



Strategic Plan

2010 – 2015

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Table of Contents

NCSA Mission and Purpose	3
Whom do we serve?.....	3
Current Funding	4
Curriculum—what does this school offer?	4
Arts Curriculum	5
Artistic, Cultural, and Ecological Literacy	7
Distinction—what makes this school special?	7
Stakeholders and Structure	8
How Does NCSA Measure Success?.....	10
Developmental Philosophy	10
Other School Resources	11
External Influences	12
Strategic Objectives	14
Implementation Schedule.....	20

Nevada City School of the Arts Strategic Plan

NCSA Mission and Purpose

The mission of the Nevada City School of the Arts is to nurture and inspire academic excellence through the arts. An open enrollment K-8 public charter school, NCSA is a collaborative community which:

- Nurtures artistic expression as another way of knowing the world;
- Inspires learners to develop a passion for lifelong learning;
- Challenges learners to acquire superior habits of mind, effective communication skills, and to display academic excellence; and
- Engages learners in accepting increasing levels of responsibility while developing respect and compassion for themselves and their world.

The philosophy of NCSA is articulated in its Charter, which also describes the educational program and governing principles that guide the School.

At a time when California schools are facing drastic cuts to funding and traditional schools are being forced to cut arts and music programs, NCSA's commitment to the scholastic model we have created (in which academics and art are thoughtfully interwoven) is more important now than ever before.

The Arts—visual arts, drama, dance, and music—are crucial to the complete education of a child. The practice, understanding, and appreciation of the arts are essential to human experience and provide an avenue for creativity and expression. Engagement with the arts promotes vitality and wholeness in the individual, stimulates brain development, and fosters growth in all academic areas. At NCSA, the arts are taught not only as separate disciplines, but are integrated throughout the curriculum.

The charter school concept was developed as a means for breaking the mold of traditional education in an endeavor to find creative, effective ways to address the needs of today's student population. NCSA has proven itself as a means to this end.

Whom do we serve?

NCSA is a charter school in a small county with ten small school districts and five other charter schools, a county where choice abounds. NCSA's student population reflects the diversity of the county. Although the county is not diverse ethnically, there is diversity among families' socio-economic status, values, cultures, and beliefs. We draw students from remote rural locations with minimal or no utilities, from upscale housing developments and rural estates, from working families and foster families, and from families receiving public assistance. Many of the families in the NCSA community relocated from the state's large metropolitan areas, such as the San Francisco Bay Area, attracted by the rural character and cultural resources of this foothills

community. Students who are gifted artistically and intellectually, come to NCSA as well as students who are not succeeding in the regular public school systems and those who have a variety of special needs. Approximately 35% of NCSA's students reside in households whose income would qualify them for the federal free or reduced price lunch program.

We currently enroll 278 students from kindergarten through eighth grade. Ninety percent of the students enrolled are Caucasian. This is consistent with our community demographics, which is about 85% White, with a small representation of students with Asian, African-American, Native American and Hispanic ethnicity.

Current Funding

As a public school, NCSA receives the majority of its funding from the state based on an Average Daily Attendance of each student. This represents a significant hardship since NCSA has the added cost of facilities rental. Unlike traditional public schools, no facility is provided by local bond measures so NCSA must use approximately 14% of its state funding on rent alone. In addition, within the last two years, the state has cut NCSA's school funding by over \$200,000. Despite the current state funding, facilities costs and cuts to education, NCSA still provides a fully integrated and enriching arts and music curriculum. In order to do this, we must rely on significant funding efforts.

While NCSA does not require a financial contribution from its families, all families are strongly encouraged to contribute to the Annual Giving Campaign (AGC) held in September each year. In the 2010-2011 school year parents are strongly encouraged to donate \$800 per child. In 2009, approximately 73% of the families pledged financial support for a total amount of \$93,313. Given the nature of the economy, the AGC was able to collect \$68,000 of the total pledged amount. The Annual Giving Campaign is managed by the school's foundation, but is restricted to the general operating budget of the school. Additional fundraisers support field studies, arts equipment, specific classroom needs and play equipment.

Curriculum—what does this school offer?

