Buddy Class program and organizing our afternoon of mixed-grade activities as part of our May Fair celebration.

The rapport between colleagues, including between departments and administration is cultivated through weekly department and full faculty (including full-time staff) meetings. These meetings are a cornerstone of nurturing colleague-to-colleague relationships through celebrating birthdays, taking turns hosting our snack/social as a meeting break, planning and reviewing school-wide festivals, participating in Anthroposophical study and preparing faculty songs/dances to share with the community at festivals such as Michaelmas and May Fair. Other opportunities for strengthening healthy relationships amongst colleagues comes through a shared morning verse to begin each day, working on Puppet Shows, collaboration in teaching, commitment to our shared agreements and the use of internal mentors and speaking partners amongst our teaching faculty.

In our community life, we aim to create multiple opportunities to support the healthy development of strong enduring relationships between the faculty/staff and parents. We host an annual 'Coffee House' which is an evening open to any adult in our community to perform for each other: spoken word, songs, dance. It is a favorite annual event among parents, and faculty and staff. We also work to provide comprehensive outreach and education to our community at all levels, including attending local festivals and fairs, Grandparents Day, the annual Holiday Fair, an Early Childhood Puppet show at the Local Library, public musical performances, and educational film screenings. Our parents join in many of our festivals and outreach celebrations. Our school-wide fall fair welcomes hundreds of families onto our campus and it takes the joint

efforts of our entire parent community and all of our faculty and staff to pull it off each November.

Exploring Strengths and Innovation

In order to broaden our parents' experiences and relationships with other faculty and staff, we have started combining similar grades to form a shared Parent Evening in the middle of our school year. This allows for parents with different aged children to form positive relationships and enables parents to deepen their knowledge and respect for class teachers outside their own child's placement.

Other innovations in the grade school include creating a Community Service through Practical Arts for our Middle School students where they serve the needs of others within our community as well as the community at large through knitting projects, gardening/grounds work and working with students in lower grades modeling skills of friendship, conflict resolution and positivity. Beginning in 5th or 6th grade, we offer a *Healthy Relationships* curriculum that was developed several years ago by a former School Counselor in conjunction with our Social Inclusion Chair to give the students time and space to practice new social skills as they begin adolescence and to help support their changing relationships with each other using respect, boundaries and self-reliance. Middle School students also receive lessons in Cyber Civics to aid in their development of understanding healthy relationships in a digital world.

We also have an active Diversity and Equity Committee dedicated to supporting our students, families and faculty through improving our knowledge and methods in support of a school community founded upon mutual respect, tolerance and cooperation. Our monthly Family Potluck and Game Night's allow for all families and any interested faculty/staff to come together for an evening of fellowship. This same framework has been implemented for our annual All School Meeting (family potluck followed by a magician to entertain the children while the adults attend the meeting). This format has more than tripled our attendance numbers over the past 3 years.

Facing Challenges and Making Compromises

There have been challenges brought by parental impulses to chat and exchange grievances in the parking lot after drop off. The school responded by hosting weekly "Coffee Wednesdays" in the area outside our classroom building, where members of school leadership, trustees of the Board, and other available faculty and staff gather with parents for informal conversation and dialogue – all while enjoying pastries and coffee. We then added short class presentations from the children to provide parents a glimpse into the classroom experience. Each grade has an assigned week where they share 3-5 minutes of something they are working on-often from their morning circles. This allows parents of all ages of students to experience a brief living picture of the curriculum through grades 1-8.

The 21st century has seen a dramatic increase of electronic media in the lives of our children and families. To counter the “new normal” of our times, we founded the WSA Parent Initiative for Media-Lite Living in September 2014 with the following goals: protect childhood, nurture children’s ability to thrive with low (or no) media, support fellow parents with alternatives to electronic media and articulate the adverse effects of electronic media, especially on children. At WSA, The Initiative for Media-Lite Living supports our school-wide effort our limit our students’ exposure to electronic media. Since it launched in 2014, it has grown into a Parent Network that provides parent advocates in each class to help guide media-lite conversations and to support the class teacher in any way possible. They also sponsor and organize our annual Screen Free Week celebration with a full schedule of activities and educational opportunities to join our community with the national movement celebrated each May.

Strengths and Innovations

- We spend a great deal of time working to build strong relationships for both students and adults throughout our community, and our priorities and programming reflect this value
- The rapport between colleagues is cultivated through weekly department and full faculty meetings
- In our community life, we aim to create multiple opportunities through school events to support the healthy development of strong enduring relationships between the faculty/staff and parents. Examples are Shared Parent Evenings, the annual Coffee House, the annual school Auction.
- Shared Parent Evenings foster stronger relationships between various classes and help parents develop positive relationships with other teachers in the school
- The Diversity and Equity Committee supports our students, families and faculty through improving our knowledge and methods in support of a school community founded upon mutual respect, tolerance and cooperation

Challenges and Compromises

- At times there are communication challenges between parents and the school when the Communication Policy is not followed.
- Our communication efforts, both internal and external, have been adversely affected by the vacancies in key leadership positions.
- Different expectations around electronic media can present challenges amongst students and parents

- We do not have a gathering space for parents to congregate on campus, and some of our larger spaces lack beauty and warmth
- Our cultural celebrations and festivals do not always reflect the ethnic diversity of our school community

Priorities

- Further develop and refine best practices for communicating both routine messages and significant updates with the community
- Maintain engaged parent groups in each grade and in cross grade activities including offering opportunities to deepen community understanding of Waldorf Education.
- Continue to deepen our community work around our *Media Guidelines* and support parents who are trying to align with our values regarding media and technology
- Fund select site improvements as imagined in the *Facilities Visioning* work to provide an accessible, warm, on-site gathering space for parents and adult education classes
- Expand cultural celebrations within the school to reflect greater ethnic diversity

RESOURCES, SUPPORT SYSTEMS, AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH (WALDORF PRINCIPLE 6)

Waldorf Principle 6

Spiritual development in support of professional growth is an ongoing activity for the faculty, staff, and board

Members of the faculty, staff, and Board recognize the value of ongoing professional and personal development, and individuals work actively through shared educational study, artistic activity, mentoring, and research to further this growth and development in service to the students. We recognize that the spiritual development of faculty and staff is an important factor in supporting quality teaching and ensuring the school's overall wellbeing.

At WSA, opportunities for faculty and staff to engage in individual study, artistic activity, and/or research are crucial components of our ongoing professional development. There is a deep commitment to anthroposophy by members of the Core Faculty, and this faculty leadership group helps to bring diverse Anthroposophical topics/studies to faculty meetings, professional development days, and pre-planning and post-planning meetings. Study topics range from topics such as diversity, pedagogy, and festivals to class and child studies. All meetings start and end with a consciously chosen verse and there is generally an artistic component in each faculty meeting.

In addition to looking closely at the needs of children and classes, a special focus is also given to the festival life of our school and the seasons of the year, which has a spiritually enriching quality. In this context, various preparations are done prior to the festivals, such as studying the meaning behind a festival and bringing an artistic performance to a festival such as a dance and/or a song. Parent education events provide teachers and parents with ongoing opportunities to actively engage around a particular theme or question.

