



Making a Difference

THE STRATEGIC VISION FOR FLINT HILL SCHOOL 2015-2020





Dear Flint Hill School Family,

Over the past year, our community has been involved in a strategic visioning process. It has been a major effort in which our Board of Trustees, Headmaster, faculty, staff, parents and alumni have shared in developing a long-range vision and sustainable plan for the School. Our new Strategic Vision outlines key initiatives that build on our successes, and charts a course that will take us to new levels of excellence in education.

This planning process, which included more than 250 participants, has provided Flint Hill with the necessary direction to construct the final plan, which was ratified by the Board of Trustees on May 20. Among the most significant themes in the plan are:

- An unwavering pursuit of academic excellence that will prepare our students to succeed in college—and beyond;
- The ongoing commitment to attracting and retaining the very best faculty; to serving our students and supporting the ways they learn best; to maintaining our leadership role in the thoughtful and appropriate integration of technological advances; to reviewing our buildings and grounds and updating our master facilities site plan with an eye toward the current and emerging needs of our programs; and
- A focus on sustaining our robust community through the engagement and involvement of our alumni and parents and the leadership of our Board of Trustees.

Working with our Headmaster John Thomas, his outstanding and capable leadership team and gifted faculty, the Board of Trustees looks forward to strengthening our School community—in partnership with our parents and alumni—forging new opportunities and embracing new ideas as we work together to achieve our goals.

I am grateful to each of the many participants who have readily contributed their time, feedback, thoughtful analysis and opinions to this exercise. Most of all, I have relished this opportunity to be fully immersed in Flint Hill's community of highly committed, incredibly competent and caring people.

You have my abiding gratitude,



Otis (Skip) Coston
CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Executive Summary

Flint Hill must always be vigilant in keeping the program mission-driven and effective. The quality of academics, co-curricular programs, athletics and the arts must remain healthy and vigorous and—equally important—the School needs to maintain a safe and nurturing environment for the social and emotional growth of its students.

The world is changing rapidly and the questions we face in society are becoming increasingly complex. Thoughtful planning must ensure classroom support, enabling best practices and innovation to flourish while maintaining Flint Hill's position of leadership in independent school education. Flint Hill's reputation has been built on a student-centered and innovative academic program with a forward-thinking perspective and an innate understanding of differentiated learning styles, as well as by powerful intellectual, athletic and artistic emphases, and a commitment to service and civic engagement.

At this point in time, Flint Hill must:

- Continue to attract and retain the most passionate and qualified educators;
- Further our commitment to the continuity of the academic program and the vitality and relevance of technological advances as an integral component thereof;
- Apply our understanding and knowledge of differentiated learning styles and the continuum of how students learn best across all divisions;
- Identify potential opportunities for engaging and partnering with members of our community and beyond to afford real-world and experiential programs that enhance the student experience while defining the limits to potential programmatic expansion;
- Address the challenge of the increasing cost of an independent school education;
- Promote a culture of feedback for continued growth and development;
- Afford sufficient time in the schedule for students and faculty to learn and grow through exploration and discovery, to delve deeply into the subject matter, and to balance academic pursuits and priorities with co-curricular activities and experiences, and;
- Steward our human and capital resources in the most appropriate way.

Introduction

In planning, that old maxim applies, “If you don’t know where you are going, any path will lead you there.” Flint Hill School began its planning process in the spring of 2014 precisely to concentrate its human and financial resources on programs and initiatives the School community agrees are most essential. Planning propels thought and action.

Flint Hill School, by every indicator, is healthy and robust. With a clear vision and associated financial plan, Flint Hill can strengthen itself further, seeking new opportunities and exploring innovative practices that will better enable it to meet its mission. The planning process, therefore, is centered on supporting ongoing initiatives, refining current programs, and defining new ones.

Following the parent and alumni surveys last spring, the strategic planning process was the focus of much energy throughout the autumn. Led by a Steering Committee, the views of the broader community were solicited through open forums, focus groups and interviews. Six task forces—made up of board members, parents, faculty, staff, and alumni—took on the responsibility of distilling the information brought forward and supplemented their findings with research, comparative studies of other independent schools, and further discussion with various stakeholders. Areas of inquiry included academic excellence—both in terms of personnel and in terms of program—community and constituent relations, governance and leadership, signature programs, STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), and student life. The Steering Committee also reviewed the mission and vision of Flint Hill School.

In February 2015, approximately 92 members of the Flint Hill community representing faculty, staff, trustees, current parents, alumni, and parents of alumni came together to review the findings of the task forces and cast a vision for the future of our school. Over the course of two days, and through the process of the retreat, the findings of the task forces were distilled into a series of objectives and initiatives within five key priority areas: academic program, the student experience, community and constituent relations, governance, and finance. Embedded in each of these areas are Flint Hill’s abiding commitment to a mission that fosters academic excellence, holds true to our four core values, is innovative in its program and curricular design and delivery, and fosters a supportive environment that allows students to grow and develop to their full potential. These essential commitments are rooted directly or indirectly in every aspect of this plan.