Academic Curriculum

Dimensions of Learning is a model of classroom instruction based on over 30 years of research in the learning process. In this model, learning involves the interaction of five dimensions of thinking. They are:

- Positive attitudes and perceptions about learning
- Thinking involved in acquiring and integrating knowledge
- Thinking involved in extending and refining knowledge
- Thinking involved in using knowledge meaningfully
- Productive habits of mind

Classroom instruction promotes and develops these dimensions so that students become constructive learners with enhanced capacity to take responsibility for their own learning and to assess their own growth. Instruction focuses on large, interdisciplinary curricular themes,

including explicit teaching of higher-level thinking, perceptions, and mental habits that facilitate learning. The ultimate goal is for students to become independent learners who have developed the ability to continue to learn throughout their lives.

Curriculum Guides for each grade level provide an outline of the content included at each grade level, and the teaching methods utilized. Curriculum Guides are developed with reference to the state standards, but leave considerable flexibility to the Main Lesson teacher in developing thematic units and approaches to delivering the curriculum. Due to our Charter focus, the curriculum has tended to be self-created and relies less on integrated state-adopted materials than is the case in non-charter public schools.

Critical thinking is promoted by the study of subjects in depth. In the development of curriculum and individual lessons, emphasis is placed on guiding the students to develop a deep understanding of selected cultures, periods of history, and science concepts. This differs from the broad survey approach taught in many schools.

A range of math levels in the upper grades (6-8th) allow students to advance to their level of ability in mathematics, from 6th grade math to geometry. NCSA teachers pay close attention to the local high school mathematics curriculum, in order to ensure that students have a smooth transition into their high school math classes.

Arts Curriculum

The arts curriculum is presented here in the four categories, or “strands,” in which the State of California presents its Visual and Performing Arts standards. Development of the NCSA arts curriculum pre-dated the development of the state standards. An assessment is underway to review the NCSA curriculum relative to the standards.

1) Visual Arts

The Visual Arts Program at NCSA includes three approaches to instruction: Main Lesson Art, Foundation Art, and Studio Arts Electives. Students move through these components of the program in an articulated, developmental sequence as they progress through the grades.

The Visual Arts Program is based on the Discipline-Based Arts Education (DBAE) model. It is designed to provide exposure to, experience with, and acquisition of content from four foundational disciplines in art: art making, art criticism, art history, and aesthetics. The artist-in-residence involves students in creating original pieces of artwork based on a study of an artist, a piece of artwork, or an historical or cultural area of study related to the academic curriculum. Visual Arts lessons often include further academic components presented by the main lesson teachers in language arts, social studies, science, or math.

Main Lesson Art is integrated with the academic curriculum for each grade level. These art lessons support, enhance, and bring greater depth to the students' studies through tactile hands-on experiences and in-depth studies of art as it relates to the area of study. Students work in a variety of media. Another component of Main Lesson Art is the Main Lesson Book. Each student begins the year with a blank book and makes entries as directed by the Artist-in-Residence. Each entry illustrates a central idea or concept relating to the students'

academic study. Grades K through 8 receive two classes per week of Main Lesson Art.

Foundation Art, a core subject for grades K through 8, is a sequential introduction to art concepts and techniques with lessons connected to art history. The goal of this facet of the program is to provide students with a working understanding and familiarity with art terms and concepts and hands-on experience with a variety of techniques and media. Grades K through 5 receive weekly instruction in Foundation Art.

Studio Arts Electives provide an opportunity for 6th through 8th grade students to explore an area of the arts in greater depth. Students choose one elective per semester. These classes meet once or twice a week and include dance, drama, archery, and a variety of other electives, in addition to a variety of visual arts. Student works of art, both visual and performing, are showcased in the bi-annual Visual Performing Arts Showcase

2) Music

The music program at NCSA, designed to enrich our core academics, is based on the philosophy and practice of Orff Schulwerk, a dynamic approach to music education developed by the composer Carl Orff and his colleague, Gunild Keetman. This approach begins with the premise that every child is innately musical and naturally loves to play, sing and dance. Children not only learn hundreds of songs, many set dances and instrumental pieces from all over the world on Orff instruments, but they also add their own ideas to each experience through improvisation, composition and choreography.

In addition to our general music classes, we provide training in musical instruments from 3rd through 8th grades. In 3rd and 4th grade they may choose between the recorder, fiddle or clarinet. In 5th grade their choice expands to include guitar.

In our middle school program, every student chooses one or two instruments to study and has the option of joining our performing groups. We have an amazing pool of talented local musicians who teach in our music program. Currently we provide small group music lessons twice weekly in cello, piano, guitar, bass guitar, and Taiko drumming. Our performing groups include Jig and Jam (a Celtic influenced group), Ensemble, and Taiko Drumming.

