

THE WAY FORWARD: OUR STRATEGIC PLAN 2014

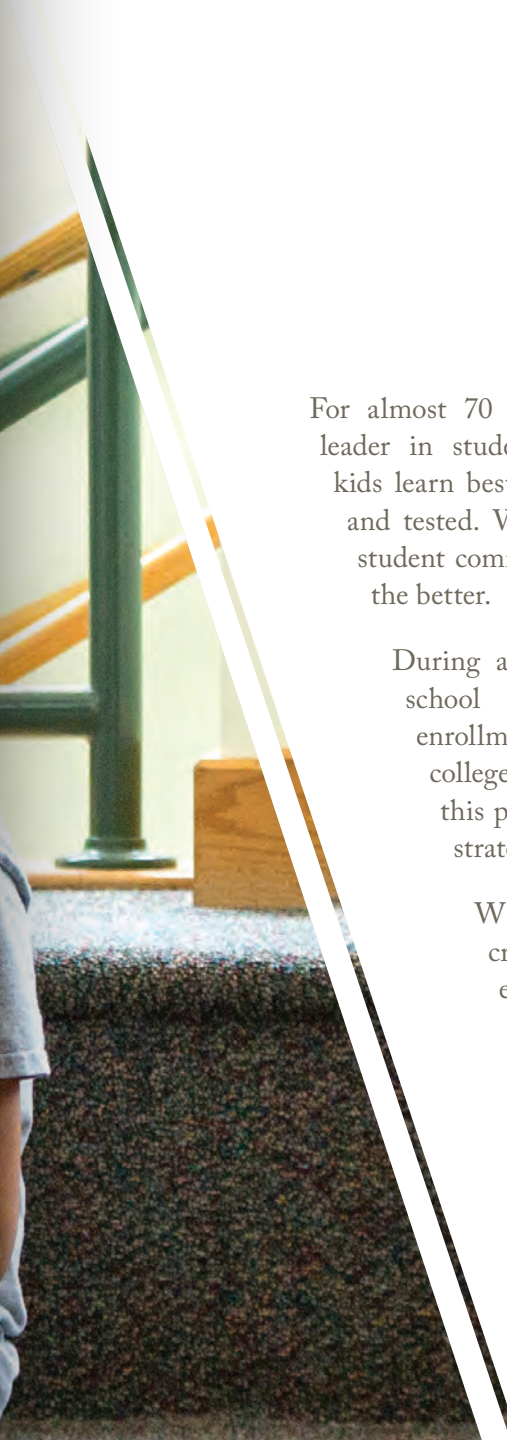
GEORGETOWN DAY SCHOOL





OUR MISSION DRIVES ALL THAT WE DO

Georgetown Day School honors the integrity and worth of each individual within a diverse school community. GDS is dedicated to providing a supportive educational atmosphere in which teachers challenge the intellectual, creative, and physical abilities of our students and foster strength of character and concern for others. From the earliest grades, we encourage our students to wonder, to inquire, and to be self-reliant, laying the foundation for a lifelong love of learning.



For almost 70 years, Georgetown Day School has been a leader in student-centered learning, recognizing this fact: kids learn best where individual perspectives can be shared and tested. We strive to provide an education that fosters student commitment—and skills—to change the world for the better.

During a period of rapid change in the independent school world, GDS stands strong with robust enrollment, exceptional faculty, an excellent record of college matriculation, and fiscal stability. It is from this position of strength that we began creating this strategic plan.

When we set out to build a plan for our future, we created a process that provided an opportunity for every member of our community to be involved. This document is the culmination of that strategic planning process, which included input from more than 500 community members (students, parents, alumni, board members, parents of alumni, and faculty and staff) over 18 months, and was finalized by our administration during the Summer of 2013 and affirmed by the Board of Trustees in October 2013.

To look forward, we first looked inward, understanding our strengths, naming our challenges, and looking to our past and our mission. We then looked outward, observing the dynamic—and increasingly challenging—world outside our doors and assessing the skills our students will need to make a meaningful impact in the world.

Early in the process, Head of School Russell Shaw identified the ten essential skills a GDS graduate will need in order to thrive in a changing world—skills that GDS is committed to providing by achieving the five goals named in this strategic planning document.

A GDS STUDENT WILL:

- **BUILD NETWORKS AND COLLABORATE ACROSS DIFFERENCES**
- **INNOVATE AND CREATE**
- **TAKE RISKS, TOLERATE FAILURE, AND LEARN FROM FAILURE**
- **SELF-ADVOCATE**
- **THINK CRITICALLY**
- **COMMUNICATE CLEARLY AND POWERFULLY**
- **TACKLE COMPLEX PROBLEMS**
- **LEARN ACTIVELY AND RESOURCEFULLY**
- **ENGAGE AS A JUST, MORAL, ETHICAL CITIZEN**
- **LEAD**

WHAT WON'T CHANGE

The GDS Strategic Plan builds on a foundation of strength. And so while we will be pursuing certain key opportunities for growth—including individual learning, the curriculum, and a commitment to equity and diversity that permeates all we do—what has always made us unique won't change.

