

Strategic Plan

2020-2025 ■



WESTRIDGE SCHOOL

JANUARY 2020

Dear Members of the Westridge Community,

Development of the Westridge 2020-2025 Strategic Plan was a two-year labor of love as our community came together to think critically about how to best serve our students' interests in the coming years. After a year-long self-evaluation by our entire faculty and staff for the school's California Association of Independent Schools accreditation, we spent a second year conducting research with faculty, staff, administrators, parents, students, alumnae, and our Board of Trustees. Our community thought big, and with their hearts, for this plan.

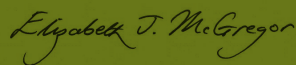
We have chosen to focus on four areas that we think will have transformational impact on our students and program:

- student well-being & social emotional development
- academic excellence & innovation
- diversity, equity, & inclusion
- student leadership & agency

These areas are tightly integrated components of academic excellence and student well-being. They reflect significant advances in research surrounding teaching & learning and human development, as well as changes in the world leading to evolving demands on our graduates, and this particular moment in our institutional history. All will be part of a significant, schoolwide program review and update, work on which has already begun.

A few things to note as you reflect on this document—first, this document provides our strategic guideposts; work is underway to determine the specific programs and tactics that will bring its vision to life in our classrooms. In addition, the plan does not cover all school programs and operations; much other work will happen alongside these strategic initiatives. And finally, in developing this plan we considered the funding that will be required for new programs and significant curricular updates. Our advancement priorities will be refined as the programs take shape.

We thank you for all you have done to make Westridge the wonderful home for students it is today, and invite you to join us in ensuring our program continues to inspire creative thinkers, compassionate young women, and courageous leaders for generations to come.



Elizabeth J. McGregor
Head of School



Richard Fung
Chair, Board of Trustees

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Strategic Priorities

1.

Expand programs and resources that promote student well-being and social emotional growth.

2.

Conduct a curriculum review across all divisions of the school to inform a comprehensive program update focused on academic excellence, innovation, and relevance.

3.

Strengthen and expand our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

4.

Develop core leadership skills and personal agency in all Westridge students.

Student Well-being and Social Emotional Development

We believe that childhood and adolescence should be an adventure of growth and discovery, while acknowledging that growth and change, by their very nature, can be disruptive.

That some stress is normal, necessary for growth, and can foster resilience and competency.

That relationships are the foundation for building the skills needed to manage stress well.

That students are best supported through integrated student care provided across departments and drawing upon the many resources and relationships available at school.

That as an institution entrusted with the well-being of girls, especially during a time of significant increases in adolescent stress and anxiety, we have a responsibility to provide the most comprehensive system of support possible to our students.

A

ll adolescence is characterized by a wide range of intense emotions. However, the levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among children and

adolescents today are unprecedented, notably among high-achieving students and girls. Research and experience tell us that social and emotional wellness and skills, including self-regulation and empathy, are critical to achieving academic excellence. Students must feel grounded and secure to be ready to learn. Therefore, in order to fulfill our commitment to educating girls and preparing them for lives of purpose, meaning, and impact, we must utilize all our resources to support their overall well-being. As a girls' school, Westridge has a special responsibility to address the unique social and emotional needs of our students.



Strategies

- Deepen our approach to social emotional learning, creating an integrated care model that:
 - prioritizes secure, supportive relationships, self-regulation, awareness of self, and understanding of others
 - guides curriculum, instruction, and resource allocation decisions
 - is integrated throughout the 4-12 program
- Collaborate with parents to promote student wellness through substantive parent education, resource sharing, and conversations regarding emotional states and development and their impact on learning.
- Review homework policies and yearly & daily schedules—including start times—to allow for deep, engaged learning and ensure meaningful opportunities for rest, recovery, and participation in a full, joyful life.
- Enhance support of students with different learning needs through:
 - clear definitions of reasonable learning accommodations and increased outreach to families regarding available options
 - increased professional development for faculty and staff on differentiated instruction, learning differences, and accommodations
 - increased professional staffing for learning support



Academic Excellence & Innovation

We believe education should be intellectually challenging, reflective, discussion-based, student-centered, and spirited.

That students, especially girls, learn best when they are deeply connected with their learning.

That students thrive on challenge and hard work when their studies are meaningful and purposeful.

