

MG21 2024-2029 Strategic Plan

Approved 12/11/24

Overview

Summary

The Monona Grove Liberal Arts Charter School for the 21st Century, MG21 is a public Instrumentality Charter School. MG21 is a school within the Monona Grove School District that serves students in grades 6-12. We are governed by the MG21 Governance Board and accountable to the Monona Grove School Board and Superintendent. Public charter schools are independent, tuition-free public schools. Our curriculum focuses on relationships, wellness and academic skills for the whole person. Students who thrive here are curious self-directed learners who enjoy project-based learning in a smaller educational community.

History

The Monona Grove Liberal Arts Charter School for the 21st Century (MG21) began in 2010 and built on the original Monona Grove Alternative School (MGAS) which had existed from 1997-2010. MGAS was a charter school which began as a grassroots effort to address rising dropout rates in the Monona Grove School District. In 2010, MGAS closed its doors primarily because as federal charter school laws changed, MGAS was no longer in compliance. MG21 took the best parts of MGAS and started over; we wrote a new curriculum, developed a new charter, put together a new, more autonomous Governance Board, and wrote and received a Charter School Implementation grant to open a new school.

The Monona Grove Liberal Arts Charter School for the 21st Century aka MG21, opened in September 2010 with an enrollment of twenty-five students, a staff of two teachers and no furniture or computers.

In 2018, the MG21 Governance Board made the decision to write another federal charter school grant to expand our school and add a 6-8 Middle Campus. MG21 received the grant and in 2019 the MG21 Middle Campus opened. Today MG21 serves close to 100 students in grades 6-12.

Unifying Principle:

To teach students to ask and answer the question: "How do I want to live my life?"

Mission: To provide a student centered educational community for independent learners which is designed to give students the skills they need to walk their path in life.

Student and School Goals: (Our Pillars)

1. Educate the whole person: To educate the whole person and help students learn and discover the path they are walking.
2. Rigorous academic skills and social-emotional growth: To foster students' academic skills (writing, thinking, reading, math, and discussion), 21st-century skills, and social-emotional skills in order for them to be successful in school and after graduation.
3. Project-based inquiry: Facilitate authentic learning experiences anchored by student-generated projects.
4. Build and connect with community: To have students recognize their moral obligation to themselves, their peers and their community (school and larger).

The “21” in MG21 – 21st Century Skills:

The overall goal is to tie the student's path and education to their ability to master the following 21st century skills of:

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Curiosity and Imagination
- Commitment and Motivation
- Community and Citizenship

Curriculum:

MG21's curriculum is grounded in three types of projects; Teacher-Led Projects, Community Projects, and Student-Led Projects.

(1) Teacher-led Projects (TLPs) are teacher directed and student centered. This is an academic classroom portion of the curriculum where students gain knowledge and expertise in the core subjects (language arts, art, mathematics, social science, science).

(2) Community-led Projects (CLPs) allow students the opportunity to work with a community expert to create a final project on a variety of subjects (e.g. music production, electronics, painting, cooking, fitness, yoga, meditation, wellness, PE and video production).

(3) Student-Led Project-Based Learning (SLPs) is an inquiry-based learning process in which students design, plan, investigate, research, and present their own projects in response to an essential question, problem, or challenge (e.g., student-designed creative, inquiry, or acquisition projects; or teacher-written, independent study projects). Projects are carefully planned, managed, and assessed to help students create high-quality, authentic products & presentations.

Methodology

This strategic plan was developed over the course of many months. In the 2023-2024 school year, the MG21 Governance Board (“Board”) undertook an intensive process of gathering data and insights from our community, including staff, students, board members, parents, and at-large community members with the purpose of developing a proposal for ensuring a sustainable leadership model for our school. Historically operated as a teacher-led school with .40 FTE Executive Director and a .20 FTE School Administrator, MG21 experienced a period of growth between 2019-2024. During that time, the school expanded from an Upper Campus only (grades 9-12) to an Upper Campus and Middle Campus program (now grades 6-12). With this expansion, MG21 added 3 new teachers for the Middle Campus as well as the added complexity of newly serving students in grades 6-8. During this time, it became apparent that the school’s leadership structure was no longer sustainable.