Exploring Strengths and Innovation

Collegiality is quite strong at WSA and members of the faculty consult with each other formally through weekly department and committee meetings and informally when specific questions or concerns arise. These conversations provide a space for teachers to share ideas, discuss successes and solicit support with challenges, while also providing an open space for child study, looking for ideas or insights that help in creating a pedagogical story for the child or the class. Being open to receive questions of “how do you do this?” and to gather answers allows for inspiration and collaboration between colleagues.

Class Teachers work closely with the Specialty Teachers to ensure a positive learning environment for all students. Each teacher trusts their own intuition to make the right choices for their class, and there is an ongoing collaboration between Class Teachers and Specialists that results in sharing of insights about students as a strengthening aspect of the pedagogical realm. The pedagogical sharing time during faculty meetings and departmental meetings creates space for deep observation and discussion amongst teachers. These conversations provide a support system for individual teachers and also help deepen relationships amongst the faculty.

The faculty also participates in regular child and class studies during weekly faculty meeting as well as in department meetings. The class studies as well as the child studies connect us all to the spiritual being of the school and to individual students. Child studies are structured around the threefold nature of the human being and are spiritually guided meetings that focus attention on one particular child, ideally for two or three consecutive meetings. A meditative mood is cultivated and held in each gathering. The emphasis throughout is on gaining an understanding and appreciation of the child so that the child's teachers may work most effectively with him or her.

Other faculty meeting study topics include research done by individual teachers that can be an opportunity to share and learn for us all. Biography work is also a tool used for spiritual growth for professional development. Last year, we deepened our Anthroposophical understanding by working with the Foundation Stone Meditation and engaging in biographical work together. The biography work will continue this year through an arrangement with the Center for Biography and Social Art. Additionally, two of our colleagues will lead a study this year to lay a foundation for ways that we can make our schedule and yearly calendar healthier and a better reflection of our pedagogical principles and beliefs about healthy breathing and healthy rhythm in teaching. Each season, we will create a picture of the human being's relationship to the earth and to the

cosmic forces that are active during that time (including the archangels), looking at how the soul moves and breathes in unison with the earth and the cosmos, deepening the picture through an artistic medium, and lastly reflecting on how what we understand can be useful in our daily work with the children. Our faculty meetings are also used to share and promote offerings such as lectures, workshops, and artistic events in the greater community.

The school's philosophy and values are reflected in our welcoming classrooms, in our curriculum, and through our actions within the community. Each assembly starts with the lighting of a candle and a few words about our community and its importance. Each room is infused with natural beauty and enlivened with artistic images which carry the connection of the individual to the curriculum. There are also thoughtful displays of student work in the halls, and arranged for parent evenings, commencement, and assemblies.

Our school garden and many other natural spaces on campus encourage care and reverence for the earth. Our third graders carry the torch of our school-wide composting program, visiting each class to collect compost and deliver it to the garden. And in our efforts to cultivate sustainability and stewardship, the fourth grade collects recycling from each class and for the first time in school history, this year every class is paper-plate-free for our weekly pizza day.

Our school leaders strive to work from a place of spiritual insight and perception, and the Core Faculty holds a weekly study to which all members of the faculty are invited. There are consciously chosen verses spoken at meetings, gatherings and important events.

Over the years, our school has supported and encouraged a growing awareness of Waldorf Education in the Southeast. We have served as a host for regional Waldorf conferences and Christian Community events, and there is now an active Anthroposophical community in the greater Atlanta area. The ARC (Anthroposophical Resource Center), a WSA parent-led initiative, has also become a valuable resource for our community. The ARC hosts study groups, workshops, and other community events. These events are promoted by email communication from the school and a growing number WSA faculty participate.

Facing Challenges and Making Compromises

Even though spiritual work is recognized as a vital component of Waldorf teaching, this is often the first thing to be let go of when our lives get busy. We all feel the pressures of time, and some days the magnitude of our professional and personal responsibilities can feel like a burden. When there is too much focus on the daily nitty-gritty, meetings can feel breathless, and deeper work is sometimes overlooked. In an effort to address this difficulty, we have committed to simplifying our schedules to allow more time for class and child studies, and more artistic work during our meetings.

Another area that affects the sharing of Anthroposophical ideas is navigating the "Christian" message when we are trying to cultivate a diverse student body. Finding the right words to convey our values and message without alienating members of our community is an important

and challenging task. We are working to find a common language to describe our common spiritual work, but at times there is still unease speaking about the spiritual side of this education.

One of the roles of the Pedagogical Chair is to oversee spiritual development opportunities and follow up on how they are done within each department. Without a full-time pedagogical chair, there is currently a missing link to how this work is done. This past year, some members of the faculty and staff took up this work on their own, but without one person holding the thread it had a tendency to get lost. With the current void in full-time pedagogical leadership, our community would benefit from more frequent opportunities to learn from visiting speakers and mentors. We would also like devote more time during meetings to discuss ways to make Waldorf principles accessible and current for parents. One step in this direction would be to organize joint parent evenings focused on the spiritual foundations of Waldorf Education.

Some members of our community also feel a need to connect more deeply with the spiritual foundation of our school, both at the Faculty and Board level. In years past, members of the faculty have led studies at Faculty and Board meetings, and there is a desire to re-enliven these efforts. As we look toward the future, we would love to have a beautiful gathering place where we can offer lectures and gatherings for our community. Presently, the school has no physical space that could be considered the “heart” of the school, and this lack of a spiritual center is felt by many members.

Strengths and Innovations

- WSA faculty and staff work actively through shared educational study, artistic activity, child and class studies, biography work, mentoring, and research to further their individual spiritual growth in support of their professional development
- Class Teachers work closely with the Specialty Teachers to ensure a positive learning environment for all students and deepen programs at all levels
- Parent education events and school festivals provide teachers, students, and parents with ongoing opportunities to actively engage with each other around a particular theme or question
- While our space can be a challenge, our best efforts have gone into making our classrooms beautiful and our natural spaces around campus nourishing

Challenges and Compromises

- The ongoing spiritual work of the school sometimes gets minimized in our busy schedule; there has also not been a central person such as the Pedagogical Chair to guide this work over the course of the year

- The Christ centered nature of Anthroposophy can come across as overtly 'Christian', sparking unease at times when speaking about the spiritual side of Waldorf Education
- The Board of Trustees meeting study has been inconsistent and not well held
- We do not have a physical space that can be considered the "heart" of the school

Priorities

- Continue our search for a full-time Pedagogical Chair who can dedicate necessary time to deepening the spiritual work of the faculty, staff, and Board of Trustees
- Have more conversations around the spiritual underpinnings of the school in an effort to bring a clear understanding of Anthroposophy as non-denominational cosmology
- Rededicate to ongoing Board study of relevant themes in Anthroposophy as well as Trustee best practices
- Recommit to the site development and 2016 *Facility Visioning Report* and set a clear plan to address our space needs in the coming years

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP (WALDORF PRINCIPLE 7)

Waldorf Principle 7

Collaboration and shared responsibility provide the foundations of school leadership and governance

Our school strongly supports the principle of collaboration and shared responsibility being the foundation for school leadership and governance. Our Board of Trustees, comprised of WSA parents and faculty, carries the legal and financial responsibilities of the school. Its functions include budget review and approval, fundraising, site planning and development. The Board has delegated the day-to-day management of the school to a three-member Leadership Team. This Team, ideally comprised of the Administrator, Pedagogical Chair, and Community Chair, has responsibilities in their own realms, but also work collaboratively to ensure the best decisions for the health and development of our school. We also have a Core Faculty, a smaller group drawn from the full faculty, which provides pedagogical leadership for the school. This group of teachers and administrators, out of a commitment to Anthroposophy, take on a special responsibility for the school's care and guidance. All of these leadership groups work out of consensus and regularly communicate with each other so there is a shared understanding of current topics, accomplishments and challenges.

