PRINCETON DAY SCHOOL

Connection, Purpose, and Learning That Lasts















> We are preparing students to become independent thinkers and responsible members of a shared community. *Connection, Purpose, and Learning That Lasts* names that work and sets our direction for the years ahead."

Dr. Kelley Nicholson-Flynn P'26
Head of School



The Path Forward for Princeton Day School

A meaningful education shapes both what students know and who they become. Each day, our students are challenged to think deeply, connect authentically with others, and engage with work that matters to them and the world around them. These experiences build habits of mind and character that endure long after the Great Road.

This strategic plan is the natural extension of that commitment. Over the past year, we have listened closely to our students, families, employees, alumni, and trustees to better understand what makes a PDS education distinctive. Together, we reflected on our strengths and identified the areas where we must focus our collective energy. The resulting priorities show how we will live our mission more fully in the years ahead.

Through these goals, we will deepen student learning, expand opportunities beyond the classroom, strengthen community bonds, and ensure the school remains strong and adaptable for generations to come. At its core, *Connection, Purpose, and Learning That Lasts* is a recommitment to the qualities that have long defined PDS: intellectual vitality, strong relationships, and joyful, meaningful learning. This work belongs to all of us.

I am grateful to the many members of our community who helped craft this plan, and I look forward to the work we will do together to bring it to life.

Semper Luceat,

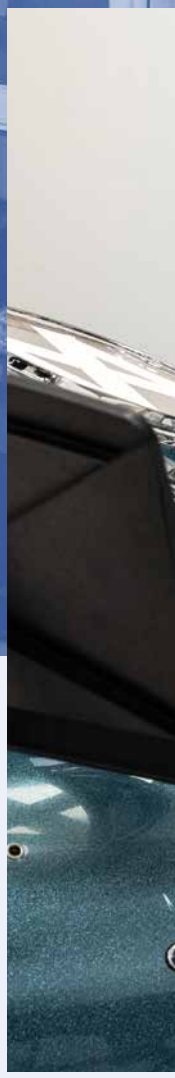
Kelley Nicholson-Flynn

Dr. Kelley Nicholson-Flynn P'26
Head of School





CONNECTION, PURPOSE, AND LEARNING THAT LASTS



At Princeton Day School, we are committed to cultivating intellectual vitality and strength of character within a community of compassion, shared responsibility, and play. From PreK through Grade 12, our goal is to develop learners who are curious and deeply engaged in the present, and prepared to act in the future as accomplished professionals and thoughtful citizens — grounded in the connection, purpose, and enduring learning that define a PDS education.

> "We're living through extraordinary change in technology, AI, geopolitics, climate, social cohesion, and the nature of work itself. This feels like an important moment for PDS to reimagine education for the future while staying grounded in our core values."
>
> **Vinay Trivedi '09**
> *Trustee*

> Our work is to help students pause and reflect on a deeper question: what actually matters to them, and why? When students pursue work that feels meaningful and authentic, amazing outcomes follow."
>
> **Sarah Graham P'33 '38**
> *Director of College Counseling*



Research confirms what we know from experience: Young people learn best when appropriately challenged by work that matters — intellectually and personally. This intersection of healthy rigor and purpose ensures they move beyond short-term performance toward deep, lasting understanding. Our graduates thrive in college and beyond because of the habits of mind and character they've developed at PDS through the guidance of exceptional educators. Across every division, this begins with building durable foundational knowledge while teaching students *how* to learn. Equally essential is cultivating character: anchoring students in our core values and in the habits that help them navigate setbacks and sustain growth. We prioritize developing the human capabilities of creativity and complex problem-solving. And, we believe this work depends on a community in which each student experiences joy and belonging.

Beyond our campus, societal and economic landscapes are shifting, creating a complex and uncertain future. Technological advances, particularly in artificial intelligence, are reshaping how we learn and work. At the same time, schools are grappling with forces that challenge our students' active engagement in their learning. These include the disconnect between traditional schooling and real-world demands, digital distractions, inconsistent experiences of belonging, and pressure to gain admission to college, leading to a culture where the need to perform can come at the cost of well-being and true intellectual and personal growth.



PDS is well-positioned to meet this moment. In a PreK-12 community shaped by a breadth of perspectives and experiences, students are challenged and capable of taking risks because of the support they receive from peers and adults. We are already refining our academic program, expanding learning through partnerships and authentic application, and strengthening opportunities for mentorship and leadership across the school. Central to this work is an investment in our educators. Student success depends on dedicated faculty who bring expertise, a passion for teaching and learning, cultural awareness, and skill in cultivating trusting relationships.

