



Discovery Charter School

2015 Strategic Plan

Approved 3/24/2015 by the Board of Directors

Goal topics:

- DCS Experience
- Development
- Facilities
- Instruction
- Marketing and Communications

DCS EXPERIENCE GOAL

Goal Outline

1. Document Revision
 - a. Create proposal
 - b. Board review of proposal
 - c. Community input
 - d. Final proposal to Board
2. Baseline assessment
 - a. Multi-prong assessment
 - b. Stakeholders self and cross assessment, survey
 - c. Team assessment: observe, interview, key stakeholders
 - d. Create report
 - e. Send back to shareholders for action/recommendations. Intend for discussion at staff meeting, community meeting, classrooms
3. Ongoing Assessment
 - a. Annual survey
 - b. Bi-annual team assessment or as needed 2 or 3 years

Elements of the DCS Experience include the following:

Students

- have positive experience
- develop growth mindset
- demonstrate resilience
- are capable and critical thinkers
- know how they learn best and have agency over their own learning
- are involved and empowered in decision making
- exhibit confidence and empathy
- have a voice in leadership and school culture
- feel a sense of responsibility for their school and are active contributors to its well being

Parents

- Model behavior we would want students to emulate
- Are trained in positive discipline
- Honor and foster the Discovery experience
- Are empowered in and out of the classroom to participate as members of the community to present ideas and offer their talents
- Make a commitment to the classroom and the school as defined by the parent agreement
- Read communications
- Participate in events
- Recognize their value in the classroom and school-wide community

Teachers

- Foster growth mindset in students and work to develop their own mindset
- Lead the development of classroom community
- Utilize flexible collaborative learning groups
- Empower parent support
- Collaborate across grade level
- Provide narrative assessments
- Model behavior we would our students to emulate
- Communicate with parents and use them as resources
- Participate in professional development
- Have a voice in leadership and school culture
- Have a clear understanding of Discovery philosophy and are practicing it

Classes

- Pursue student interest and honors them as capable contributors to their own learning
- Meet regularly to build community
- Have posted class agreements
- Assign homework that is relevant and meaningful
- Meet a variety of learning levels
- Are setup to support a collaborative environment
- Recognize and develop students multiple intelligences
- Foster student discussions
- Are a safe environment where every voice is value
- Incorporate life skills learning
- Incorporate up to 10 field trips each year, which are connected to academic or social emotional growth

Board Members and Administrators

- Advocate for the Discovery mission and philosophy
- Value collaborative decision making
- Are actively engaged in the community through participation in school events

School

- Builds community through shared resources and talents by teachers, parents, staff and the wider community
- Foster community through events (class, grade, school) and education (training and lectures)
- Is standards-based but not standard-driven
- Values depth of understanding and critical thinking
- Is a welcoming community where people can feel physically and emotionally safe

Discovery Development Committee

Strategic Goal

Develop external facing programs and processes to build and support new funding streams and enhance existing programs. Build a finely tuned fundraising, development and gifting program that is capable to sustain the Discovery organization and its students/program into the future. Better communicate to the Discovery community about our fundraising programs, establishing a culture of giving, by connecting people emotionally to the Annual Fund.

Committee Mission

To build a robust development program consisting of multiple components with a supporting structure, accountability, as well as a stored knowledge base of those program components to build and maintain for sustained revenue streams in the long term, by engaging financial support outside of the Discovery community.

Development Work Continuation

Committee requests that Board permit them to continue to explore more fully and define some of the development program ideas, with the goal of writing up and presenting to the Board a plan with development pilot program options to approve as part of the strategic planning and implementation.

Sample of program exploration:

- Further fine tune the grant process and grant work
- Engage Alumni – past students and parents (beyond occasional emails):
 - 10 year anniversary and other event happenings
 - Reunions
 - Philanthropic national and worldwide giving days
- Corporate Relationship Building
 - Making personal connections with business executives
 - Working with corporations to establish service working days/teaching on Discovery campuses
 - LinkedIn “Corporate Connections” group for Discovery
 - Search for opportunities within Silicon Valley
- Sponsorship Opportunities
 - Large sponsorships of key enrichments and program elements
 - Sponsorships of additional opportunities: Tinker Lab, Maker Faire, Art Exploration, Middle School leadership conference, events, etc.

