



# HIGHLANDS SCHOOL

A H I G H E R D E G R E E O F L E A R N I N G

**STRATEGIC PLAN** **2015-2019**



## OVERVIEW

Highlands School, founded in 1958, is an independent school distinguished by its diverse community and a commitment to academic excellence, creative expression and leadership development. Its curriculum serves children from preschool through 8th grade, and focuses on preparing and motivating students to thrive and make positive differences in a constantly changing, global world. Highlands holds dual accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and the Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS).

Following the engagement of a new Head of School in the summer of 2014, the Board of Trustees of Highlands School embarked on a strategic planning process to articulate a long term vision for the school and identify strategic priorities for achieving that vision.

The purpose of this plan is to communicate high level goals and specific objectives that will guide the activities of the Board and administration for the next five years towards achieving its vision for Highlands. Though the plan also identifies strategies for achieving each goal, Highlands will maintain flexibility during plan execution to manage unexpected challenges and capitalize on new opportunities.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The process built upon work done by the Board's Strategic Planning Committee in 2013 and included the following:

- A four hour Board visioning session and follow-up session with the Board Executive Committee;
- A stakeholder engagement process including an online parent survey and two in-person community conversation sessions, one with faculty and staff and the other with members of the Parent Auxiliary and Grade Level Representatives;
- Consultant development of a draft vision narrative and strategic plan;
- Review of a draft plan with the Board Executive Committee and modification to reflect committee and stakeholder feedback; and
- Presentation of the draft plan to the Board Strategic Planning Committee, the Board of Trustees, faculty and staff and Grade Level Parent Representatives.

## VISION AND MISSION

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### VISION

Highlands School is a recognized leader in independent education known regionally and nationally as a vibrant educational community that emphasizes academic excellence in a supportive environment and nurtures the whole child and every child to reach his or her own potential.

### MISSION

Highlands School's mission is to provide an academically challenging program, to create a love of learning in every student, to instill the habits of success in every student, and to prepare the student to be a responsible and productive member of the community.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Highlands School strategic plan includes **six strategic priority areas: curriculum and academics; student experience; campus and facilities; faculty development and retention; financial health and school governance, and communications.** These are the areas of focus identified as critical to move Highlands forward during the plan period. For each priority area, the plan includes a statement of the strategic goal as well as objectives to support goal achievement and strategies, or action steps, for implementation.

### STRATEGIC PRIORITY One

## CURRICULUM AND ACADEMICS

**Highlands delivers a rigorous curriculum from early childhood through 8th grade that challenges every student to reach his or her potential and prepares all students for lifelong success.**

Highlands embraces a culture that emphasizes academic excellence in a supportive environment and will continue to focus on providing a rigorous academic program meeting not only state but national standards. The school's curricular vision will be driven by best practices in 21st century learning, oriented to critical thinking, problem solving, inquiry, innovation, creativity, collaboration and communication. Highlands is dedicated to nurturing and enabling the success of each child enrolled and will continue to serve infants through 8th graders.

### OUR OBJECTIVES:

- A curriculum that incorporates best 21st century practices in education
- Differentiated learning strategies that enable success for each student
- Technology appropriately integrated into the curriculum
- Global educational experiences available to all students

### OUR STRATEGIES:

- Maintain excellence in core curriculum
- Implement 21st century learning strategies oriented toward creativity, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, problem solving, inquiry and innovation
- Enhance the arts curriculum and integrate arts programming into the classroom
- Ensure robust foreign language programming in all grades
- Explore and define opportunities for the early childhood learning center

## STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Highlands educates the whole child through an experience that is innovative, creative, experiential and collaborative.

Highlands will focus on the education of the whole child through curricular and extracurricular programming that is engaging, experiential and fun. Highlands will continue to engender a love of learning, a capacity for leadership and a sense of character and responsibility in each student. Highlands will continue to incorporate global experiences and arts education into its programming and will strengthen its wellness programming with increased attention to physical fitness, nutrition and athletics.

