

# **Ocean Studies Charter School**

## **Our 5-year Strategic Vision**

### **Ocean studies history and future vision**

OSCS was founded in 2011 and now educates 113 students in K through 5th grade. The school's success lies in its Montessori foundation and marine science program where students attend weekly field labs and work on 'real-world' projects. In order to continue to offer this unique opportunity to the Upper Keys community, the school needs to move from its current, small, expensive & leased facility to a more affordable location, with improved parking, security, ADA access and the room to add a middle school so students can continue to develop their passion and understanding of marine science to 8th grade. This would align the school with all the other Upper Keys schools.

The OSCS mission to create a "foundation for students to become scientists, mathematicians, writers, free-thinkers, guardians of our waters and responsible citizens of the world" can truly be realized by providing our students this opportunity of improved facilities.

The small, nurturing and community culture of the school is also a reason of choice for parents and students. As the school moves forward, it is critical to maintain this through the parent volunteer program and interactive drop off and pick procedures.

### **OSCS 5 Year Strategic Vision**

1. Secure a financially viable facility for long term success
2. Extend the grades offered from K to 8th grade.

### **Purchase of a building**

OSCS purchased a 7,200 sq ft building at 100360 Overseas Highway in December 2019. The location includes 6 vacant lots to the south and is on US 1, bayside.

#### **Location Decision**

The Board made a strategic decision to look at opportunities to purchase a building in Key Largo based on the following: -

- Ocean Studies is located in Tavernier and 13 miles south of KLS, 2.7 miles north of PKS and 5 miles north of TVM. There are currently three publicly funded schools within a 5-mile span (PKS, TVM, OSCS). For Key Largo residents, the closest publicly funded alternative to KLS is OSCS, at 13 miles south of KLS.
- Locating the new school at 100360 Overseas Highway moves it 8.4 miles further north and only 4.7 miles south of KLS. This makes it a more viable option for Key Largo residents to consider.
- According to the 2010 US Census, over 60% of 5 to 18 year olds in the Upper Keys live in Key Largo. Therefore, moving to the new location

provides an opportunity of an alternative education, to a greater number of students.

- The school will be located close to US1, with greater visibility for residents and potential families to know about us.
- Of the current OSCS student population, 60% live in Key Largo and 30% live in Islamorada.
- The new location is 1.2 miles from Friendship Park & 1.3 miles from Key Largo Community Park providing comprehensive sports facilities. John Pennekamp State Park is 2.8 miles.

### **Improved facilities and safety**

The recently purchased building is of concrete construction. It will be renovated and configured to provide a safer facility for our students, with reflective glass and hurricane resistant windows, direct egress to the outside from each classroom, and improved parking and walkway access to the school.

The ADA access will be significantly improved with an accessible ramp from the ADA parking spaces and an elevator to the second floor.

The larger outdoor area will provide a future educational zone with labelled native hammock and natural walkways. An expanded garden and available land to enlarge our planting of native and endangered species as well as a larger composting program can all be incorporated.

Inside the facility, the lower floor structure will be renovated to provide 5 upgraded elementary classrooms plus a new Marine Science lab.

### **Financial Security**

OSCS currently pays over \$250,000 per year in facility related costs including rent of \$17,000 per month, high maintenance costs of over \$30,000 per year and elevated insurance due to the flood zone. We currently have a Triple Net lease. This represents 21% of the school income, when the school is at capacity\*. Facility related cost is the critical expense for charter schools nationally. In order to ensure the long-term future and educational choice for Upper Keys students, it is imperative that OSCS reduces its facility expense in the long-term to 10 to 12% of income, a nationally recognized target for charter schools.

(\* State/Federal income is approximately \$10,500 per student equating to \$1,200,00 per year for 112 students).

To obtain the facility target of 10%-12% of income, the school will need to:

- Reduce the monthly expense over time
- Increase FTE and income stream to 180 FTE. At 12 % of income this equates to \$226,000 in facility related costs.

#### New Building Costs

Purchase Price	\$1,800,000
Down payment	\$ 433,175 (100% private donations and fundraising)
Bank Loan for the balance	

Construction and renovation costs will be funded through private donations and a secured bank loan. The estimated repayment of principle and interest on the mortgage and construction loan, reduced maintenance and reduced insurance for an X flood zone, approximates to \$220,000 per year.

#### **MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Currently, OSCI is the only elementary school in the Upper Keys that is not able to offer its students a continuous education up to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The Board has reviewed and explored options to extend to 8<sup>th</sup> grade for the past 3 years, in response to continued requests from students and parents alike. The current location is not suitable and therefore this was not an option until a new location was secured. A detailed plan of how the middle will operate has been developed as a separate document.