- Development of “Friends of Discovery”
 - Search and personally connect with those outside our community looking for philanthropic opportunities

- Developing and producing events for larger public draw
 - Large educational events/parties for children in Bay Area
 - Educational and business panel events with corporate and business sponsors and such as School Choice event and others
 - Parent education speakers
 - Movie nights
 - K5 Run for children

- Training Opportunities for Educators and Administrators
 - Onsite & Online
 - Consulting

- Crowd-funding
 - Key program elements that cover all schools such as music, science, etc.
 - Well-defined projects

Facilities Strategic Planning

Goal:

DCS will offer facilities (campus, buildings, grounds) that provide the best learning and working environment to its students, teachers, parents and administration, in a scalable and financially sustainable way over the next several years. Those facilities will allow DCS to offer the complete set of academic, enrichment and other programs in a way that fully leverages the available space, with all the necessary resources, amenities, tools and equipment, without any encumbrances or restrictions.

Discovery – Phoenix Campus

The key goals for the Discovery I (Phoenix) Campus are:

1. Make better use of existing space – portables interior, two story portables, more doors for better traffic flow, etc.
2. Need for more space – breakout room, music room, storage space
3. Work towards getting a new campus:
4. Find a location/land (charter implications if outside Moreland)
5. Get funding
6. Design and build
7. New Discovery Phoenix Campus needs to be within a short commute distance. (Commute is a significant community concern.)
8. Engage a real estate/charter school development professional for new site search

Discovery – Falcons Campus

The key goals for the Discovery II (Falcon) Campus are:

1. Create a financially sustainable campus over the next 3 years
 - a. Continue negotiations on rent
 - b. Negotiate (with SJUSD) ability to rent the facilities to other organizations for community events etc.
 - c. Offer alternative programs outside regular school hours – special day classes, home schooling, etc.
2. Make better use of the existing space – atrium, rooms with new walls, etc.
3. Determine most optimal configuration for classes and grades as the school grows.
4. Accommodate additional programs such as science lab, music/performing arts program, technology lab, etc.

Instructional Goals

Goals:

DCS shall ensure that the Discovery philosophy of child-centered education is applied in every classroom.

DCS shall ensure that assessments in all classes shall be student-centered, portfolio based, and shall include student generated criteria.

DCS will develop a comprehensive professional development plan that encourages and supports Discovery staff in practicing student-centered education in all classrooms.

Academics at Discovery is a collaborative process between students, teachers, and parents. In our classrooms, we strive to create an equitable thinking environment, in which high expectations and strong support are provided for all learners. We honor the developmental stages of our learners and recognize that there is a wide range of conceptual understanding, skill mastery, and pace of learning. In our classrooms, we strive to create an environment that fosters inquiry. Students become competent problem solvers by actively inquiring, questioning, innovating, probing, experimenting, hypothesizing, and persevering as the tasks become more challenging. Students are provided with thinking time and opportunities to reflect and assess their learning and progress, and to learn from their mistakes. Using their literacy skills, including writing and oral presentations, students work collaboratively and/or individually and share their strategies, refine their own thinking, and engage in academic discourse to communicate their thinking to others.

We recognize the importance of social emotional learning and teaching to the whole child. During the first six weeks of each school year, time is dedicated to building a foundation for an optimal learning environment that fosters creativity, collaboration, risk taking, perseverance and perspective taking. Deeper learning and engagement occurs when students, parents and teachers feel safe, connected, accepted and respected. Parents and teachers at Discovery are trained in both Positive Discipline and Conflict Resolution. Social emotional competency is essential for students to be actively engaged in their learning, involved in their community, and solving problems independently.

We believe that students are the ultimate users of assessment data, and as such they should be involved in assessing their own work beginning in kindergarten, with gradually increasing levels of involvement and sophistication as they age. We do this through student-led conferences, portfolios, and student-generated rubrics, among other things. The use of student-built portfolios that are passed from teacher to teacher shows student growth over time, cognitively, socially, and emotionally.

While many schools have devoted a tremendous amount of time and resources to improving student scores on standardized tests, or summative assessments, we feel that formative assessments - those that are a part of the teaching and learning process and aid teachers and students in designing instruction and tasks- are much more valuable.

Engagement in challenging and meaningful performance tasks allows students to actively learn, make connections to their existing knowledge and build on it, and show what they've learned in a variety of different ways. At the same time, teachers can diagnose student misunderstanding and provide constructive feedback. Feedback that is as close to the time of performance as possible and focused on next steps is going to be much more valuable for learning than a grade or summative test score that provides little if any information and no ability to inform instruction.

In literacy instruction, we recognize that there is a wide range of skill mastery in areas such as reading and writing. For example, some students start to read as early as 3, and others do not read until 2nd and 3rd grade. Students read and write about what they're passionate about, what they are interested in, what they are currently exploring, and in ways that express their individuality. We strive in our classrooms to create writing communities that encourage authentic voice and authentic audience. We appreciate that students first and foremost read for pleasure and from that, read for meaning and read to learn. We create classroom communities that celebrate literacy. Within literacy communities, students are invited to think critically, actively construct knowledge through inspiration from what they read and the connections they find in their own lives, and discover themes and ideas, not through rote work, but by engaging in real life discussion of issues and ideas.