Our choral program includes a lower grade choir and a middle school choir that perform in the Nevada County Choral Festival each November. We also sing every week at our all school assembly.

3) Dance

Dance elective classes are offered in the 6th through 8th grades. Offerings vary between modern dance and jazz as well as cultural and historic dances in the 1st through 5th grades.

4) Theatrical Performance

Dramatic presentations are used in all grades to promote a deep understanding of the ideas, concepts and historical periods covered in the respective grade-level academic curricula. In addition, a drama elective is offered in the middle school and performed in the Winter and Spring Showcases.

Our students perform in a wide variety of venues, including our annual Winter Revels program (for 3rd–5th grades), a Winter and Spring Showcase in the middle school, Portfolio Night, school assemblies, monthly Performance Workshops, and curriculum integrated music pieces developed by the students and a wide variety of programs designed by our main lesson teachers.

Artistic, Cultural, and Ecological Literacy

It is not NCSA’s intention to train individuals for careers in the arts, or to “create” artists. Rather, art instruction and utilization of the arts as an integral part of academic instruction are central to providing a comprehensive public school curriculum in a learning environment that values the arts as a vehicle for more fully understanding the complex relationships that comprise the world in which we live.

Participation in visual and performing art productions help our students to develop a sense of confidence and a level of expertise in being in the “public eye.” Visits to museums, plays, and performances help students relate their own creative experiences to the larger art world. They learn to develop a critical eye for the arts and learn to support each other in their endeavors.

Exploration of the natural world and the nexus of art, nature, and academics are accomplished through field studies. These excursions, from one-day field trips in the lower grades to week-long ventures in the upper grades, provide a unique opportunity to explore areas of the curriculum in greater depth, and increase students’ awareness of their role as stewards of the Earth. This culminates in an 8 to 10 day excursion for our 8th Grade students to Death Valley National Park. While there, the students deepen their understanding of the desert geology and landscape through watercolor painting led by the artist-in-residence, hiking, exploring and writing poetry. By the end of a student’s career at NCSA, from kindergarten through 8th grade, he or she will have spent over 60 days in field studies.

Physical Education

Movement classes are provided once a week in Kindergarten and twice a week for grades 1 through 8. The core physical education curriculum includes games, skill building, and physical fitness training. NCSA also participates in Cross Country, Track and Basketball along with the other schools in the community.

Distinction—what makes this school special?

In its seventeen year history, NCSA has garnered awards for its academic and artistic programs and achievements at local, state, and federal levels.

In 2001, NCSA became the first charter school to be honored with the prestigious National Blue Ribbon award for Excellence in Academics. This award is the highest honor bestowed upon the most successful public schools in America. Prior to that, NCSA received the California Distinguished School Award. NCSA has also received the Nevada County Excellence in Arts Education Award (2001). In 2009 NCSA’s Director, Holly Pettitt, received the Nevada County Charter School Administrator of the Year Award.

NCSA’s emphasis on social curriculum helps to develop in students the ability to manage

themselves in a school environment as they progress to high school. NCSA's use of teaching methods that actively engage students and that emphasize creative expression help to instill in students a love of learning.

The active involvement of teachers and parents in administration of the school, and in production of school events provides students with a community of caring adults to support them in their journey of learning. The presence of kindergarten through 8th grade students in one building further create this sense of "family," providing a secure base from which to launch into a large high school setting.

Stakeholders and Structure

Faculty and Staff

Each grade level, from Kindergarten through 8th, has a credentialed, experienced Main Lesson Teacher who is ultimately responsible for the academic, social, and emotional education of the children in his or her class. Main lesson teachers are responsible for the curriculum and instruction in all academic areas assessed by the State, for collaborating and supporting art teachers and their programs, for the overall physical and emotional well-being of students, and for communicating and collaborating with parents to achieve individual and class success. NCSA's teachers are deeply committed to the school community, its mission and core philosophy. They offer a rich resource of special skills and backgrounds and focus on creative, heartfelt teaching. The teachers are well versed in the curriculum and school culture, and are committed to participation in school governance. Teachers are also involved in classroom financial bookkeeping and school fundraising support.

