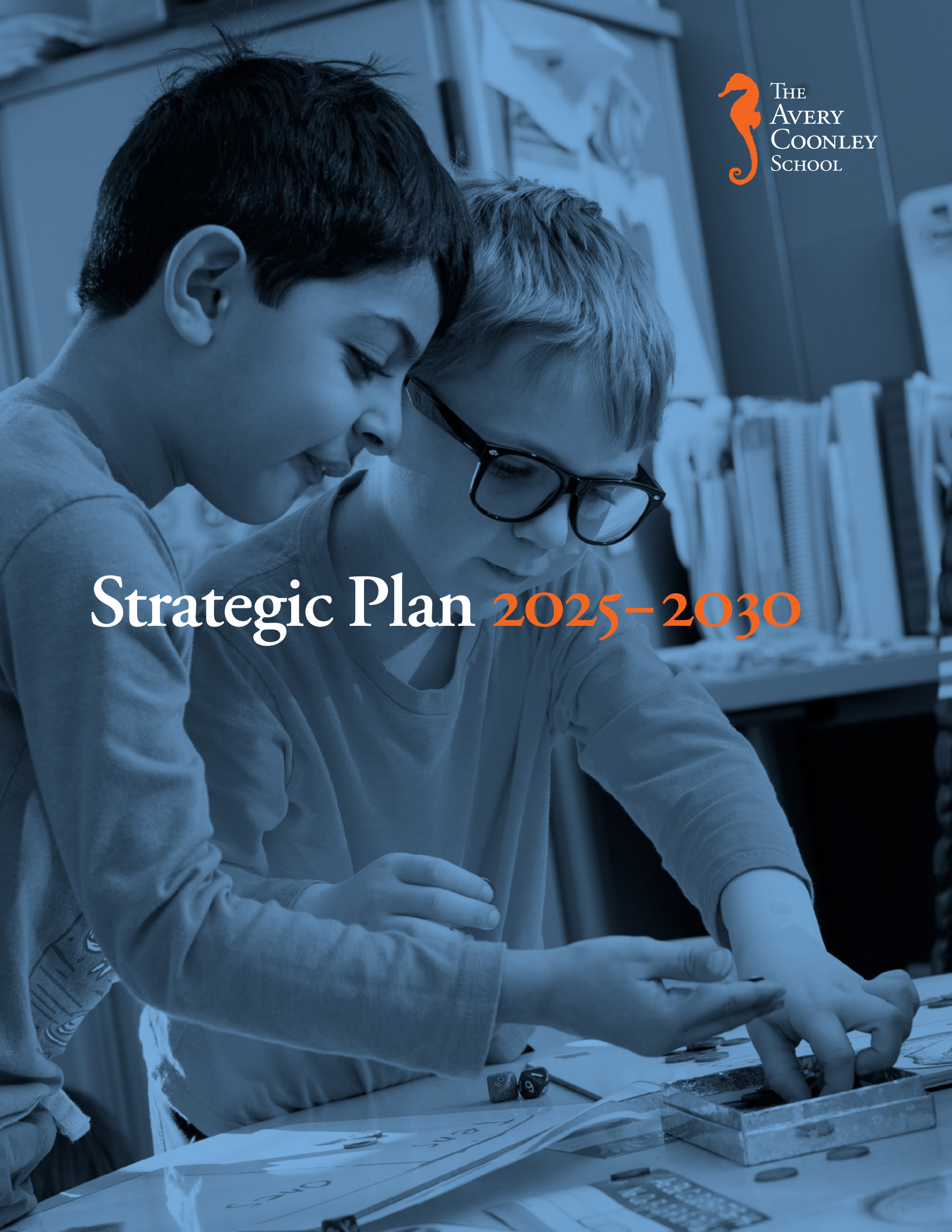


Strategic Plan 2025–2030





Our Mission

The Avery Coonley School elevates high-achieving and gifted learners through immersion in a mutually talented community where intellect, curiosity, and creativity are enhanced by optimal challenge.

Our 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.

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.

Letter to the Community

The Avery Coonley School was founded with a profound purpose: to empower learners to become critical thinkers and independent, lifelong learners. With the launch of our 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, we proudly reaffirm this commitment, ensuring that our mission to educate gifted learners continues to thrive and inspire. This document serves as a living guide, anchoring us in who we are while charting a bold path forward. It ensures that our decisions remain mission-aligned, helping us to stay grounded, adaptable, and accountable in a rapidly changing world.