In mathematics, developmental instruction involves hands-on math manipulatives to teach mathematics, to build engagement and to deepen understanding of math concepts at all mathematical levels. Students move from manipulative to representational to abstract levels. Information is presented in multiple modalities to meet a variety of learning styles and students develop understanding and progress in their mathematical knowledge at their optimal rate. Students are encouraged to discover mathematical procedures and develop computational fluency not through the memorization of procedures, but by engaging in real life problem solving. Using mathematical discourse, including writing and oral presentations, students work collaboratively and/or individually and share their strategies with others.

Science at Discovery is about creating environments that foster inquiry and encourage students to design experiments to test their thinking. Students have access to materials that support scientific explorations. Teachers facilitate students' understanding of scientific methodologies and provide students with access to scientific tools and resources that can support their investigations. Math and literacy are integrated into science through presentations and data analysis.

At Discovery, parents and teachers collaborate to provide students TK-8 with meaningful, engaging and experiential enrichments. Through these enrichments, students experience and investigate the physical and social world in diverse ways, explore interests, and connect learning to real world activities. Enrichments may vary

depending on the grade level but often include the arts, gardening and outside explorations, technology, field trips, cooking, science, foreign language, and music. The various enrichments offer experiences for learning social and life skills, creating and expressing meaningful ideas. Enrichments may be extensions of ongoing classroom explorations or opportunities for students to be exposed to new skills, materials and experiences. Students are given sufficient time to explore enrichments without interruption. The emphasis of enrichments is on the process of creation rather than the goal of a finished product.

At Discovery, gifted students are provided with differentiated educational experiences that maintain the interest and intrinsic motivation of gifted students, and nurture their self-esteem. We recognize that gifted students have unique needs that often go unnoticed, have heightened sensitivity to their environment, and often under-perform in school when the educational program fails to meet their needs. At Discovery, students are identified through a process that relies on multiple criteria, including cognitive abilities, academic achievement, learning characteristics and behaviors. Additionally, we look for input from multiple sources, which may include the present and past classroom teachers, special subject teachers, counselors, parents, peers, and the students themselves. Students may be identified for their general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude and/or leadership ability. Identified GATE students will be taught in the “least restrictive environment”, allowing them to learn at an appropriate level and pace, in order to make continuous progress in their areas of strength.

In social studies at Discovery the emphasis is on presenting students with multiple perspectives and a broad range of possible ways of acting in the world, by focusing on: enduring human dilemmas; human agency; authorship and skepticism about author interpretations; connecting historical perspective to current and local issues; and discrimination and marginalization.

The Discovery classrooms are a community of inquiry with the following features: intellectual negotiation among participants who have varying levels of expertise; conversation focuses on questions that warrant sustained discussion and in depth study; students use prior knowledge together with newly gathered data to make sense of new ideas; practice of classroom thoughtfulness—taking time to think carefully and respond thoroughly; and students do history by posing, investigating, and tentatively answering historical questions. In the community of inquiry, there is emphasis on asking complex questions that are worth asking, integrating and challenging students' prior knowledge, using imaginative entry into history (such as role play or creating historical narratives), and empowering students for informed civic agency and engagement.

Social studies is an opportunity to integrate content knowledge learning with social development and learning. Social education, which consists of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), character education, and community-building, is an important goal for education in contemporary elementary schools, and the social studies program at Discovery offers important opportunities to integrate social education into the culture of the school.

DCS Marketing and Communications Strategic Goal

The goal of the DCS Marketing and Communications plan is to provide a holistic view and framework that will guide both internal and external organization communications. This plan will define each target audience, the communication objectives, the communication methods, timing/frequency, and expected outcome.

External Communications

The primary goals of external communication are:

1. **“Brand awareness”:** Specifically to make the community, other schools, educators, and corporations aware of the Discovery Charter School organization.
2. **Student recruiting:** To attract potential families and students to apply to the schools.
3. **Fundraising:** To raise money for DCS from external sources.
4. **Alumni connections:** To keep a connection with our alumni and have them engaged and support the organization.

Internal Communications

The primary goals of internal communication are:

1. **Organization Awareness:** Provide high level information to the entire community regarding the overall DCS organization, financial reporting, direction, achievements, etc.
2. **School Awareness:** Provide information relevant to each school community.
3. **Class Awareness:** Provide information relevant to each specific classroom.
4. **Fundraising:** Drive awareness and participation in Annual Fund Drive.