



State of the School Address

Fall 2015



Shelley Poreda
Director of School

Reaching New Heights

AMS yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

(Excerpts from a speech at Grandparents and Special Friends Day)

Every school year is fresh and new and each day we celebrate the many opportunities that exist for growth. We will see growth in each individual child, in every staff member and even in members of our community.

Amherst Montessori School itself has grown by leaps and bounds over the past 45 years. You might be wondering what it means to grow and *reach new heights* as a small independent school. A continuous level of growth has occurred since AMS was founded in 1970 when one small classroom was sufficient and has evolved to what it is today. In the last three years alone, we have transformed from a two-room schoolhouse with rental units in a strip mall to a beautiful state-of-the-art, 13,000 square foot building. Over that time period we also increased our enrollment by nearly 35%.

All of this growth was made possible with a great deal of work by many people – meaningful, deep work that empowers us to reflect on who we have been, who we are today and who we want to be tomorrow. We are reaching new heights over and over again along the way.

Last year the Board of Trustees embarked on the mission of creating the school's next Strategic Plan. The first initiatives from their strategic thinking enabled us to establish a new administrative structure, which allows us to focus on, and further develop, each specific area of the school's operations to its highest potential. From curriculum to fundraising, to marketing and enrollment, we have experienced people managing the administrative responsibilities of this school with grace and passion.

Our strategic plan also includes updating our mission statement. Our mission statement is our guiding light, the force we follow in decision-making and problem solving, and it is the true representation of who we are. The profound effort put into this task gives us a platform that will inform our work for years to come. We will be unveiling our new mission statement to the community in the very near future.

We are currently in the planning stages of seeking dual accreditation with the American Montessori Society and the Association of Independent Schools of New England. Accreditation is a rewarding process that will expose our greatest strengths and our opportunities for growth. It will give us credibility as an authentic Montessori school from infant to secondary education.



We have also expanded our Learning Support Team with the addition of a Learning Support Guide to our reaching team. The Learning Support Guide works with families and classroom Guides to develop specific plans for children with extra needs and learning differences. This is an incredible addition to our program offerings and has already proven to have a positive impact on the students and our learning environment.

I'm thrilled to announce the opening of a new classroom serving infants age 6-15 months. This room is an exciting addition as we've yet again met the needs of the greater community by providing high quality infant care while exposing our littlest friends to the wonderful world of Montessori education.

The Amherst Montessori School Elementary program, serving children from 1st through 6th grade, currently has the highest enrollment in our history. We have the pleasure of working with 30 amazing students at this level and we are proud to be part of their ever expanding world. Giving them the tools and support to grow into mature, capable, independent beings brings us great joy and presents each of us with additional growth opportunities and challenges every day. We are learning from them!

All of this growth is made possible by utilizing monetary resources and human capital. We hold two major fundraising opportunities each year; our annual fund campaign and our annual auction. Our annual fund has already reached unprecedented heights. We've begun the year with 23% of our \$16,500 goal already raised! The annual fund supplements our general operating budget. Money raised helps support the enhancement of our programs, provides professional development for our staff, sends the students on field trips, buys books for our libraries, and so much more.

We are striving to be a World Class Montessori School. It's truly a beautiful and rewarding time to be at AMS. I invite you to join us in celebrating our growth by [making a gift](#) to Amherst Montessori School. Let's work together and reach new heights together!

With deep gratitude,