Our plan centers around four goals: **Innovate Our Curriculum, Nurture Our Community, Amplify Our Impact and Invest in Our Future.** These themes reflect our aspirations as a school community—to celebrate and nurture our unique identity, to foster an inclusive environment where every member feels a sense of belonging, and to remain at the forefront of innovation in education. Each goal is supported by actionable priorities and initiatives that balance inspiration with long-term sustainability.

As you explore this strategic plan, you will find initiatives that enhance our community connections, expand STEAM programming, and deepen our commitment to environmental stewardship. Our commitment to **inclusion and belonging** guides every aspect of our plan, ensuring that equity and inclusion are woven into the fabric of each of our goals and priorities (see pg. 7). The plan also emphasizes leadership development, alumni engagement, and our promise to strengthen long-term infrastructure, endowment, and revenue streams. These initiatives have been shaped by a collaborative effort, expertly led by Jen Reenan, Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees, and Shilpa Gokhale, Trustee and Alum. Our deepest gratitude goes to them, the Steering Committee, and everyone in the ACS community who contributed to this vision for the future.

Together, we will bring these priorities to life, ensuring that ACS remains a place where gifted learners are empowered to achieve extraordinary outcomes. I invite you to join us on this journey as we renew our community, reinforce belonging, and embrace innovation for an even brighter future.

Warm regards,



Kirsty Montgomery, Ph.D.
Head of School
The Avery Coonley School



S. Prasad Veluchamy
Chair, Board of Trustees
The Avery Coonley School

Committee, Structure, and Timeline

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC) was formed in Fall 2023, with the goal of creating a group that represented the diverse stakeholders in the ACS community. The SPSC was co-chaired by Trustees Jennifer Reenan and Shilpa Gokhale, Administration and Faculty were represented by Dr. Kirsty Montgomery, Josh Friess, and Gwen Cooper, the Board of Trustees was represented by Prasad Veluchamy, Lisa Vaughan, and Susan Corwith, and Jim Oberweis and Venkat Venkatakrishnan represented our parent community.

In Fall 2023, a survey for current parents and Group 7 & 8 students was developed and launched in addition to surveys that were sent out to the Board of Trustees and employees. During this time, the SPSC reviewed the data that came out of the school's prior Strategic Plan in addition to feedback received from ISACS.

To get insight from our various stakeholders, we held focus groups in early 2024, getting participation from over 60 parents in 7 parent-centered focus groups in addition to focus groups with faculty and administrators. Dr. Polly Parker from Independent School Management (ISM) ran these groups and presented the findings to the SPSC in early April. ISM also reviewed the key findings from the community survey (parents, students, faculty, administration, and staff) that was done in November/December 2023 with Dr. Montgomery. Feedback was also collected from ACS alumni as to the strategic priorities they wanted the school to consider. Finally, the school administered the National Association of Independent School's (NAIS) Assessment of Inclusivity and Multiculturalism (AIM) survey, which was designed to evaluate diversity, multiculturalism, equity, and justice in independent schools.

A sub-committee of the SPSC compiled and reviewed information from a wide swathe of local public and private schools—including competitive and market data—and presented it to the SPSC in early March, which enabled the SPSC to get a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing ACS within our local academic landscape. In addition, Dr. Susan Corwith, Director of Northwestern University's Center for Talent Development, made a presentation to the SPSC on the trends in gifted education, so the group could keep those in mind as we formulated the Strategic Plan.

Finally, seven school visits were made to schools across the country (East Coast, West Coast, and Midwest) by Dr. Montgomery and various members of the SPSC to make first-hand observations about how these schools meld their curriculum with their physical campus, so that we could take these into account as the Campus Master Plan was being developed.

In May 2024, members of the SPSC, the Board of Trustees, and all the senior administration participated in a strategic planning workshop that was led by a consultant. From this workshop, four strategic goals were identified as being ACS's most significant opportunities and most urgent needs. Following the workshop, workgroups consisting of workshop participants as well as faculty members were formed. These workgroups met throughout the Fall to gather additional input around the identified goals and help identify priorities and action items for each goal.

