

# Strategic Direction Plan 2023-2027

**Stichting Montessori Onderwijs Zuid-Holland**

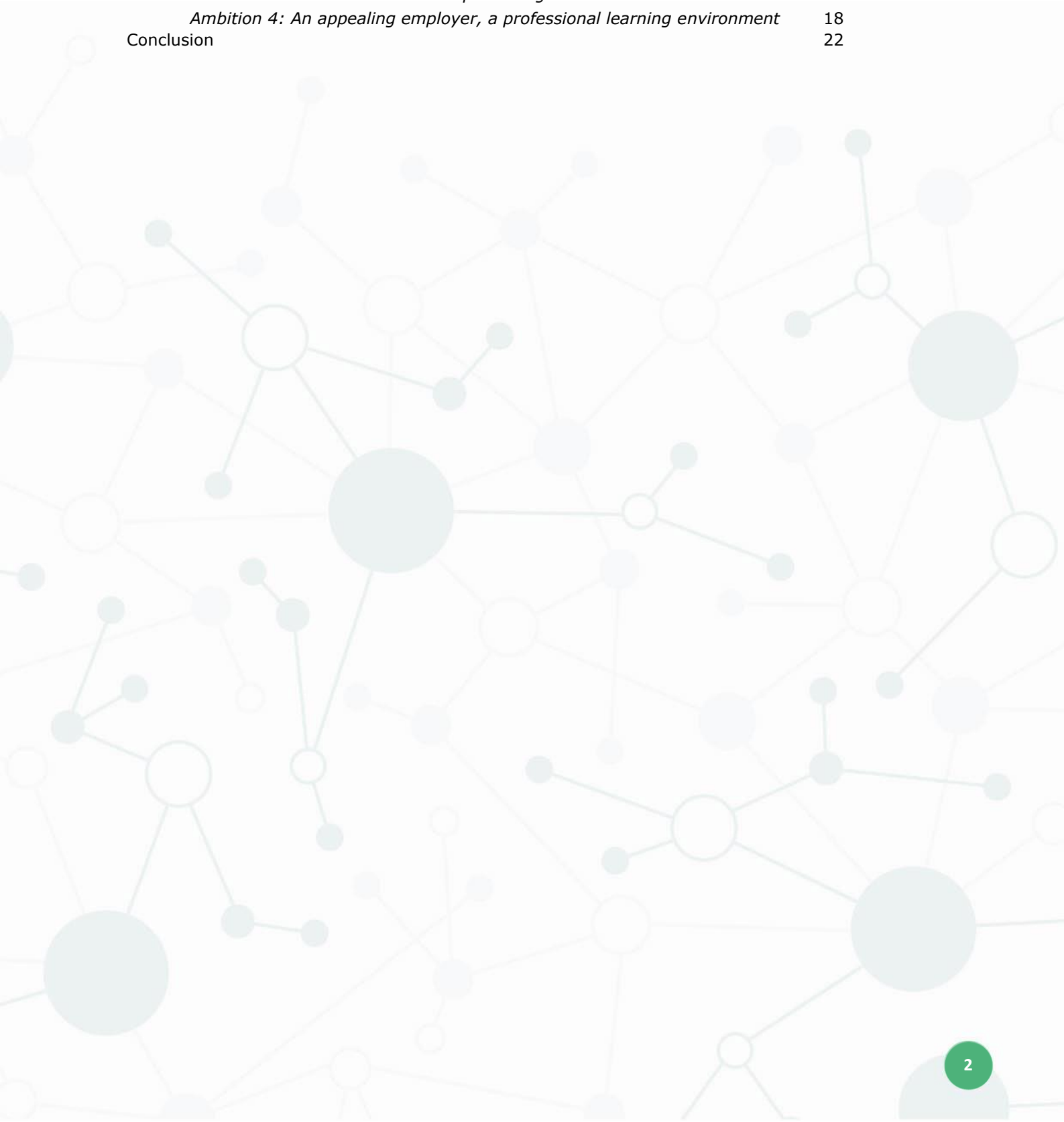


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Montessori Onderwijs Zuid-Holland

# Contents

Introduction	3
About this strategic direction plan	4
Our mission and core values	5
Our ambitions for 2023-2027	7
<i>Ambition 1: A clear (Montessori) identity</i>	7
<i>Ambition 2: Good and increasingly inclusive education</i>	10
<i>Ambition 3: Collaboration and responsible growth</i>	14
<i>Ambition 4: An appealing employer, a professional learning environment</i>	18
Conclusion	22



# Introduction

Wonder, curiosity and open-mindedness. These are the three characteristics of each child that the Stichting Montessori Onderwijs Zuid-Holland cherishes and encourages in order to ensure that they grow and develop in their own way. Every child to its own top: that's our mission, that's what we stand for, that's what motivates us. To achieve this, we offer challenging and future-oriented education of high quality at our five Montessori schools and one international school. In this strategic direction plan 2023-2027, we describe how we will work to achieve this together over the next four years.