The Board, in collaboration with the Wisconsin Resource Center for Charter Schools (WRCCS), and in consultation with the superintendent of the Monona Grove School District developed a proposal to institute a new full-time position, School Director, that would combine both the Executive Director and School Administrator roles. This change was memorialized in the [2024-2029 Charter](#).

On the heels of this in-depth look at our school’s model and leadership needs, the Board developed this strategic plan. Because we gathered a significant amount of data in the process described above, we were able to use that data to form the basis for our strategic planning analyses. In addition, we gathered additional data from staff and collected empirical data relating to our school’s demographics, staff and student attendance, and data collected by the school district and the state for evaluative purposes.

The Board dedicated ½ day to reviewing and discussing the data collected to form the framework of this strategic plan. The overarching theme identified for this plan is **sustainability of MG21**. The Board then identified four areas of focus, discussed goals, accountability metrics, and priority. The Board approved this strategic plan on **December 11, 2024**.

SWOT RESULTS

After review of the data, the Board created a summary analysis of MG21's strengths, areas for growth, opportunities, and barriers:

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Areas for Growth</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School community/culture ● Model - PBL/Student agency ● Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public perception/reputation ● Strengthen Curriculum, increase expectations/ math ● How to best support students with behavior challenges and behavior needs to increase sense of safety
<u>Opportunities</u>	<u>Barriers</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Education of MG21 to broader community/district <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ With engagement/support of new district Superintendent ● Support of staff - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leadership development ○ Succession plan ○ Wellness/ staff retention ● Funding/sponsorships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New financial support pass-through with MGEF ● Report data showing impact on students. Qualitative/narrative data in addition to quantitative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Open enrollment policy ● Funding for staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Scarcity mindset as resources/finances are tight. ● Stigma ● Translating academic achievement into familiar metrics. ● Our small size can be a barrier

2024-2029 Areas of Focus

The overarching theme of this Strategic Plan is **Sustainability** of MG21. Within this theme, there are 4 focus areas:

1. **Branding**
2. **Staff sustainability**
3. **Academic success**
4. **Financial sustainability**

This section of our strategic plan outlines our goals and accountability metrics for each of the four identified focus areas. The areas of focus are listed in order of priority; the Board has committed to working on each of these four focus areas in order, as listed below. This work will be completed over the course of 2024-2029 through ad-hoc subcommittees of the Board.

Goals and Accountability

I.Branding

Ensure that the staff of the district, including other teachers, administrators, and the community at large understand what MG21 is and is not. Guiding questions for this include:

- Should our enrollment mirror the diversity/demographics of the district?
- How can our school best serve the needs of the students and families in our district?

Goals

1. Define our brand and develop a public outreach plan (PR) that explains the “why” of MG21 and targets the community at large, aiming to highlight our students’ creativity, successes, and contributions to the community.
2. Define the profile of a successful student and work closely with the district to educate teachers and administrators within the district about when it is appropriate to recommend a student to MG21 and the process for doing so.
3. Identify how to target other students to shape perceptions of MG21; possibly from an earlier age (i.e. early-mid elementary school.)
4. Work closely with the district to examine open enrollment and how MG21 and the district can help each other reach enrollment targets through a creative policy shift on Open Enrollment.

Measurement/accountability

- Develop a plan with specific actions to be taken as a result, which we evaluate for effectiveness.
- Create a document available to all defining the profile of a successful student.
- Develop an actual plan with actions to shape other students’ perceptions of MG21.
- Define the problem from a MG21 perspective, schedule a meeting with District leadership to explore possibilities.
- Collect and report on data regarding enrollment and community/public perception, including:
 - Numbers of applications over time
 - Family survey data; include questions about public/community perception
 - In-district recommendations to MG21 show an understanding of our structure, our strengths, and our limitations.

II. Staff Sustainability

Focus on ensuring that staff feels supported so that we end up with more staff longevity and less turnover (staff retention/sustainability of our community) - Track data/feedback to know if this is working/where challenges are. Guiding questions for this include:

- How can we make MG21 the best environment possible to retain staff in light of overall district challenges?
- Are there big changes to our school's operational or educational model that we should study and consider that could improve staff sustainability within this 5-year plan or in our next charter renewal?

