

# Inspiring Excellence

THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ACS



 THE  
AVERY COONLEY  
SCHOOL

## DEAR MEMBERS OF THE ACS COMMUNITY



“The goals for the ACS 2018 Strategic Plan reflect our long-held beliefs and the core values that guide the everyday experience for our students...”

For over 100 years The Avery Coonley School has stood for educational excellence and has offered students a transformative experience. We are proud of our history — and equally excited about our future. Over the past year and a half, members representing all ACS constituencies came together under the guidance of Ian Symmonds, a leader in the NAIS world of strategic thinking and planning. Together, ACS affirmed its commitment to educating gifted children and created a strategic plan that focuses on building on our strengths and meeting the challenges of maintaining our place as a premier independent school and thought leader in 21<sup>st</sup> century gifted education.

The goals for the ACS 2018 Strategic Plan reflect our long-held beliefs and the core values that guide the everyday experience for our students — a commitment to gifted students, academic excellence, diversity, and long-term sustainability. Analysis and discussion of the state of ACS confirmed that our students are best served when these goals are supported in action by our progressive educational roots, which include focusing on the whole child and our commitment to hands-on, creative, experiential, problem-based learning. The 2018 Strategic Plan offers a vision and path to strengthen these core values and to deliver on our promise of excellence in all we do.

At the heart of every great school are the qualities and characteristics of its students, faculty, and staff. The vision for ACS ensures that ACS embraces and is inclusive of gifted children from all walks of life, and attracts the very best faculty and staff from a diverse, inclusive pool of applicants. Our strategic plan addresses enrollment and marketing opportunities and initiatives designed to further strengthen and deepen the pipeline for both future students and faculty. Our plan also offers strategic financial initiatives aligned with our mission, as we look to secure and build upon our financial sustainability.

There is a great deal to be proud of at ACS. Our graduates can be found among the ranks of the finest colleges and universities, as well as the world’s leading corporations in the fields of technology, medicine, music, diplomacy, law, art, and finance, to name just a few. However, as we move forward in today’s world, schools can never be complacent nor satisfied with the status quo. Today’s children need forward thinking adults to help prepare them for the challenges of tomorrow. The Strategic Plan represents our vision and road map for both building on past achievements and creating a new, 21<sup>st</sup> century Avery Coonley School that ensures the future success of generations of ACS students.

Paul Druzinsky  
*Head of School*



“We believe that joy and excitement of learning must begin early in life.”

## MISSION



The Avery Coonley School is an independent school whose mission is to provide a learning environment that is appropriate both for academically bright and gifted children who are motivated to learn and have demonstrated the potential for the scholastic achievement necessary to succeed in a challenging academic program, in order that they may become positive, productive, and respectful members of society.

## PHILOSOPHY



We believe that the joy and excitement of learning must begin early in life.

We place a high premium on developing the desire in our students to become critical thinkers and independent, lifelong learners.

We assist our students in realizing their intellectual, emotional, social, creative, and physical potential by promoting academic achievement, character development, self-reliance, self-confidence, independent thought, and personal fitness.

We recognize and are sensitive to the unique needs of gifted children. Within a traditional structure, we provide acceleration and enrichment, and foster a supportive atmosphere that provides opportunities for creativity, problem-solving, and risk-taking.

We believe that diversity is the foundation for a strong, competent, and compassionate community. Therefore, we value racial, religious, economic, and cultural diversity in our student body, faculty, and staff.

We strive to build a community that encourages understanding and mutual respect and nurtures appreciation of the individual, civility, gratitude, honesty, kindness and consideration, responsibility, and volunteerism.



**GOAL**  
**DEEPEN OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR  
GIFTED MISSION AND PROGRAM**



Nurture gifted children to become happy, engaged, lifelong learners.

Deliver an innovative, comprehensive program that reflects the NAGC Pre K - Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards to provide optimal challenge for each student.

Refine our understanding regarding who we serve within our mission as a school for gifted children.