We are in turbulent times. There are numerous developments in education and society that we need to factor in during the period 2023-2027. The teacher shortage as well as the overall staff shortage and the broad concerns about language and math skills among children are felt within our organisation too. Specifically for our educational foundation, we are facing large-scale new construction and renovation for four of the five schools in the coming years. Another key development is the transition from two board members to a single executive board member.

Based in part on these developments, we have defined the four ambitions that set our course for the coming years. We work toward a clear (Montessori) identity, provide good and increasingly inclusive education, grow together responsibly and develop as an attractive employer, offering our employees a professional learning environment. The goals we have set under each of these ambitions will allow us to respond to the above developments and fulfil our ambitions.

We take (changing) circumstances into account, plotting our own course as (Montessori) schools. Everything we do is at the service of the student, enabling them to develop based on their own inner drives. This strategic direction plan will help us navigate, even through circumstances and challenges that we cannot yet fathom. We look forward to getting started, together with all staff, students, parents and partners within the schools.

**Cathelijne Willemse and Paul Mos**

*Executive Board Stichting Montessori Onderwijs Zuid-Holland*

## About this strategic direction plan

This strategic direction plan follows up on the 2018 strategic policy plan. Many colleagues and others contributed. We started a conversation: what do we stand for and where do we want to go as collaborating schools? We have translated the outcomes into four ambitions for the upcoming policy period:

- Ambition 1: A clear (Montessori) identity
- Ambition 2: Good and increasingly inclusive education
- Ambition 3: Collaboration and responsible growth
- Ambition 4: An appealing employer, a professional learning environment

For each ambition, this plan sets out the objectives to achieve these ambitions. These are the issues we will (continue to) work on in the coming years. This strategic direction plan forms the basis for the individual school plans that each school prepares.

# Our mission and core values

Montessori education is our starting point. This type of teaching and the well-known slogan *Help me do it myself* are principles of our schools, reflected in our mission, vision and core values.

## Our mission

We see it as our job to maintain and promote the wonder, curiosity and open-mindedness of our students. An important condition is to appreciate each person's original aptitude and the mutual diversity of talents. We want to create an environment in which staff and students can continue to develop, practice and apply this aptitude. Curious and from the individual's interest. We are committed to high-quality education that is challenging and future-oriented.

This mission can be summarised in our slogan:

Every child to their own top!

## Our core values

The core values of Stichting Montessori Onderwijs Zuid-Holland form the basis of what we do and what we do not do. They underpin the relations between our staff, children, parents and all our other partners in society.

### *Sustainable development*

We see it as an important task to thoroughly prepare our students for their role in society. Not only now, but also in tomorrow's world. That is why we believe it is crucial that our students and staff develop not only their knowledge and skills, but also their moral sense and the ability to be curious: about each other and about the changing world. This is the only way to ensure they are able to develop permanently and sustainably.

### *Ownership*

We own our own development, and choose our own route. Sometimes that means continuing to develop what you are already good at. At other times, it means mastering what you could not yet do. This ownership applies to both our children and our staff. Children obviously need guidance in this regard. The interaction between school and parents/educators plays an important role in this context.

### *Space*

To grow, you need space. Space to make your own choices and manage your own time wisely. And also to give space to colleagues, fellow students and other people around you, in close consultation. A prerequisite for this space is social safety: an environment where giving and receiving trust is paramount.

