



Lighting

THE WAY

a vision for equity and education

GERMANTOWN FRIENDS SCHOOL



Dear Friends,

Throughout its dynamic history, Germantown Friends School has cherished its core belief that each individual has that of God within, supporting students as they discover their unique Inner Light and celebrate it in others. The school's evolution has been grounded in its Quaker values, progressive pedagogy, and classical approach—a foundation that allows GFS to share its mission to seek the truth; challenge the intellect; honor differences; embrace the city; and nurture the mind, body, and spirit in relevant and meaningful ways.

The ethos of continual revelation that guides the school's approach to teaching and learning also extends to its strategic vision. There is no end. There is no limit. This nimbleness allows GFS to be an adaptive, responsive, and healthy institution today and for generations to come. In fact, the Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools Visiting Committee also found GFS to be “a school that was no longer willing to rest on its previous history and success, but instead a school that was focused on being better every single day.”

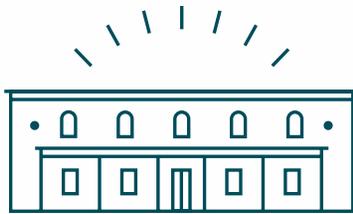
Compelled by its foundational values, GFS embarked on the Strategy Through Inquiry process two years ago, giving the community a platform to explore its future direction and role within education more broadly. The School Committee embraced these ideas and perspectives and married them with campus and operational needs to identify a set of purposeful directives to enhance and advance the GFS mission. Your enthusiastic participation and thoughtful contributions to this process have informed a clear vision for the future of GFS that prioritizes the themes of **Mission-Driven Program, Learning in Community, Strength and Stewardship, and Responsible Impact.**

Today, we pause to celebrate the school's storied journey, and also to look forward, presenting a framework for the future of GFS that ensures an educational excellence attuned to our changing world. Just as the community answered the call to help identify and shape this exciting vision, I ask you now to join with us in moving it forward. Together, we will continue to prepare young people for the demands of today and tomorrow.

I am grateful for your partnership.