Guided by our mission, the strategic priorities that follow are designed to enrich connection, strengthen purpose, and ensure learning that lasts. Achieving this requires deliberate choices about where we invest our energy and resources, so that students experience learning as a lifelong source of empowerment and joy.



MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

Our Mission
is to cultivate intellectual vitality and strength of character within a community of compassion, shared responsibility, and play.

Our Vision
is to empower each student to act with wisdom and purpose.

Our Values
are Humanity, Creativity, Intellect, Joy, and Stewardship.







> Our community is shaped by daily acts of intention: inviting voices in, engaging disagreement with respect and care, and building joy and belonging together."

Anthony McKinley
Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Our Values

Humanity

We nurture the qualities that connect us and foster a sense of belonging: openness, empathy, respect, and kindness. Affirming each individual's inherent dignity, we lead with integrity and a deep sense of what it means to be human.

Creativity

We discover possibilities where others see limitations, finding insight in setbacks and approaching challenges with bold curiosity and resourcefulness. Through imagination, we inspire innovation.

Intellect

We practice inquiry, critical reasoning, and the essential art of learning how to learn. As teachers and students, we evolve our understanding through meaningful dialogue, building the habits of mind that sustain academic growth and an enduring love of discovery.

Joy

We embrace the energy of purposeful connection and exploration. In moments of growth, wonder, and delight, learning becomes a source of lasting inspiration and fulfillment.

Stewardship

We thrive on the shared knowledge that we are all connected — to each other, across communities, and throughout the natural world. By learning from history, making intentional choices, and taking deliberate action, we shape both today and tomorrow.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1 Deepen Student Learning

Students build mastery, develop strong habits of mind, and apply their learning with purpose.

2 Expand Learning Beyond the Classroom

Clear pathways in athletics, the arts, and co-curricular programs help students explore interests and grow with confidence.

3 Enrich Community Life

School spirit and belonging deepen through relationships, shared traditions, and meaningful experiences.

4 Secure a Strong and Enduring Future

Aligned resources, strong systems, and community investment ensure clarity of direction and long-term sustainability.











How This Plan Was Shaped

Over the past year, the Strategic Planning Committee engaged hundreds of members of the PDS community to help shape the school's direction. Input was gathered through interviews, surveys, employee and family think tanks, and a Community Design Day. This process surfaced both the strengths that define PDS today and the opportunities ahead. Through careful analysis and deliberation, the committee identified the areas where focused effort will have the greatest impact.

The resulting priorities reflect a shared commitment to connection, purpose, and learning that lasts. This plan focuses our energy on areas of opportunity, while strengthening the overall PDS experience. Even where specific initiatives are not named individually, the work outlined here is designed to impact the full breadth of our program. The goals will be pursued thoughtfully over the next several years, ensuring that our efforts remain responsive to the community's needs.