That experiential education provides opportunities for deep learning that engages the hearts, as well as the minds, of students.

That curriculum innovation is critical to preparing students for an ever-evolving world and to the continued relevance of a Westridge education.

Westridge was founded on the notion that girls have a right to the best education and we have maintained

our commitment to academic excellence for more than 100 years. This requires constant curriculum evolution, with teachers refining existing courses and introducing new ones, and the school pursuing broader curricular paths. Periodically, we step back to view our program with a wider lens, looking at underlying approaches and thinking deeply about why we do things the way we do. This is one of those times. Recent leaps forward in educational research, neuroscience, and pedagogical best practices inspire this work. Our goal is to create a curriculum that is authentic to Westridge and focused on deep, challenging, and exciting learning rooted in intrinsic student motivation.

Strategies

- Undertake a comprehensive curriculum review to improve consistency of philosophy and practices across the 4-12 arc of our program.
- Revise current approach to advanced studies across the three divisions in order to ensure all students are appropriately challenged and to expand deep and meaningful learning within our most rigorous courses.
- Reimagine Westridge's experiential programs, including Interim, strengthening them through a unified philosophy and ensuring their equity, relevance, and sustainability.
- Review assessment policies and practices to ensure that learning objectives and expectations are aligned and philosophically consistent.
- Expand our computer science curriculum and programs to provide more depth, variety, and advanced offerings.
- Transform approach to faculty professional development to ensure an ongoing commitment to curriculum innovation rooted in educational best practices.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

We believe understanding the full human experience is essential to preparing students for our increasingly diverse, global, and connected world.

That building and supporting a diverse community of students and adults must be a top priority for Westridge because a diverse educational environment deepens, strengthens, and solidifies academic excellence for all.

That a true sense of identity, emotional trust, and belonging is required for being present for learning, teaching, and taking part in the Westridge community. As such, equal priority must be placed on building and fostering a culture of inclusion.

That all students welcomed into our community deserve access to the same opportunities.

Westridge has a long-held commitment to DEI, which we will strengthen and prioritize for the benefit of all our

students, especially those who are or have been traditionally under-represented on our campus. Research shows that diversity in the classroom benefits all groups of students academically and socially across numerous factors, including intellectual engagement, self-confidence, analytical thinking and problem-solving skills, and the ability to think and write critically. But with increasing diversity comes a responsibility to increase equity literacy so that all students and families feel welcomed and valued for who they are and the unique perspectives they bring to Westridge. This work may require us to reflect on long-held traditions and listen and respond in new ways; to widen our perspectives as we expand what it means to be a Westridge student and family and strengthen our community. DEI touches every aspect of our school and we are prepared to invest the required time and resources.



Strategies

- Establish an oversight committee, comprised of representatives from across the constituencies of the school, to provide comprehensive and systemic focus on DEI priorities.
- Increase DEI training for all constituencies—faculty & staff, students, parents, and trustees.
- Undertake a comprehensive DEI asset mapping of the curriculum to identify biases and gaps in inclusion of voices and perspectives of marginalized communities.
- Institute systematic annual data gathering and analysis to uncover inequities in our programs and policies.
- Create a strategic plan to increase the number of people from underrepresented groups within our student body, faculty & staff, and Board of Trustees.

Leadership & Agency

We believe all will profit from closing the persistent gender gap in leadership.

That girls' schools provide an ideal environment for developing leadership skills and traits in girls.

That girls are empowered when acting on their own behalf and making choices in their own interest.

That all girls benefit from developing the qualities and values of a leader—from integrity and resilience to vision and positivity—regardless of the path they choose in life.

That our emphasis on student voice, responsibility, and lives of impact primes Westridge girls to make a difference in the world.

Leadership has always been a part of Westridge culture. Our families cite leadership development among the things that define Westridge. To date, a formal leadership curriculum has not been taught and through this plan we will introduce a more intentional approach to the subject. Doing so will empower our students to own their leadership potential and to think bigger, and with more nuance, about what it means to be a leader and how leadership skills can impact their lives today and in the future.





Strategies

- Identify the essential leadership skills and qualities we want for Westridge students.
- Review and evaluate current curricular and co-curricular programs to identify where these skills are taught today.
- Develop a formal, 4-12 leadership and agency framework and curriculum to ensure consistent exposure to these critical skills for all Westridge students.



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