From these workgroups, Dr. Montgomery worked with Jen Reenan and Shilpa Gokhale to draft the Strategic Plan, with the Board of Trustees and SPSC providing feedback throughout the process.

Strategic Goals and Priorities

Strategic Goal One: **Innovate Our Curriculum**

Empower our gifted students to thrive in an increasingly complex world through curricular opportunities that promote curiosity, creativity, collaboration, critical and analytical thinking, and a love of lifelong learning.

PRIORITY 1: Signature Programming

Create new, distinct curricular program experiences at every group level and across all disciplines that provide transformative learning experiences for our gifted students.

PRIORITY 2: STEAM Expansion

Expand the depth, breadth, and innovation of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) programming at Avery Coonley.

Strategic Goal Two: **Nurture Our Community**

Establish a culture of inclusion, wellness, and engagement that enhances community, inspires confidence and compassion, and prepares students to become future leaders.

PRIORITY 1: Community-Building Initiatives

Strengthen connections among students, faculty, administration, families, and the broader community through inclusive education and enrichment programming, engaging social gatherings, and effective school communications.

PRIORITY 2: Leadership Development

Increase opportunities for students to develop the skills, competencies, and behaviors necessary for future leaders with an emphasis on community service and global citizenship programming that promotes intercultural understanding and fosters awareness about global issues.

PRIORITY 3: Environmental Stewardship

Foster a sense of belonging through nature, by enhancing our outdoor campus, providing more opportunities to study and enjoy nature, and helping students become impactful agents of change for sustainability and the environment.



Strategic Goal Three: **Amplify Our Impact**

Strengthen our reputation and broaden our impact by articulating Avery Coonley's mission to serve gifted children, showcasing the achievements of our students and alumni, and collaborating with our alumni to optimize the student experience.

PRIORITY 1: Gifted Mission & Value Proposition

Identify and articulate the unique value Avery Coonley provides to gifted children and deploy effective communication and marketing strategies to enhance both student retention and new enrollment.

PRIORITY 2: Alumni Engagement

Launch an alumni mentorship and internship program, promote alumni engagement with students, and increase career networking opportunities for alumni.

Strategic Goal Four: **Invest in Our Future**

Commit to the school's long-term viability through infrastructure enhancement, philanthropic outreach, and more diversified programming and revenue streams.

PRIORITY 1: Infrastructure Enhancement

Launch a capital campaign focused on supporting the construction of the most critical and strategic elements of our Campus Master Plan.

PRIORITY 2: Endowment Growth

Increase our endowment to expand student access and opportunity, especially for underrepresented populations, enhance gifted programming, and invest in faculty professional development.

PRIORITY 3: Programming & Revenue Diversification

Identify and develop programs that broaden access to Avery Coonley for gifted children and others while building additional revenue streams to support our mission.



GIVE NOW



Our Commitment to Inclusion and Belonging

At ACS, we recognize that diversity is essential to building a strong, competent, and compassionate community. This belief guides every aspect of our new strategic framework, ensuring that equity and inclusion are woven into the fabric of each of our goals and priorities:

Strategic Goal One: Innovate Our Curriculum

We empower students to thrive in a complex, interconnected world. By incorporating principles of inclusion and belonging into STEAM expansion, curricular innovations, and transformative academic experiences, we equip students with the tools to engage thoughtfully across cultural boundaries.

Strategic Goal Two: Nurture Our Community

We foster inclusion and belonging by strengthening in-person connections and offering programming that reflects diverse perspectives. Initiatives such as community-building activities and leadership development emphasize intercultural understanding, global citizenship, and the dignity of every individual.

Strategic Goal Three: Amplify Our Impact

We celebrate the diversity of our community through alumni engagement, mentorship programs, and communications that highlight the unique contributions of students and alumni from varied backgrounds.

Strategic Goal Four: Invest in Our Future

We reaffirm our commitment to equitable access by growing our endowment to support underrepresented populations, enhancing faculty professional development in inclusion and belonging, and ensuring our facilities and infrastructure reflect the diverse needs of our community.

As a community, we know that fostering inclusion and belonging requires continuous growth and dialogue. By embedding it into every goal and initiative of our strategic plan, ACS is committed to creating a community where respect, empathy, and curiosity guide our actions and inspire our students to contribute to a more just and equitable world.





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