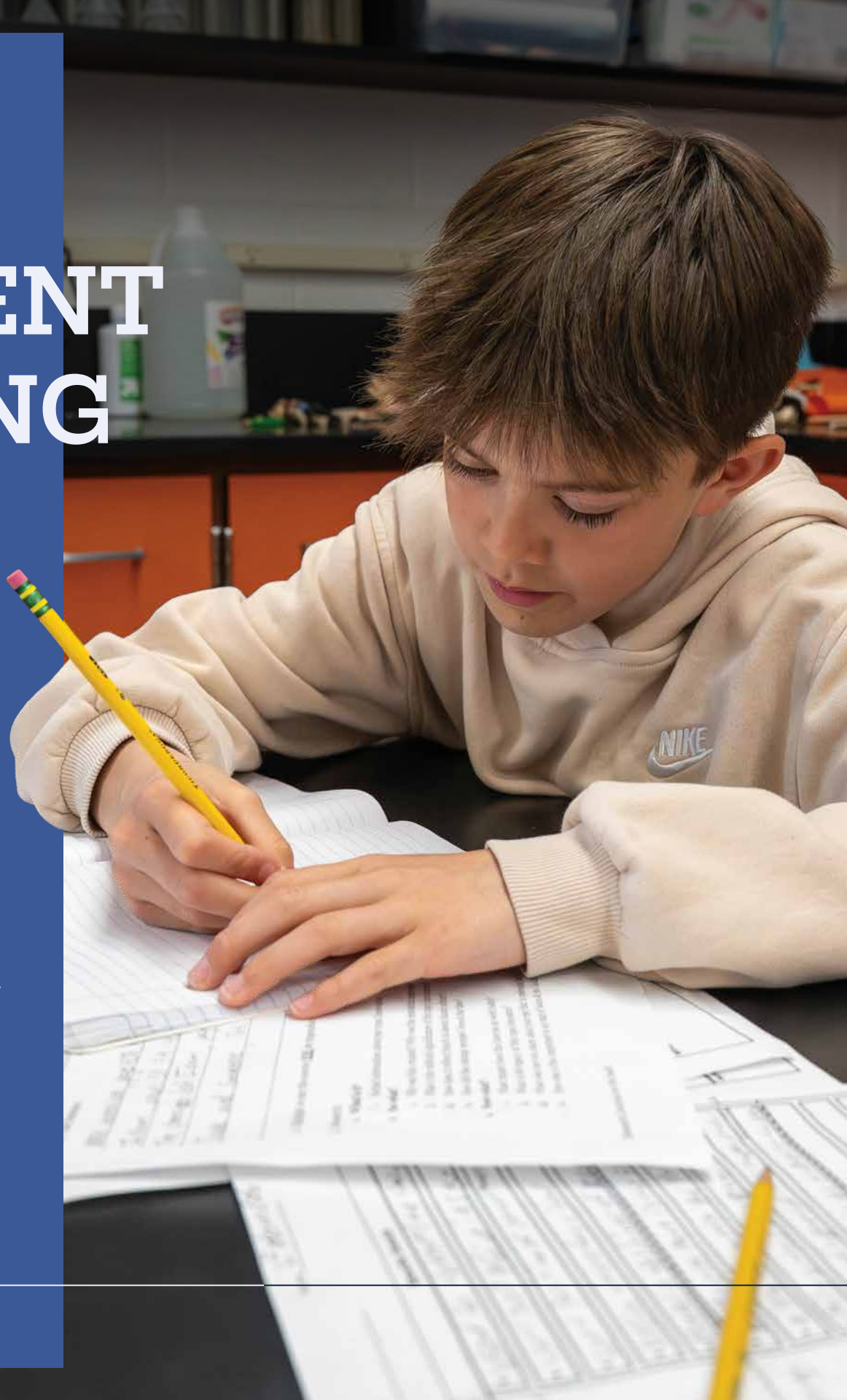
PAVING A GREATER ROAD TOGETHER



PRIORITY 1

DEEPEN STUDENT LEARNING

Academic excellence is central to the PDS mission of cultivating intellectual vitality, long defined by strong teaching and ambitious academic standards. True excellence depends on *deep learning*, in which students move beyond memorization toward genuine understanding, seeing how ideas relate and why they matter. Research tells us that deep learning occurs when students pursue mastery of a subject, become active participants in scholarly work, and apply their learning creatively to authentic problems. Supported by expert educators and a curriculum infused with our core values — humanity, creativity, intellect, joy, and stewardship — students build the habits of mind that sustain a lifetime of learning.



> "Ninth-graders often don't recognize when they're stuck. We've reimagined the curriculum and designed supports that address their developmental needs."
>
> **Zaneta Chambers '95**
> *Middle and Upper School Learning Specialist*



INITIATIVE 1

Evolve the Academic Program

We will ensure that learning builds intentionally over time and enables depth, transfer, and meaningful inquiry by:

- Supporting student challenge, exploration, and advanced study through clarification of the PreK-12 academic progression, ongoing curriculum redesign, and revised graduation requirements.
- Incorporating key skills, knowledge, and mindsets that support our mission, including learning-to-learn, critical thinking, social-emotional development, civil discourse, and global citizenship.
- Integrating a breadth of voices, perspectives, and ideas across the curriculum.
- Establishing approaches to the safe, ethical, and effective use of technology and artificial intelligence.
- Defining and enriching our signature curricular programs to reflect PDS's strengths and provide pathways for distinction, innovation, and connection within and beyond the community.
- Leveraging our location to connect students with external expertise and experiences in research, culture, and service.

