

THE GROSSE POINTE ACADEMY  
2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

# VISION FOR THE FUTURE



THE GROSSE POINTE  
ACADEMY



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## SECTION I

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Defining the Next Era of Pre-K-8 Education

**Blending time-tested foundations with bold innovation to prepare confident architects of a better world.**

Rooted in a rich legacy of education, The Grosse Pointe Academy traces its origins to the Academy of the Sacred Heart, founded in 1885 by the Religious of the Sacred Heart—an order of cloistered nuns established in post-Revolutionary War France by Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat—on land that was once a French ribbon farm stretching from Lake St. Clair to Ridge Road. In 1969, the Sisters deeded the school and buildings to a lay Board of Trustees, which—under the original 1885 State of Michigan Charter—incorporated GPA as an independent, non-profit, coeducational elementary school, where the moral, physical, and intellectual development of each child, grounded in respect for self and neighbor, continues to thrive within a caring, family-like community on this historic wooded campus.

For more than 50 years, The Grosse Pointe Academy has defined excellence in whole-child education during the most formative years of development. As home to Michigan’s longest-running Montessori program, GPA is grounded in a deep understanding of how children grow intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Blending time-honored principles with forward-thinking practice, we cultivate curiosity, resilience, character, and academic rigor—enriched by our Christian Life program, students develop purpose and ethical leadership by practicing core values—compassion, service, honesty, and empathy. Students put these values into action through responsible citizenship and respect for shared humanity, learning to welcome differences, strengthen community, and lead with integrity.

To inform our next chapter of GPA, we engaged our community in a comprehensive listening process—interviews, focus groups, and surveys centered on three “big questions” about GPA’s strengths, challenges, and aspirations. The message was consistent: families, students, and educators deeply value the Academy’s close-knit culture of belonging, where every child is known, supported, and encouraged to serve—strengthened by small classes, meaningful service, cherished traditions, and forward-looking programming. Success is defined not only by strong preparation for high school but by graduates who are moral, kind, capable, and well-rounded. The research also sharpened our focus. GPA must innovate with purpose and discipline—grounded in evidence, supported by faculty, and communicated transparently to parents—while strengthening program coherence, aligning assessments, streamlining frameworks, supporting teachers, refining schedules, and telling a clearer, more cohesive story of the GPA experience.





This work unfolds within a shifting strategic context. GPA operates in a region facing long-term declines in school-age population, increasing competition in early childhood education, and growing pressure on tuition-dependent institutions. Even so, GPA remains well-positioned among independent school peers, offering distinctive value through competitive tuition, Montessori foundations, mixed-age learning, individualized instruction, and consistently strong outcomes. This plan responds directly to these realities—sharpening GPA’s identity, strengthening enrollment and retention, and aligning resources to mission-driven priorities.

Accordingly, the plan advances four integrated Strategic priorities—**People, Learning, Campus, and Resources**—each essential to sustaining excellence. We will invest in exceptional educators; deepen and elevate learning across divisions; steward a campus master plan that ensures safe, flexible, and future-ready spaces; and strengthen long-term financial vitality through disciplined management, diversified philanthropy, and a compelling articulation of our value and vision. Implementation will be actionable, measurable, and adaptive, with clear ownership, defined timelines, and key performance indicators—including enrollment, net tuition revenue, development results, retention, and stakeholder satisfaction—monitored through a Balanced Scorecard framework and shared transparently with our community.

Grounded in our four educational pillars—**Safeguarding Childhood, Academic Rigor, Meaningful Relationships, and Real-World Relevance**—this plan charts an intentional and sustainable path forward. It protects the joy of childhood while raising expectations for excellence, invests in the people who make our mission real, strengthens GPA’s distinctive value, and ensures the Academy remains a trusted and vibrant institution for generations of students and families.

“*The best thing about GPA is the world-class education from top-tier educators.*”





## SECTION II

# MISSION, EDUCATIONAL PILLARS, AND ACADEMY CORNERSTONES

## MISSION

**Nurture, challenge, and inspire the intellectual, creative, and personal potential in every child.**



## EDUCATIONAL PILLARS

Our educational vision is anchored in four pillars—Safeguarding Childhood, Academic Rigor, Meaningful Relationships, and Real-World Relevance—ensuring every student experiences the joy and wonder of childhood, the challenge of deep learning, the strength of being truly known, and the purpose of education that connects to life beyond the classroom.

### #1 Safeguarding Childhood



GPA honors childhood as a sacred time for discovery, imagination, and joy. By protecting this formative period, the Academy lays the foundation for confidence to grow and for a lifelong love of learning to take root.

### #2 Academic Rigor



Students are challenged to pursue deep understanding through productive struggle. GPA emphasizes curiosity, perseverance, and critical thinking, fostering learners who are resilient, reflective, and confident in their abilities.

### #3 Meaningful Relationships



Learning at GPA is rooted in strong relationships among students, educators, and families. This culture of connection ensures that every child is seen, valued, and encouraged to develop and celebrate their unique strengths.

