We are in the midst of very exciting times at The Valley School. After 30 years of growth, maturation, and refinement, The Valley School entered the 2015-16 school year poised to develop a comprehensive strategic plan that would reflect our highest ambitions and most important priorities. Now in our fourth decade of existence, we are deepening our roots to our students, families, and community, and we embrace the unique opportunity to create an aspirational vision for the future.

The plan offers a roadmap that begins with affirming the traditions, beliefs, and commitments from Valley’s founding and then identifies the next steps of growth needed for Valley to remain a sustainable institution. It recommends future-oriented initiatives that will evolve Valley into a recognized leader in education. We are excited to share our strategic plan and thoughtfully begin both the implementation and communication with our school community.

Background and Context

During the 2015-16 school year, The Valley School launched a comprehensive strategic planning process to develop a long-range view of school priorities through a highly inclusive and participatory process. In order to build a base of sound information and to guide the planning process, the Board engaged an independent school consultant to partner with us as we developed the plan. A steering committee comprised of faculty, administration, board members, and parents was formed and began its work while our consultant completed a comprehensive research effort that included stakeholder surveys, competitive and educational landscape analysis, market segmentation, and demographic trends.

Based on the findings of the research, the strategic planning steering committee then worked collaboratively to establish priorities for future focus. Working groups were created to expand upon the strategic priorities and outline specific initiatives, action plans, and immediate priorities.

The planning process was completed as The Valley School Board of Trustees unanimously approved the Strategic Plan at its annual retreat in June 2016.

Our strategic plan identifies five strategic goals for our future, with supporting strategies to accomplish them.
STRATEGY ONE:
Create an Aspirational Future for The Valley School

ARTICULATE OUR IRREPLACEABLE CHARACTERISTICS
• Articulate the irreplaceable characteristics of The Valley School that are vital to the school’s identity and culture to ensure core attributes are retained.

CONFIRM OUR VISION FOR OPTIMAL SCHOOL CONFIGURATION
• Maintain one section per grade, Pre-K through 5th grade.
• Maintain current elementary and Pre-K structure, without expanding to a middle school.

ESTABLISH REGIONAL LEADERSHIP
• Develop The Valley School’s position as a leader in child-centered learning and development.
• Build a program of active collaboration with other schools and teachers to share The Valley School’s approach to learning and teaching.
• Create a robust, organized teacher apprentice program that becomes a competitive, destination program.

ENHANCE OUR FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY
• Continue to follow best practices in managing the school’s finances.
• Maintain compensation for The Valley School’s employees at levels competitive with peer schools.
• Use debt as a tool to accomplish the school’s strategic initiatives and not to cover annual operating expenses.
• Develop summer programs that enhance community outreach, broaden diversity, increase professional development opportunities, increase awareness of the school, and add revenue.

STRATEGY TWO:
Enhance Our Learning Program

ARTICULATE OUR EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY
• Connect our philosophy to current research on the importance of exploration, collaboration, play, and imaginative thinking.
• Articulate the benefits of heterogeneous classrooms with a broad range of development.

IDENTIFY LEARNING BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES
• Describe the core benefits and outcomes for graduates of The Valley School education.
• Gather testimonials from The Valley School alumni, alumni families, middle schools, and high schools on the advantages of a The Valley School education.
• Develop a mission-appropriate framework to guide the Board’s oversight of the learning program.

DEEPEN ALIGNMENT ACROSS OUR LEARNING PROGRAM
• Increase the frequency and breadth of formal evaluations of student learning.
• Revise the curriculum to reflect more cultural diversity and broaden The Valley School’s cultural perspective in curriculum development, celebrations, and special projects.
• Identify and address curricular and pedagogical areas for enhancing the learning program.
• Review The Valley School’s use of technology and explore creative uses that expand a student’s foundation in digital literacy and citizenship.
• Enhance the use of the The Valley School grounds as a second classroom.
• Enhance “All School Sing” and make connections to The Valley School’s curriculum.