Similar to a "head" of school, the Leadership Team (LT) has the responsibility and accountability for the daily operations of the school. These individuals have their own responsibilities but work

collaboratively to ensure that the school is functioning optimally. The Pedagogical Chair provides leadership to the faculty and ensures the excellence of the educational program through review, refinement, and development of pedagogical policies and procedures. The Community Chair works to ensure a healthy school environment through building relationships and bringing the parent and wider community perspective to school decision-making. The School Administrator facilitates and coordinates non-pedagogical school matters, including government compliance, facilities maintenance, school finances, and development. The Board is responsible for the hiring and review of the Administrator and Community Chair, and the Board has delegated the responsibility for the hiring and review of the Pedagogical Chair to the Core Faculty.

For the 2018-19 school year, the position of Pedagogical Chair is vacant. In the absence of a Pedagogical Chair, the Core Faculty has distributed the duties of pedagogical leadership among many qualified members of our faculty. Each faculty department (Early Childhood, Lower Grades, Middle School, Specialty Teachers, Educational Support), now has a Department Chair to set department agendas and support individual teachers with parent communication and discipline follow-up as needed. Each chair also serves on the Core and is responsible for reporting from the departments to the Core and facilitating communication between departments. A part-time Faculty Coordinator covers the remaining responsibilities of a Pedagogical Chair, including managing the strategic plan progress, serving as the third Leadership Team member, along with the Administrator and Community Chair, managing the Core faculty agendas, reporting to the Board of Trustees, and serving as the “face of the school” at community and outreach events.

The members of the LT are ex-officio members of the Board and attend Board meetings monthly. They also participate on the Board Executive Committee, and in that capacity, meet monthly with the Board officers (President, Vice-President and Treasurer) prior to each Board meeting. Two of the members of the LT (Administrator and Faculty Coordinator) also serve on the Core Faculty and meet weekly with that group. Collectively, the LT ensures communication among the various bodies of the school, including the Board, Faculty, parents and students.

The Core does not have the capacity to carry out all of the pedagogical work needed at the school and delegates many responsibilities to mandated committees. All faculty members are responsible for serving on two committees annually or in some cases, a faculty member may serve on one committee and have another significant role in the school. Faculty members are selected for committees depending on their interests and where they can have a meaningful impact based on their strengths. The Core reviews all committee mandates at the start of the year to make sure committee work is aligned with the school’s mission and strategic plan. This year’s Department Chair structure also supports strong communication and makes sure that agendas for departments, committees and the full faculty are aligned toward the school’s mission and values.

Sound administrative policies and practices of the school further the educational program by enabling teachers to focus on their classes and the students in their care. The administrative staff meet weekly to ensure that the school's operations are effective and efficient, including facilities and safety considerations, enrollment, development and financial policies, volunteerism, communication, and the school calendar. Policies are consistently reviewed and revised as necessary. Some of these are within the purview of the administrative staff and other policies are brought to the faculty for their consideration.

Exploring Strengths and Innovation

Innovations related to this principle can be seen through new program initiatives, the Leadership Team model, and improved Board/Core communication.

The seeds of new pedagogical programming are discussed informally between colleagues in department meetings, and eventually these become formal proposals for consideration by the Core and full faculty. Ideas that receive the consensus of the faculty may be immediately adopted, while others are tried for some time to test them prior to adoption. Areas of innovation that require financial resources are presented to the Finance Committee and weighed against other priorities. There is a recognition that other areas may need to be eliminated or adjusted to allow for new initiatives while also ensuring a balanced budget each year.

The Leadership Team model was adopted with the goal of increasing communication and collaboration between the various spheres of the school, namely administrative, pedagogical, and community. There is an understood differentiation of roles and the members of the LT meet twice weekly to discuss current school topics, determine next steps and in some cases, make decisions related to ongoing issues. The LT has the ability and responsibility to move things forward so that parents and teachers benefit from visible, timely and transparent decision-making. Also, the Pedagogical Chair position is an expansion of our former Faculty Chair model where a full-time teacher held pedagogical leadership responsibilities. When we find the appropriate person, we believe having a full-time person in this position will provide strong pedagogical leadership for our school.

One of the priority areas for the 2017-2018 school year was to improve communication between the Board and the Core Faculty. To that end, the Board and Core collectively created annual operating goals from the strategic plan. In addition to the regular Board and Core meetings, the Board President made a commitment to attend part of a Core meeting each month. Additionally, other members of the Board Executive Committee attended faculty meetings quarterly, specifically with the goal to make the school finances more transparent. This enabled the Board and Core to strengthen their partnership by bringing more understanding and attention to areas that overlap Board and Core areas of responsibility.

Facing Challenges and Making Compromises

The LT model has not been fully executed due to vacant positions, interpersonal differences, and insufficient capacities of some of our past leaders. Even for the current school year, while there is an operational Leadership Team, it consists of a part-time Faculty Coordinator, rather than a full-time Pedagogical Chair, and an interim Administrator, rather than a permanent one. Also, the LT mandate needs greater understanding among all groups in terms of responsibilities, authority, objectives and decision-making. The purpose and role of the LT model needs to be reviewed and clarified. This may include considering how we create more intentional pathways for training leaders and cultivating leadership skills in more people.

Another area of growth is our need to become nimbler in our decision-making. Frequently, topics can be discussed over a long period of time, gathering a lot of input, before a decision is made. Then, when a decision is made, we may still struggle to implement the decision effectively and in a timely fashion. While we have policies and practices in place that are meant to support shared responsibility, we still struggle when faculty do not follow through on processes or hold appropriate boundaries.

In preparing for our upcoming accreditation, it has become clear that we do not have appropriate and efficient systems for maintaining current administrative and pedagogical policies and procedures in a way that they can be easily accessed and used. We have a need to consolidate, store, manage and share the school's policies and procedures in an effective manner. This includes the ongoing development and revision of policies and procedures as needed.

An area that will receive attention this year is orienting new employees and Board members. Orientations for new Board trustees, faculty and staff and ongoing training will ensure that all bodies are aware of school policies, procedures and shared agreements from past years.