INITIATIVE 2

Advance Professional Excellence

We will invest in our educators so they continue to develop content expertise, hone their teaching practice, and create innovative programs to maximize student learning by:

- Strengthening retention and recruitment strategies to attract and build a talented, values-aligned, and diverse group of educators.
- Energizing a culture of continuous improvement through meaningful feedback and recognition, coaching and mentorship, and professional development.
- Fostering faculty professional innovation and practitioner research, in conversation with leading voices in the field of education.
- Ensuring staffing supports program continuity and thoughtful evolution.

INITIATIVE 3

Optimize Learning Time and Space

We will redesign the PreK-12 academic schedule and evaluate our current use of classroom and campus spaces to enhance deep learning, well-being, and collaboration by:

- Reimagining the school day to balance the developmental needs of our PreK-12 learners and minimize conflict.
- Refining the yearly calendar to maximize days in session while reducing stress points for students, families, and educators.
- Addressing schedule and space challenges in each division and program.

> "Deep learning invites students to question, to wonder, and to construct meaning in their own lives and in relationship to others. Over time, they draw on those ideas in new contexts because the understanding endures."
>
> **Caroline Lee**
> *Academic Dean*

PRIORITY 2

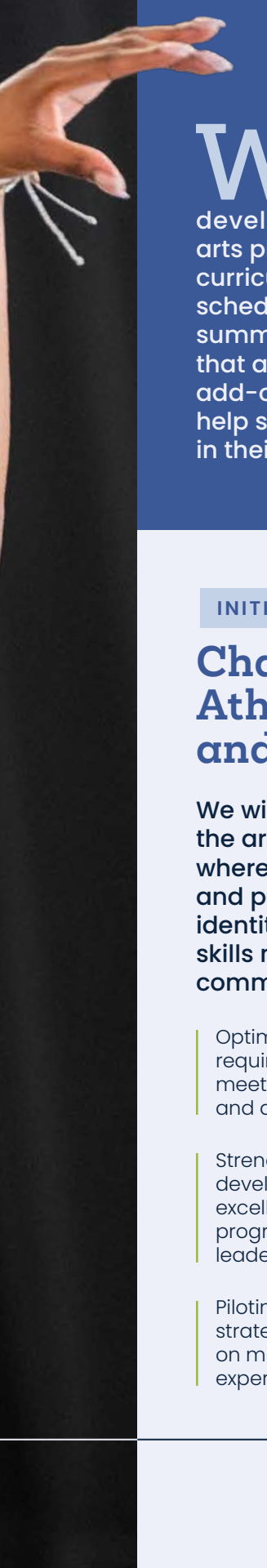
EXPAND LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM



> Athletics and the arts are where character is forged. You can't simulate the resilience it takes to miss a shot or hit a wrong note and keep going."

Eric Schnepf

Upper School History Teacher, Class Dean, and Varsity Baseball Head Coach



Whether on a team, in a production or ensemble, or in service of a cause, co-curricular experiences are powerful spaces for expanding learning and developing confidence and character. Athletics and the arts play a distinctive role within this landscape, bridging curricular and co-curricular life through specialized facilities, schedules, and expertise. Similarly, clubs, after-school, and summer programs provide essential pathways for exploration that are both serious and playful. These opportunities are not add-ons to learning. Along with our academic program, they help students discover who they are and engage purposefully in their communities.

> "Computer science is often viewed as purely technical. In practice, our students experience it as a space for creativity, collaboration, and human-centered problem-solving. It's work that connects skill to purpose."
>
> **Justin Sheehan**
> *Computer Science and Innovation Chair*

INITIATIVE 1

Champion Athletics and the Arts

We will affirm athletics and the arts as vital spaces where competition, creation, and performance shape identity and the character skills necessary to thrive in community by:

- Optimizing facilities, staffing, requirements, and schedules to meet the evolving needs of the arts and athletic programs.
- Strengthening continuity, development, and competitive excellence within the athletics program, including expanded leadership roles for varsity coaches.
- Piloting recruitment and access strategies and evaluating impact on mission alignment, student experience, and program quality.

INITIATIVE 2

Build Co-Curricular Progressions

We will design intentional PreK-12 co-curricular pathways that move students from introductory participation to advanced pursuit by:

- Establishing clear program sequences that build student expertise over time, while remaining flexible enough to support new interests and innovative opportunities.
- Adjusting staffing models to sustain these programs through a thoughtful balance of faculty leadership and external expertise.

