Parker
Francis W. Parker School
Expanding Learning

STRATEGIC PLAN
Expanding Learning

“The needs of society should determine the work of the school. The supreme need of society is ideal citizenship. Ideal citizenship demands for the individual the highest degree of knowledge, skill, power and service. Therefore, the one purpose of the school is to present conditions for growth toward ideal citizenship.”

— Colonel Francis Wayland Parker

More than a century ago, Colonel Parker believed that educating young people required opening their minds and spirits to become engaged, self-confident citizens and leaders with ethical and empathic character. These beliefs continue to make our school community thrive today. Thanks to this foundation, Parker stands as a nationally recognized leader in progressive education, because we are innovative and forward-thinking in ways that resonate with the needs of society and each new generation of students, teachers and parents.

Our engaging, inclusive approach to learning empowers students to think and act with empathy, courage and clarity as responsible citizens and leaders in a diverse democratic society and global community. We know that the lives of our students, teachers, staff and families are interconnected, that all members of our community are valuable. We appreciate that our futures depend on all of us, and our long-term educational philosophy of cultivating responsible citizens has never been more important in the history of our school, our city and our nation.

Building on a foundation of historical strengths, Parker has a robust strategic plan for the future. Developed through extensive discussion with a diverse array of participants and grounded by years of educational experience, Parker’s plan offers a thoughtful roadmap for action that will inspire students and teachers for years to come.

Each of the plan’s three strategic goals, and each of its specific action items, builds on our accomplishments and drives us to improve Parker’s ability to know and educate every student, nurture them as young citizens and inspire each one to learn about the world and their relationship to it. With this plan, we are strengthening our sense of community through cultural competency and support for equity, diversity and inclusion within our school, our city and beyond. Finally, with this plan, we are improving school operations and facilities and building a stronger endowment that can allow Parker to further empower our students and educators.

The faculty, staff, administration, alumni and Board of Trustees are excited about what is to come and we are committed to implementing our plan for our students and our society. This is Parker. A progressive education for today, strategically engaged for tomorrow.

Daniel B. Frank, Ph.D.
Principal

Rika Yoshida
President, Board of Trustees
Our Mission

Francis W. Parker School educates students to think and act with empathy, courage and clarity as responsible citizens and leaders in a diverse democratic society and global community.

Our Values and Vision

Relationships and Community
We treasure the respectful ways students, teachers, staff, parents and alumni come to know one another through their work and studies, empowering each individual and our community with hope and possibility.

We understand how history, culture and society shape our individual and shared experiences, and we appreciate how our unique identities develop through our relationships with others, our own inner lives, our surroundings and the world of ideas. Our school nurtures authenticity and trust as we inspire each student to be a creative citizen, capable and dedicated to upholding Parker’s mission.

Inclusivity and Dignity
We are deliberately composed of a diverse group of people committed to equity and inclusion throughout the school. We create learning experiences through curriculum and pedagogy that resonate with the many different identities that our community comprises, making us effective citizens who honor the dignity of every human being. We are an intimate and expansive school that affirms the ways students can flourish when they feel known, appreciated and supported by equitable access to the fullness of a Parker education. Our school thrives when we each can acquire and contribute to the creation of new knowledge and skills; explore our imaginations and different perspectives; share who we are becoming; and expect to be treated with respect and kindness when expressing our own ideas, popular or not, while also learning to confront behaviors that oppress, exclude or demean the humanity of others.
Engagement and Creativity
We pursue educational excellence by cultivating creative problem-solving through vigorous effort so all can experience joy in learning and come to understand how individual and collective labor can improve society.

We grow in intellectual, emotional, physical, aesthetic and moral life through our attuned approaches to responsive teaching and mentoring. We learn from one another as we participate fully in spirited, rigorous, reflective and ethical engagement in all areas of study and activity, curricular and extracurricular. We seek purpose, meaning and impact through the content and methods that inform our learning and teaching. Our academic and artistic standards for interdisciplinary inquiry flow from classroom learning to life throughout the school and beyond.

Openness and Growth
We believe growth in understanding, ability and confidence occur when we are open to new questions, perspectives and information; when we act with respect, civility and curiosity as we make reasoned judgments; when we speak in our own voices; and when we listen attentively to the voices of others. We know that our ability to think for ourselves expands when we engage in healthy, nuanced discussion and persevere with integrity when complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity challenge us. Our educational vision leads us to create transformational opportunities to stretch beyond current achievements and points of view, opening us to learn from both our successes and our failures through attentive reflection and open conversation.