Another challenge we have struggled with is making our Strategic Plan a living document. With the underperforming functionality of the LT for the past few years, there has been difficulty following an enlivened process to create, manage, and track ongoing implementation of the school's strategic plan goals in a way that keeps the school moving forward toward a long-term vision. With the full-complement of LT positions filled, even on an interim basis, we have already seen improvement in this area. Moving forward, WSA would like to adopt a 'best practices' process for the creation and on-going tracking and revising of our Strategic Plan based on annual feedback and progress reports, meaningful engagement and follow-through on the goals, and a process to share annual accomplishments and revisions with the full faculty and parent body. We started this process last year by delegating the operating goals of the strategic plan to specific individuals or departments for accountability and follow-through, but there is a need to make this process more seamless and part of the school's culture and annual rhythm.

Strengths and Innovations

- We have an effective committee structure with mandates and responsibilities delegated by the Core and Board of Trustees
- Leadership Team model ensures representation and input from various constituencies of the school
- Communication has become stronger between the Board, Core, and full faculty due to more frequent joint meetings

Challenges and Compromises

- The Leadership Team model has not been fully executed since its inception for a variety of reasons; this year two out of three of our leadership team positions are currently vacant and have interim members
- The role and responsibilities of the Leadership Team model needs to be reviewed and clarified
- There is sometimes a lack of clear decision-making authority between LT and Core, and decision making and follow through can at times be slow and inconsistent
- Lack of appropriate and efficient systems for reviewing, updating, and managing administrative and pedagogical policies and procedures.
- New school employees and Board members are not consistently oriented to the policies and practices of the school
- There has been limited leadership and oversight around our Strategic Plan

Priorities

- Continue to review and clarify the three-fold Leadership Team model at the Board, Core and full-faculty levels; Continue to identify ways in which we can improve upon our governance structure and ensure that we are being efficient and effective leaders
- Further clarify roles and responsibilities of the LT and review and revise how decision-making processes work in regard to the LT and Core to ensure that all members of the WSA community understand who is accountable for what decisions
- Consolidate, store, manage and share the school's policies and procedures in a more efficient and effective manner

Last updated: 9/21/2018

- Improve the orientation process for new employees and Board members to ensure that these individuals are aware of the policies, procedures and shared agreements related to their work
- Continue to strengthen our strategic planning and goal tracking process to ensure that all major initiatives and projects are in alignment with the strategic goals of the school, including a biannual review of job descriptions and Board committee mandates .

Chapter IV: Areas of Future Growth

Our strategic planning and re-accreditation processes have inspired the Faculty, Staff, Trustees, and members of the parent community to join forces in support of meaningful growth for our school. As we reviewed the insights and recommendations gathered during the feedback portion of our self-study process, we noticed several strong themes emerging. We distilled the plans and priorities gathered from our work around the AWSNA Principles as well as feedback from our Value Narrative Survey to arrive at five specific and meaningful institutional goals. These priorities will serve as the main areas for focus for WSA over the next two years, and they will help guide the annual work of school leadership bodies and committees as we move into the future.

These five Areas of Improvement are:

1. Governance and Leadership
2. Curriculum and Faculty Development
3. Cultivating Community through Healthy Relationships
4. Communication, Policies, and Processes
5. Site Development

The narratives included in this chapter will provide a more in-depth description of each Area of Improvement, with a focus on the following guiding questions:

- Where is the school right now? (Current Profile)
- Where do we want to go? (Vision)
- What is our plan to achieve the vision? (Plan)
- How we will measure success? (Results)

As we move forward, The Leadership Team will oversee the process to address these five Areas of Improvement and will align these efforts with current and future goals from our Strategic Plan. They will also ensure meaningful engagement with identified priorities across all leadership bodies and school committees, and will monitor progress against agreed-upon benchmarks. Some of these benchmarks of success may include:

- Increased applications for available slots and higher enrollment numbers overall
- Lower attrition rates for existing students

- Low faculty turnover
- Increase in annual fund participation
- Fewer concerns voiced from parents about school-wide issues (i.e. Leadership)
- Positive feedback and increased satisfaction reflected in annual survey results

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

We envision a dynamic school culture supported by strong, collaborative leadership.

Current Profile

At the present moment, leadership is a key area of emphasis for the School. Two of the three positions on the Leadership Team (the individuals responsible for day-to-day leadership of the School) are held as interim positions while the School looks for permanent replacements for these positions. At the same time, the Board and Core (the bodies responsible for longer-term leadership of the School) are both experiencing their own change and growth. The Board has a new President for the first time in six years and the Core has greatly expanded its membership. All these changes in leadership present us with an excellent opportunity to examine what has and has not worked for us in the past, what is continuing to work for us now, and what changes we would like to see made.

At present there are a number of places where leadership at the School is strong. The Leadership Team works through a strong collaborative process that ensures different perspectives are heard and the day-to-day needs of the school are addressed. The expanded Core is working well, and a new Department Chair structure provides ongoing support for the Faculty Coordinator. The Board is engaged and interested in the governance of the School, but mindful of its proper place as a support for the pedagogy, not a replacement for the wisdom of the teachers.

Although we have made several meaningful changes in recent months to support stronger leadership, there are also places where the School is less strong. There is a great deal of shared vision at a high level. The Board, Core, and Leadership Team all agree on the broad strokes of what needs to be done, but there is less agreement on the granular detail. As the School operates as much by consensus as possible, this lack of agreement and/or follow-through on the finer details can be an issue. Likewise the School has not always spoken with one voice. The strength of multiple perspectives can and does become a weakness when those perspectives don't just feed into the decision-making process, but they come out of it as well.

The School needs to find a way to speak in a more unified voice and having strong leaders who can provide vision and direction is key. Finally, there is a lack of clarity around some aspects of governance. While much of the past year has been spent increasing that clarity, more work remains to be done to ensure all members of the school community have a clear understanding of school policies and lines of authority and accountability.

Vision

As the School moves forward, we see ourselves addressing these concerns through tangible and effective action. We trust that the Board and Core, in collaboration and with input from the Leadership Team, will soon be able to reach clarity on the School's leadership processes, policies, and the roles everyone plays within the structure. Once established, these structures and roles can be more easily communicated to the community as a whole. We also hope to find capable individuals to join our Leadership Team by the end of this school year so our interim leaders will be able to return to their regular duties next fall.

As we seek new leaders to guide our school into the future, we will be looking for individuals capable of adaptive management, those who can allow the School and their role within it to grow and change over time with the needs of the School, individuals open to holding space for divergent thoughts and points of view, individuals who will be strong advocates for diversity of many kinds, and who are able to provide clarity of vision and follow through for the School.

Plan

To achieve these goals, the School will continue the work begun last year under the Strategic Plan. One key goal is strengthening community understanding and confidence in the 3-fold leadership model. In order to build this trust, there will be ongoing dialogue between and among the various leadership bodies at the School concerning where clarity is needed, how to improve clarity, and how to define leadership to meet the School's needs. These discussions will be ongoing, and even after new leaders are selected we will continue a process of annual review and improvement to ensure success. The Board and Core will also continue their improved collaboration, with regular meetings to ensure good communications on this matter and others. As part of our annual review of school policies, the leadership bodies will be recommitting to the School's Community Agreements and will continue to hold themselves and each other accountable for this work.