Goals

1. In collaboration with Staff, institute appropriate and individualized supports to help: improve retention, a positive feeling of community, and reduce overall feeling of being overwhelmed.
2. Invest in personalized professional development/personal growth for staff and continue our school's commitment to this.
3. Develop a succession plan that includes building internal knowledge on processes/procedures (if missing) so that if current leadership is called away or unavailable everyone knows what the plan B is and to alleviate concerns that too much institutional knowledge is held by 1 or 2 staff.
4. Establish a succession plan for the School Director position.
5. Explore 1-3 "big ideas" related to our school's model (i.e. year-round school or other models) for possible incorporation into the next charter renewal in the future.

Measurement/accountability

- Annually, collect teacher and staff feedback about their experiences and whether changes have resulted in improvements.
- We have created a succession plan for MG21 leadership for Board consideration.
- Provide recommended changes, if any, to the Board for inclusion in the 2029-2034 charter.

III. Academic Success and Student Learning

Increase academic success and rigor; translate our academic successes to quantitative and qualitative data that we can share with the district and the public; ensure that MG21 is a safe and supportive environment where all students can learn. Guiding questions for this include:

- If students are not meeting state benchmarks/test scores are not improving over time to come in line with expectations, how can we identify what changes are needed to meet these goals?
- If state benchmarks/scoring criteria are not able to capture student learning at MG21, how can we best demonstrate academic success at our school and communicate our academic standards to targeted audiences (prospective student families, DPI?, school board? Other members of the district and community?).

Goals

1. Review standardized test data by standards to determine areas of strengths and opportunities for improvement in the curriculum.
2. Monitor academic and social emotional progress on standards in formative and summative student work and support MG21 teachers to address barriers to success through instructional design .
3. Review academic data and evaluate ways to appropriately communicate our schools' metrics (given our size and model) to the district and the public.
4. Create a "portrait of a graduate" that highlights the skills and knowledge that an MG21 student gains while here.

Measurement/accountability

- Show improvement in standardized test scores over time.
- Produce public-facing, independent quantitative and qualitative data to share with the school board and the public (including prospective and current students and their families).
- Publish "Portrait of a Graduate."

IV. Financial Sustainability

Ensure that our school remains financially viable for the school district. Support our school's unique needs and programming through the development of an independent fund that we can use for needs that may not be otherwise supported by the school district. Guiding questions for this include:

What financial resources outside of district funding can we provide that will support MG21's educational model?

How are we tracking/understanding the finances of our school and showing our value to the district (ensuring that our school does not become seen as a financial drain on the district)?

Goals

1. Set a long-term fundraising goal based on identified needs for the school.
2. Create a yearly fundraising campaign that involves the board, students, and community along with sponsorships, etc... to add to the MG21 fund.
3. Create metrics (revenues/expenditures) to measure MG21's fiscal impact on the district.

Measurement/accountability:

- The Board establishes a long-term fundraising goal and plan.
- Establish board/school policies for the use of the funds (i.e. curriculum, CLPs, trips, purchasing items like camping gear, staff supports, meeting other goals, etc.) and a process for how funds are distributed.
- The Board has data showing the fiscal impact of MG21 on the district, with which we are able to tell our story.

Implementation

The board will implement this plan in stages over the next four years. The board will create ad hoc committees to work on each goal and make recommendations to the full governance board. Some work may be ongoing. The board will review progress on goals and engage in planning for the next area of focus each year at our annual retreat. The board intends to engage in this work on the following schedule:

- Beginning in the 2024-25 school year: **Branding and staff sustainability**
- Beginning in the 2025-26 school year: **Academic success and financial sustainability**
- School years 2026-27 through 2028-29: **Continuing work on all goals**

Reporting

At the annual board retreat, the appropriate subcommittee of the MG21 Governance Board will provide a report on the work done in each focus area identified in this plan for that year. Any relevant or appropriate updates may be incorporated into MG21's annual accountability report.

Appendix

- A. [Board members](#)
- B. [2024-29 Charter](#)
- C. [2023-24 Data Summary survey and focus group data](#)
- D. [Additional SWOT data collected in 2024](#)
- E. [Demographics](#)
- F. [Family surveys](#)
- G. [Student Attendance data](#)
- H. [MG21 State Report Card 2022-23](#)
- I. [MG21 State Report Card 2023-24](#)
- J. [Annual Accountability Report 2023-24](#)