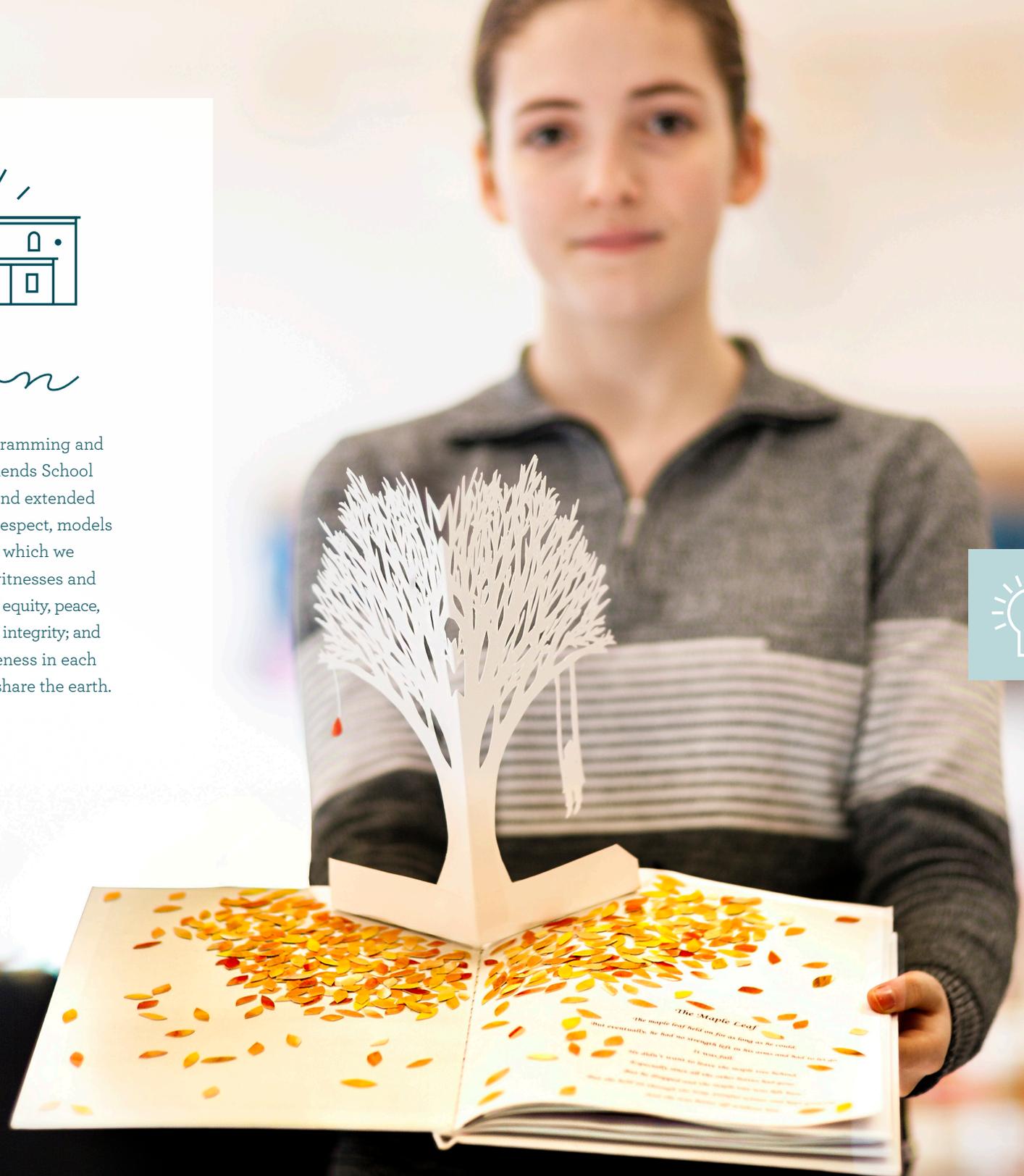
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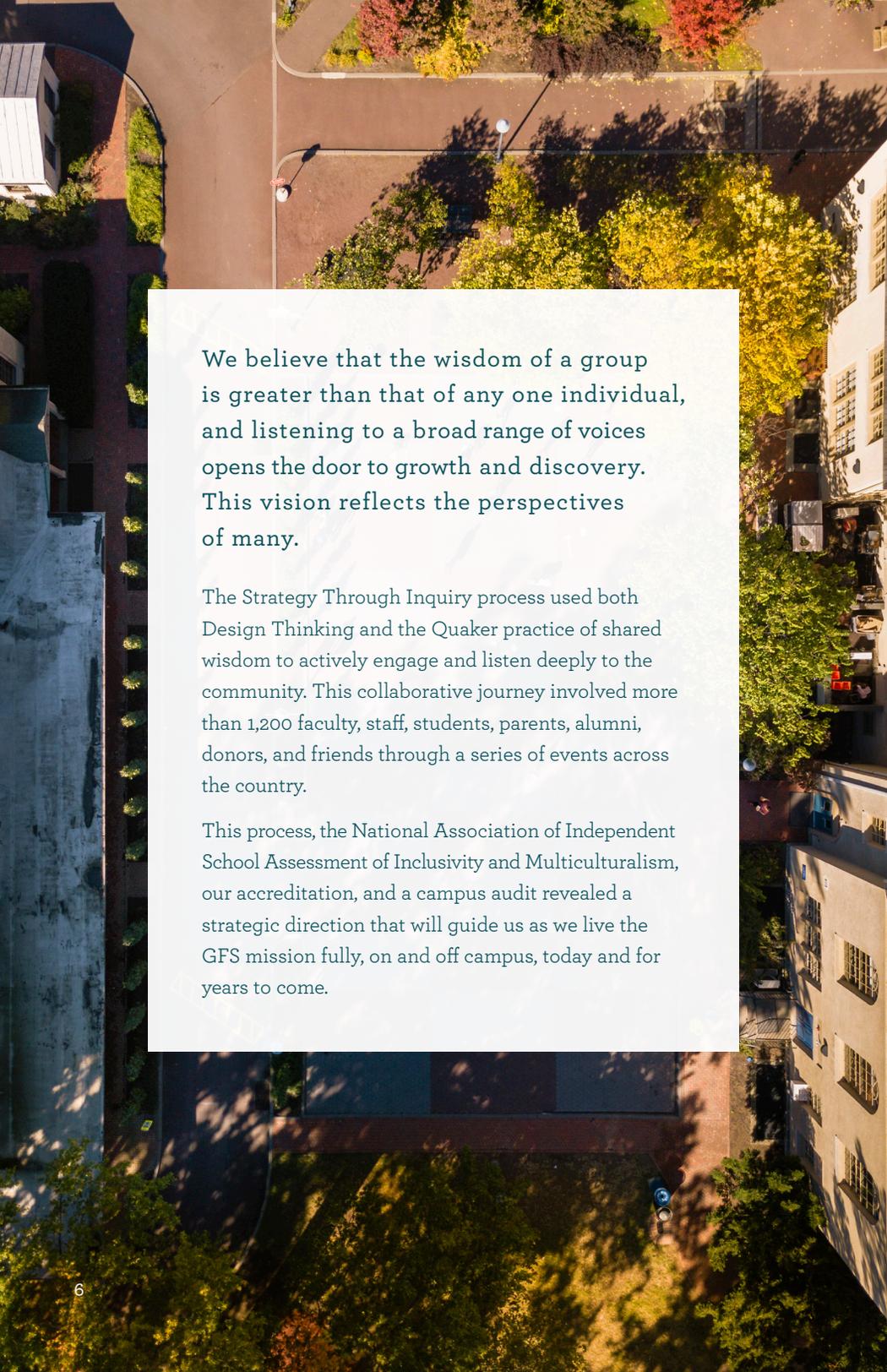
Dana Weeks, Head of School