## GOAL

### STRENGTHEN OUR IDENTITY AS A DIVERSE, INCLUSIVE, AND MULTICULTURAL SCHOOL COMMUNITY

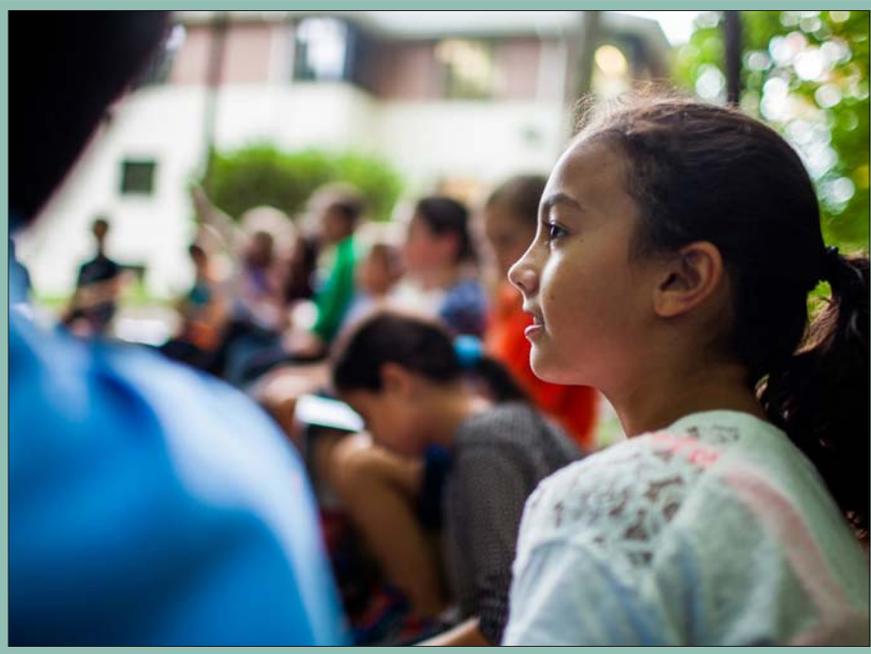


Improve the current admission process with regard to cultural sensitivity.

Enhance our outreach to currently underrepresented populations, including Black and Latinx families.

Expand access to families of diverse socioeconomic status.

Examine our existing curriculum for cultural competency and introduce a comprehensive curriculum around social justice.



## GOAL

### EXPAND OUR PLATFORM OF PROGRAMS, PARTNERSHIPS, AND EXPERTISE



Explore the creation of a center for extended learning in order to advance our role in the world of gifted education, expand the ACS brand, and serve as an innovation lab.

Create an advisory board to provide guidance on best practices in gifted education.

Explore a partnership with a university or college to enhance the ACS learning environment.



## GOAL

### ENHANCE OUR LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY



Develop consistent, effective marketing and communications.

Develop updated positioning, marketing strategy, and implementation plans.

Thoughtfully increase aggregate K-8 school enrollment while seeking to maintain attractive student-teacher ratios.

Develop a long-term, comprehensive, and policy-driven financial plan for ACS.

Seek to reduce our operating expenses by increasing our organizational efficiency.

## THANK YOU

### TO OUR STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE AND WORK GROUPS

*Steering Committee members are denoted in **bold** below.*

**Paul Druzinsky**, *Head of School*  
**Archana Chawla**, *Strategic Planning Steering Committee Co-Chair, Trustee, Parent*  
**Joshua Friess**, *Strategic Planning Steering Committee Co-Chair, Trustee, Parent*

#### MISSION AND PROGRAM WORK GROUP

**Alexis Bryant**, *Work Group Co-Chair, Faculty*  
**Susan Corwith**, *Work Group Co-Chair, Northwestern Center for Talent Development*  
**Sunshine Echevarria**, *Faculty*  
**Leslie Gordon**, *Administration*  
**Jackie Gupta**, *Trustee, Parent*  
**John Harrast**, *Trustee, Parent*  
**Dimitre Marinov**, *Parent*  
**Caer McCabe**, *Parent*  
**Josephine Sheng**, *Parent*  
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#### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WORK GROUP