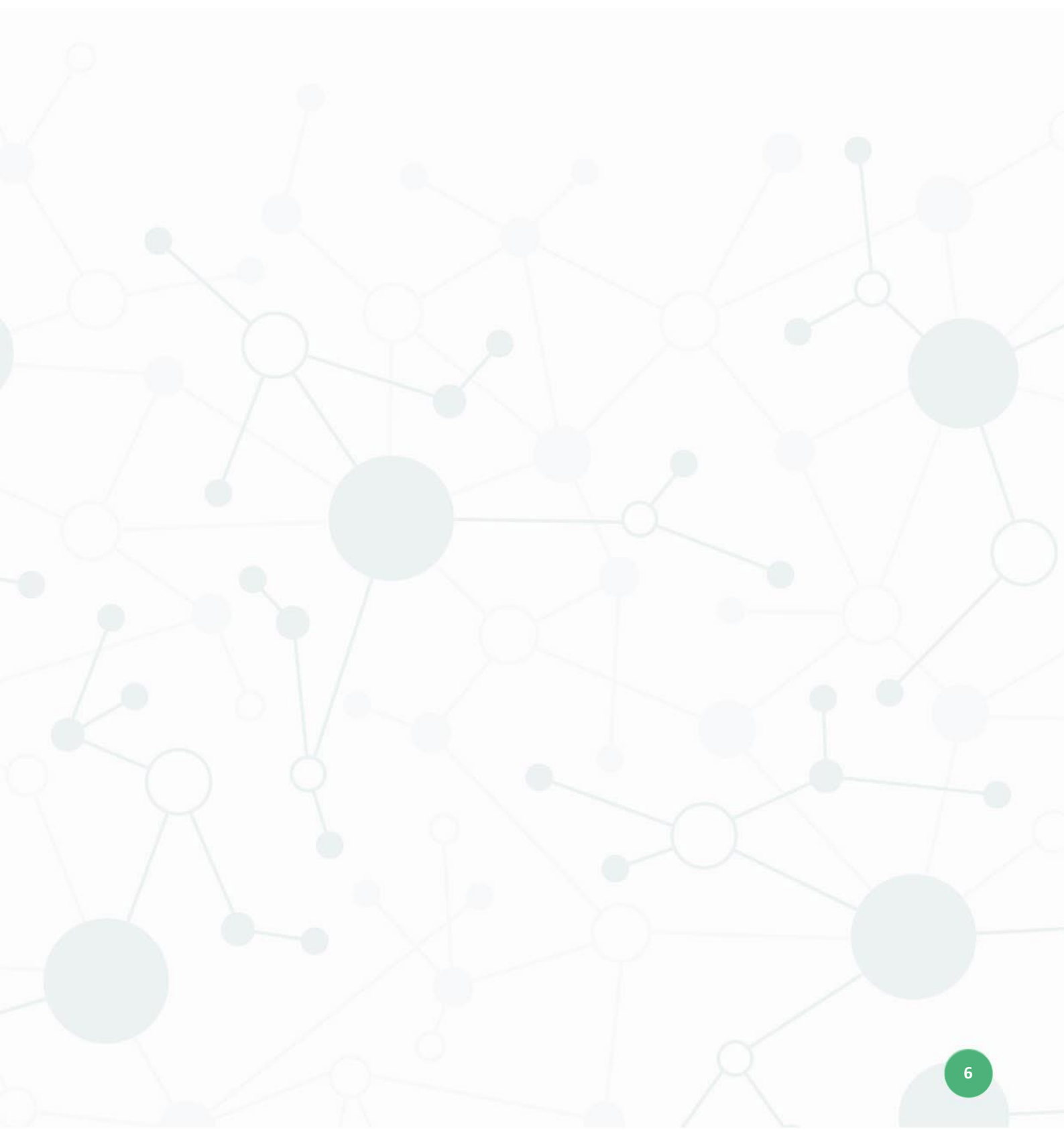
### *Connection*

Parenting and teaching are team sports. Connecting with parents is our core focus. They bring the most precious thing they have to our schools. In addition, we encourage connections with child care organisations, further education, the district in which our schools are located and the business community in the region, among others. We should also not

forget the connections with each other. Between and within teams, cooperating schools, schools and the board, the foundation and controlling authorities. Finally, we make connections by offering different subjects in an encompassing and coherent manner and by bringing age groups together in heterogeneous classes.

### *Entrepreneurship*

Children are naturally enterprising. We want to encourage that trait in both our staff and our children. Being able to 'colour outside the lines' within a safe environment is something we welcome. Again, curiosity is a prerequisite.



# Our ambitions for 2023-2027

## **Ambition 1** **A clear (Montessori) identity**

For us, as a foundation with five Montessori schools and one international school, the child's development is central. We believe that our Montessori and IPC education teaches our children the necessary knowledge and skills while also training them to become independent, confident individuals with an eye for others and the environment. This philosophy is more than a teaching concept and is at the heart of everything we do. MZH is a values-driven organisation that does what it says and says what it does.

### **International school & the Montessori identity**

Our foundation consists of five Montessori schools and the Elckerlyc International School, which teaches based on the International Primary Curriculum. The philosophy overlaps with that of Montessori in many ways. For example, both assume student ownership and place great importance on the individual learning path. Both allow the teacher to act as a coach whenever possible. And both provide all that is necessary for children to develop optimally in the areas of qualification, socialisation and identity development, on the basis of cosmic education.

Where this plan specifically discusses Montessori themes, we leave room for the International School to interpret things in its own way. Given the shared vision mentioned above, we are confident that this mode essentially fits the Montessori vision.

### **Conscious choice by parents**

We want parents to consciously choose the vision of our (Montessori) schools. This includes clearly stating what parents and students can expect from us and what we expect from students and parents. This includes providing parents with information about our educational vision upon registration, and holding an expectations meeting with parents at the beginning of the year.

### **'Help me do it myself'**

A child's own choice within the learning process is a focal point for us. We help children do it themselves. We prefer to use Montessori materials and, where appropriate, also teaching methods that give explicit space for a child's own preferences and choices.

### **Heterogeneous groups**

We believe in the value of heterogeneous groups of three school years in the middle and upper grades. This serves to promote cooperation and identity development. Learning from older children and helping younger children are natural in such a group. The teachers know children well because they have been with them for a longer period of time.