Vision

Through educational programming and practices, Germantown Friends School seeks to create a campus and extended community that, in every respect, models and exemplifies a world in which we want to live; a world that witnesses and demonstrates the values of equity, peace, stewardship, simplicity, and integrity; and a world that sees the uniqueness in each individual with whom we share the earth.





We believe that the wisdom of a group is greater than that of any one individual, and listening to a broad range of voices opens the door to growth and discovery. This vision reflects the perspectives of many.

The Strategy Through Inquiry process used both Design Thinking and the Quaker practice of shared wisdom to actively engage and listen deeply to the community. This collaborative journey involved more than 1,200 faculty, staff, students, parents, alumni, donors, and friends through a series of events across the country.

This process, the National Association of Independent School Assessment of Inclusivity and Multiculturalism, our accreditation, and a campus audit revealed a strategic direction that will guide us as we live the GFS mission fully, on and off campus, today and for years to come.

Guiding Principles

BUILD upon a program that fosters moral decision-making and flexible thinking; encourage self-awareness, well-being, and intellectual curiosity.

SEEK opportunities to honor the richness of all cultures; inspire a positive and powerful impact on the world.

OFFER academic excellence; a curriculum that is rooted in the classical, relevant, local, and global.

EMBRACE a new financial model that fully supports operational sustainability AND access.

REACH more students by extending the GFS experience beyond its current campus.

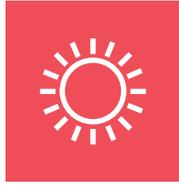
ADAPT the campus to sustain and connect the community.

MODEL environmental stewardship; tread lightly on the earth.

FOSTER a culture of perpetual learning; demonstrate that learning is not finite.

ENCOURAGE students, faculty, and staff to see themselves as both researchers and learners, and GFS as an incubator for testing new ideas.

STRIVE for a community and campus that—in both content and character—embrace and reflect the diversity in our world.



MISSION-DRIVEN PROGRAM

THE GFS CULTURE of continuous revelation supports a faculty and staff who see themselves as lifelong learners. We want to provide our imaginative and innovative teachers and administrators with the space and the resources to support their own educational journeys and fulfill their potential for leadership, initiative, and creativity. This enhanced focus will help them develop thoughtful projects and programs that encourage students to be curious, purposeful, and empathetic citizens. Providing support for the exploration and development of teaching strategies, curricula, and programmatic innovation allows faculty and staff to test and implement the new concepts needed as our world, communities, and students evolve.

Just as we support faculty and staff on their professional journeys, we strive to help students realize their fullest potential academically, physically, psychologically, socially, and spiritually. Students spend their childhoods in our lively, intellectually challenging environment, and their well-being is our top concern. Increased support, staffing, and programming will encourage wellness and drive an education and experience that enriches the whole being.

Through programming, facilities, funds, and partnerships, we aim to build the capacity and opportunities needed to attract and retain motivated faculty and staff, support innovation in teaching and learning, and ensure the continued health and well-being of our students.

We will

Create opportunities to nurture the mind, body, and spirit of our faculty, staff, and students to:



Serve as an incubator for innovation in teaching and learning.



Enhance a culture of continual professional and leadership development.



Invest in the health and well-being of our students.



LEARNING IN COMMUNITY

WE BELIEVE in the power and value of community—a guiding testimony that has influenced much of the school’s history and programmatic evolution. By building and embracing community, GFS strives to cultivate experiences that remove educational barriers and build human connection and understanding.

The school has always been committed to contributing to the educational and overall well-being of Germantown, and yet there is more we can do in partnership with neighbors near and far. Looking ahead, GFS will expand its role as an active participant in a larger system of thriving organizations within our community, and deepen our relationships with teachers, students, and neighbors throughout the city, across the country, and around the world.