Right now the School feels it is on the right path with this work. Much of the past year was spent laying the groundwork for what needs to be done over the next couple of years, and it is now a matter of ensuring that forward progress is maintained. To that end, the responsible bodies will continue to meet, keep each other apprised of progress, and ensure strong communication and transparency to ensure things are moving forward in a meaningful way.

Specific goals

- Continue to review and clarify the three-fold Leadership Team model at the Board, Core and full-faculty levels; Continue to identify ways in which we can improve upon our governance structure and ensure that we are being efficient and effective leaders (P7)
- Further clarify roles and responsibilities of the LT and review and revise how decision-making processes work in regard to the LT and Core to ensure that all members of the WSA community understand who is accountable for what decisions (P7)
- Improve the orientation process for new employees and Board members to ensure that these individuals are aware of the policies, procedures and shared agreements related to their work (P7)
- Continue to strengthen our strategic planning and goal tracking process to ensure that all major initiatives and projects are in alignment with the strategic goals of the school, including a biannual review of job descriptions and Board committee mandates (P7)
- Continue to develop our shared leadership model that includes Department Chairs and a collaborative agenda and goal-setting effort (P1)

Results

Success in this realm will be difficult to assess quantitatively, as leadership is difficult to measure. In part the school will assess success based on whether or not members of the community raise concerns about leadership regularly. One might assume that the less these concerns are voiced, the better the leadership is functioning. In addition, some proxy measures can and will be established.

We will keep relevant stakeholders informed and involved through regular communications in the community newsletter, the All-School Meeting, and communications from the various leadership bodies as the need arises. As we move forward on this area of improvement, we will keep in mind the Strategic Plan and other Areas of Improvement and check progress against them. We will use the results of the various surveys and any lessons learned to drive the next phase of goals in this area.

Other benchmarks of success may include

- Successful hiring of strong leaders to fill our current leadership vacancies
- Positive feedback and overall satisfaction expressed during the Leadership Team review process

- Positive feedback shared by parents, faculty, and staff in the bi-annual community survey
- Positive growth identified during the Board's annual self-review
- Adherence to checklists for the annual cycle of policy review and renewal
- Meaningful progress made towards meeting strategic goals

CURRICULUM AND FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

We envision an innovative, child-centered educational program that cultivates intellectual curiosity, social sensitivity, and physical stamina

Current Profile

Our school is lively and vibrant. From the youngest kindergarteners helping tend their class garden to the eighth graders trying to puzzle out the principles of fluid dynamics in physics, our students love to learn and are deeply engaged in their work. The Waldorf curriculum allows the space for children to explore the world in ways that are appropriate for each stage of their development. In both our mixed-age kindergartens and our classes that continue as a cohort through the grades, the children have years to form relationships with each other and with their teachers. These relationships form a foundation of respect and trust from which children are willing to challenge themselves and explore their own growing edges. The teachers' long relationships with their students allow them to develop a deep understanding of each child's gifts and challenges and to allow the students' individual needs to shape the instruction for that class. The teachers' freedom to innovate allows the curriculum presented to each class to reflect, within our shared standards, the needs of this class, in this place, at this time. Our curriculum includes not only academic pursuits, but artistic practice, social education, and movement and practical work. Time playing outside each day, both in free play and in games classes, along with work in the garden, handwork, and woodwork, educates the children's bodies, building competence and confidence to manifest their ideas in the world.

Many of the principles that contribute to our school's strengths also offer challenges and point us toward areas for our further development. The deep roots of Waldorf education that reach back to the first Waldorf school in 1919 bring us proven practices for working with developing children, but they also challenge us to let our teaching reflect the world we live in, quite different from early 20th century Germany. The freedom in teaching that allows teachers work creatively and flexibly to meet the needs of each class also opens the door for disagreement. Colleagues' different interpretations of unclear policies sometimes lead to conflict and undermine collaboration.

For many families, our school feels like a refuge for their children with special learning needs. Our care to work with each child as an individual and our gradual schedule of explicitly introducing academic subjects can be a great relief to children who have struggled in larger and more intensively academic environments. We recognize as a school, however, that we do not have the resources or expertise to adequately serve a large population of students with special learning needs. While it is not part of our vision to exclusively serve this population, we cannot ignore the fact that more and more children today struggle to some degree with sensory integration challenges and other difficulties. We have expanded our Educational Support Department to include more academic support personnel and a school counselor, and we offer more developmental movement support in the lower grades. We have improved our discernment in the admissions process to more realistically identify the children we can best serve. Still we find that in many of our classes, meeting the learning needs of an ever widening spread is beyond the resources and expertise of our teachers, leading to frustration and attrition of both teachers and students.

Observation forms the foundation of assessment in Waldorf education. Teachers' perception and meditation guides them in developing curriculum to best meet their classes. While observation creates a compassionate and holistic understanding of each individual student, communicating what we know about each student to parents and colleagues can be inconsistent and less effective than we would like. Parents give the feedback that even after reading the extensive narrative final report that describes the student's progress over the year, they don't have a clear sense of how their child is meeting the expectations of each grade, as outlined in the school's Benchmarks, and how they are progressing relative to expectations outside of our school. Additionally, we have used the same practice of administering Key Math and Woodcock-Johnson Reading Mastery tests to our 5th graders for more than 20 years. While these assessments give us a very detailed picture of how our 5th graders compare to national norms, they may no longer meet the needs of our students and school.

Waldorf education has a rich tradition of festivals that mark the rhythm of the year. Enthusiasm from our faculty and community at large to expand existing events and add diverse festivals and other opportunities to gather as a community have led to a calendar that is overflowing. Scheduling frustrations, student fatigue, and family burnout have increased as new initiatives continually arise to join, but not replace, current events.

Vision

In the years ahead, we see ourselves continuing to develop so as to better realize the ideals of Waldorf Education and to meet the needs of the children who come to us. A vibrant community based on collegial collaboration will allow teachers to support and learn from each other, developing mastery and bringing creativity and insight into their teaching, so that we are a model for other Waldorf schools in our region. The varied gifts and perspectives of each teacher will enrich the life of the school, and even our disagreements, because they are compassionate and respectful, will lead us to grow and individuals and as a school.

A well-developed understanding of the Waldorf curriculum and a solid grounding in the principles of child development described in Anthroposophy will allow our teachers to bring the curriculum in innovative ways to meet the students of today and reflect the diversity of our community. In addition to working with the archetypes of child development, assisted by the broad expertise present in the Educational Support Department, teachers will continue to deepen their understanding of individual learning needs and how to address them. To complement the observation that is the basis for teachers' understanding of their students, the school will continue to explore means of assessment that humanely and effectively give a more objective picture of each child's progress as he or she moves through the school, according to both our own benchmarks and national norms.

Clarity in the school around expectations, policies, and procedures, as well as regular review of these, will support effective collaboration within the faculty and with parents. A common understanding will allow supportive teamwork to bring the best possible school experience and education to each student, fostering growth to his or her full potential academically, socially, and physically.