**STRATEGY THREE:**
Define and Expand Our Diversity and Inclusivity

**DEFINE OUR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY INTENTIONS**
• Define our goals of building a more diverse community in terms of people of color, culture, family composition, socioeconomic status, gender, and a broad range of learning.
• Commit to increase both ethnic and economic diversity and emotional connectedness to our differences and similarities.

**EXPAND OUR STUDENT & LEADERSHIP DIVERSITY**
• Expand the diversity of our student body to better reflect our community.
• Increase representation of students of color from 20% to 35%.
• Promote increased socioeconomic diversity by expanding financial aid support from 13% of operating budget to 20%.
• Increase the representation of people of diverse backgrounds in The Valley School’s leadership groups.

**BROADEN DIVERSITY WITHIN OUR SCHOOL CURRICULUM**
• Enhance the school’s curriculum to reflect cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity, and be responsive to the cultural dynamics within the school.
• Expand the library and classroom book collections to reflect images of children from multiple ethnicities and non-traditional families.
• Provide professional development to assist faculty in having conversations about race, culture, and diversity.
• Develop connections to local diversity groups and explore how we might connect with them.

**ENHANCE AND SUSTAIN OUR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION CULTURE**
• Establish a Diversity and Inclusivity Committee of board members, faculty, and parents to guide our ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion.
• Conduct a school-wide inclusivity and anti-bias assessment to provide school leadership with an internal roadmap of strengths, challenges, and steps for increasing inclusivity in the life of the school, the classroom, and the curriculum.
• Develop and promote the language with which our school community talks about diversity and inclusivity.
• Introduce parent education sessions designed to increase awareness, understanding, and appreciation for diversity and inclusion.

**STRATEGY FOUR:**
Fortify Community Relations and Communications

**ENHANCE MESSAGING AND STORYTELLING**
• Develop brand and message frameworks to capture key messages, benefits, and features.
• Develop communications toolkit and train staff and faculty to become storytellers.
• Enhance website, newsletters, marketing materials and social media to reflect The Valley School’s values and approach to learning with an updated narrative.

IMPROVE UPON INTERNAL COMMUNICATION
• Ensure shared understanding of the balance of both child-centered learning and academic depth.
• Implement annual community survey and compare to baseline established in strategic planning research.
• Publish and distribute the curriculum map, with a focus on how the curriculum is at work in the school.
• Develop a new website with improved user experience and functionality when the useful life of the current website expires.

STRENGTHEN OUR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT AND OUTREACH
• Expand The Valley School’s outreach to prospective families so that they are inspired to learn about our school, producing a more robust application pool of mission compatible children and families.
• Expand connections to local and community organizations.
• Establish a Marketing Advisory Board to include current parents who have an interest in sharing the Valley School story.

CREATE A CULTURE OF GENEROSITY
• Organize administrative roles for greater focus on enhancing generosity of time, knowledge, ideas, connections, and fundraising.
• Create a development plan that addresses the need for funding professional growth initiatives, special projects, scholarship endowment, and future capital needs.
• Reinstitute annual fund drive, in coordination with other fundraising initiatives, such as annual auction.

DEVELOP A COMMUNITY RELATIONS PLAN
• Develop an intentional plan and cohesive message about community relations that fits with The Valley School philosophy.
• Promote The Valley School “good works” to our outside community.

STRATEGY FIVE: Build a Long-Term Campus Plan

MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE CAMPUS FACILITIES TO PROVIDE AN OPTIMAL, CHILD-CENTERED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
• Preserve the quality of our current facilities through financial commitment to regular maintenance and campus enhancements.
• With future campus projects, maintain the neighborhood scale and architectural aesthetic of our Madison Valley location.

DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
• Create strategic partnerships to supplement our on-campus facilities and provide additional spaces for delivering our programs.
Our Mission
The Valley School creates educational experiences that encourage children's innate passion for learning through abundant opportunities for intellectual exploration, imaginative thinking and the practice of kindness.

Our Values
The Valley School community—parents, children, faculty and administration—puts the positive educational experience of children at the center of everything it does, guided by the following values:

• Collaboration
• Fairness
• Respect for individuality
• Kindness
• Creativity
• Inclusiveness