

**The West Hill School
Strategic Plan 2013-2018**



THE WEST HILL SCHOOL

Connect. Learn. Grow.

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The West Hill School Strategic Plan Committee

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Yellow Group Head Teacher

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Blue Group Teacher

Swati Bhatia Virmani
Director of Technology & Library Services
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MISSION STATEMENT (PRIOR TO 2013)

The mission of The West Hill School is the education, guidance and nurturing of preschool children in a coeducational environment. Housed in a unique facility, constructed specifically for use by young children, a carefully designed program with age appropriate activities challenges the intellect and stimulates creativity. Learning through a well planned balance of play and formalized instruction, the children are able to explore and satisfy their curiosities while developing a fund of knowledge and socialization skills. An emphasis on thoughtfulness of others fosters and provides the foundation necessary for building successful interpersonal relationships. The West Hill experience is one in which students are encouraged to practice and assimilate the skills of careful listening, focused observation and independent thinking. It is our goal that each West Hill student will progress to kindergarten with self-confidence, curiosity, joy of discovery, pride in accomplishment, and a sense of community.

REVISED MISSION STATEMENT (2013)

The West Hill School offers pre-school age children a safe and nurturing environment that encourages a life-long celebration of learning. Through our rich and varied curriculum, balanced with play and multisensory academic instruction, the children explore and satisfy their curiosities while developing their cognitive, social/emotional, and physical skills. Children experience and practice the self-regulation skills of careful listening and focus and attention that promote school readiness. Through activities that reinforce the development of empathy and emotion management, children learn to build friendships and successful interpersonal relationships. It is our goal that each child progresses to kindergarten with the tools to achieve a balanced education that promotes self-confidence, joy of discovery, pride in accomplishment, and respect for differences in our school, our community, and our world.

2013-2018 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES

Strategic Direction #1 – Strengthen the Mission Statement to Support the Development of the Strategic Plan

Goal: Review and revise the Mission Statement to reflect the future direction of The West Hill School (“School”).

Strategies:

- Present existing Mission Statement to staff, parents, and Board to generate discussion and consensus concerning the School’s vision and goals.
- Submit draft of Mission Statement to School Affairs Committee for revision and approval before submitting to Board for final approval.
- Advertise and display the Mission Statement in the lobby and classrooms and on any pertinent school-related documents.

Strategic Direction #2 – Build Governance Development and Capacity

Goals: Develop policies and procedures for the Board that support the School’s mission, vision and strategic goals and reflect the School’s community. Provide Board members with the tools to be effective and fulfill their mission.

Strategies:

- Develop a comprehensive 5-year West Hill School Strategic Plan that reflects the Mission Statement.
- Develop a fundraising strategy aimed at preserving the School’s capital and ensuring long-term financial stability.
- Develop an orientation and mentoring process for new Board members.
- Conduct periodic reviews of the Board’s by-laws to ensure that they are up-to-date.
- Develop a process for evaluating the effectiveness of Board members and a process for evaluating the Head of School.
- Develop a process for taking and circulating minutes from Committee meetings to Board members.
- Research professional development opportunities for Board members.

- Create a Board profile chart detailing the Board’s composition (expertise, resources, and perspectives) that are relevant to achieving the School’s mission.
- Maintain a balanced Board composed of current parents, former parents, and individuals not directly affiliated with the school.
- Undertake a review of all policy areas affecting staff, operations, finance, facilities, etc., and develop/revise policies that need immediate attention.
- Employ the assistance of a salary consultant to research other schools and develop a competitive salary schedule for the staff.

Strategic Direction #3 – Define the Leadership Structure

Goal: Establish a clear leadership structure that supports the School’s mission, policies, programs, and personnel. Delineate the role of the Board as the governing body that supports the Head of School and related activities.

Strategies:

- Monitor the School’s performance in meeting the goals and objectives outlined in this Strategic Plan.
- Maintain a well-qualified Board with a set of talents and skills that bring knowledge and constructive action to the School.
- Confirm annually that Board Committees are appropriately structured and that appropriate insurance contracts, financial policies, external audits, etc., are in place.
- Encourage open communication between the Board Chair and the Head of School to support the Head’s efforts to achieve the goals of the Strategic Plan and Mission Statement.
- Extend Board assistance as needed in the transition to a new Head of School (2013-2014).
- Compile an organizational chart delineating the School’s leadership structure and responsibilities; review said chart annually.
- Review job descriptions by Head of School as needed.

Strategic Direction #4 – Ensure Financial Sustainability of the School Through a Commitment to Fiscal Responsibility and Preserving Financial Strength

Goal 1: Develop a budget with the aim of maintaining the long-term financial stability of the School.