### #4 Real-World Relevance



GPA connects learning to life beyond the classroom, helping students understand why their learning matters. By engaging with real-world problems and applications, students experience education not merely as preparation for the future but as a way to actively shape it.



# ACADEMY CORNERSTONES

## PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE



**The Academy Cornerstones (Portrait of a Graduate)** define the essential attributes we seek to cultivate in every student, serving as guideposts that deepen learning and reflect our mission and core values. Each Cornerstone is clearly articulated through the behaviors that embody or fall short of these traits, ensuring consistent expectations across classrooms and grade levels.

Together, they shape our curriculum, instructional practices, and school culture, helping students understand their worth as scholars and individuals while preparing them to thrive in a rapidly changing world that demands adaptability and purpose.

### Intellectual Curiosity

- It is...**
- A genuine love of learning about a wide variety of topics and ideas
  - A thirst for knowledge
  - Always asking questions and seeking answers
- It is not...**
- Just about getting the right answer
  - Just getting good grades
  - Just doing well on standardized tests

### Leadership

- It is...**
- Modeling good behavior
  - Ability to adapt, pivot and collaborate
  - Celebrating others' achievements
- It is not...**
- Being in charge
  - Popularity
  - Being in power

### Global Citizenship

- It is...**
- Understanding the wider world and his/her place in it
  - Respecting all cultures
  - Environmental and community stewardship
- It is not...**
- Just about traveling
  - Just about fulfilling community service
  - Just about being bilingual

### Critical Thinking

- It is...**
- Analyzing and synthesizing multiple resources and perspectives
  - Applying knowledge and creativity to problem-solve
  - Having perseverance
- It is not...**
- A quick response
  - Filling in the answer
  - Agreeing

### Empathy

- It is...**
- Recognizing and valuing other people's views, opinions and struggles
  - Recognizing our point of view and how it affects our decision-making
  - Making sincere connections with others
- It is not...**
- About sympathy
  - About you
  - About your emotions

### Independence

- It is ...**
- Self-advocacy
  - Self-direction
  - Risk-taking
- It is not...**
- Being selfish
  - Doing it all on your own
  - Being afraid to ask for help

### Active Listening

- It is ...**
- Being present
  - Understanding intent
  - Reflecting
- It is not...**
- Just about hearing
  - Remembering facts
  - Taking notes

### Effective Communication

- It is ...**
- Sharing in a clear and concise manner
  - Speaking confidently in front of others
  - Writing competently with purpose
- It is not...**
- Speaking to be heard
  - Writing words to fulfill an assignment
  - Oversharing





## SECTION III

### STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Our strategic priorities—People, Learning, Campus, and Resources—form the foundation of this plan. Together, they represent the essential pillars required to fulfill our mission, elevate the student experience, and ensure the long-term financial sustainability and vitality of The Grosse Pointe Academy.

# PEOPLE

**We will support and retain a talented faculty, staff, and board.**

GPA's success depends on its people, and this plan makes a deliberate investment in the faculty, staff, and leadership structures that bring our mission to life each day. We will strengthen recruitment and retention by implementing competitive compensation across employee groups and creating clear pathways for growth, leadership development, and succession planning. To sustain excellence over time, we will reduce unsustainable workloads by adding targeted staffing and protecting planning time, ensuring educators have the capacity to design high-quality instruction, personalize learning, communicate effectively with families, and engage in meaningful professional development.

At the same time, we will strengthen institutional stability through clearer governance and stronger Board partnership. This includes clarifying trustee roles and expectations, updating governance policies, providing ongoing trustee training, and aligning committee charters and work plans to GPA's strategic priorities—ensuring that the adults who lead and serve the school operate with clarity, cohesion, and shared accountability in support of our students and mission.

# LEARNING

**We will deliver a differentiated curriculum and instruction.**

GPA will continue to refine and elevate its academic program by strengthening Montessori and mixed-age pathways, expanding project-based and experiential learning, expanding executive function development, advancing human-centered AI literacy, and growing STEM opportunities. Our aim is a coherent, mission-aligned PreK–8 program with clear expectations, consistent practices, and excellent outcomes across Early, Lower, and Middle School.

To achieve this, we will launch a schoolwide effort to strengthen academic alignment and student growth by conducting a comprehensive curriculum audit, clarifying and mapping the students' arc of development from Early through Middle School, and establishing strong curriculum leadership and governance to ensure consistency across divisions. In parallel, we will refine assessment exploring tools that more clearly track and communicate student progress in and out of the classroom. Finally, we will review the daily schedule and annual calendar to reduce inefficiencies, protect instructional time, and explore flexible models that balance academic depth with enrichment—grounded in input from faculty, students, and families.



# CAMPUS

**We will design and construct a reimagined campus.**

GPA's campus is both a community anchor and a powerful teaching tool, and this plan ensures our facilities actively advance the educational experience we promise. Through strategic decisions—especially regarding the long-term future of the Lake Shore Building—along with targeted investments in safety, sustainability, and learning spaces, we will honor GPA's history while creating modern, flexible environments that support innovation and student growth.

