Collective Innovation

The 2016-2020 CDS Strategic Plan
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A Note from Lucy Farey-Jones and Heather O’Donnell, Co-Chairs of the Strategic Planning Committee

When we set out to guide the strategic plan on behalf of the diverse, quirky, passionate, creative, sometimes opinionated community that is CDS, we knew we wanted a process that welcomed participation from everyone. We also were determined to take a good look at the rapidly changing world around us and be honest about the implications of these changes for CDS. And we were seeking a unifying principle that would rally the community. Just as the last strategic plan from 2008 called for growth, this plan needed a single unifying theme that would kick off the goals and galvanize the community.

The inception of this plan started with a series of interviews with parents, faculty, and staff. We also did desk research, watched endless TED talks, and talked with subject matter experts in our community and beyond. Courtesy of a parent, we even invited the Institute of the Future to present to us at one point. We then held the first of two full-day board retreats to agree on the five big pillars of the plan.

The goals on the following pages flow from this work and are an articulation of the five pillars that we believe make CDS the special place that it is.

We are planning for the long-term health of our school in highly interesting times.

Next, we shared the pillars with the faculty, staff, and administration, inviting them to contribute their ideas for strategies to reach these goals. These were very useful sessions. We also hosted a series of open discussion forums for parents to help focus the strategies. Many of the ideas that came from the faculty and parent sessions are reflected in the strategies that you will see in this plan, and we are grateful for all the input we received.

We then held the second of our full-day board retreats to debate and formalize the strategic priorities on a Sunday in January of this year in a very invigorating and inspiring day at 601 Dolores.

We are planning for the long-term health of our school in highly interesting times. Diversity is not a nicety for CDS—it is a differentiated advantage. We know that diversity makes us all better as a society. A child who grows up amongst a diverse group of people grows up a better person, no matter the background of that child. Diverse groups produce better thinking than homogeneous groups. It is true in schools, and it is true in workplaces. Thus, diversity is...
something we have to protect and yet, for some aspects of diversity—particularly socio-economic diversity—the tide is against us. We find ourselves in what some say is ground zero of the gentrification wars in the city, if not the country. San Francisco is now the most expensive city in the nation in which to live, and the demographics of our parent base are shifting. As we think about the school we want to be in the future, this is both an opportunity and a challenge.

Of course, the increasing cost of life in San Francisco also presents a real challenge in retaining our faculty. The city is facing an exodus of teachers, social workers, artists, and other workers who have helped make San Francisco a unique city. Because of the high cost of living in San Francisco, these important members of the community are being forced to either endure longer commutes or leave the city entirely.

On top of these seismic shifts, we are in an industry that is being disrupted. Innovation in education is in full swing. Yet, because of this innovation, the potential of one individual to change the world has never been greater. Access to knowledge has never been greater. We see time and time again the power of this. We see it in our 8th graders working in the new Innovation Lab, making and fitting robotic hands or making their own smart phone chargers. The fact is that children today, with the right tools, and the right social emotional learning, really can change the world. Never has our belief that Passionate Citizens Change The World been more relevant.

The changes we see can catalyze us as a community. And ours is an amazing community full of compassionate, creative, and entrepreneurial individuals. As a community, we can harness innovation to defend our mission of diversity, strengthen our community ties, and enhance our children’s educational experiences and their sense of connection to the world around them. Thus, the theme of this strategic plan is collective innovation.

Please take some time to read through this CDS Strategic Plan, which represents many hours of work by many different constituencies: trustees and parents, as well as faculty, staff, and administration. The plan will serve as a road map for CDS over the next several years.

Thank you, and warmest regards,
Lucy and Heather

A Note from Lucy Farey-Jones and Heather O’Donnell
Our Guiding Principles

The CDS Vision
CDS Is A World-Changing School

The CDS Belief
Passionate Citizens Change the World

How We Do This
▶ COMMUNITY
▶ CAMPUS
▶ CONSTRUCTIVISM

Our Mission
Children's Day School recognizes that every child is born with unique gifts. Our mission is to develop each student’s genius by providing an inspiring environment where challenging academics are inseparable from social, artistic, and physical experiences, and where children of all backgrounds feel safe to be themselves, become avid learners, and strive to make a difference in the lives of others.

Our Values
The Children’s Day School community nourishes and celebrates diversity, promotes justice and respect for all people, and aspires to act always with integrity, compassion, and generosity.
The Five Pillars of our Strategic Plan

Below are the things that make CDS truly unique.

1. Program
Deliver program excellence to our students, faculty, and families.

2. Students
Educate and raise confident, passionate citizens with a powerful worldview.

3. Community
Strengthen our supportive, diverse, and innovative community using the principles inherent in our founding purpose.

4. Environment
Develop and maintain our outdoor and indoor facilities to provide an environmentally sensitive, enriching, child-centered learning environment.

5. Finances
Lay the foundation for long-term financial sustainability and strength.
Program

Deliver program excellence to our students, faculty, and families.