Plan

To achieve these goals, WSA will continue to clarify our expectations and how we communicate them with our students' parents and with each other. Our benchmarks, newly revised last year, hold untapped potential to support our assessment and communication of students' progress. We will explore how to better use them so that collegial work, parent conferences, and report writing are more efficient, effective, and consistent. We will also examine alternatives to our current 5th grade assessments to ensure that the nature and timing of assessments at our school best suit our needs and our available resources.

Another area of untapped potential is our Educational Support Department. Many families at the school don't realize the depth and breadth of support offered. Now that our educational support programs are well-established, we will work to better communicate what is currently being done for these students and how to go about getting support for students who still need it. While the support offered to students in small groups has really solidified, much of the support offered to teachers has been ad hoc, upon request. As needs in each classroom increase, teachers need more tools at their disposal to use with the whole class, rather than relying on pull-out groups to support just a few students with the most significant needs. The Educational Support Department has tremendous expertise in many areas, and working out ways for them to better equip classroom teachers on a consistent basis will support teaching in the school as a whole.

Much work has been done over the past six years to consider the daily schedule during school hours so that it offers our rich curriculum to the students in a balanced way, within the material constraints of our site and faculty. Our consideration will now turn to the events that make up the rhythm of our year. We will review what we offer as a whole, in light of our goals as a school, to best determine what should stay and what should go so that our students, families, and faculty feel less fatigue.

Specific goals

- Continue to use our revised academic benchmarks and assessment tools to provide parents with a better understanding of the curriculum goals expected at each grade, support more effective parent conferences and deepen teacher report writing and curriculum planning (P4)
- Continue our study of the festivals and rhythm of the year during faculty meetings to clarify our picture of what is essential in our festival calendar (P3)
- Continue developing, formalizing, and communicating Educational Support services school-wide, and support teachers in working with students with diverse learning needs. (P4)
- The Core faculty will review our current practice of administering standardized assessments in Grade 5, and explore alternatives to identify the strengths, challenges, and desired outcomes of each.

Results

The vision outlined above offers possibilities for both specific measurable results and more intangible outcomes. If the plans above are successful, we will have a new, or newly affirmed, practice for ascertaining that our students are learning in accordance with our benchmarks and national norms. We will have a new, or newly affirmed, festival calendar. We will have a standard, consistent practice of training our teachers to meet diverse learning needs.

If these plans successfully move us toward our vision, we will see that our assessment practices effectively identify students who need greater support at the times when intervention is most helpful. We will not discover learning challenges in later grades in longtime students. Feedback from parents will express satisfaction with the student services offered and the communication around those services. Teachers will have a clearer picture of each student's progress, and parent feedback will also reflect positive experiences with communication from teachers about student progress. Better information and more effective services will lead to higher satisfaction and less attrition of families at our school. More effective practices for meeting student needs will help alleviate teacher frustration and burnout, leading to higher satisfaction and less attrition in faculty. A more stable community of faculty and students will allow classes to achieve full enrollment.

Benchmarks of success may include

- Early identification and intervention for students who are struggling
- High satisfaction and retention rates of families
- High satisfaction and retention rates of faculty
- Full enrollment in all classes
- High parent satisfaction with communication around student progress as measured through quantitative surveys and direct feedback
- Improved parent satisfaction regarding student support resources

CULTIVATING COMMUNITY THROUGH HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

We envision thriving community relationships inspired by shared values, respect for diversity, and active engagement

Current Profile

Community life at the Waldorf School of Atlanta has always been a strength of our school culture. There are many stories shared amongst parents/families that include the elements of not only finding an excellent education for their child, but also a warm and welcoming community for their entire family.

There have been several new initiatives established in recent years to cultivate stronger relationships between and amongst members of our community, including community game nights, a student talent show, and Coffee Wednesdays (a meet-and-greet for parents with a small class presentation). While the majority of our focus has been on internal relationships within the school (classes, faculty, parents), we are interested in expanding our relationships with external groups as well.

Although we currently have many active initiatives to support strong relationships throughout our community, we have identified several areas in need of continued growth. In particular, we would like to strengthen our commitment to diversity in our school practices (students, faculty, festivals, pedagogy), expand community service and outreach initiatives, and expand participation in our parent education programs.

Vision

We envision thriving community relationships inspired by shared values, respect for diversity, and active engagement throughout the community. With the continued increase of attention on play-centered education, reducing screen time for children, and the importance of outdoor play in nature, we would like to be recognized as 'Thought Leaders' who can share the ideals of Waldorf Education with the greater community through parent education events and improved marketing strategies.

As we become more visible in the greater Atlanta area, we would also like to be known as a school community with a strong commitment to Social Justice and diversity. In support of this ideal, it is our hope to increase socio-economic, ethnic, and racial diversity so our student body reflects a multitude of cultures and communities. We would also like to find more ways for our students to move out into the community through service projects and community outreach.

Plan

Strong communication is an ongoing priority for WSA, and we already have several initiatives underway to support this aspect of our school. The marketing committee is focused on re-enlivening our messaging to regularly connect to our mission – thinking with clarity, feeling with compassion, and acting with purpose in the world – as these all embody the foundations of healthy relationships. Using social media and other external marketing platforms as well as fine-tuning our internal messaging on our website and Breeze Bulletin newsletter, will help to lead the way in broadcasting the school’s commitment to strong relationships and compassion for others.

This year we are also embarking on a yearlong community-building program through The Center for Biography and Social Art. This work will provide opportunities for faculty/staff, BOT, parents and other dedicated community members to come together and share aspects of their own biographies to develop greater flexibility, empathy and common understanding. A Parent-to-Parent Education series will further enable parents to share their knowledge and expertise with each other in a community setting.

As we deepen our internal relationships, we are also seeking ways to expand our community beyond our school campus. The Social Inclusion Coordinating Group (SICG) is exploring opportunities to increase external community service opportunities for middle school students to more fully embody part of the school’s mission of “acting with purpose in the world.” This work may develop through a growing partnership with our sister high school, Academe of the Oaks, and other community partners. As we continue to diversify our student body, we will also be seeking additional resources and support for families that bring different aspects of diversity to our community (ethnic, racial, socio-economic). Our Festivals and Fairs Committee is also exploring opportunities to deepen the festival life of our school to honor a variety of cultures and traditions.

Progress towards meeting these goals will be communicated via the Breeze Bulletin, the bi-monthly Community Letter and through Community Enrichment/Adult Education email blasts.

Specific goals

- Organize faculty conversations and trainings to deepen relationships and help strengthen diversity throughout our curriculum (P2)
- Explore cultural celebrations within the school to reflect greater ethnic and cultural diversity (P5)
- Expand ways for our students to become actively engaged in our wider community through community service (P2)

- Schedule outside lecturers and expand parent education programming to deepen community understanding of Waldorf Education (P5 and P6)
- Support effective colleague-to-colleague communication to increase collaboration, to work through challenging issues, and to support teacher well-being (P6)

Results

A vibrant community with strong and healthy relationships will benefit every aspect of our school from retaining our dedicated faculty/staff, to increased student retention, closer class communities and a full event calendar with a balance of parent education, social gatherings and a diverse festival life.