To deliver on this vision, we will implement an integrated Campus Master Plan paired with a comprehensive five-year maintenance plan. This work will upgrade classrooms and program-support spaces; expand indoor and outdoor learning environments; improve operational efficiency; address deferred maintenance and critical infrastructure needs; restore key historic campus features; and enhance safety, functionality, and aesthetics. As part of this process, we will secure a clear, long-term plan for the Lake Shore Building, including an evaluation of appropriate revenue-sharing options to strengthen GPA's financial sustainability.

# RESOURCES

**We will continue to build a model of financial success.**

Sustaining GPA's mission requires disciplined stewardship of the resources that make excellence possible—people, programs, campus, and financial capacity. This plan strengthens long-term stability by aligning budgeting, staffing, and investment decisions to clear strategic priorities, ensuring we can preserve the joyful, rigorous, relationship-centered experience that defines GPA while remaining resilient in a competitive, tuition-dependent environment.

To do this, GPA will develop and implement a comprehensive 5-10 year financial and growth strategy grounded in multi-year modeling, clear benchmarks, and disciplined capital planning. We will strengthen enrollment through data-informed recruitment and proactive retention, supported by a sustainable tuition assistance approach that expands access while protecting net tuition revenue. In parallel, we will grow philanthropic capacity through a focused five-year advancement plan, increased endowment support, and a Strategic Plan-aligned capital campaign, while elevating marketing and communications through a unified brand strategy that increases visibility, deepens engagement, and supports recruitment, retention, and donor stewardship.



## SECTION IV

# Our Path Forward

The Grosse Pointe Academy stands at an extraordinary moment in its history—one shaped by a proud past, a compelling present, and a future filled with promise.

We know that the formative years shape the future. PreK through Grade 8 is not simply preparation; it is the launchpad. Who a child is becoming by age fourteen sets the trajectory for lifelong opportunity and lasting impact. In a world defined by complexity, rapid innovation, and constant change, families are asking deeper questions: What kind of people are we helping children become? Will they be confident, resilient, ethical, and ready to lead? In this liminal moment for education, GPA has both the opportunity and responsibility to lead with clarity, courage, and purpose—remaining steadfast in our mission while shaping what learning can and should be during these formative years.

This strategic plan is a shared commitment to protect what is timeless, strengthen what matters most, and prepare whole people for what lies ahead. At the heart of this plan are our four pillars—safeguarding childhood, fostering academic rigor, nurturing meaningful relationships, and connecting learning to real-world purpose. We believe readiness is more than academics; it is confidence, curiosity, resilience, empathy, and integrity. We believe wonder, belonging, and joy are essentials—not extras—because they fuel learning and define a healthy, thriving culture. We believe growth happens when students are both supported and stretched—when challenge is paired with care, and learning happens within strong relationships and community.

We recognize that beliefs must translate into action. That is why our work is anchored in four strategic priorities—People, Learning, Campus, and Resources—working in concert to secure a vibrant and enduring future for GPA. We will invest in exceptional educators and leaders who see and value the whole child. We will refine curriculum coherence and elevate developmentally aligned, rigorous, and relevant learning experiences. We will reimagine our campus as both a community anchor and a dynamic teaching tool. We will steward our resources wisely so that our mission remains strong for generations to come.

With this plan, we step forward together—faculty, staff, families, trustees, alumni, and partners—united in shared leadership and shared responsibility. We become better together through partnership, mentorship, and community. The work ahead is ambitious because the calling is profound. We owe it to our students to build a school experience that honors childhood, demands growth, strengthens character, and equips them to navigate and shape an ever-changing world. The path ahead is bright. Because of the strength of this community and the clarity of our beliefs, The Grosse Pointe Academy is poised not only to meet the future but to help define it.





# School Leadership

The Board of Trustees provides guidance, oversight, and fundraising support for the Academy. Standing Board committees include the Executive Committee, Finance Committee, Marketing, Enrollment and Retention Committee, Development Committee, Buildings and Grounds Committee. The current Board of Trustees includes the following members and roles:

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Paul Lindow, President
- Ted McDermott, Vice President
- RJ Wolney, Secretary
- Adam Hollerbach, Treasurer
- Devin Ezop, Member at Large
- Tommy Adams, Head of School (Ex-Officio)

### TRUSTEES

- A. Mason Colman
- Powell Corbett
- Heather Edwards
- Rian English
- Stacey Haas
- Joseph Kaiser
- Frank Kuplicki
- T. Hart Mecke
- Ellsworth Miller
- Bob Moesta
- Erica Panagopoulos
- Roselie Posselius

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## SENIOR LEADERSHIP

- Tommy Adams, Head of School
- Bridgette Murray, Assistant Head of School
- Jo Kutchey, Dean of Faculty and Staff
- Claudia Leslie, Early School Division Head
- Cyndi Willoughby, Director of Finance and Operations
- Amy Bos, Director of Institutional Advancement

## STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

- Tommy Adams
- A. Mason Colman
- Kate Kingsley
- Maureen Kruse
- Paul Lindow
- Bridgette Murray

We welcome any questions or feedback on this strategic plan via email to [StrategicPlan@gpacademy.org](mailto:StrategicPlan@gpacademy.org).





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