### **Staff training**

To propagate our Montessori educational vision, we need colleagues who understand and subscribe to this vision. We therefore consider it of great importance that all of our staff

members have a diploma demonstrating competence in the field of Montessori education. This applies to both new and existing colleagues in all positions: teaching, as well as leadership and support.

### Building design

We believe it is important for our school buildings to be recognisable as MZH schools. This means that any new construction must be based on a clear schedule of requirements that takes into account the visibility of our (Montessori) identity. In any case, workstations outside the classroom, a green schoolyard and a building where indoors and outdoors merge are essential elements. Further criteria for what that visibility means will be specified during this policy period. Because this point also affects cooperation as MZH schools, it is also discussed under ambition 3: Collaboration and responsible growth.

## Objectives under the ambition 'A clear (Montessori) identity'

What we want to achieve	How we want to achieve that
Staff, parents, students and others involved have a clear understanding of the (Montessori) vision and use it as the basis for their actions.	Our schools have clearly stated the (Montessori) vision on their websites and in the school guide.
	Our schools provide information to parents about the educational vision (as a book or otherwise) upon registration.
	Our schools schedule talks with parents at least twice a year to discuss the (Montessori) vision.
	Our schools are committed to connecting with parents, for example, by organising theme nights around the (Montessori) vision.
All of our colleagues are familiar with - and skilled in - teaching Montessori education.	New teachers begin the course Montessori Basisbekwaam ('Montessori Basic Proficient') within two years and complete it within three years.
	Staff at management level take the Montessori training for executives.
	We establish a target percentage of teachers who achieve Montessori Vakbekwaam ('Montessori Proficient') or Montessori Meesterschap ('Montessori Mastery') certification.
We have heterogeneous groups in the upper and middle grades, in which learning from older children and helping younger children are natural components.	Our schools, whenever possible, have mixed groups of three grade levels in the middle and upper grades.



	Our training budget enables our foundation to offer training on dealing with more (age) variation within a group.
We communicate our shared values as six MZH schools.	Elckerlyc International School identifies as an MZH school and clearly shows parents (for example, on the website and in the school guide) that it is part of the foundation.
	We define criteria for the design and lay-out of schools and classrooms aimed at clearly showcasing our MZH concepts and traditions.
We are committed to using teaching methods that explicitly accommodate a child's individual needs and preferences.	We encourage our schools to choose the teaching method that gives the most room for a child's individual needs and preferences when several qualitatively similar ones are available.



## **Ambition 2**

### **Good and increasingly inclusive education**

'Every child to their own top' is a key pillar of our education. We offer all our students the opportunity to grow in three areas: qualification, socialisation and identity development. Our education must be as inclusive as possible.

#### **More inclusive education**

Our guiding principle is that every student is welcome in our schools. From Day 1, we invest both in functioning as an individual and within a group. We call this normalising behaviour. Within our foundation we have a lot of expertise for children who need this, such as an in-house remedial educationalist and specialists in the fields of math, language, behaviour and giftedness. We also offer teachers training based on a training budget in order to properly allow for more variation and more specific attention needs in a group.

When we find that our education is not appropriate for a particular student, we conduct thorough research into their educational needs. Based on relevant action recommendations, we look for ways to better address specific needs. We want to provide all children with the education that is appropriate for them, but also recognise that there are limits. If we cannot provide the appropriate education, we will look outside our foundation for education that is the best fit.

#### **Qualification**

Students in our schools develop the knowledge and skills they will need throughout the rest of their lives. We offer them contemporary education, focusing on basic skills such as reading, spelling, math and citizenship, as well as ICT skills and media literacy, for example. Education in which subject matter is given meaning in relation to the real world. This can be in the form of cosmic education, or more implicitly by offering cross-curricular material in projects or on field trips, for example. Based on the Montessori and IPC vision, we do not see tests as an end in itself, but as a means to monitor a child's broad development.

#### **Socialisation and citizenship**

From the beginning of elementary school, we teach children to take good care of themselves, others and the world around them. Our curriculum for citizenship is our educational vision. The school is a training ground to achieve this. Each school sets its own goals, and more importantly, sets goals for the individual student.

At MZH, we believe that our pedagogy and cosmic education ensure that we give children the right means to become good citizens. Or as Montessori put it, 'to make the world a better place'. All our schools subscribe to this shared vision. In the coming years, we will take steps in setting and evaluating our goals, and we will continue to discuss this topic.

#### **Identity development**

Each child is allowed to develop in their own way and at their own pace. We are frequently in touch with the parent and child to stay well informed about everyone's talents and areas of improvement. We challenge each child in an appropriate way. Within the foundation, we carefully monitor the balance between formative and result-oriented education. The quality of our education must be high, and we believe this begins with developing our students as people.