GDS is community centered.

We will continue to be “home” to our faculty, students, alumni, and their extended families. Strong, authentic relationships with each other, especially our treasured faculty-student partnership, will remain core to our success.

GDS is an institution that teaches critical thinking.

We will always prepare our students with a rigorous curriculum that challenges students to think for themselves and on their feet.

GDS is committed to diversity and equity.

We will only deepen our focus on access, inclusion, and success. We will continue to value the different stories, backgrounds, and experiences of every individual in our diverse community and prepare our students to live in the global community.

GDS is committed to public engagement.

We will stay focused on graduating students who go on to change the world—students whose schoolwork has a public purpose and teaches

them not only how to advocate for themselves, but also how to advocate for others.

GDS is a center of effective, reflective teaching.

We will continue to support our faculty known for their talent, caring, and skill—and especially for the one-to-one relationships they pursue with every student. GDS teachers are leaders in their field who inspire students to be true to one's self and succeed.

GDS is proud of our unconventional excellence.

We will hold on to the “special sauce” that makes us unique. We will continue to promote and embrace the ideas, energy, and individualism of every person, and the belief that kids should be allowed to “color outside the lines.”

GDS is dedicated to experiential learning.

We will continue our focus on learning through doing as central to our classroom practice and provide a curriculum that offers the opportunity to engage in real-world problems and find practical solutions.

IMPLEMENTATION: How it Works

The complete strategic plan is laid out in a table format, identifying overall goals that are broken down into objectives. Each objective represents a major output that when combined, achieve each goal. Within each objective, there is a further breakdown of activities. Each activity has been assigned a lead who will be responsible for creating a work plan to implement the activity, most likely with the help of a faculty support team. We also name a timeline for achieving each activity, over the course of the next one to five years. The plan is flexible—as we move forward, we will continually review the work and make course corrections as required.

This document includes each goal and every objective, with an example activity (from the 100 in total) highlighted. You can access the entire plan and view videos about the plan online at www.GDS.org/Planning





Goal 1

DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING:

Engaging students as individuals.

Objectives:

- 1 Criteria:** Develop clear criteria for whom we can serve.
- 2 Assessment:** Identify clear and consistent criteria and instruments for measuring and tracking student growth from PK-Alumni.
- 3 Student support:** Establish an all-school Center for Student Support & Excellence to develop and implement a PK-12 strategy for effectively supporting each student's needs.
- 4 Differentiation pedagogy:** Identify instructional best practices and provide training to faculty across the institution.
- 5 Skills & Wellness:** Address student learning through program offerings.
- 6 Partnership:** Establish principles and best practices for communication and partnership among parents, teachers, and students in support of student learning.

Spotlight Activity:

Differentiation in Practice: All-School Center for Student Support & Excellence

Ensuring that all students receive the support they need requires a holistic approach. Looking forward, this Center will provide a structure for addressing the unique needs of individuals to achieve academic success through: structured data collection that aids in student evaluation and informs teaching and learning from year to year; systematic and integrated support strategies from a faculty team for individual students; and school-wide systems designed to fill gaps and respond to shared needs (such as enrichment programming and summer academic programming).

Goal 2

THRIVING TEACHERS:

Investing in support, growth, and excellence.

Objectives:

- 1 Growth-oriented faculty culture, part 1:** Hiring, onboarding, mentoring, and evaluating.
- 2 Growth-oriented faculty culture, part 2:** Professional learning and leadership opportunities.
- 3 Equitable compensation:** Develop an equitable compensation strategy that recognizes the range of contributions made by individuals across the school.
- 4 “A GDS Teacher Will ...”:** Provide transparent expectations of excellent teaching to all members of the GDS community.

Spotlight Activity:

Professional Development and Evaluation Cycle

An ambitious, collaborative, reflective, joyous, research-based faculty culture yields the best outcomes for students. At GDS, we believe that good teaching requires a “growth mindset.” Our plans call us to provide our faculty with every possible opportunity to grow—to reflect on and improve their craft, allowing them to better serve our students. When we launched our professional development and evaluation cycle last year, we initiated a four-year (for veteran teachers) or three-year (for new teachers) process that laid out requirements for feedback and observation. In the next two years, we’ll be fine-tuning the process and clarifying our course of action for addressing performance issues. While we are refining ways to elicit and provide feedback and evaluation, we’re also identifying ways to invest in our faculty’s ability to teach and grow their craft by building capacity and pursuing learning opportunities.