### OUR OBJECTIVES:

- Opportunities for all students to develop and demonstrate leadership skills
- A rich holistic, wellness program
- A diverse student body to help prepare students for success in an increasingly global world
- Strong character development for all students

### OUR STRATEGIES:

- Provide leadership opportunities at all grades
- Use service learning opportunities to support leadership development
- Offer robust nutrition and physical fitness programming
- Provide broad array of enrichment opportunities through afterschool programming
- Continue to consider diversity in school admissions
- Continue to incorporate character education into curricular and extracurricular programming
- Take advantage of community resources and opportunities for community engagement to support curricular standards and enhance the student experience

## CAMPUS AND FACILITIES

The Highlands campus is welcoming and nurturing with facilities that support 21st century learning.

Highlands will enable student success and encourage school community by providing spaces that support school programming and by strengthening its campus environment. In addition to providing classroom and support spaces that encourage learning, collaboration and exploration, Highlands will provide outdoor spaces that enable classes to take advantage of the quality of our campus while extending the programming beyond building walls. Highlands will attend to the need for additional space to accommodate its current early childhood learning center enrollment while considering appropriate opportunities to expand that program. The Highlands campus environment will be treasured as an asset that builds and represents the distinct Highlands community.

### OUR OBJECTIVES:

- Updated classrooms and learning spaces (indoor and outdoor) that enable 21st century learning strategies
- Facilities to support our commitment to nutrition and wellness
- Appropriate facilities for early childhood education
- Multi-purpose space(s) to accommodate extracurricular and after school activities

### OUR STRATEGIES:

- Develop campus plan to address facilities, open spaces and infrastructure; analyze resources required to implement the plan
- Begin campus improvements as determined by the campus plan

STRATEGIC PRIORITY **four**

## FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION

Highlands attracts and retains a diverse faculty composed of the region's most dedicated and talented teachers.

In order to meet its goals for curriculum and academics and the student experience, Highlands must attract and retain an outstanding faculty. As Highlands seeks to be a school that the area's best teachers consider a challenging, fulfilling and rewarding place to build their careers, the school will systematically encourage and provide for faculty professional development and continuing education, and will attend to issues related to the competitiveness of faculty compensation. Highlands' faculty members will serve as leaders in the greater educational community.

### OUR OBJECTIVES:

- Outstanding professional experience with competitive salary and benefits
- Robust professional development opportunities integrated into the school year
- Strategic industry partners in place to support faculty recruitment

### OUR STRATEGIES:

- Create a plan to enhance faculty compensation and development and identify resources required to implement the plan

STRATEGIC PRIORITY **five**

## FINANCIAL HEALTH AND SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Highlands is positioned for long term financial health sufficient to fund its strategic goals and has in place an active, engaged and effective Board of Trustees.

Highlands will maintain consistently strong financial health with sustainable and reliable ability to support operating and investment needs. Its strong, recurring revenue streams will be supported by revenue generated by a robust, diversified development program that will support both operating and capital expenses.

### OUR OBJECTIVES:

- A strong development program
- Comprehensive financial strategy to support strategic goals
- A balanced approach to funding the school through diversified revenue streams
- High level of Board engagement
- Board composition optimized to support strategic goals

### OUR STRATEGIES:

- Enhance the development program including annual giving, planned giving and potential capital campaign
- Identify optimal enrollment targets
- Perform ongoing operational assessment and financial planning
- Continue to build Board membership and diversity
- Continue efforts to increase Board engagement aligned with Board roles and responsibilities

## COMMUNICATIONS

Highlands is a well-recognized brand and has effective internal and external communications mechanisms in place.

Highlands will build and maintain strong and effective systems of internal and external communications in order to ensure that all constituents have appropriate and timely access to information about the school. Internally, this will require attention to mechanisms of communication between the administration, Board, faculty and staff, parents and students and development of message delivery strategies and vehicles that facilitate information sharing. In addition, Highlands will develop two-way communications strategies with alumni to strengthen alumni connection to the school and enable the school to learn and share the success stories of its graduates. Finally, Highlands will promote a strong brand identity that ensures its reputation aligns with the excellent quality of the educational experience the school delivers.

### OUR OBJECTIVES:

- Well known in the community and beyond for quality of our program and character of our community
- Effective communications among all members of the Highlands community
- Strong connections with school alumni

### OUR STRATEGIES:

- Enhance marketing and community relations efforts to ensure awareness by prospective faculty, families and supporters
- Pursue effective, timely 360° communication between faculty, Board, parents and other key stakeholders
- Develop mechanisms for engaging alumni



# HIGHLANDS SCHOOL

A HIGHER DEGREE OF LEARNING

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