Strategies:

- Develop a 5-year plan that reflects the School's priorities in areas such as curriculum development, staff development, salaries, facilities maintenance and improvement. On the revenue side, develop fundraising goals and projections for tuition.
- At the beginning of every fiscal year, establish an annual budget that reflects the School's priorities for the year and is in line with the goals of the 5-year financial plan.
- Submit the annual budget to the Board for approval in March, and review the budget at subsequent Board meetings, with a formal evaluation taking place in September and an ongoing assessment to reflect any shifts in priorities and/or the School's financial situation.
- Continually monitor expenses at Finance Committee and Board meetings to ensure that they are in line with annual projections and the School's priorities.
- Closely monitor and benchmark the School's compensation and employee benefit programs.
- Annually review tuition levels with a focus on balancing affordability, competitiveness, and financial stability.
- Conduct regular Board review and approval of operating statements.
- Evaluate and develop alternative sources of income and optimize/improve existing sources.
- Develop a 5-year financial plan.
- Review the security of financial information and databases.

Goal 2: Protect and grow the endowment and operating reserve to protect future success of the School against potential volatility.

Strategies:

- Monitor the level of development and fundraising to make sure it is sufficient to support the operating budget.
- Periodically review the investment strategy for the endowment and operating reserve to confirm its compatibility with the goals of the School.
- Evaluate spending of the endowment income and operating reserve funds to ensure appropriateness with respect to the School's mission and long-range plans.

Strategic Direction #5 – Strengthen Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Practices to support the School Mission

Goal 1: Review, improve, document, and clearly articulate the daily schedule, curriculum framework, and student assessment practices including the staff professional development to support them.

Strategies:

- Develop a Curriculum Framework that includes the School Mission, how the Mission is reflected in daily practices, specific group curriculum themes, and learning objectives.
- Utilize best practices in designing and providing an environment that promotes student engagement and purposeful play.
- Develop a positive climate for behavior and learning through the use of a school-wide philosophy such as Bucket Fillers.
- Research programs that promote self-regulation, emotion management, skills for learning, and friendship building.
- Research the implementation of a foreign language and culture study that will be embedded within the regular curriculum.
- Research various programs that address student readiness in handwriting, math and literacy.
- Research and determine if a more finely developed and comprehensive student assessment plan is needed to inform instructional practices and communicate with parents/guardians.
- Review the curriculum, program enhancements, assessment, and instructional practices and update resources to ensure they meet the needs of the school programs.
- Research and develop a plan to utilize outside resources to enhance the curriculum through in-school field trips.
- Examine the effectiveness of the two and three day enrollment structure of the Red/Green group based on feedback from parents/guardians and the community.

Goal 2: Develop a climate that fosters staff collaboration and an enthusiasm for reflection and positive change.

Strategies:

- Foster an environment of continuous learning and improvement among staff by promoting professional development opportunities and allocating funds for this purpose.

- Investigate purchasing additional laptops for staff training and to increase their productivity in communicating with parents/guardians, recordkeeping, and recording observations of student growth and development.
- Implement a constructive and reflective faculty evaluation process that emphasizes professional growth through mutual goal setting as well as administrative reviews.
- Create a work environment that values and supports all staff members.

Goal 3: Research, develop and implement plans to acknowledge, understand, celebrate, and enhance the diversity of the school community.

Strategies:

- Include lessons, library books, materials and supplies that reflect diversity.
- Invite parents/guardians and community members to meet with the children to discuss their cultures, traditions, and celebrations.
- Research other schools and communities that have attracted student enrollees and staff that reflect diverse backgrounds and develop a plan for the School.

Goal 4: Review all programs that are offered beyond the school day and the school year to ensure their effectiveness and to increase student enrollment.

Strategies:

- Review the current extended day program for curriculum content and feasibility and flexibility of scheduling of the sessions.
- Review the Summer Session to ensure more engaging and exciting curriculum content. Review the scheduling of the sessions in order to increase enrollment and make the sessions more efficient and effective.

Strategic Direction #6 – Enhancement of School Facilities to Support and Enrich the School Program and Maintain the Building and Grounds

Goal: Develop a school plan that: 1) maximizes flexible and creative use of space that fosters purposeful play; 2) supports the curriculum and outdoor programs; and 3) provides a safe and secure environment.

