

FINAL - As Approved
May 18, 2009



Board of Trustees Strategic Planning Committee

Draft Strategic Plan, 2009-2014

VISION FOR CLIFF VALLEY SCHOOL

- A nationally recognized school, among those setting the standard as a school of choice in independent education in Atlanta.
- A superior academic institution, specializing in differentiated instruction, serving students 3 and above in preschool through grade 8. Our students are well prepared to succeed in a challenging secondary school setting.
- A program with a global perspective, teaching two foreign languages and emphasizing the arts and the environment.
- An intimate school community, built on a student body that is small by design -- appropriately sized for optimizing children's emotional and social development.
- A socio-economically diverse, scholarship institution.
- Emphasis on promoting respect, resourcefulness and responsibility among our students. They thrive academically, artistically, physically and socially. They take risks, explore new things, and participate in school and society with self-confidence.

ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

Strategic Objective

By 2014, Cliff Valley School will extend to serve grades 6-8.

In keeping with our positioning and our heritage, we will remain small and selective, with low student/faculty ratios and multiple instructors in our classrooms (which will not exceed 24 students in any class.)

We will do things right. We will offer a quality 6th-8th experience from our first day of operations in those grades, adding one grade per year. This will require not only dedicated planning, but the financial resources to provide requisite facilities and specialized faculty.

We will create the administrative structure to support three complimentary program areas: preschool, elementary and middle years.

Our enrollment structure will evolve from the current "funnel" -- with far more students at preschool than in the elementary grades -- to a more congruent "pipeline," as we hope to enroll students at preschool and retain them through graduation. Our focus will be on providing a cohesive, continuing experience for children who are ready for school at Cliff Valley, from "pre-pre-K" through "middle school."

Action Items

- Beginning Fall 2009, our Board will form a broadly based, standing Extension Committee, to lead strategic planning for the 6-8 extension and its implementation and transition, working with the administration and other Board committees. This committee will serve until all middle-years grades are open.
- By October 2009, the administration will present the Board with an initial "ballpark" financial projection for the middle-years program outlined in this Strategic Plan, including the costs of required facilities, faculty and staff.
- Prior to the opening of the middle grades, an administrative structure will be in place providing leadership for the preschool, elementary and middle-years programs. This may not have to be three

administrators -- staffing will be implemented by the Head of School - but each area will be the subject of specific planning and administration efforts.

- Our staff will include a counselor, with training to serve middle-years students, as they cope with the unique challenges of their age.
- Continue to attract and retain diverse, outstanding teachers who demonstrate a clear understanding of our school's educational philosophy and are highly competent.
- Resources permitting, an admissions director will be part of the administrative team, beginning no later than the academic year prior to launch of the middle-years program. In any event, a member of the staff will be formally assigned the responsibilities of day-to-day operation of the recruiting and admissions process.
- To ensure a cohesive, competitive preschool-to-middle years program, we will offer five-day programming, with extended-day options, for students 3 and older.
- In keeping with this focus, service for 2-year-old students, will be discontinued by 2014.
- We plan to phase out three-day programs in favor of a full school week by 2014. This proposal may be revised in the event of significant preference for 3-day classes, and available resources.

FINANCE

Strategic Objective

To create and execute an annual financial plan for the school which includes a balanced operating budget.

Action Items

- Ensure responsible stewardship of debt by refinancing the mortgage before the current term expires in 2014.
- Evaluate investment options for cash on hand and develop policy/procedures surrounding investments.
- Explore opportunities for ancillary revenue streams.
- Prepare financial analysis of curricular options for the initial growth of the middle-years program.

ADVANCEMENT

Strategic Objective

To establish and execute development strategies to support financial sustainability and facility growth of the school. The plan will include strategies to: finance capital improvements; increase brand recognition; and communicate effectively, focused on the needs of our students, our community and our plans for expansion.

Action Items

Development

- Create advancement plan annually.
- Utilize NAIS data to benchmark Annual Fund against other comparable schools and develop strategies for areas of improvement.
- Develop a plan for the financing of future capital expenditures to improve and enhance the school's grounds/facilities and to

support the needs for expansion (e.g., Capital Campaign) by fall of 2010.

- Research and create a plan for endowment, to be implemented when financial situation allows.

- Research and create a plan for Financial Aid, including policy/ procedures for distribution, to be implemented when financial situation allows.

- Explore and develop plan for outreach to foundations.

- Continue to refine our current fundraising efforts by improving documentation for the purpose of guiding future years efforts, creating succession plans and increasing volunteerism.

Marketing & Communications

- Develop a marketing plan with an emphasis on technology (as it relates to the website) to support expansion.

- Create a communications plan to support expansion and growth, including fundraising efforts for capital improvements.

- Develop a communications plan for outreach to non-parent constituents, community businesses and foundations.