INITIATIVE 3

Reimagine After-School and Summer Programs

We will transform our auxiliary offerings into well-integrated extensions of the student experience that enhance learning and acknowledge family needs by:

- Aligning after-school and summer offerings with the school's strategic priorities and areas of programmatic strength.
- Designing programs that promote meaningful participation and developmental appropriateness for students.

PRIORITY 3

ENRICH COMMUNITY LIFE



> When I think about PDS, I think about the moments when we were all in the same place — the games, the performances, the traditions. The times when it wasn't about the big win but about who was there and how it felt to be part of it."
>
> **Grayson McLaughlin '26**



Strong communities create the conditions for deep learning. At PDS, this strength is built through relationships that develop across age groups and backgrounds, through shared traditions and celebrations that energize student life, and through physical spaces designed to invite connection throughout the day. This network of connections among students, families, alumni, and educators gives young people a sense of belonging that they need to take healthy risks, discover their voices, and contribute to something larger than themselves.

> "One of the gifts of being a PreK–12 school is the chance to bring students together across divisions and grade levels in the many spaces where identity and leadership take shape."
>
> **Amy Matlack**
> *Head of Libraries*

INITIATIVE 1

Energize School Spirit

We will cultivate a vibrant, participatory community culture across class years and interests by:

- Uniting students regularly around shared experiences beyond the classroom to foster connections.
- Removing barriers to participation in community events to ensure all students and families feel welcome.
- Leveraging existing traditions to build collective identity while celebrating diverse cultures and lived experiences.

INITIATIVE 2

Foster Connection and Responsibility

We will ensure that students form authentic relationships and develop a sense of responsibility to others by:

- Building upon mentorship and peer leadership structures that connect students across age groups and backgrounds.
- Strengthening advisory, small-group, and affinity group structures to provide belonging and support.

INITIATIVE 3

Design Spaces That Invite Connection

We will shape our physical environment to encourage community interactions throughout the day by:

- Evaluating indoor and outdoor spaces to identify how they facilitate or limit socialization, movement, and informal use.
- Implementing targeted redesigns to create flexible, cross-divisional environments that support an active student life.

PRIORITY 4

SECURE A STRONG AND ENDURING FUTURE



> A school's future depends on people who believe in it enough to invest in it, not only financially, but through their time, leadership, and care. What I received here shaped my life. Supporting the school is simply my way of ensuring that experience continues for others."

John Wellemeyer PCD'52 P'18 '18
Trustee

> Expanding access allows us to welcome students who excel academically and contribute meaningfully to the co-curricular life of the school."

Julie Cucchi P'22 '24
Director of Admission and Financial Aid



The work outlined in this plan depends on a strong, adaptive institution and the capacity to sustain itself over time. PDS must steward resources wisely and make evidence-based decisions that position the school for long-term success while actively engaging our community in the philanthropic investments required to achieve our strategic priorities. When goals, resources, and systems are aligned, the school can communicate its identity and direction with clarity and focus its energy where it matters most: ensuring every student has full access to the deep learning, meaningful connection, and sense of purpose that define a PDS education, now and in the future.

INITIATIVE 1

Strengthen Financial Stewardship and Impact

We will build financial resilience and operational efficiency to sustain the school's mission while remaining attentive to the cost of education by:

- Deepening our philanthropic culture to raise the resources required to support our strategic priorities and maintain competitiveness in faculty compensation and financial aid.
- Aligning staffing and operational systems to ensure they match current enrollment and program needs.

INITIATIVE 2

Lead with Inquiry and Evidence

We will continue to create a culture of data-informed decision-making by:

- Advancing capacity and structures for ongoing data collection, analysis, and application.
- Developing internal data dashboards that create feedback loops, track progress toward strategic goals, and drive alignment between mission and practice.

INITIATIVE 3

Amplify the PDS Story

We will enhance recognition, distinction, and pride by:

- Aligning mission, visual identity, and messaging to establish a consistent and recognizable PDS brand.
- Building the capacity — people, processes, and content — to boldly share stories of impact within and beyond our community.

This strategic plan sets our direction, but it is our educators, students, and families who will bring the work to life. By embracing these priorities together, we are strengthening the education we offer today and securing the school we want for tomorrow. Our students will leave PDS not only prepared for what comes next, but carrying with them the connection, purpose, and learning that will sustain them for a lifetime.