Main lesson Teachers receive single-year contracts and serve at-will subject to approval of the Charter Governance Council. The teachers are not unionized and have no collective bargaining. They receive a salary and benefits that are lower than the county and state averages. A small fund (\$400) is allotted to each teacher for classroom supplies. Due to financial cutbacks, there is currently no funding for professional growth opportunities.

Teachers play a fundamental role in the governance of the school. This has occurred in the context of a school-wide collaborative model. Two teachers are voting members of CGC (they rotate this responsibility every two years). They meet bi-monthly with the school director in development and support meetings and separately, as a faculty. The faculty's intimate knowledge of the school helps to inform decisions about the school's direction. Teachers are in a position to empower parent participation in volunteering, fundraising and donations at the classroom level. Continual improvements in evaluation, support, and collaborative governance, empower the faculty and builds morale.

We employ Instructional Assistants in grades K-5. They are essential to the classroom's success by assisting in small group instruction, supervising the play yard and supporting the main lesson teachers.

Our full-time Artists-in-Residence are practicing visual artists who come from wide variety of professional and credentialed backgrounds. They work in collaboration with the main lesson teaching staff to create art lessons that are integrated with the academic program. In addition,

they teach the foundations of art to all grades, handwork to the lower grades and variety of arts electives in the middle school.

The Movement Teacher develops and implements the creative movement and physical education program. This includes, through the instruction of age-appropriate games and movement exercises, the fostering of cooperative social skills, good sportsmanship, a healthy attitude towards competition, and a lifelong commitment to physical fitness.

Our Music Teacher works with all classes to help integrate the curriculum with appropriate musical content in context history taught in each grade. She also teaches the foundations of music using primarily the Orff Schulwerk method in order to foster both a love and understanding of music. In addition, our music teacher coordinates the music electives program and collaborates with the teachers for all performances.

The Studio Arts, Music and Dance Specialists are practicing professional artists in the community and craftspeople from our community who provide both an introduction to the arts and in-depth programs for advanced creative work. These instructors provide students with a hands-on studio arts experience, primarily for the middle school elective program.

Administrative Staff

The School Director develops, implements, and oversees administrative processes to ensure the smooth operation of the school. S/he develops and maintains communication systems and facilitates productive interactions and collaborations within the school community, including staff, parents, governance council, SAEF, and the Parent Association.

NCSA's office staff includes a part-time Business Manager, part-time receptionist, part-time enrollment coordinator, and part-time office administrator. A part-time arts program coordinator supports the artistic staff with scheduling, procurement, and related functions. The arts program coordinator recruits and hires the studio arts instructors.

Charter Governance Council

The purpose of the Charter Governance Council is to govern the Nevada City School of the Arts in accordance with its school charter. In turn, the school charter conforms to all provisions and requirements of California State charter school law. Governance responsibilities encompass all operations of the school and include, but are not limited to, curriculum and student achievement, finance, instruction, personnel, policies and procedures, student discipline.

The CGC consists of a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 13 members. Two are faculty members selected by the faculty, there are three to six parent members, one representative from the arts program selected by the arts faculty, and one representative from the community-at-large, all nominated by the CGC.

School of the Arts Educational Foundation

The School of the Arts Educational Foundation (SAEF) is a nonprofit, public benefit corporation as defined in section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. SAEF exists to enhance the educational experience for the community of students, teachers and families at Nevada City

School of the Arts. By fostering and modeling a culture of giving, SAEF creates opportunities for parents and the larger community to make contributions, financial and other, to support this endeavor. All school fundraising is conducted under the aegis of SAEF, which also administers all funds for field studies. In conjunction with the Charter Governance Council, SAEF provides essential and supplemental financial administration and support to NCSA. SAEF is governed by up to eleven (11) directors, nominated and elected by the SAEF Board.

How Does NCSA Measure Success?

NCSA, in its Charter, identifies an educated person as one whom:

- Uses the arts as a lens to see the world
- Thinks critically
- Reflects and self-assesses
- Is literate and numerate
- Has a sense of social conscience
- Is self-directed and self-motivated
- Thinks scientifically and uses technology as a tool
- Values relationships
- Adapts to change
- Communicates and works collaboratively and cooperatively with others

Developmental Philosophy

All children develop along their own path. Not all children walk, talk, or read within the same timeline. With this belief, learning becomes a process of celebration rather than a patchwork of fixing skills. In the primary grades, developmental curriculum differentiates to allow all students to feel capable, successful, and empowered learners. Nevada City School of the Arts believes in a developmental program for academic content.