Responsibility and Collaboration
We hold that a Parker education is a privilege that carries responsibility and accountability. We call on all to participate with self-discipline, independence of mind and a collaborative spirit in keeping with the mission, values and vision of our school. We expect each of us to come prepared to learn and support Parker’s progressive approach to education, human development and community life. Our purpose is to inspire all to apply their skills, thoughts and values to make our school and the world more just, beautiful and interesting.

Character and Citizenship
The people of Francis W. Parker School encourage one another to exercise personal and civic power by connecting reflection with action, research with creativity, wisdom with innovation, deeds with consequences and character with citizenship. In these ways, Parker stands as a progressive school, dedicated to the growth and development of the whole person in relation to the growth and development of the whole school community, on behalf of our democratic society and the wider world.
Parker Parent Partnership Agreement

As parents engaged in the education and development of Parker students...

Our goals are to communicate openly with the school and each other on behalf of our children; volunteer and participate in the life of the school; and contribute financially to support the school at whatever level we are able in its effort to provide an excellent education for its students.

As members of the Parker community...

We appreciate that education thrives when parents trust the school, the students and other parents with a spirit of open-mindedness, a respect for diversity and generosity with time, ideas and resources.

As adults...

We know that children listen to our words and watch our actions to better understand how they relate to teachers, students and other adults throughout the school.
Diversity Statement

Francis W. Parker School strives to uphold its mission to educate for character and citizenship by recognizing and respecting all members of the community in all areas of school life. Founded on the belief that diversity enriches learning and that a diverse community benefits everyone, the school is deliberately composed of a diverse group of people so that we may learn how to honor the dignity and experience of every human being.

Parker strives to create a safe and inclusive environment where students learn to have courageous conversations about differences in experiences, opinions, ideas, interests and identities that shape humanity. Parker also aims to cultivate a school community that teaches with sensitivity about differences including, but not limited to, race, sex, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, political and social values, culture, gender identity, religion, physical ability and learning style.

At Francis W. Parker School, we believe, as part of a global world, we must teach students about diversity to strengthen their capacity to relate to one another so they may learn to treat others with respect and kindness and challenge behaviors that oppress, exclude or demean the humanity of others.

Parker’s commitment to diversity informs its approach to admissions and hiring; its support of financial assistance to families of varying socioeconomic means; and its belief in the importance of developing the school’s curriculum, community and culture in ways that connect our students’ experiences with our broader society and with the wider world.
Establish Parker as The Definitive Leader Among Progressive Schools

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Enhance our excellent educational program, reinforcing our progressive ideals and delivering world class experiences relevant to the 21st century.

**ACTION ITEMS**

- Prepare, communicate and debate position papers articulating the vision and mission of progressive education.
- Identify the criteria by which success in progressive education should be evaluated and implement a system to measure and account for whether programming has succeeded.
- Guide curriculum advancements through elements of integrated learning and empathic action, including critical and design thinking, responsible citizenship, collaborative democratic leadership skills, coordinated curriculum, professional development, civic engagement and global awareness.
- Strengthen Science, Technology, Engineering, Math and Computer Science learning through enhancements to our curriculum, resources and facilities.
- Strengthen visual and performing arts, languages and humanities programs.
- Expand our interdisciplinary, project-based teaching and learning.
- Develop and implement TIDES (Technology, Innovation, Design Thinking and Entrepreneurship for Society) as Parker’s unique interdisciplinary paradigm for advancing STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) learning.
- Identify the essential democratic skills in each of the school’s divisions, and identify new opportunities within and beyond the classroom for students to practice these skills.
- Create new, developmentally appropriate leadership opportunities and programs for students within each division of the school.
- Expand our domestic and international travel program.
- Expand learning by providing students opportunities to take online courses to augment classroom experience.
- Ensure a JK-12 daily schedule, school calendar and workload that provides more time for fostering spirited and in-depth engagement in teaching and learning.
- Expand professional development for faculty and staff to enhance our own learning community.
- Consider developing and implementing a progressive full-day kindergarten to enhance the educational experiences of the youngest students.
- Identify and implement enhanced programming opportunities that become available with increased enrollment.
- Create Upper School student internship opportunities.
OBJECTIVE 2: Expand our role as a leader and oasis for progressive educational thinking.