### **Parent involvement**

For the aforementioned development in the areas of qualification, socialisation and identity development, the relationship with parents is essential. Raising children is something we do together. We keep the lines of communication with parents short and are committed to joint education based on the Montessori and IPC vision. As already described under ambition 1, we hope and expect that parents consciously choose our (Montessori) education.

### **Quality assurance**

We believe it is important for our schools to work with a long-term plan to continuously develop the quality of the school and staff. We annually prepare a quality calendar for this purpose, specifying in what way and with what instruments we do this. All our schools work with a four-year school plan based on this strategic direction plan. In addition, each school prepares an annual plan with intermediate and final evaluations every year.

For us, quality assurance is strongly related to personnel policy. Our staff must be given the space to develop in both professional and personal terms. Therefore, we provide a personal development plan for each employee.

We also monitor quality at the board level, including with an educational quality dashboard and interim quality discussions between the board and schools. This is based on the spearheads of educational results, teaching, student care and school climate (especially safety). If the monitoring shows that quality is lagging, we analyse the situation to make targeted improvements.

Our schools set school standards to monitor whether educational outcomes meet expectations. They use analysis tools such as Parnassys, Ultimview and the National Education Cohort Survey to determine whether results meet standards. The results achieved are regularly discussed with the board of our foundation.

Furthermore, we are moving to a new student tracking system for our schools, 'Student in Focus' ('Leerling in beeld'). This system provides insight into a child's cognitive development and allows performance tracking for basic subjects at the student, group and school levels. In addition, 'Student in Focus' provides insight into a child's social-emotional development and progress relating to executive functions. In addition, we offer school leavers an intelligence test: the Dutch Intelligence Test for Educational Level (NIO).

Finally, we are examining the adequacy of current satisfaction surveys at the student, parent and staff levels. This requires us to take a critical look at exactly what we want to survey, and what a particular answer says about the quality of our education. We also include the Education Inspectorate's requirements for learning outcomes for primary education, especially in the areas of basic skills in language and math. We determine which performance indicators we consider important and how to arrive at reliable and useful values.

# Objectives under the ambition 'Good and increasingly inclusive education'

What we want to achieve	How we want to achieve that
Student reports emphasise the child's broad development.	<p>We are exploring ways to make children’s identity development more visible in reports.</p> <p>In reports, we visualise a child's development in the three dimensions of qualification, socialisation and identity development. We monitor the balance between cognitive progress and social development.</p>
We promote active citizenship and social cohesion.	Our schools are committed to the development of social and civic competencies and report the results. Each school sets goals both at the school and student level.
We work in partnership with parents on the child's broad development based on our (Montessori) vision.	<p>We actively inform parents about the (Montessori) vision, for example by sharing professional literature with them and organising information evenings around Montessori themes.</p> <p>In parent talks about children’s development, we pay specific attention to broad development and a shared upbringing based on the (Montessori) vision.</p>
We provide optimal support for our teachers and other colleagues concerning the core of their duties.	<p>We will provide a personal development plan for each employee in the coming policy period.</p> <p>We implement (new) forms of peer review (see also ambition 4: 'An appealing employer, a professional learning environment').</p> <p>We alleviate the administrative burden of directors by outsourcing some of it to colleagues on staff (see also ambition 4: 'An appealing employer, a professional learning environment').</p>
Within our means, we aim for the most inclusive education possible.	<p>We are specifying scenarios to provide appropriate education for children with extra care needs wherever possible. This is limited by our capabilities and depends on urban and regional factors.</p> <p>The training budget covers training for teachers to effectively deal with a diverse group of students (with multiple specific needs).</p>
We improve and properly monitor our children’s performance, with a particular focus on basic skills.	<p>We allocate extra time and attention to reading and spelling in the middle grades.</p> <p>All schools are adapting the new student tracking system 'Student in Focus’.</p>

<p>We gain a clear insight into and adequately monitor the quality of our schools.</p>	<p>We are examining whether the current satisfaction surveys are still adequate and will move to a new method if necessary.</p>
	<p>Based on this research, we will define (new) performance indicators.</p>
<p>We monitor educational quality at the board level.</p>	<p>We work with an educational quality dashboard.</p>
	<p>We conduct interim quality discussions with representatives of the board, the schools and any other stakeholders.</p>
	<p>If necessary, we conduct analyses to create targeted improvements that we then translate into policy.</p>
<p>Knowledge sharing and evaluation are an integral part of our quality assurance.</p>	<p>We provide time and space to actively share knowledge and skills, for example, in the form of intervision meetings, peer reviews and joint lesson preparation.</p>
	<p>We develop the frameworks for peer review. The concept is that each colleague conducts at least one internal and one external peer review visit. (See also ambition 4: 'An appealing employer, a professional learning environment').</p>

## **Ambition 3**

### **Collaboration and responsible growth**

#### **Collaboration**

Over the past policy period, our schools have begun to collaborate more intensively, both with each other and with the management team. We are further specifying this cooperation in this new period. 'Learning from and with each other' is the guiding principle in this context. Not everyone has to participate in every topic: developments are prepared and conceived by those who have the most knowledge on this particular topic and/or feel most involved in this particular issue. We also respect each school's stage of development: not every school needs to go through the same funnel.