In building meaningful partnerships with community groups, nonprofits, and educational institutions, we seek to foster learning and create purposeful dialogue between our students and students from other schools.

We will

Curate opportunities that encourage deep engagement, understanding, partnership, and knowledge sharing to:



Create and extend educational enrichment programs.



Forge community education partnerships.



Exchange and share learning in our community and around the world.



STRENGTH AND STEWARDSHIP

AS WE EDUCATE students of all ages to understand diversity and appreciate strong and equitable systems, we will make sure that our institution reflects and builds on these values. We must consider people, population, and place in administrative and financial decisions and strategy.

We are committed to growing the school's financial aid programs and removing barriers for talented students who demonstrate potential. For many families, financing a GFS education remains insurmountable. Building a dedicated endowment for financial aid moves us toward a model that enables us to nurture greater socioeconomic diversity and access.

GFS also seeks to shine as a multicultural campus, respecting and reflecting the rich diversity of our neighborhood, city, and world. We must strive to provide a welcoming experience for all students, families, faculty, and staff, respecting culture, affinity, and individual circumstance.

We will

Implement meaningful, purposeful resource planning to:



Nurture greater socioeconomic diversity and access.



Build a targeted endowment for financial aid.



Ensure the school's long-term financial health.



RESPONSIBLE IMPACT

CARE AND RESPECT for the environment and all living systems are essential tenets of GFS' Quaker beliefs. Environmental responsibility throughout the campus and curriculum is crucial to our future as a school and as a beacon of best practices in education.

GFS is committed to modeling social and environmental practices, behaviors, and actions that lead to the creation of a carbon-neutral campus environment. Already, we have made significant progress in incorporating sustainability into the GFS program. Yet we can, and must, act with greater urgency to meet these goals. We must continue to educate students on the science and systems related to a healthy planet, and foster a culture of environmental stewardship across all divisions that also extends into the local neighborhood.

With the leadership of a dedicated sustainability director, GFS will build a comprehensive program that promotes environmental responsibility and supports a culture of conservancy and action across all divisions. We want our community to maintain and protect our environment, and develop the capacity for informed and thoughtful decision making.

Our physical campus will also reflect a care and concern for all. The planned campus renewal will improve accessibility, decrease our environmental footprint, and better unite the school in building greater community.

We will

Respect all living systems through practices and campus planning to:



Infuse sustainability into our program and practices.



Implement the school's sustainable campus master plan.



CAMPUS MASTER PLAN

Increasing community through enhanced connection and accessibility.

THE GFS CAMPUS AND BUILDINGS reflect the history of the school, the community, and the nation. Some spaces have transformed in purpose and design; some spaces are underused today, but are overflowing with potential. Over time, the school experienced numerous land acquisitions and construction initiatives, many due to the support of generous donors.

We will continue to honor the Quaker values of simplicity and stewardship in our approach to the design and feel of the campus, embracing renovations and alterations to meet the needs of the GFS student body and support our educational pedagogy. GFS partnered with DIGSAU, an architecture firm in Philadelphia, to develop a thoughtful strategy for the campus that reflects our vision and directives. The Campus Master Plan will preserve the school's history, deepen connections on campus and within the broader community, improve learning and the student experience, and emphasize environmental integrity. GFS will connect buildings; update heating and cooling systems; add elevators for accessibility; steward human, built, and natural resources; and reuse existing infrastructure, thereby minimizing new construction.

We look forward to working together to bring this visionary plan to life in four phases that will each take approximately 2–3 years.

DIRECTIVES OF THE CAMPUS MASTER PLAN:

- Consolidate the Lower School.
- Enlarge and improve the cafeteria.
- Provide a Middle School student and administrative center.
- Strengthen relationships among the performing arts programs.
- Consolidate and expand athletics and physical education departments and programs.
- Promote wellness through thoughtful spaces and programmatic offerings.
- Create coherent administrative spaces throughout campus.
- Develop a humanities center.

PHASES:

1. Student Commons and Center for the Arts
2. Early Childhood Program Expansion and Lower School Consolidation
3. Sharpless Renovation and Main Connector
4. Athletics and Physical Education Expansion (can occur concurrently with other phases)

THANK YOU

Strategy Through Inquiry Clerks and Program Managers

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School Committee

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Clerk
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Kate O'Shea
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Toni Sharp
Anne Stassen, Recording Clerk;
Religious Life Committee
Clerk
Faye Steacy

We invite your wisdom and partnership
as we advance, cultivate, and adapt this
shared plan for the future.

www.germantownfriends.org/vision