The thrust of Flint Hill’s Strategic Vision is the reinforced commitment to academic excellence, student and community engagement, and an intentional effort to build on our strengths and innovate in ways that keep education relevant and dynamic. Flint Hill will achieve this through the following strategic goals:



- I. A dynamic academic program
- II. A transformative student experience
- III. An engaged community
- IV. A strong model of governance, and
- V. A sustainable future

Flint Hill seeks to achieve its goals within a challenging, inclusive environment, characterized by outstanding and committed faculty, staff and students. Progress towards “Making a Difference: The Strategic Vision for Flint Hill School 2015-2020” will require the judicious use of existing human and financial resources, faculty and staff training and development programs, more efficient administrative procedures, careful enrollment management of student body composition, and thoughtful assessment of the two campuses and facilities.

Full achievement of these goals, however, will be possible only with the continued commitment and support of Flint Hill’s alumni, parents and friends. Working together, we can achieve our goals, and assure our distinct position as a leader in JK-12 independent school education.

This plan represents the culmination of a comprehensive planning process. Many actions are yet to be set; many decisions are yet to be made; funds must be raised to enable some of these initiatives to come to fruition and the overarching vision for Flint Hill must be shared. This document is intended to spur discussion in order to refine the plan for the next several years—with 2020 vision.



Our Vision for Every Student

Take meaningful risks. Be yourself. Make a difference.

Our Mission

A Flint Hill education focuses on the learner. Within a context of strong relationships, we create developmental experiences that embrace the best practices of traditional and contemporary education. Through continuous growth, we actively and thoughtfully implement the ideas and resources that help each student investigate, create, and communicate collaboratively and effectively in a rapidly changing, interconnected world.

Our Core Values

- Respect
- Responsibility
- Honesty
- Compassion

Our Guiding Principles

- Our commitment is to develop – in a caring community – an individual who seeks excellence and embraces the “Driving Spirit” of Flint Hill School.
- At Flint Hill, education is a journey based on deep engagement, substantive interactions with teachers and peers, and lasting relationships.
- Our dedication to ongoing improvement and dynamic curricular programming honors and extends the best aspects of traditional learning methods by incorporating innovation, entrepreneurship and risk-taking in meaningful ways.
- Our supportive yet challenging learning environment encourages reflection and positions students to understand who they are and attain their personal best – for themselves and for the world in which they will serve.



A Dynamic Academic Program

GOAL I Vibrant independent schools are able to build on their program strengths and innovate in ways that keep education relevant and dynamic. The world is changing rapidly and the questions we face in our society are becoming more complex. We must be aware of the capabilities our students will need to face such a world and the kind of education we need to offer.

OUR COMMITMENT

Flint Hill attracts and retains the most passionate and qualified educators, adept at incorporating a variety of teaching strategies and tools, understanding of the wide range of cultural and societal influences at play, and committed to meeting the individual learning needs of every student.

Flint Hill balances rigor, creativity, innovation and student-led achievement to provide a multi-dimensional learning environment.

Flint Hill provides an educational experience that embeds the core school values into all facets of our academic program while emphasizing critical thinking, collaborative problem solving, creative expression, and cogent communication; fostering individual achievement and personal success for themselves and the world in which they will serve.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- 1.1 Focus our energy and resources on learning and teaching excellence - enhancing our key philosophical approach with methodology and programmatic measures that inform and shape the learning experience for all students in all divisions by:
 - (a) Ensuring all students have the opportunities and resources necessary to realize their potential.
 - (b) Expanding our current model of academic coaching to encompass all students, through a formal process of ongoing training and mentoring of faculty.
 - (c) Achieving national recognition by sharing our unique and inclusive approach to learning and teaching excellence.
- 1.2 Embark on a concentrated effort to expand offerings and opportunities for innovation, design, entrepreneurship, communication skills, and self-discovery, augmenting the Flint Hill program by:
 - (a) Providing the framework and infrastructure to ensure individuation with cutting-edge, and experiential learning for all students.
 - (b) Utilizing technology to take advantage of the rich and dynamic possibilities of partnering with other teachers and classrooms around the world.
 - (c) Incorporating progressive, interdisciplinary opportunities to explore, expose, inspire and engage the creativity, curiosity and activism of students through collaborative studies and real world applications.
- 1.3 Leverage technological advances thoughtfully and intentionally, as tools for enhanced teaching and learning.



A Transformative Student Experience

GOAL II At Flint Hill, we recognize the need to ensure that students feel both free and safe to take meaningful risks. Intellectual independence, a knowledge of and belief in oneself, perseverance and passion are all elements we seek to encourage, inspire and foster in our students—providing each with the confidence, courage and skills they will need to succeed in college, and in life.



OUR COMMITMENT

Flint Hill provides a balanced and well-rounded student experience that encourages participation in and among academics, athletics and the arts.

Flint Hill upholds a school culture in which adults and students alike model and reinforce our core values (respect, responsibility, honesty and compassion), fostering a mutually supportive environment and a commitment to service to oneself and the world in which they will serve.