In the area of collaboration, we see the following focal areas:

- *(Inter)regional and (inter)administrative cooperation*  
The government will actively and intensively focus on reducing the teacher shortage. The spearheads are (inter)regional and (inter)administrative cooperation. As a foundation, we will therefore explore the possibilities of 'swapping out' staff internally or deploying them flexibly where they are most needed. Even in staff training, we see the bigger picture and are aware that we are training teachers for the field, not necessarily for our own schools.
- *Internal Quality Assurance*  
Our schools are all different, even when it comes to the school population. To promote equal opportunity for our students, internal quality assurance is essential. The focus will be on the 'linchpin' function of our quality officer. This includes, for example, promoting cooperation between our internal supervisors, as well as swift detection of quality issues when analysing learning outcomes. This includes providing solution options accordingly.
- *Making internal services more efficient*  
We give school directors and internal coaches more space to focus on the primary process. To this end, we are redesigning internal services, for example by outsourcing administrative tasks to other colleagues.
- *Efficient and contemporary ICT resources*  
In the ICT area, we are tracking areas for improvement on a foundation-wide basis. First and foremost, our facilities must be up-to-date. We also keep our eyes open for new developments, focusing on the efficient use of ICT in all our schools. Our ambition as MZH is to be at the forefront of ICT, but not to be ahead of the troops.
- *Language Friendly Schools*  
We have considerable expertise in teaching a new language (to new students), mainly thanks to our International School. We are investigating the possibility of developing into Language Friendly Schools by using this expertise more widely, so that we benefit more from the existing knowledge about learning a new language in general and English in particular.

#### **Growth**

For the next policy period, we want to keep the number of schools within our foundation the same. The span of control is currently balanced. Growth requires investments on overhead,

for example, and also involves personnel and financial risks. Given the upcoming construction projects, we think this is an undesirable development. However, we do want to be open to cooperation opportunities and participate broadly in the region. Where possible, we will connect with (new) interesting initiatives. Furthermore, we are exploring the possibilities of developing integral child centres in the future.

In LEAs ('lokaal educatieve afstemming', i.e. local educational cooperation), we will work with other boards within a municipality to try to reach an agreement to grow schools to a capped size. This helps avoid excessive fluctuations in student numbers, which also reduces the likelihood of school closures in times of lower enrolment. That way, parents and students have more choices.

As a foundation, we are considering how to maximise the growth of our schools within the current buildings. This requires reaching an agreement on specifics concerning maximum growth, for example, through consultation with the local and community participation councils. The premise is that we do not occupy dislocations.

We realise that our premise of a limited class size has advantages: it allows teachers to spend a relatively ample time on individual students. We prefer to keep the student-teacher ratio intact. On the other hand, we also see that a slightly larger number of students per group makes it possible to hire more support. This allows for reducing or rearranging the teacher's job, enabling more time to be spent on pedagogy and less on administrative tasks. That way, we potentially do not need to make sacrifices in terms of the student-teacher ratio.

When making decisions for new school buildings that the foundation will build in the coming years, we explicitly consider the aforementioned principles.

### **The profile of the foundation**

Effective cooperation also includes a strong profile as an MZH school. We want to express and communicate that togetherness more, both internally and externally. For example, when it comes to furnishing schools and classrooms. The fact that this is an MZH school must be visible in each of our schools. Points of interest include:

- the presence of optional workstations outside classrooms
- a green schoolyard with natural materials
- a building in which indoor and outdoor space blend together
- a building and schoolyard with room to discover as well as rest

### **Self-evaluation**

To learn from each other as schools, we believe it is important for MZH schools to evaluate each other. Educational quality, buildings, atmosphere, appearance and (Montessori) identity can be part of such an evaluation. The evaluation will always remain confidential between the two participating schools. Upon request, the directors can compile a summary for the board if necessary. By evaluating each other, we want to improve educational quality and increase the sense of belonging within the foundation.

### **Language**

When we talk about working together in equality, this also applies to actively involving non-Dutch-speaking colleagues in our foundation. Our guiding principle is that we also make all relevant documents available in English for our colleagues, if possible immediately.