Children’s Day School provides a distinctive curriculum designed to encourage curiosity, build academic competency, foster resilience, and prepare students to solve the problems of an increasingly complex world. Children’s Day School embraces technology but believes that it works in service of a bigger goal, that of raising well-rounded global citizens. We believe that by better defining and articulating the core tenets of our program and by attracting and supporting educators who embrace our philosophy, CDS will stand out as an exceptional place for students, faculty, and families.

Strategic Priorities

1. Articulate how the curriculum builds across grade levels for these core tenets of our program: social justice, social-emotional learning, and ecological literacy.

2. Leverage our teaching philosophy and approach based on constructivism, to foster a joy of learning.

3. Make both teaching and learning visible to those outside the classroom through the use of various technology platforms, thereby strengthening school-family partnerships.

4. Attract, support, and retain a team of world-class teachers and administrators who will provide an excellent education and an enriching learning environment for our students.

5. Articulate a technology vision that supports our mission and strategic priorities.
Students

Educate and raise confident, passionate citizens with a powerful worldview.

Children’s Day School honors the diverse minds and spirits of our children and ensures that they leave CDS with a passion to change the world. Our students are collaborators, team-builders, creative problem solvers, out-of-the-box thinkers, and unique individuals who have a strong sense of social justice, civic responsibility, and environmental stewardship. We believe that our combination of traditional academics along with unconventional learning opportunities results in great students who have the capacity to do great things—in high school and beyond.

Strategic Priorities

1. Expose students to diverse perspectives and provide them with the tools to engage and thrive in a world that requires critical thinking to solve problems large and small.

2. Strengthen experiential learning opportunities to broaden our students’ worldview.

3. Thoroughly examine our learning services program, defining our objectives, benchmarking against peer schools and making improvements that better support our current and future student population.

4. Evaluate the mission statement in context of our vision and strategic plan, engaging the community to thoughtfully revise it if necessary.
Community

**Strengthen our supportive, diverse, and innovative community using the principles inherent in our founding purpose.**

The Children’s Day School community nourishes and celebrates diversity, promotes social justice and respect for all people, and aspires to act always with integrity, compassion, and generosity. Our families, students, staff, alumni, and friends have a special connection that sets us apart from many of our peer schools.

**Strategic Priorities**

1. Maintain a leadership position among Bay Area schools in socio-economic diversity. Strive for a “no majority” admission goal.

2. Leverage the innovative and talented CDS community with the goal of strengthening community and increasing parent involvement.

3. Provide clear and effective communication across all divisions about the school’s programs, students, and accomplishments, using technology to get regular parental feedback.

4. Forge meaningful connections with our external community and local neighborhoods, leveraging our relationships with Aim High, the San Francisco Boys & Girls Club, and other organizations to attract and serve under-resourced youth.

5. Broaden our definition of community to include other schools around the world, sharing our ideas and learning from their perspectives.

6. Strengthen and increase awareness of the unique CDS brand in the wider community.
Environment

Develop and maintain our outdoor and indoor facilities to provide an environmentally sensitive, enriching, child-centered learning environment.

The campus facilities of Children’s Day School are an asset and a source of pride for us. Our sunny, safe play yard at 333 Dolores Street, the remarkable farm and garden, and the grand, state-of-the-art middle school building at 601 Dolores Street signal the school’s maturity, growth, and stability. We believe that carefully considered and well-maintained indoor and outdoor learning environments enrich our students’ experience.

Strategic Priorities

1. Strengthen the connections of our learning spaces and physical campus to the school’s educational goals.

2. Provide spaces that promote outdoor learning and the study of environmental sciences at both campuses.

3. Maintain and improve the physical assets of our campus to align with our commitment to environmental sustainability.

4. Evaluate whether our current facilities are meeting the needs of our students and update the facilities master plan to reflect the changing needs of our community, including athletic facilities and preschool facilities.
Lay the foundation for long-term financial sustainability and strength.

Children’s Day School has a strong commitment to socio-economic diversity. Our sliding scale tuition program, our desire to retain extraordinary teachers, and the high cost of living in San Francisco require that we be diligent, thoughtful, and innovative in planning for the future.

Strategic Priorities

1. Implement financial and fundraising strategies that provide long-term sustainability including raising funds to complete the facilities master plan and a plan for establishing an endowment.

2. Understand and build a culture of philanthropy at CDS by educating our community, encouraging participation, and building ambassadors for the school’s mission.

3. Invest in CDS teachers by maintaining compensation that is competitive with peer schools, budgeting for realistic salary increases, and investigating options to assist with housing costs.

4. Commit to sustainable goals and policies for sliding scale that reflect our values, balancing both affordability and accessibility.

5. Continue to diligently manage the annual operating budget, including restoring operating reserves to recommended levels or higher, and explore alternative revenue streams.
How You Can Get Involved

Coming out of the ratification of this plan, the board and faculty have formed many task forces. These groups will work on the identified strategic priorities over the next five academic years. The task forces range in subject matter from teacher housing to alternative revenue streams and many others. If you would like to be involved please email Lindsay Galligan, Liaison to the Board of Trustees, at lindsayg@cds-sf.org and tell us how you would like to help.