

Doors to Our Future

The Friends School of Atlanta Strategic Plan 2015-2020

Introduction

The Friends School of Atlanta (FSA) is a young, vibrant and ambitious institution. We have accomplished much in the short 24 years of our existence, and we have exciting plans and possibilities for our future.

Specifically addressing one of those possibilities, many of our families have voiced the wish that the high quality of our FSA education could continue right through their children's high school years.

Nothing would please us better than to add on a high school. Our Board has been very clear, however, that a) we must build a sustainable institutional foundation capable of supporting a high school before taking such a step, and b) any new initiatives must serve to strengthen (rather than stress) the outstanding program we already provide to our students in Pre-Kindergarten-8th grade.

In other words, in keeping with the careful foresight that has long been a hallmark of FSA, we are committed to having in place the program, enrollment, facilities and financial infrastructure to support a world-class high school -- or we will not embark on the project.

In such a context, a strategic plan is a complex and challenging task, and our community has proved itself, once again, to be up to the challenge. In the fall of 2014, a Steering Committee composed of Friends School Board members, administrators, teachers and parents came together. This group's charge was to kick off a strategic thinking process that could 1) serve the school beautifully in its current configuration, as well as 2) create a structure in which we can conclusively answer important questions regarding our dream of adding a high school.

To address this dual challenge, the Steering Committee led a strategic planning retreat in November. The Strategic Planning Work Group, convened for this event, included representatives from all FSA constituencies, plus generous outside experts who agreed to share their time and expertise with us.

The outcome? We are very proud to present the four far-reaching and ambitious Strategic Goals recorded below.

GOAL I: Maintain and enhance FSA's outstanding educational program.

IA. Create opportunities to deepen our community's understanding of Quaker history and beliefs.

1. Systematically review the Quaker-related content of our academic program.
 - a. Articulate how Quaker values are embedded throughout the program.
 - b. Create a scope and sequence of topics to be addressed through the grades.
2. Create learning opportunities regarding Quakerism for faculty, staff and parents.
 - a. Write a professional development plan responding to the felt needs for learning by faculty and staff.
 - b. Establish a program of opportunities for parents to
 - i. Learn more about their children's experience
 - ii. Explore Quaker history and beliefs for themselves
 - iii. Tell the FSA story as parent ambassadors
3. Make connections outside FSA with communities who share our values (both Quaker and other).
 - a. Explore online possibilities for connecting with other Friends school students.
 - b. Consider forming partnerships with other school groups and organizations in the Atlanta area.

IB. Review and refresh our outstanding core academic program.

1. Continue attention to STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) subjects, as well as environmental stewardship.
 - a. Engage in a systematic review of all subject areas over the next four years, in accordance with FSA's Curriculum Review Schedule
 - b. Create a technology education plan.
 - c. Consider resources needed to support FSA's model for inclusion.
 - d. Integrate service learning in robust ways into our core curriculum.
 - e. Consider staffing needs throughout.
2. Keep diversity issues and themes in mind through all curricular reviews.
3. Grow the summer camp and after-school programs.
4. Explore the possibility of purchasing a bus to extend learning outside the classroom via field trips.

IC. Create a plan for professional development and evaluation that will serve the needs of our highly skilled faculty and staff.

1. Involve faculty and staff in articulating and prioritizing professional development needs for the whole school, for each individual and for orientation of new faculty and staff.
2. Develop a performance review protocol.

ID. Advance our goals in multiple areas of diversity.

1. Study and document our current diversity pattern in enrollment, staffing and Board membership. What communities make up our FSA diversity picture and where are our gaps?
2. Re-evaluate the role of the Diversity Equity Justice (DEJ) Committee and the Board in supporting diversity. Revise or create new structures if needed.
3. Build partnerships with other communities in line with FSA's mission and vision.
4. Provide education around diversity and inclusion for faculty, staff, parents and Board.

GOAL II: Starting from the foundation of our time-honored values, raise our visibility near and far.

IIA. Enhance FSA's mission-based marketing.

1. Conduct a market study (auditing where we are now by researching demographics and identifying FSA's current brand image).
2. Produce a marketing plan and a clearly articulated brand message that builds from our core values and clearly articulates where we want to go.

IIB. Expand the reach and the content of our communications program.

1. Work to crystallize FSA's message both internally and externally.
 - a. Send the message far and wide that we challenge students to soar academically.
 - b. More clearly define and articulate our model for inclusion at FSA.
 - c. Highlight our emphases on diversity and social justice and broadcast these messages with joy.
2. Incorporate new communications elements into our website design.

IIC. Organize and coordinate for state-of-the-art communications efforts.

1. Consider adding staffing for communications.
2. Aggressively use social media.
3. Engage the FSA community in telling our story (creating a playbook and providing training, as needed).
4. Identify specific communities for marketing, partnerships and/or targeted scholarships.
5. Leverage current relationships, including marketing to summer camps and other programs that use our building.

IID. Study the feasibility and possible benefits of opening a 3-year-old program.

IIE. Connect with other organizations, congregations and communities that are like-minded, building bridges as well as awareness of the value of our program.

GOAL III. Achieve financial sustainability targets that will serve our current program well and potentially support the creation of a high school.

IIIA. Continue to support our teachers in ways that are commensurate with their exemplary value.

1. Revisit and, if necessary, revise our system for faculty and staff compensation. Review models based on training, experience and benchmarking with comparable schools.
2. Work to fund teacher training at 1% of revenue by 2020.

IIIB. Create conditions to enroll 230-250 students.

1. Create an overall enrollment plan, to include marketing and admissions functions (studying our current enrollment picture and targeting additional communities in the Atlanta market that we don't currently serve).
2. Review our financial aid goals and budget, considering a possible expansion of financial aid as a means of increasing enrollment as well as overall revenue.
3. Engage volunteers among the parents and student body in organized programs of recruitment.
4. Review programs for family social connection and other retention initiatives.
5. Fund additional staffing and operations costs for this enrollment initiative, as needed.

IIIC. Test requirements for the possible addition of a high school.

1. Determine capital and operations monies needed to fund our campus plan (including renovations to the existing facility as well as a potential high school facility).
2. Do a feasibility study to determine our capacity for raising those funds as part of a comprehensive campaign.
3. Work to accumulate start-up funds from multiple sources to match the level determined, as required.

IIID. Enhance the structure and function of our advancement team.

1. Create an overall advancement plan to accomplish the ambitious tasks ahead (including planned giving, endowments, a major gifts program, the annual appeal and grant writing).
2. Staff at the level required to accomplish the work.

GOAL IV: Improve our current facilities and explore campus requirements for a possible high school.

IVA. Do a cost analysis of our Master Campus Development Plan.

1. Flesh out plans for improvements to the current facilities that will be needed to support the requirements of this plan.
2. Detail plans for a possible high school.

IVB. Prepare for a capital campaign.

1. Conduct a capital campaign feasibility study for both projects.
2. Finalize the capital campaign plan for one or both phases:
Phase I – Expand Pre-K-8 to 230-250 students
Phase II – Open a high school