## Objectives for the ambition 'Collaboration and responsible growth'

What we want to achieve	How we want to achieve that
We promote and intensify collaboration between the schools within our foundation.	MZH schools are studying the possibilities of internal exchange or flexible deployment of staff.
	We are strongly committed to peer review visits: by the end of the policy period, every colleague will have completed at least one internal and one external peer review visit.
	For effective and equal collaboration, we also involve non-Dutch-speaking colleagues within our foundation. We make all relevant documents available to our colleagues in Dutch and English.
We are improving internal quality assurance.	We promote collaboration between internal supervisors (focused on 'learning from each other').
	We identify quality issues when analysing learning outcomes (and then suggest potential solutions).
	We give internal supervisors more space to focus on their primary duties by outsourcing non-substantive tasks.
We make efficient use of contemporary ICT resources foundation-wide.	We are exploring any areas for improvement in ICT and how we can address these collectively.
	We keep our eyes open for new developments, with a focus on their efficient deployment in all the schools of our foundation.
We are taking our teaching of English to a higher level.	Increasing expertise in learning a new language whereby we profile ourselves as schools where a new language (English or Dutch) can be learned quickly (Language Friendly School certificate). We are examining the possibilities of using Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) for this.



Our foundation participates broadly in the region, strengthening education as a whole.	We are exploring opportunities for more extensive inter-governmental cooperation.
	We are open to opportunities and seek affiliation with new collaborative initiatives whenever possible.
	We train teachers for the field, not necessarily for our own schools.
We go for maximum responsible growth within current school buildings.	We are exploring opportunities for growth without compromising on the current student-teacher ratio.
	We agree on what constitutes responsible maximum growth (e.g., based on number of students per m2).
	In local coordination with other school boards, we determine the maximum size (or growth) of a school.
	We are exploring opportunities to develop integrated child centres.
The current student-teacher ratio remains intact.	The maximum class size remains 25 for our Montessori schools and 16 for the International School, or we ensure through adjustments in the division of teachers' duties that the time they have for students remains the same (by reducing the administrative burden).
We present ourselves more as a foundation, even to the outside world. Each school should be clearly identifiable as an MZH school.	We define criteria for the design and lay-out of schools and classrooms aimed at clearly showcasing our MZH concepts and traditions.
	We are committed to self-evaluation: MZH schools evaluate each other (in confidentiality). Each school will be evaluated at least once during the next policy period.

## **Ambition 4**

### **An appealing employer, a professional learning environment**

To keep enough teachers committed to us in the coming years, it is crucial to be appealing and distinctive as an employer to (potential) colleagues. We want our employees to feel appreciated, to feel at home and to be able to grow in the direction they find interesting. We want to ensure they can do what they are good at. It is also important that we are a good employer and communicate that. We are going to raise our profile, also as a foundation. This way, we build a strong foundation for retaining and recruiting employees.

### **Personnel retention**

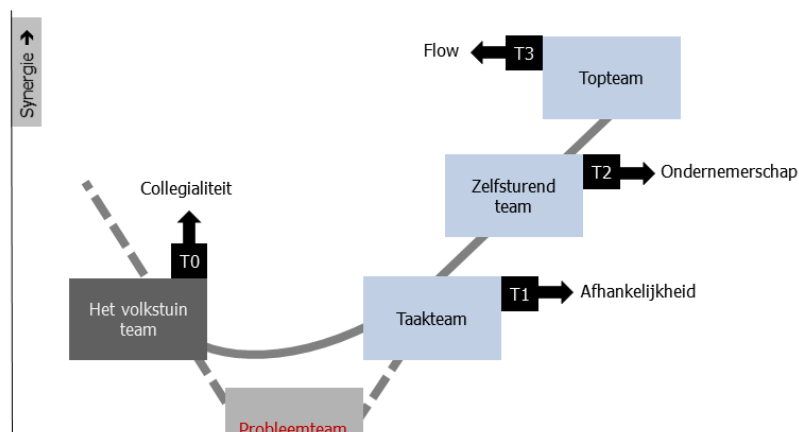
#### **Doing what you are good at**

We want to give our employees room to do what they do best. For teachers, school directors and internal supervisors, the emphasis is on their substantive and practical work. This is why we are committed to reducing their administrative burdens as much as possible. This can be done, for example, by transferring some of their non-substantive tasks to administrative colleagues.

#### **Professional, self-learning teams**

'Teachers and school leaders determine the quality of education,' according to The State of Education 2022, the annual report of the Education Inspectorate. We like to expand on that statement: all of our employees together determine the quality of our education. In order to guarantee that quality, and to increase it where necessary, we believe it is important that Stichting Montessori Onderwijs Zuid Holland (MZH) develops into a *learning network* in the coming years. At the foundation level, training is available in every area. Within our foundation, knowledge exchange is a matter of course, and development and professionalisation are at the core of our personnel policy. The specialists in the network come together and are challenged, for example, with a newly established MZH Academy.