To provide the necessary facilities, a second story would be constructed with 2 classrooms and three breakout rooms, plus an outdoor patio area and bathrooms. Two stairwells and an elevator would be added for fire, safety and accessibility compliance. The middle school would comprise of a 6/7<sup>th</sup> grade classroom and a 7/8<sup>th</sup> grade classroom.

#### Benefits of extending to 8<sup>th</sup> grade:

- Continue the marine science focused education into teen years so that student's interest and passion for the environmental sciences can develop to a greater level of understanding and is more likely to continue to high school and beyond.
- Provide the opportunity to stay in the same school beyond 5<sup>th</sup> grade and move once, to high school, along with the other Upper Keys students.
- Students and staff members can continue to develop a strong relationship into teenage years and help guide students through the struggles and challenges of adolescence.
- Improve student retention as older siblings stay until high school allowing younger sibling to remain at OSCI.
- Aligns with the other three publicly funded schools in the Upper Keys
- Provide increased income to help secure the long-term viability of the school.

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**APPENDIX BELOW**

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Demographics, Upper Keys and impact**

According to the *Monroe Schools Comprehensive Annual Finance Report for FY ending June 30 2018*, an increase of 40 FTE's was predicted across the district in the 2018-2019 school year. The Monroe County population grew from 73,209 in 2010 to 77,295 in 2018 (approximately 6%).

Early January 2020, 1,704 K-8<sup>th</sup> grade students were enrolled in publicly funded schools in the Upper Keys. Of these, 1,110 were in K - 5<sup>th</sup> grade and 594 in 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade and approximately 50% attended Key Largo School. The closing of ICS in 2019 added approximately 70 students into the K-8 population (*ICS had 91 students*).

In its current location, OSCS educates 10% of the Upper Keys student population and 60% of its students live in the Key Largo area. In the proposed school (180 FTE), OSCS would account for 10.6% of the Upper Keys K-8 public school population.

According to the 2010 US Census,

	<b>Age 5-14</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>White</b>
Islamorada	479	6,119	10.8%	87.89%
Tavernier	176	2,136		
Key Largo	977	10,433	22.4 %	73.3%
	<b>1,632</b>	<b><u>18,688</u></b>		

### **Upper Keys State Enrolled Student Population (Week 21, 2020)**

*(Keys Schools database - does not include Home or privately schooled students)*

	<b>K-8</b>		<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>White</b>
PKS	595		29.7	66.6
OSCS	113		26.5	61.1
TVM	199		22.1	71.4
KLS	797		53.8	38.4
<b>Upper Keys</b>	<b><u>1,704</u></b>		<b><u>39.9 %</u></b>	<b><u>53.6 %</u></b>

In its current location, OSCS closely represents the ethnicity of the Islamorada and Tavernier school population. The school is located in Tavernier.

The ethnicity of the Upper Keys population is different to the keys school data and in particular the Key Largo data is significantly different. This may be due to a number of factors that may include; high vacation home and 'snow-bird' population, a change in

ethnicity over the last 10 years, KLS students who reside outside of the Upper Keys amongst other factors.

The socioeconomic data for OSCS is not available and so cannot be compared at this time.

### **Serving the community**

OSCS does not offer a free and reduced lunch service, nor a transportation service.

#### **Transportation**

A unique aspect of the school is a requirement for parents/guardians to drop their children off into the classroom and pick up from the classroom. In this way, parents interact on a daily and weekly basis with the teachers and also with other parents. It generates an important cultural benefit that allows progress reports and general feedback to occur regularly and informally throughout the year and provides a familiarity that students find nurturing. For this reason, the school does not enroll in a transportation program, however, families are connected and carpool where appropriate. The school will continue to connect parents as we re-locate to the new school.

#### **Lunch Services**

As part of the school program, the school encourages zero waste (minimize packaging waste) and is a no added sugar school (no juice, flavored milk, cookies, confectionary etc). The school has a Green School Council and Garden Club that runs the compost program and educates all classes in recycling and reducing waste. In addition, the school does not currently have the facility to offer the Monroe School free and reduced lunch program, however, it does work to offer aid to families as and when it can. This may include financial help for before and/or after care, aid towards activities (sweetheart dance, movie night etc) or general aid such as providing clothing and help to families in need, as demonstrated after hurricane Irma. The school will continue to review options to ensure that Ocean Studies is truly a school of choice for the Upper Keys population and estimates that currently it closely reflects the socioeconomic data of the surrounding community.

	Breakfast	Lunch	
Cost	\$1.75	\$2.50	
Reduced Cost	\$0.30	\$0.40	
Value of Reduced Lunch/yr	\$261	\$378	<b>\$639</b>
Value of Free lunch/yr	\$315	\$450	<b>\$755</b>