PUTTING THE PLAN INTO PRACTICE



Clear priorities require clear follow-through. Each year, the Head of School will work with the Board of Trustees to set annual goals aligned with the plan's initiatives to guide work across academics, co-curricular and community life, and operations. These goals anchor daily decision-making in long-term purpose.

Progress will be communicated regularly through a consistent set of channels, ensuring transparency, alignment, and shared accountability across the community.



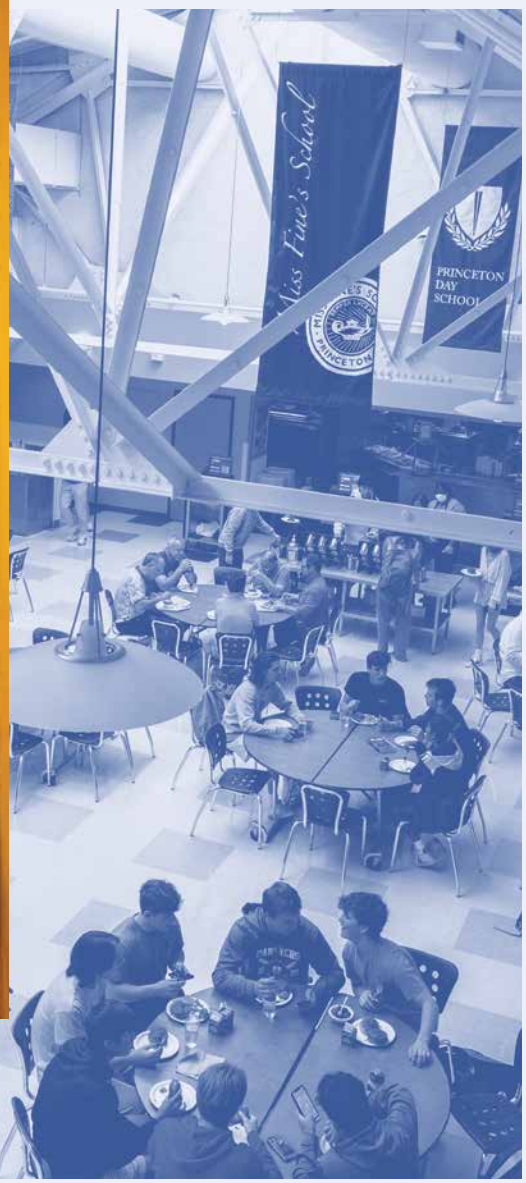
HOW WE'LL SHARE PROGRESS

Late Summer
Opening letter outlining priorities for the year ahead

Fall
State of the School address

Late Fall
Family survey and feedback opportunity

Spring
Coffee talks with the Head of School and members of the Leadership Team



Strategic Planning Committee

STEERING COMMITTEE

Christopher B. Bobbitt P'22 '26, Chair of the Board of Trustees

Kelley Nicholson-Flynn P'26, Head of School

Amanda Maher P'28 '30 '34, Trustee

Deanna Harkel P'38, Director of Marketing and Communications

Lauren Ledley, Director of Academic Technology and Institutional Research

Lisa Surace P'22 '24, Associate Head of School

Myriam Folkes, Assistant to the Head of School

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jixin Dai P'26 '33, Trustee

Wesley D. Markham, Trustee

Shefali Shah P'30, Trustee

Robert Clemens, Director of Facility Operations

Jon Cormier P'29 '31 '34, Director of Advancement

Katie Fay, Director of Athletics and Physical Education

Sarah Graham P'33 '38, Director of College Counseling

Amanda Gregory P'37, Upper School Foreign Language Faculty

Katie Jamieson '96 P'27 '30 '34, Lower School Language Arts Chair

Caroline Lee, Academic Dean

Jonathan Martin, Middle School Dean and Performing Arts Faculty

Anthony McKinley, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Katie O'Shaughnessy P'27, Head of Upper School

Anita Shah P'22 '25, Parents Association

Matt Trowbridge '98 P'34 '36, Middle School Humanities Faculty and Director of Squash

The *Journal*

Progress update in the school magazine

Together, these touchpoints keep the community informed and connected to the work as it progresses.

> We have a common aim: to give the best possible education to our students, to develop to the fullest their minds, talents, and characters, to stimulate creative and independent thinking, and to give them opportunities to experience the joy of learning and the responsibilities and privileges of democratic life."

Shirley Davis
Headmistress of Miss Fine's School (1943–1963)

Princeton Day School

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pds.org