Flint Hill promotes an environment in which individuality is valued and appreciated.

Flint Hill generates school spirit by cultivating traditions that create opportunities to develop long lasting personal relationships, forge strong ties with our alumni, and enhance pride in and engagement with the School.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- 2.1 Create a deliberate, yet natural progression of the student life experience from JK-12 that is focused on intellectual, inter-personal, social, emotional and physical development and well-being and provides meaningful and authentic opportunities for leadership, service and community engagement.
- 2.2 Leverage technological resources thoughtfully and intentionally to strengthen the student experience for ethical and real-world application.



An Engaged Community

GOAL III Flint Hill is a community in which all constituents can contribute to the fulfillment of our mission, each benefitting from the full and enthusiastic participation of the others. Building and sustaining connections and philanthropic support with and among our students, faculty & staff, families, alumni, and our local and global community enriches and improves the learning environment and experience of our students.

OUR COMMITMENT

Our students embrace and uphold the values of the School, arrive excited and ready to learn, welcome new experiences, exhibit a commitment to service and to becoming responsible global citizens, and are open to meet the challenges that each day offers.

Our faculty and staff model the core values of the School and support the mission, are passionate about their work and the role they play at Flint Hill, collaborate effectively with colleagues and with parents for the betterment of the students, foster a mutually supportive environment, and are committed to personal and professional growth and development.

Our alumni, as valued, vital and integral members of the Flint Hill community, are engaged in school life, serve as ambassadors of the institution, and actively further the mission and vision of the School through their involvement, advocacy and philanthropic support.

Our parents work in partnership with Flint Hill's faculty and staff; uphold the School culture in a manner that is guided by a common understanding of the mission and core values; and demonstrate their commitment to the School in many ways through their volunteerism, advocacy, philanthropic support and dialogue, and by other means that promote the best interests of the students.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- 3.1 Reinforce the distinctive philosophy and culture of Flint Hill to all members of the community and uphold it in daily life.
- 3.2 Sustain and advance relationships with our alumni; informing and engaging alumni to support Flint Hill through a comprehensive program of communication, connection, and opportunities for involvement.
- 3.3 Promote a shared understanding of the role of the Parents' Association through enhanced communication and outreach, and strengthen its role in facilitating volunteerism, advocacy, and dialogue in and with the parent community.
- 3.4 Maintain a proactive stewardship effort to stay in touch with grandparents, parents of alumni, neighbors and friends, inviting and encouraging their ongoing participation and support.
- 3.5 Enhance and implement the means by which to solicit feedback from stakeholders for the ongoing and dynamic progress that is endemic to Flint Hill.



A Strong Model of Governance

GOAL IV Flint Hill is governed by a Board of Trustees who, working collectively and collaboratively, ensures the strength and sustainability of our school.

OUR COMMITMENT

The Board of Trustees upholds the vision, mission and core values of Flint Hill School, adheres to sound governance principles, including prudent fiscal management, and hires and supports the Headmaster. Trustees advance these endeavors through their active service, thoughtful support, and development of a culture of philanthropy. They recognize the long tradition of excellence at the School and are committed to vigorously reinforcing it, believing the School should always be working toward continuous progress through thoughtful strategic planning, and regular assessment and evaluation.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- 4.1 Review, evaluate, and consider adjustments to the bylaws of the Board as they pertain to board size, composition and membership on board committees.
- 4.2 Elevate the profile of the Board and understanding of its role through regular two-way communication to the school community regarding its members and its work.
- 4.3 Ensure thoughtful succession planning by building a robust pipeline of prospective trustee candidates who are appropriately reflective of the needs of the school and the diversity of the Flint Hill community.
- 4.4 Ensure Trustees are educated and provided with timely information with regard to matters of significant impact, matters with significant budget implications, and key strategic initiatives, so they may execute their fiduciary responsibilities as informed decision-makers.





A Sustainable Future

GOAL V Flint Hill operates with a prudent and long-range financial plan in order to ensure the school's fiscal health, including—but not limited to—its ability to support institutional objectives and strategic initiatives, to steward its resources wisely, and to handle unanticipated challenges.



OUR COMMITMENT

At Flint Hill, the Board of Trustees and administrative leadership understand that management of the school's finances requires a balance of important considerations. The school must be able to compete for the very best faculty and staff; the value of tuition must be acknowledged as commensurate with the value delivered; and the school must be able to ensure access for a wide array of mission appropriate students to maintain its commitment to diversity in all its forms; the program must be rich and stimulating; campus and facilities maintenance and improvements must be made and monitored in a constant, consistent fashion, and; the school must maintain long-term financial stability.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- 5.1 Monitor and balance expenditures carefully.
- 5.2 Ensure that the campuses, facilities and physical plant enhance and support education and the student experience.
- 5.3 Expand other sources of revenue through ancillary programs.
- 5.4 Significantly strengthen and sustain increased philanthropic support by creating a culture of philanthropy at Flint Hill School.

With Appreciation

Thank you to the many members of our community who participated in this strategic visioning process. We are grateful for your time, input, and guidance.

Dora Adamopoulos
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