Learning is not only an individual effort; it is also a team effort. As a team with your direct colleagues (e.g., the teaching team), but also more broadly as a team of all staff in the school. As a foundation, we are going to make a strong commitment to a learning team culture in the coming years. This goes beyond just working together in teams. A team that works together has a shared responsibility and objective. A team that learns together goes one step further: team members benefit from each other by openly discussing specific points that could or should be improved, and by looking for solutions together. This creates a professional learning community. As a foundation, we encourage and provide opportunities for our staff to learn from each other, such as peer reviews, joint lesson preparation and intervision groups. To show how a team can develop into a learning team, the following model is illustrative:



'Stages of team development' from "Handboek Teamcoaching" by Martijn Vroemen (2017)

When people are 'randomly' teamed up without any connection or synergy, we speak of a 'problem team'. In an 'allotment team', there is already a bit more synergy: people might exchange materials or talk briefly with each other about developing the best soil. There is a certain sympathy, but bonding has not happened yet. From there, a team can develop into a task team, a self-managing team and eventually a top team. Both in synergy (strengthening each other) and bonding (a sense of belonging to each other), this is one level up each time.

The difference between a task team and a self-managing team is mainly in showing initiative. In a task team, everyone focuses primarily on their own task, while in a self-managing team, someone also takes responsibility for the bigger picture. A top team is the ultimate goal, where a flow is created and everything seems to go naturally. Vroemen emphasises that this is rare and usually temporary. For the teams in our schools, we aim for the level of task team at least.

## Recruiting staff

### Raising the profile of the MZH Foundation

One of the ways to make our schools more attractive to new employees is to promote the strengths of our foundation as well as our schools in all our communications and specifically in labour market communications. These include, for example, good working conditions, room for own development and the added value of our (Montessori) identity.

We can also take a strong position as a foundation in relation to the PABO teacher training in the province of Zuid-Holland. By offering enough internships and providing thorough and attentive guidance to the interns we have, we make our schools attractive to students. Proper and realistic pay for trainee teachers and lateral-entry teachers is also important.

A strong profile includes highlighting the things that go well. As a foundation, we want to focus more on things we already do well or have done well. We encourage colleagues and parents to spread that message as well. For example, is there something to report about happy parents, good results or a formation that is (almost) complete? Talk about it in news reports or in conversations with local residents or other (indirect) stakeholders. A well-known school attracts staff. People prefer to work in a school that is doing well.

# Objectives to the ambition 'An appealing employer, a professional learning environment'

What we want to achieve	How we want to achieve that
<p>We have learning teams in our schools: our teams are at least at the level of task team.</p>	<p>We make training and/or professional literature available to each school in the area of team development.</p>
	<p>We give our schools the space and budget to individually determine the current stage of the teams and use it as a baseline to further develop the teams in specific theme meetings.</p>
	<p>With the MZH Academy, we offer training and networking opportunities.</p>
<p>Knowledge sharing is natural at all levels of the school and the foundation.</p>	<p>We provide time and space to actively share knowledge and skills, for example, in the form of intervision meetings, peer reviews and joint lesson preparation.</p>
	<p>We develop the frameworks for peer review. The concept is that each colleague conducts at least one internal and one external peer review visit.</p>
<p>We allow for appealing internships and lateral entry into our schools.</p>	<p>We invest in providing internships.</p>
	<p>Each intern has a personal internship supervisor.</p>
	<p>We are committed to appropriate pay for trainee teachers and lateral-entry teachers.</p>
<p>We pay attention to our employees' job satisfaction and make it attractive for them to (continue to) work with us.</p>	<p>We are exploring the options of easing the administrative burden of our teachers, directors and internal supervisors, for example, by partly outsourcing administrative tasks.</p>
	<p>We are committed to the personal and professional development of our employees, for example, through the aforementioned focus on knowledge sharing and the learning network.</p>
<p>Directors are given more space to focus on their primary duties.</p>	<p>We alleviate the administrative burden of directors by outsourcing some of it to colleagues on staff.</p>
<p>We make it more attractive to work more hours per week.</p>	<p>We are exploring the possibilities of (financially) rewarding colleagues who work 0.8 FTE or more and of establishing a minimum working hours factor of 0.6 FTE.</p>
	<p>We are critically reviewing our labour market communications: do they adequately highlight</p>

We are raising our profile as an employer so that we recruit enough candidates, even in times of labour shortages.

our strengths? For example, the excellent fringe benefits, extensive coaching for new teachers, plenty of room for growth and development, close collaboration and knowledge sharing between schools. We then implement targeted improvements.

We habitually celebrate the things that are already going well within our schools and our foundation. In this context, we also look outward, for example, by sending press releases or having dialogues with local residents or other stakeholders.

## Conclusion

With this strategic direction plan, we set the course for our schools over the next four years. We achieve these ambitions through the corresponding objectives that we set. These will be specified in the work within our foundation and in our schools, including through the individual school plans.

As a foundation, we are excited to realise the ambitions in this strategic direction plan. We invite all our partners to join this effort. Together, we are committed every day to providing a high-quality and increasingly inclusive education for all our students within a clear Montessori vision. For solid and satisfactory collaboration at all levels. And for a professional learning environment, where our employees feel appreciated and can do their jobs well.



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