Developmental curriculum is based on brain research and child development and means that a student is seen on a continuum of learning. Students are held with the confidence that they will gain the skills to be fluent readers and competent mathematicians. They are not held to linear expectations that all students will achieve certain skills on a consistent timeline. Therefore, when approaching academic content the overall development of the student is considered.

In a developmental curriculum, students receive structured instruction in all areas of reading and math acquisition. Frequent assessments allow educators to respond to students' growing skills and students are held to high academic expectations. Educators pay attention to discrepancies in skills, learning, or progress, referring students for additional help as needed.

At the same time, students are honored for their growth and achievements, rather than focusing on their lack or goals. Confidence and a positive attitude towards learning are valued along with skills acquisition and they are held with an assurance that they are successful and will achieve their goals.

Many of the objectives NCSA holds for its students are extremely difficult to quantify and difficult to measure. We do not adhere to state adopted curriculum or help students practice for standardized tests, as we firmly believe they are inadequate for measuring whether a student has developed a passion for learning and the intellectual tools needed for a lifetime of thinking, learning, and caring about the world. While we would rather not give our students these tests, NCSA, like all public schools, is mandated to administer the STAR test to students. Understanding that we believe in a developmental philosophy of teaching and learning, it would follow that our elementary students score below average in State tests. However, while the rest of the students' scores in the State and County begin to drop in the upper grades, our 6th, 7th and 8th grade students consistently score at or above the county and State average each year.

Student Assessment

Curriculum standards for each grade level are aligned with the California State Standards. Annual assessments, including standardized testing and classroom assessments, provide information to determine whether each student is meeting, exceeding or progressing toward grade level standards and making at least one year's growth at their ability level each year.

On average, each class at NCSA has 6-8 students who struggle due to learning difficulties. NCSA has a full-time Learning Center available for those students who have IEPs, 504s or who have had Student Success Team meetings designating them as needing more academic help. The Learning Center is staffed by a Resource Specialist and an Aide who provide all levels of remediation and support to help those students make academic gains.

Research indicates, however, that those students who struggle early continue to struggle through the course of their school career. Therefore, it is NCSA's realistic goal that at least 75% of students will be at grade level or above and 25% will demonstrate one year's worth of progress at their ability level each year as evidenced by our assessment plan.

Other School Resources

NCSA Facilities

When founded in 1994, NCSA met in a church, parents' garages, an old house, and even a graveyard. Soon after the school was begun, we moved into a leased space in a building that had previously housed an electronics firm. We eventually outgrew that facility as we added more grade levels, and moved to the Bitney Charter Park in 1999. Our 24,000 square foot facility provides classrooms, an open atrium/gallery, a small library, and dance, music, and art studios.

Charter schools are the only public schools in California that are not automatically provided any funds for a facility; the cost of rent and utilities comes directly out of our educational budget. The monies provided by the state will not continue to grow as rapidly as the cost of rent, which is currently 14% (or \$237,000) of our annual budget.

The site that the school currently occupies was not built with a school in mind, but rather was built for a high technology company. Over the years, the building has been adapted to meet the school's needs as much as possible. However, its size and many of its architectural features are not ideal. Its geographic topography, while beautiful, is lacking in flat surface areas conducive to most outdoor sports programs. Further, as long as we continue renting on a short-term lease,

we lack control over our long-term space costs, and have less flexibility to plan for other expenses. Currently every room is maximized for efficiency, with some programs sharing rooms, and the staff and faculty lack a break room.

Technology

NCSA is connected to the Nevada Union Joint High School District's network, which does not provide electronic mail accounts for all staff or website hosting. Currently, some of the limitations of NCSA's current utilization of technology include:

- Having both Apples and PC computers on site, with varying operating systems even within each of those platforms, often creates problems for file sharing.
- Some staff member do not use their NCSA e-mail accounts, preferring to use their personal accounts for school purposes, and some access their school accounts from home.
- There is no central source, process, or schedule for backing up computers.
- Although there is a file server on site, it is only compatible with PC computers for file sharing.
- Maintenance of the web site is an adjunct duty of the School Director.
- Daily technology support is provided by an on-call contractor which results in a fragmented response to meeting needs.
- Six computers are available for student use in the middle school and 4th and 5th have 3-4 computers in the classroom.
- A student's computer literacy is obtained solely from support they receive at home.