Other benchmarks of success may include

- Social media metrics overseen by the Marketing committee
- Development and annual report tracking community support
- Sustained or increased diversity in enrollment
- Increase in offerings and attendance (with community participation when appropriate) at parent education classes, including those organized by the Diversity and Equity Committee
- Use of parent survey to measure parent satisfaction

COMMUNICATION, POLICIES, AND PROCESSES

We envision a collaborative school culture supported by strong communication, clear policies and procedures, and mission-driven goals

Current Profile

Communication is a vital component of a collaborative organization, and yet, as we seek to create structures that will ensure best practices in this area, we are reminded that communicating clearly requires time, effort, and openness to diverse opinions. In recent years, our Community Chair has taken an active role in supporting stronger communication between and amongst various groups within our school, but this work cannot be done in a vacuum and it requires active community support and engagement.

Over the past several years there has been a concerted effort to improve lines of communication between the Board and the Core Faculty, and several initiatives have been put in place to support these relationships. There have been more frequent joint meetings between leadership groups, and more effort has been given to strategic goal setting and regular reporting of progress. For the most part, communication between teachers and parents and amongst teachers themselves is also quite strong. Challenges arise, however, where there are not processes or clear lines of authority around decision-making.

Another challenge we currently face is an ineffective method of storing and sharing information. Although we have many clear policies and processes in place to support our students, teachers, and school community, we have struggled in recent years to organize these documents and keep agreements active in our daily work. In general, we would like to be more proactive and less reactive in the writing and adoption of policies, and we would like an effective method for organizing and reviewing school documents so we are more efficient when challenges arise. Right now, not everyone has easy access to what they need in order to do their job, and this is causing inefficiencies and at times frustration.

Vision

We envision a school culture supported by clear, effective policies and strong communication. In support of this goal, we would like to develop a better method of organizing, reviewing, and updating school handbooks and policies so they can serve as living documents that evolve to meet our changing needs. When new document storage systems are in place, we would like ongoing training and review for all faculty and staff so we can ensure ongoing effectiveness. As we seek to make our daily processes more streamlined and efficient, rote tasks will become easier and there will be more time and energy to focus on more substantive, strategic-focused work.

As we continue to build strong lines of communication between various school groups, we would like to establish a shared vision and clear practices around communication to ensure that all our messaging is professional and effective. Clear communication helps to foster trust and strengthens relationships throughout the school. When parents and faculty are not clear about specific policies, this can at times cause unnecessary confusion and frustration. We would like to establish simple, realistic communication guidelines that will meet the needs of parents while not overwhelming teachers with additional workload. Our policies should ideally be clear enough to be useful, but broad enough to support the nuances of particular issues that arise.

Plan

In support of these communication goals, The Marketing Committee has already begun organizing a parent focus group to better understand the strengths and challenges of our current communication processes. These sessions will be an opportunity to gather feedback and also solicit ideas from the parent community.

The marketing committee is also working on a flow chart of communication that will be informed by these focus groups. They are trying out a new online platform for class-based communication that could be adopted by the school more broadly. The Marketing Committee will also be reviewing our website this year and considering how we could use it to facilitate communication as well. When best practices are determined, they will be presented to the faculty and developed into a school-wide communications plan. We will work to empower the small groups best setup to solve the problems of communication, policies, and procedures.

When it comes to technology in the school, this is an area where we need immediate input and management. Upcoming plans will involve the creation of an ad-hoc tech committee to research best practices related to communications platforms and tech solutions. The adoption of a modern, cloud-based document storage method is a high priority. In addition, policies and procedures should be established to make document storage, communication, security, and database management more efficient. These efficiencies will allow for greater stamina in our jobs, save us time and money, and enable us to move more productively forward.

Specific goals

- Continue to educate the school community about the WSA Communication Policy so that the protocols for communication and transparency of educational and organizational operations are more clear (P1)
- Consolidate, store, manage and review the school's policies and procedures in a more efficient and effective manner (P7)
- Further develop and refine best practices for communicating both routine messages and significant updates with the community (P5)

Results

We will know we have been successful when all faculty and staff understand how to use the technologies provided and there is full adoption and understanding around the how and why of their use.

We will have been successful in our communication efforts when information travels freely and well both within our school, amongst faculty, staff, core and board, as well as when parents communication needs are satisfied and there is broad participation in the methods of communication that have been established.

Benchmarks of success may include

- Higher faculty awareness of policies and easy access to information
- Greater level of compliance with school policies throughout the community

- Stronger committee engagement with strategic goals
- Improvement in parent opinion about the quality of school communications
- Increased community awareness of school news, events, and policies

SITE DEVELOPMENT

We envision a beautiful school campus that provides a nurturing learning environment, fosters connection with the natural world, and meets the physical and aesthetic needs of WSA into the future

Profile

Our school is in limbo as it relates to our site. We currently lease space from Columbia Presbyterian Church and have done so for the last 20 years. We also own two houses and six acres of land adjacent to the church and we have been on that property for close to fifteen years. Every six or seven years, school leadership revisits whether we should stay on our current campus or consider moving to another space that would afford us the amenities that have been difficult at our current location, such as performance space, athletic facilities, science lab, improved classrooms, etc.

Just two years ago, in May 2016, the school completed a process to consider this question about staying on our current campus or moving to another site. We hired Dynamic Change Solutions, a local consulting firm, to lead us through a visioning process for our facilities. There were two core objectives:

- To provide an abbreviated needs assessment to best determine the school's short and long-term facility needs.
- To facilitate a visioning process that would build consensus around a community supported vision for the school.

The report concluded that "the facility's layout is not intentional and does not flow with the natural settings. The lack of dedicated spaces, and facility logistics and limitations distract and tap teacher energy and decreases morale." Additional concerns identified by school leadership include spaces that are neglected and underutilized, lack of understanding about the church's plans and priorities, lack of funding to make the upgrades needed for an older building, and a limited ability to grow and have all the amenities we desire in our current space. Additionally, as

leadership and families change at the school, it is hard to hold a consistent vision for our site and to maintain the momentum to move forward with an agreed-upon plan.

The findings from the report recommended that we conduct a formal board vote to affirm the recommendation to focus efforts to stay on our current property rather than move. This vote took place in a board meeting during the 2016-17 school year and was communicated to the community. There has been no real progress since that time to move forward with the remaining recommendations from the visioning report. These recommendations include beginning formal negotiations with Columbia Presbyterian Church for a long-term lease, implementing a new leadership model with a single point person whose primary responsibility is this project, and “eliminate the historic radical-consensus model and replace it with a new framework that allows for consensus, but ends discussion and input once a decision is made.”

Vision

We envision a beautiful school campus that provides a nurturing learning environment, fosters connection with the natural world, and meets the physical and aesthetic needs of WSA into the future. The ideal facility will be intentional and purposeful with classrooms that link and flow with nature. The enhanced facility will have a dedicated performing arts space, library, athletic facilities, a science lab, improved classrooms, etc.