FACILITIES

Strategic Objective

To expand the physical plant to enhance support for programming, provide space for the sixth through eighth grade expansion, and position the school for expanding from one to two classrooms per grade level for the K – 8 program.

Action Items

The addition of a gymnasium / auditorium will add to programming opportunities for both the Physical Education and Fine Arts programs, and provide space for community events.

- The goal is to break ground during the summer break for 2012, but will be dependent upon a successful Capital Campaign to fund the construction
- Preliminary architectural work will be done in spring 2010 in order to set the goals for the Capital Campaign

The Standing Extension Committee will lead the implementation of the plan to extend through 8th grade. This committee will explore space options to accomplish this, including:

- Building a small part of the future addition during the gymnasium construction to add 4 classrooms for use by the 6th – 8th expansion
- Exploring off campus options for temporary housing of the expansion grades until additional classroom space can be built on campus
- Determining how use of the existing space could be reconfigured to accommodate the new grades

Following a successful capital campaign for construction of the gymnasium:

- Floor plans will be developed for the construction of the 2nd wing of the school, including classroom space to expand to two classes per grade level

- While it is not anticipated that construction of this space will actually begin during this 5-year period, we will position the school to initiate a second capital campaign to complete the construction of the additional classroom space as soon as feasible.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Strategic Objective

Continue to strengthen the preschool – grade 5 curriculum and programs, focusing especially on ensuring that preschool students continue to be equipped for elementary success. Build a comprehensive curriculum and programming for grades 6-8 that integrates seamlessly with our preschool and elementary school. Focus on enhancements to the elementary and middle school programs in the arts, technology and research skills.

Action Items

General

- Ensure faculty, current and prospective parents, and students experience a seamless integration across the preschool curriculum, the elementary school and the future middle school curriculum.
- Continue use of *Understanding By Design*, curriculum mapping, and differentiation for curriculum development, documentation, and implementation
- Establish a comprehensive parent education curriculum that provides parents with the resources and tools to address the developmental needs of their children.
- Continually evaluate and adjust programming to ensure student success throughout the program.
- Maximize our approach to team teaching including internal role clarification among teaching teams and human resources policies that acknowledge the roles and competencies of each teacher.

Preschool

- More clearly define the various roles parents can fulfill in the preschool classroom. Build a consistent system so that teachers

have the tools, resources and structure to utilize parents more effectively in the classroom.

- Ensure the preschool curriculum is implemented with a systematic approach that prepares all students to succeed from the outset in the Cliff Valley elementary program.

Elementary

- Articulate our philosophy about technology education and what is developmentally appropriate
- Develop plan for technology needs and upgrades (hardware, software, etc.)
- Develop and implement a comprehensive technology curriculum. (including keyboarding skills)
- Develop and implement a comprehensive curriculum for research skills.
- Continue the integration of classroom curriculum and enrichment programs
- Continue an ongoing evaluation of our academic programs to ensure academic excellence, particularly in language arts, math and science.
- Continue best practices for social/emotional development.
- Create more opportunities for students to participate in extracurricular events and activities outside of Cliff Valley. (E.g. World Math Day, Science Fairs)
- Ensure all enrichment programs have adequate space and resources to provide an outstanding educational experience. Initial focus should be on space and resources for art and PE programs.

Grades 6 – 8

- Charge the Board's ad hoc committee on expansion with working with the administration, faculty and other board committees to ensure quality in the new middle years program from the outset.
- Design and write rigorous academic curriculum for grades 6-8 utilizing differentiated instruction including materials and resources to support the curriculum
- Ensure curriculum and program prepare students for the variety of upper school options in Atlanta. Goal is to place students in their top choice for upper school.
- Offer counseling and assistance to our elementary students as needed, to help them with the transition to the middle-years program.
- Develop enrichment programs for grades 6-8 including PE, art, Spanish, music, Outdoor Classroom, and additional foreign language.
- Ensure that students are comfortable and competent in technology and tech-based learning skills.
- Develop class trips, both national and international, to support the curriculum and enrichment programs including foreign language, social studies, and environmental studies.
- Offer two foreign languages.
- Offer sports programs available at school and through partnerships with local schools and organizations
- Expand after-school offerings and clubs to include a range of appropriate activities for grades 6-8
- Offer counseling and support programs at school and through partnerships with other educational resources and organizations. Offer homework lab.
- Develop community service opportunities for students, emphasizing environmental studies and issues, and partnering with local, state, and national environmental groups

- Develop admission requirements for new students applying to 6th grade based on academic achievement and appropriate social, emotional, and behavioral development
- Obtain dual SAIS/SACS accreditation for new programs

Summer Programs

- Develop and refine summer programs for preschool and elementary students and the marketing of those programs to ensure they are at full capacity
- Expand summer program offerings for rising 4th-6th graders prior to expansion, ultimately expanding summer programs for students through grade 8.