External Influences

Operating Environment

The purpose of a charter school is to improve student learning; encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods; create new professional opportunities for teachers; and provide parents and students with expanded educational opportunities within the public school system. These opportunities are provided without some of the constraints of traditional bureaucratic rules and structure, and give schools the opportunity to use a "performance-based" system of accountability. In essence, charter schools allow for increased flexibility in exchange for an enriched educational experience while maintaining academic excellence.

The opportunities that a charter school has to develop its own systems for accountability are accompanied by a responsibility to do so, and the additional challenge of being sufficiently disciplined in the identification and application of standards. In order to achieve and maintain high quality in the educational program, the charter school must adopt a system for continually evaluating its methods and results, and have systems in place that will assure timely identification of concerns, and timely changes as needed.

Revenues are not keeping up with increasing costs. Personnel costs, while low, do increase. Non-competitive compensation decreases chances of keeping present or recruiting new faculty. Lack of job security, as compared to tenured teachers in non-charter public schools, impacts faculty morale. The absence of funds and time in the school calendar for professional development decreases the ability of faculty to fashion and maintain exemplary curriculum.

Federal, State, District influences

Our sponsoring agency, the Nevada County Superintendent of Schools (NCSOS), has established a charter school management system. In order that schools are free to focus their attention on their students and the development of their own educational vision, the county allowed the charters to establish their own “cooperative” that gives each school the autonomy to develop and manage its own educational program. The Charter School Directors come together as a group of six to deliver an exceptional Special Education program through our Joint Powers Authority (JPA) and to collaborate on best charter school practices. We pay the NCSoS 7% of our revenues: 1% as a mandated oversight fee and 6% for business services (payroll, budget management, auditing, etc.).

Opportunities with respect to facility needs

Expanding our facility to better meet our needs, and reducing the costs of such a facility are critical to our ongoing success. To that end, NCSA has a facilities committee charged with researching options, including purchase of our current building, purchase of land and constructing our own facility, purchasing and/or leasing a larger facility, and funding possibilities.

Recent consultation with a local commercial real estate developer estimated that the cost for land and a building would be approximately \$10-11 million dollars. Several different funding strategies have been considered by NCSA, and when a specific building or land purchase is identified, we will follow through on the most appropriate funding strategy.

Strategic Objectives

Following a survey of the NCSA community and a series of working group meetings with the Charter Governance Council and the faculty, a number of objectives were developed and evaluated on the following criteria:

Financial—Current and future costs of implementation. It is also important to consider the opportunity cost of not pursuing an objective. We need to be able to reliably predict our financial situation in order to commit to a future plan. Scenarios should be developed using projections at least five years out, based on best available information.

Timing—Commitment to a strategic direction needs to consider that the choice to pursue one objective will require sufficient dedication of resources and that other objectives will have to be deferred or eliminated altogether. Sequencing of strategies is important. For example, increased enrollment would provide additional funding for enhancing facilities. However, additional space and staffing would be needed to meet the needs of additional enrollment.

Human resources impacts—How much time and energy is available, whether paid staff or unpaid volunteers? What level of authority and commitment does each participant have? Are the right skill sets available or can they be readily obtained?

Practicality—does it make sense to pursue a given objective, given the overall school and community environment, and reasonability of expectations?

Degree of risk—neither the school nor SAEF have significant funds in reserve. “Investments” in our future need to be made prudently. The degree of risk impact is not necessarily the same as the financial impact. An alternative may be relatively low-cost, but still high-risk if the likelihood of achieving the desired outcome is not high. Alternatively, a high-cost alternative may be low-risk if it would be all but certain to result in the intended consequence.

Internal consistency—The projects undertaken in implementing the strategic direction need to fit together in an integrated approach and be able to be followed and continued as turnover of administrator, staff, parent, and community volunteers occurs.

The objectives are presented below in order of priority for each component of the school: Funding, Personnel, Facility, Academic Curriculum and Assessment, Arts Based Education, Social Curriculum, Community, Technology, and Marketing.

Funding

Revenue for NCSA comes primarily through the state Average Daily Attendance funding. State revenues do not cover the expenses that the school incurs on a yearly basis; therefore a secondary source of income for the operating budget is NCSA's Annual Giving Campaign. It is clear that more funding is needed if we want our faculty and staff to receive pay parity with other Charter Schools, and to continue to improve our program. Additionally, funding will be needed if we are to secure ownership of a facility.