Strategies:

- Evaluate the effective use of the existing classroom space in order to capture more space for the learning environment.
- Evaluate the effective use of the existing playground and develop a plan to creatively utilize the outdoor space for a play area that includes a nature play environment.
- After a security audit completed by the Police and Fire Departments and the Insurance Carrier, develop and implement a comprehensive Crisis Management Plan for the health and safety of the school community.
- Initiate a School Safety Committee to review all existing practices and facilities on an ongoing basis.
- Develop and communicate a comprehensive identification and treatment system to address the needs of all students with allergies and other health needs.
- Initiate a plan to expand the existing facilities to support all school programs.
- Create a Health Services space for children who are ill during the day.
- Develop a Master Facilities Plan that will guide the checks and balances necessary to maintain and enhance the school building and grounds.

Strategic Direction #7 – Define and Implement an Integrated Marketing Plan, Reflective of the School’s Mission and Vision, that Supports the School’s Admissions, Development, Communications, and Overall Standing in the Community

Goal 1: Integrate planning done by marketing personnel, annual fund chairs/committee, fall festival chairs, auction chairs, marketing committee, and director of admissions.

Strategies:

- Establish framework for collaboration via recurring meetings and sharing of ideas.
- Create shared objectives for all marketing and communications efforts.
- Include representatives for key committees, admissions, and fundraising in marketing committee discussions.
- Develop a shared resource guide to equip all contributors to successfully plan for future programs, events, communications, and overall marketing efforts.

Goal 2: Review school admissions policy to ensure consistency with current curriculum, goals for students, and guidelines for parents/guardians.

Strategies:

- Educate all staff on current NAIS Principles of Good Practice.
- Compare terms of commitment to that of peer schools with respect to fee deadlines, withdrawal guidelines, etc., and revise if necessary.
- Review process of meeting and engaging prospective students to ensure the metrics for evaluation are consistent with classroom expectation and style.
- More prominently articulate the School's mission/vision and key program themes in interactions with prospective students and their parents/guardians.
- Revise prospective student visit evaluation form to be consistent with current school practice and curriculum standards.

Goal 3: Create a more inclusive school community, in terms of broader diversity of faculty, staff and students.

Strategies:

- Develop a communications plan that connects the school to a diverse community, emphasizing acceptance of every race, creed, lifestyle and socioeconomic group.
- Evaluate admissions protocol to determine if process promotes greater inclusiveness of children from diverse backgrounds.
- Examine student financial aid program to evaluate opportunities to utilize budgeted scholarship dollars to support diversity initiatives.

Goal 4: Develop and finalize a development plan to guide fundraising activities that is supportive of the school's immediate and long-term capital needs.

Strategies:

- Define roles and expectations for volunteer leadership roles, i.e. committee chairpeople.
- Create standards for measurement of return on investment for fundraising activities, such as Annual Fund, Spring Auction, Fall Festival, Shopping Night, etc.

- Determine appropriate allocation of endowment income for school operational and capital improvement budgets.
- Evaluate communication plan for Annual Fund drive as part of larger review of comprehensive marketing plan.

Goal 5: Demonstrate alignment of overall marketing and communications plan with School's Mission, while maintaining clear and consistent communications with all constituents.

Strategies:

- Include mission and vision statements as a guide for all communications, with specific activities devoted to accomplishing the specifics of the stated Mission.
- Connect the School to the surrounding community through various Community Outreach projects such as canned food drives and other philanthropic activities.
- Create a formalized marketing and communications budget that matches the objectives of the comprehensive marketing plan.
- Develop a guide for expected regular communications that parents, alumni, faculty, staff, and community members can expect from the School over the course of each year.
- Create annual survey to review marketing and communications effectiveness.
- Research demographics to ensure target audiences appropriately reflect the inclusive mandate for identifying prospective future staff, students and other contributors to the school (Board members, guest speakers, etc.)
- Formalize and document comprehensive communication plan.

Strategic Direction #8 – Expand Communication Practices with all Members of the School Community

Goal: Develop and maintain meaningful engagement with and from parents/guardians and other members of the community to enrich and support all students in the learning environment.

Strategies:

- Review and revise all School handbooks – Parent/Guardian, Employee, and Board; secure review by attorney as appropriate.

- Solicit input from parents/guardians concerning the current state of the School and parent/guardian communication.
- Develop ongoing verbal and written feedback to parents/guardians as an integral part of the learning process.
- Distribute individual portfolios to parents containing photographs and work product of the students.
- Continue efforts to keep parents/guardians and other members of the school community abreast of classroom happenings, school programs, events, and other school-related information.
- Investigate ways, other than volunteerism, to invite parents/guardians into the School to observe the children as they engage in their daily program such as a Birthday Book Dedication and Reading, assisting in the classrooms, sharing their heritage at assemblies, etc.
- Invite parents/guardians to participate in parenting groups and seminars.
- Investigate the expanded use of technology for administrative tasks, as a hub of information for current parent/guardians, and as a marketing device to attract new enrollees.