ACTION ITEMS

- Promote, host and participate in educational conferences and workshops, forging institutional relationships with other organizations, including schools, universities, businesses, government and neighborhood entities, museums and cultural institutions and foreign exchange students and teachers.
- Create and maintain an international center for faculty professional development, exchange, discourse and thought leadership in progressive education.
Strategic Goal Two: Expand Access to Our Community

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Enhance our community through increased diversity, equity and inclusion.

**ACTION ITEMS**
- Support and fully commit to educational, enrollment and hiring programs attuned to diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Increase the number of diverse students in each grade level and diverse teachers and staff in each division of the school.
- Increase the financial resources available to provide financial support, including completing the Heller Challenge.
- Minimize tuition increases to ensure a diverse student population and to maintain Parker’s character, including increasing our unrestricted endowment to ensure economic diversity.
- Develop and implement enrollment growth as necessary to support the diversity goals of the institution.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Ensure that all members of the Parker community can fully partake in the Parker experience.

**ACTION ITEMS**
- Support optimal communication between and among students and adults, both inside and outside the classroom.
- Create new opportunities for parents, students, faculty, administrators, staff and alumni to think together about the quality of life at Parker, the meaning of progressive education and Parker’s expansive approach to education.
- Enhance personal touch approach to all constituent groups through face-to-face-relationships and communication.
- Enhance the ability of competing ideas to be heard, debated and considered.
OBJECTIVE 3: Provide opportunities for more students to experience a Parker education.

ACTION ITEMS

- Identify and implement opportunities to make a Parker education available to more affiliated and non-affiliated students.
- Strategically support enrollment to ensure that it provides non-affiliated and diverse students with the opportunity to participate, benefit and contribute to Parker.
- Develop and implement an increase in school size through the addition of one section in grades JK to 5 and 9 to 12.
- Reimagine and renovate existing physical spaces in the school and build new spaces as appropriate.
Support the Compelling Parker Vision

Strategic Goal Three:
Support the Compelling Parker Vision

OBJECTIVE 1: Better define our unique brand and communicate our identity.

ACTION ITEMS

- Enhance our marketing and communication efforts to communicate our mission, educational programs, organizational partnerships and community spirit.
- Enhance our marketing plan to further our reputation by articulating value, focus and benefits of a Parker education in Chicago marketplace.
- Clarify our institutional identity to better differentiate ourselves from other schools.
- Expand efforts to sustain high loyalty among all constituent groups through annual competitive market research and internal parent customer service assessments, student and parent exit interviews and annual alumni feedback.

OBJECTIVE 2: Solidify Parker’s financial future.

ACTION ITEMS

- Develop a financial plan that keeps Parker agile and nimble enough to enact educational program changes in a timely manner.
- Develop a new capital campaign based upon the goals of this new strategic plan, increasing our endowment to support financial aid and other educational programs.
- Develop capital campaign goals that include outreach to alumni, parents and parent emeriti, as well as increasing trustee leadership in all fundraising.
- Engage Parker alumni, parents, parent emeriti and friends of the school to participate in the life of the school and support its educational initiatives through expansion of the Alumni Association and further enhancement of its infrastructure.
OBJECTIVE 3: Enhance our physical plant and supporting resources.

ACTION ITEMS

• Complete new design and vision for the Kovler Family Library as a vital resource for learning through both collaborative group work and through quiet individual study.

• Evaluate new ways to use and enhance the school’s existing public spaces to facilitate greater community learning and interpersonal relationships.

• Examine the need for additional space by assessing the periphery of the Parker campus including the acquisition of contiguous parcels of real estate.

• Consider building new spaces in accord with any future plans for school enrollment.

• Consider reconfiguration of spaces that will be necessary to address advancement of TIDES.

• Explore options to increase access to additional athletic facilities to support the healthy benefits of our growing sports programs.

• Revisit the capacity and capabilities of our existing physical plant during the life of this plan to ensure the ongoing relevance and performance of our campus.

OBJECTIVE 4: Establish accountability procedures for implementing the strategic plan.

ACTION ITEMS

• Create an ongoing administrative mechanism to monitor and assess the progress of our strategic plan on a quarterly and annual basis.

• Revisit our priorities on an annual schedule, reprioritizing our goals based upon our progress.