Objective #1 Increase our additional funding

Strategy 1

- Develop an "All School" budget which would combine both the foundation's and school's budget for clarification and identification of revenues and expenses.
- SAEF Completes budget development and presents to their board.
- SAEF provides School Business Manager budget to "meld" together
- Present All school budget to CGC.

Strategy 2

- Support the Annual Giving Campaign committee to create a dynamic, ongoing campaign which will raise more revenue. Support SAEF in all fundraising endeavors.
- Create smooth transition as outgoing AGC chair leaves. Director and Business Manager should take active role in campaign.
- Identify new chairperson for the AGC
- SD/BM attend initial strategy meetings
- Encourage full involvement by parent community in AGC.

Strategy 3

- Develop alumni database and relationship with alumni for future fundraising.
- Create Facebook NCSA Alumni Tab
- Create Survey for Alumni
- Contact former students from 1996 forward
- Link up with SAEFs efforts to establish relationships with Alumni

Strategy 4

- Work with and support SAEF in identifying grants and providing them with all pertinent information for grant applications.
- Add SAEF President and Bookkeeper to CCSA and AE mailing lists
- SAEF to focus first on Mobile Labs and Staff Development

Strategy 5

- Continuing to educate parents about importance of attendance and independent studies.
- SD/EC use Canvas and Monday Notes as a means of informing parent group about attendance rates.
- Enforce SARB Policy consistently.
- Encourage parents to use IS when appropriate.

Personnel

Currently our employees' salaries are not in line with charter school market rates. In addition, the salary schedule needs revision due to its lack of step increase equity. We also do not have a set of comprehensive personnel policies or a current staff handbook. Finally, we have no funding for professional development.

Objective #2 Be a competitive workplace with high professional standards.

Strategy 1

- Bring salaries in line with charter school market rates.
- Research CCSA to determine market rate for charter school employees.
- When funding increases, begin steps to correct salary schedule.

Strategy 2

- Develop every-other-year evaluation schedule for all classified employees.
- S.D. Determines which employees will be evaluated this year.
- Create clear support structure for classified employees

Strategy 3

- Create clear and comprehensive personnel policies for all employees.
- Compile all current policies in one location/notebook
- Review other schools' policies to see if NCSA is in line with best practices.

Strategy 4

- Update Staff Handbook
- Ask Office Manager to compile current documents all employees need for reference.
- SD reviews and provides current policies and information to complete handbook.

Strategy 5

- Identify sources of funding in order to allow each teacher to attend a Professional Development conference every year. Work with SAEF to find funding.
- Ask SAEF to research grants to meet this need.
- Require teachers to seek out professional development opportunities

Facility

NCSA is currently in the 2nd year of a three year lease. The annual cost of rent is \$237,000. Given that the state provides no money for our facility, rent is paid from ADA money normally budgeted for program. It is widely recognized that owning our own facility would be advantageous in developing our program, stabilizing our budget, and provide a better working and learning environment.

Objective #3 Reduce our annual facility expenditures within 5 years

Strategy 1

- Support the work of the Facilities Committee in identifying potential land and or buildings for acquisition and actively support SAEF in securing funding through various means. Provide all financial documentation necessary for funding.
- SD should continue to facilitate monthly meetings with the Facilities committee.
- Continually update SAEF as to status of current needs.

Strategy 2

- Develop a facilities plan
- Ask facilities committee to continue on after October to outline plan.
- Include the need for a staff room, performance space and reductions of gas/electric bills in plan.
- Increase maintenance time as funding allows
- Increase student awareness of clutter and mess
- Continue to work on beautifying campus

Academic Curriculum and Assessment

Currently NCSA's teachers create their own individual curricula for each class. This is essential to continue, but there also needs to be threads through each grade that connect the classes and ensure that the essential state standards are being addressed successfully.

Objective #4 Renew, reenergize and update our educational plan and curriculum goals to further enhance our philosophy of integrated arts and academic instruction.

Strategy 1

- Clearly define or re-define our curriculum guides, themes and arts integration for each grade level and state how those effectively address the standards.
- Teachers will review their current curriculum guides for accuracy and ensure they are in-line with their current teaching practices. They should update them to reflect what is happening in each grade in order to create consistency throughout the school.