Goal 3 CURRICULUM EVOLUTION:

Providing students with skills to collaborate and innovate for tomorrow's needs.

Objectives:

- 1 Mathematics:** Review and evolve curriculum at the Lower Middle School.
- 2 STEAM:** Further integrate GDS Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math curriculum.
- 3 Modern & Classical Languages:** Create a school wide integrated strategy and program for language instruction.
- 4 Athletics:** Enhance program to optimize student experience, health, and well-being.
- 5 PK-12 Social Impact Curriculum:** Building from strength.

Spotlight Activity:

Social Impact Curriculum

True to our founding principals, every day at GDS is rich with opportunities for students to understand the complexity of the world and to consider what it uniquely means to them. Moving ahead, GDS will make these opportunities more consistent across divisions. We'll create next-phase curriculum through programs such as an experiential learning institute (where students are matched with external and internal opportunities to deepen their passions or explore new areas of interest) and a policy institute (which will accelerate and sharpen GDS student learning and engagement in issues of social justice and equity). Lastly, we'll be growing our public presence in this work by sharing that curriculum widely.

Goal 4 DIVERSITY:

Next steps in engaging difference, equity, and access to build foundations for success.

Objectives:

1 GDS Diversity and Equity Curriculum:

Articulate and make public our philosophy and curriculum.

2 **Access:** Expand access to the GDS learning environment with the goal of achieving the broadest possible diversity at GDS.

3 **Equity:** Provide resources to ensure that all students and families can be full participants in the life of the School.

4 **Success:** Ensure that all GDS students are provided with an equitable opportunity to thrive, both socially and academically.

Spotlight Activity:

Data Collection and Analysis

Perhaps not the first thing that comes to mind when considering activities to support equity and diversity, collecting and analyzing comparative data on student success at GDS will inform true accountability. Are there achievement differentials among students at GDS? What is the representation of students of color and girls in our highest-level science or math classes? Are we providing the right supports for all students so they can achieve? Without complete data collection across divisions, we can only guess at these answers or rely on anecdotes. Our commitment to our students is, and always has been, creating and nurturing equitable and diverse classrooms where each child can thrive. Creating and implementing a process for tracking this information will inform on our success and define any course correction needed moving forward.



Goal 5 INFRASTRUCTURE & OPERATIONS:

Building frameworks for innovative learning environments.

Objectives:

- 1 Data strategy:** Develop and implement a learning and operations tracking system.
- 2 Technology:** Develop a learning and operations technology master plan and hire necessary staff.
- 3 Calendar:** Evaluate school calendar with the goal of optimally supporting student learning.
- 4 Facilities:** Develop a strategy in support of optimal student learning.
- 5 Personnel:** Create systems to support faculty and staff.
- 6 Auxiliary:** Review and determine a long-term plan for Auxiliary Programs.
- 7 Finances:** Develop opportunities to be more operationally “lean.”

Spotlight Activity:

High School Learning Center

Just as we understand that our instruction must be flexible and nimble to allow for the needs of individual learners, our learning spaces must also be varied and modern. That’s why we have started planning for a new learning center at the high school that will provide an intellectual and collaborative hub for students and faculty, much the same as the High School Forum serves as a social hub. There, our community will have greater opportunities for powerful moments of discovery and spontaneous meetings that are the source of learning inspiration and dedication. The Learning Center will be complete for the 2014-2015 school year.

LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

As the GDS community and administration built out the strategic plan, the Board of Trustees was simultaneously undertaking a process to consider the long-term financial health of the institution. Specifically, they considered the three financial factors that have the most impact on the budget: sustainable tuition increases; increased support of financial aid; and competitive teacher salaries. After significant deliberation, the board ratified ten-year tuition and financial aid targets. These targets strive to continue historically low tuition increases each year while also increasing financial aid. The targets were also informed by increasing growth of non-tuition revenue via fundraising and other approaches being explored, a close review by the board and school principals around the areas of socio-economic and non-economic diversity, as well as an increasing draw from endowment resources.



OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR COMMUNITY

As we embark on implementing the initiatives in this strategic plan, our commitment to you is that this will be a responsive, living process. While we put into action the hundred plus activities included in the extended plan and evaluate our progress, we will evolve the plan as needed. We will report to you online at www.GDS.org/Planning, update you as activities get underway, and look forward to your continued feedback and partnership.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Georgetown Day School wishes to thank the individuals and committees responsible for seeing our strategic planning process through to fruition. Thanks to your stewardship, energy, and leadership we have a strategic plan that innovates while staying true to our values.

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