**Nancy Doris '91**, *Work Group Co-Chair, Trustee, Parent*  
**Rebecca Malotke-Meslin**, *Work Group Co-Chair, Administration*  
**Asma Afridi**, *Parent*  
**Alice Brown**, *Faculty*  
**Mary Ellen Bull '79**, *Trustee, Alumni Parent*  
**Farah Cheema**, *Parent*  
**Jessica Friess**, *Parent*  
**Raj Goyal**, *Trustee, Parent*  
**Kiyomi Hamilton**, *Parent*  
**Anna Lenhardt**, *Administration*  
**Brendan Sheehy**, *Trustee, Parent*

#### PLATFORM WORK GROUP

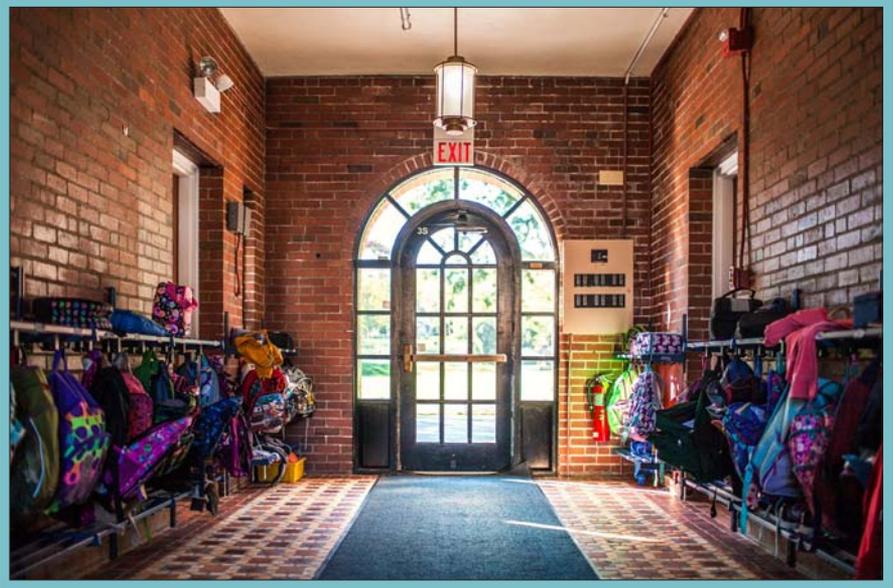
**Imran Qureshi**, *Work Group Co-Chair, Trustee, Parent*  
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**Nina Goyal**, *Parent*  
**Jennifer Marvel-Gillono**, *Faculty*  
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**Toni Pritchard**, *Trustee, Alumni Parent*  
**Jen Reenan**, *Trustee, Parent*  
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#### MARKETING WORK GROUP

**Amy Louis**, *Work Group Co-Chair, Trustee, Alumni Parent*  
**Lisa Vaughan**, *Work Group Co-Chair, Parent*  
**Bo Blackburn**, *Parent*  
**Steven Bosco**, *Administration*  
**Sue Gould**, *Trustee, Parent*  
**John Grube**, *Trustee, Alumni Parent*  
**Dhevi Kandasamy**, *Parent*  
**Kevin Peterson '69**, *Trustee*  
**Michi Trota '92**, *Staff*  
**Lisa Wiltz**, *Administration*

#### FINANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY WORK GROUP

**Peter Brown**, *Work Group Co-Chair, Administration*  
**Deb Clarke**, *Work Group Co-Chair, Trustee, Alumni Parent*  
**Bill Atwood**, *Trustee, Parent*  
**Maneesh Chawla**, *Parent*  
**Dave Dundek**, *Faculty*  
**Brian Gilmartin**, *Trustee, Parent*  
**Carolyn Johnson**, *Administration*  
**Cathy Slark**, *Trustee, Alumni Parent*



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