Strategy 2

- As a means of measuring our success in implementing the curriculum guides, we need to develop authentic and on-going assessments to occur in every grade and every core academic area.
- Teacher and SD will meet to develop assessments for each core curriculum area to ensure students are showing the expected growth for their ability level each year.
- The end result will be three benchmark assessments per core area a year for each grade.
- During their agreed upon teacher in-service afternoons, teachers and School Director will work together to develop appropriate assessments for their grade levels.
- Add a homework policy to each curriculum guide.

Strategy 3

- Report cards need to be refined and updated. Student progress needs to be better communicated to parents.
- This needs to occur after all benchmark assessments have been created.
- Our developmental philosophy needs to be taken into account for all report cards.
- Communicate to parents what our expectations are at each grade level.

Arts Based Education

While our current visual arts and music programs are strong, there is no performance component which reflects dance. In addition, there are no curriculum guides for the arts or music programs.

Objective #5 Continually refine our visual and performing arts program to reflect continued expansion and student creativity.

Strategy 1

- Use movement classes as a means of integrating dance and performance into the academic curriculum when appropriate.
- Identify logical places where dance and performance naturally fit in to movement without losing the balance of playing games, team sports and physical health.
- Review, revisit and possibly re-define the purpose of movement at NCSA.

Strategy 2

- The artists and music director will create an arts and music guide for all grade levels.
- Provide release time for each teacher to begin the creation of the guide.
- The goal should be 2 grade levels per year

Strategy 3

- Train main lesson teachers in integrating the arts into the curriculum.
- Contact Sierra North Arts Project at UC Davis to set up on site trainings in DBAE for all staff.

Social Curriculum

Currently NCSA uses the “Teaching Children to Care” model of social curriculum for the lower grades and “Mysteries” in the upper grades.

Objective #6 Develop a broader social curriculum.

Strategy 1

- Create philosophy/policy pertaining to cell phones, internet and the media in general
- SD to search for Media Policies already implemented in schools.
- Modify policy to fit NCSA's needs.
- Board to discuss philosophy of media use at school and effect on social issues.

Strategy 2

- Pursue training available through the county for Second Steps Curriculum which includes anti-bullying and social media skills
- All credentialed teachers will be trained in this curriculum and begin implementing this year.

Strategy 3

- Identify an appropriate social curriculum in the middle school.
- Begin series of meetings with teachers.
- Decide upon a certain curriculum
- Report back to CGC

Community

NCSA enjoys the benefits of a small, close-knit community, with most of our parents feeling a “part” of that community. As with other small communities we also suffer from a perception of “clique-y-ness” by some of our parents. We have a high amount of volunteerism.

Objective #7 To ensure our families feel a sense of pride, participation and ownership and are encouraged to collaborate with staff to promote the success of the school.

Strategy 1

- Utilize social media to keep in contact with families and alumni.
- ***See Marketing and Funding***

Strategy 2

- Identify volunteer coordinator.
- SAEF to review volunteer sign ups
- SAEF /SD to select a parent to be VC

Strategy 3

- Mentor new families by way of a family buddy system.
- Ensure that all parents feel welcome and valued at NCSA.
- VC recruits parents from each class to be mentors to new families.
- Those parents call/meet and reach out to new families

Strategy 4

- Identifying key volunteers and make them visible in the school community.
- Ask school photographer to take pictures of key volunteers
- Ask Arts assistant to create artistic board to place pictures on and display in the atrium.

Technology

NCSA has out-of-date computers, network and internet access. We are constantly struggling to bring our teachers and students into the tech present. On the other hand, we do not promote technology amongst our students. We rely completely on parents to provide training to students. We also need to update our website and make it more valuable as a source of information.

Objective #8 Develop technology plan

Strategy 1

- Create mobile lab through MAC tech grant
- SAEF to apply for necessary grants/funding.
- Develop guide for parents

Marketing

Currently there are people in Nevada County that do not know we exist or think we are a college level art school.

Objective #9 Effectively promote our school to the community at large.

Strategy 1

- Update Website
- Work with designer to complete site by the end of the year.

Strategy 2

- Develop Marketing Plan for NCSA
- Create a ready-to-go event booth.
- Create promotional materials designed to give information to perspective parents
- Create promotional materials designed to give information to donors and interested parties.
- Form partnerships with community organizations who share our vision. (Center for the Arts, ACNC, etc.
- Refresh previously used advertisements
- Seek out publicity opportunities

Strategy 3

- Promote NCSA's academic success
- Apply for National blue Ribbon School Award
- Apply for distinguished Schools Award