In addition to plans for a more enhanced facility over time, we also envision better care of our current facility starting immediately. We have hired a new groundskeeper this year who is committed to engaging the community in beautifying and maintaining our grounds. She plans to have monthly community workdays to focus on specific areas that need our attention. The first one was held on September 8, and approximately 20 families worked together with our facilities manager, groundskeeper and gardening teacher to clean up our carpool lane, as well as an unsightly and overgrown area by our school gardens. We envision assigning specific spaces to classes to maintain and beautify. We want to take stock of our current spaces, care for them and enliven them!

Plan

The first step will be to review the visioning document. Since the process was concluded in May 2016, there have been additions to the Site Committee, Board, and Leadership Team so everyone needs to be brought up to speed. We all need to be familiar with the decisions made at that time and make sure that all current stakeholders have been informed of the decisions and the school’s direction. We need to ensure that priorities around site are incorporated into the Strategic Plan with specific goals for this and successive years. A primary goal is to determine what we would like from the church on a long-term basis; this may include increased use of Sanctuary and other additional spaces, upgrades to the kitchen, and purchase of the upper playground. We need to determine the desirable length for a long-term lease and then initiate negotiations. Another goal would be to investigate the possibility of moving the one early childhood program in the classroom building to the early childhood area that currently exists at

821 Kirk Road. Suggestions for accommodating this early childhood classroom range from putting a pod or other structure in the early childhood playground to refitting the administration building for such a purpose.

The school will need to actively engage the current members of the Site Committee in the goals for the site as articulated in the visioning document. Everyone will need to be informed of the work that has taken place and recommit to realizing the vision laid out by the document before determining how best to proceed. We will determine how the Site Committee will function best and whether we have the right people engaged to carry out the necessary work. We do not intend to reinvent the visioning work that has already been completed.

Regular site updates to the stakeholder community will be provided in our monthly Community Letter. At the appropriate time, we will share the visioning document and the leadership's commitment to improve our current facilities to meet the needs of our students.

Specific goals

- Develop a comprehensive plan to address our space needs in the coming years (Site Committee) (P2)
- Explore additional indoor and outdoor learning spaces, including a science lab, kitchen, amphitheater, Extra Lesson/Developmental Movement room, and Early Childhood healthy spaces (Site Committee) (P3)
- Provide an accessible, warm, on-site gathering space for parents and adult education classes (P5) Focus site development efforts on ensuring welcoming gathering spaces for our community (P6)
- Fund select site improvements as imagined in the *Facilities Visioning* work to provide an accessible, warm, on-site gathering space for parents and adult education classes (P5) Focus site development efforts on ensuring welcoming gathering spaces for our community as outlined in the school's *Facilities Visioning* document (P6)
- Establish an ad-hoc Board visioning group to research and report on the current state and potential of our site

Results

Once the Site Committee has documented its specific plans and priorities for the year, there will be monthly meetings to monitor progress toward achieving these priorities. These meetings will also allow Site Committee members to hold each other accountable for accomplishing the steps that will achieve our vision for the site.

Benchmarks of success may include

- A successful renegotiation of the lease with the church, including agreements regarding the sanctuary, kitchen and other desired spaces
- Stronger awareness throughout the community about site-related projects and initiatives
- Positive feedback on our bi-annual community survey
- Increased financial contributions for the auction paddle call
- Enthusiasm and collaboration from faculty on site-related projects

Chapter V: Reflection of the Process

The Waldorf School of Atlanta has engaged in a thorough and fruitful process of self-reflection and improvement. The work undertaken over the last 18 months has given us many insights and galvanized our vision of WSA for the future. We have had to make some hard decisions as a result of our self-study work, but we feel confident we are on the right path for the growth of the school.

Nearly two years ago an internal Accreditation Steering Committee (ASC) was created. This group was selected by the Core Faculty and Leadership Team to provide leadership and organization throughout the re-accreditation process. Two members of the ASC were key participants in previous WSA accreditations, including the current committee chair.

Our process began with an AWSNA and SAIS orientation of revised accreditation processes. Following this session, the ASC began gathering documents and planning the rhythm of our Self-Study work. The ASC decided to organize our reflections around the seven guiding Principles for Waldorf Schools. As part of this process, the team created a three-week rhythm with the full faculty to explore each of these Principles in greater depth. This process included department breakout conversations focused around specific questions (both from AWSNA and written by our ASC) to better penetrate the Principles. ASC was interested in gathering feedback to determine our current innovations and areas of strength and to identify the most pressing challenges we are facing as a school. The Board of Trustees also worked with and reflected on all Principles relevant to the work of the Board. Participants were asked to rate our alignment with each Principle according to the suggested rating scale: weak, aspiring, established, or vibrant. The Core Faculty or Executive Committee, where appropriate, made the final rating determination. Once these conversations were complete, the ASC compiled the notes related to each Principle and small groups of writers were selected to create a narrative summary of the feedback.

In an effort to gather additional feedback regarding our programming during this process, WSA sent out the SAIS Value Narrative Survey to all stakeholders of the school. Survey results were compiled, summarized, and used to inform various aspects of our Self Study. A summary of this feedback can be found in the Appendix of this report.

As the ASC read through the feedback gathered from our survey, self-study, and a recent strategic planning process, we noticed several themes emerging. These themes were developed into five proposed Areas of Improvement. The ASC created a "vision statement" to capture how each area could support our mission and help strengthen our school community. These Areas of Improvement were presented to the Leadership Team (with the Board President in attendance) for approval. The Board and Core worked during a joint work session to further articulate and create the vision and plans in four of the Areas of Improvement, and the Core completed the last alone.

To ensure compliance with all SAIS Standards and Indicators, as well as all AWSNA Policy Areas, the ASC also completed an extensive assessment of school documents. Documents that had not been updated in recent years were reviewed and modified to align with current practices. The ASC and members of the office staff worked together to document compliance with all SAIS Standards and Indicators and to upload supporting documentation into our Accreditation Portal. Following our SAIS Pre-Visit in April 2018, WSA was asked to complete a few revisions to our Board Policy Manual, By-Laws, and other LT related documents to articulate our leadership practices in greater detail. We are hopeful that the revised documents more clearly describe our recruitment, hiring and review processes, and better articulate areas of accountability and oversight for school leaders.

One of the greatest challenges we faced throughout the accreditation process was a lack of organization and accurate recordkeeping for school documents. It quickly became clear to the ASC that we need a more organized and effective method to review and share documents. Out of this challenge, the ASC recommended the creation of several new handbooks, including: A Pedagogical Leadership Handbook for the Core Faculty, an updated Board Policy Manual, an updated Curriculum and Assessment Guide, and a Faculty Handbook. As indicated in the previous chapter of our School Report, clear documentation and recordkeeping have also been identified as one of our future priorities. We are hopeful that these initiatives will provide greater clarity and support for teachers, parents, and school leaders as we move into the future.

We believe this Report presents a current picture of WSA, addresses recommendations made during our previous accreditation cycle, captures the insights of our self-study work, and articulates several specific plans to address our five Areas of Improvement. We intend to use these priorities to guide our work as we move into the future.