Vision and Strategic Plan
The Center for Early Education

1. Envision it.
2. Plan it.
3. Do it.

Our Mission
The Center for Early Education, a socio-economically and culturally diverse independent school for children Toddlers through Grade Six, strives to graduate students who are joyful, resilient, life-long learners. The Center embraces a philosophy of education that combines a nurturing, inclusive learning environment with an increasingly challenging academic program that addresses the developmental needs of each child.
Our Vision

Be Cutting-Edge  Take the Long View  Explore Space  Communicate Community

Grow Leaders  Embrace the Techies  Admit the Passionate  Understand Our Planet

Involve the Whole Family  Grow with our Students  Head in the Right Direction...  ...Envision It, Plan It, Do It!

Join Us

At The Center for Early Education, we’ve worked, as a community, to envision our future. Now we ask you to read our strategic vision and plan, and join us in making The Center’s future vision a reality.

Imagine fearlessly and, by continuing to let us know what you think, keep the vision alive.

Our Process

In the spring of 2009, The Center for Early Education began to design a comprehensive and far-reaching strategic vision. We gathered information in every conceivable way (well, almost). Surveys. Individual interviews. Focus groups of a few and many. We even spoke with city leaders, secondary school Heads and Admissions directors, trustees, parents, alumni, faculty, staff, administrators and current students.

And, finally, we hosted a two-day conference with 87 participants representing every group whom we
could imagine had, has or will have a stake in The Center’s future. We had a State of the School Meeting in January 2010 followed by a full-day retreat of The Center’s Board of Trustees. We tried to cover it all.

All along the way, we wanted everyone to be candid. We studied their observations, compliments, and critiques. We tried ‘benchmarking’ The Center to peer schools. We gathered enough data to defend a college thesis!

With such weighty research, the Board determined what, in all that data, yielded common themes and then set some priorities. Armed with those themes and priorities, The Center’s Trustees set out a vision, a plan, a strategic view of what The Center for Early Education aims to be and to become.

Our Vision
The Center for Early Education is nearly 75 years old. But our school remains young at heart. Looking to the future, The Center’s Board of Trustees is committed to a vision of education that capitalizes on our model of life-long learning and looks to lessons learned in our past. Understanding how far we have come we are better prepared for a vital and thriving future, grounded in our Mission.

Mediocrity is not an option for The Center. Despite enormous changes in education since 1939, the year The Center was founded, our school has kept pace in every way. In fact, The Center is considered a leader in such areas as team teaching, the home-school partnership, cutting-edge curriculum and the integration of technology into the curriculum.

The future of education holds even more and perhaps quite different challenges. It will require rigorous and thoughtful effort to understand and prepare for the changing educational landscape. We cannot predict what that landscape will look like. But we know how we can prepare for it. By deliberate planning in every area of school operations. By honest evaluation - of our curriculum, our faculty and staff, all of our programs, and, most of all, of how prepared our graduates are to live their lives.

At the helm of this process is a devoted Board of Trustees and school leadership that are deeply aware of and committed to the fundamental Mission of our school. In an exemplary fashion, The Center wants to encourage students to become life-long learners and to instill in them a joy of learning, resilience, self-esteem, respect for others, and commitment to the community beyond the school.

Sustain Programs
Assess our educational programs, policies and standards to ensure continuous improvement. Enhance our capacity to teach 21st Century skills, including the development of personal resilience, while maintaining our core values of responsibility, caring, inclusion and honesty.

1. Learn about, share and consider new trends and research in education. Seek out and learn from other exemplary programs. Do these things through:
   a. Developing our faculty and staff professionally and personally,
   b. Visiting and learning from other schools, educators and experts in related disciplines,
   c. Measuring The Center’s outcomes against those of peer schools (benchmarking).

2. Energize our commitment to diverse learning styles. Pay close attention to meeting the educational and emotional needs of students who need more help and those who need greater challenges. Never teach to a theoretical average student. Be sure that all programs and support systems address the individual student.

3. Focus on Science. Make it more touchable, tangible, timely and tantalizing. Use every best practice in teaching to elevate the The Center Science program within our school, within the educational community, and most importantly, within our students’ experience.

4. Pay attention to the inner life of each student. The Center was founded on this principal: that the inner life of the child is as important as behavior. In fact, you can’t understand the second without understanding the first. Do this by:
   a. Evaluating the testing used in our Resource Program
   b. Considering alternatives for interpreting tests and using them to benefit students and their families

5. Integrate The Center’s Core Values into every aspect of our curriculum, programs and community life.

6. Monitor The Center’s curricular goals for progress and needed revision. Charge the Board’s Mission and School Life Committee with educating The Center’s Trustees about our school’s programs as well as changes in contemporary educational practice.
7. Deepen our parents’ understanding of The Center’s curriculum. Do this through presentations and open discussions at:
   a. Open Houses,
   b. Grade level meetings,
   c. Parent education evenings and daytime coffees.
8. Tailor the school schedule to meet the needs of students and teachers, learning styles at the Early Childhood and Elementary School levels, The Center curricular goals and community life.

Sustain Finances

Examine our reliance on our major revenue sources including tuition, endowment returns, and fundraising. Evaluate the appropriate allocation of current revenue streams to better support our Mission, vision, programs and initiatives. Balance will be our key to financial sustainability for present and future generations.

1. Grow our true endowment significantly over the next five years. Develop specific case materials to describe funding priorities, policies and how a larger endowment would make the school more sustainable.
2. Create new revenue streams based on existing or new programs. Offer valuable, well-priced educational opportunities to both Center families and others in the community.

Sustain Our Campus

Use our campus to the fullest. Use our facilities in efficient and creative ways. On a regular basis, evaluate the way our campus supports our current programs. Develop our physical plant to match our aspirations for how our school will grow and change.

1. Make our campus more environmentally sustainable and efficient in its operation. Aim to make our facilities as “green” as possible using more shade and landscaping, as well as implementing gardening projects.
2. Keep our security systems “state-of-the-art.”
3. Develop curricula and programs to educate our students about the environment and the environmental obligations that each person has.
4. Use as much of the campus as possible for as much of the year as possible. Look for plant operating efficiencies. Evaluate the next step in our campus master plan, including the potential of replacing the brick building, which currently houses Early Childhood Programs and administrative offices.
5. Explore the use of solar energy for campus operations. Explore technologies to reclaim the ground water that The Center currently pumps into the city sewage system.
6. Evaluate opportunities for campus expansion.
7. Use our campus for programs and events that will generate revenue.

Explore Space
Sustain Community & Communications

Enhance the sense of community on our campus. Expand inclusiveness. Find the best ways to regularly communicate and share information with our school community. Seek input from everyone involved with The Center. Be sure everyone knows and cares about The Center’s Mission and programs.

1. Conduct an annual school survey of parents, faculty and staff. Periodically survey alumni, parents of alumni and grandparents. Encourage their feedback and new ideas.
2. Deepen the objectives of parent education programs. Address key themes from the annual school survey. Educate the Board and parents about the role and work of the Mission and School Life Committee as well as The Center’s curricula, programs and goals.
3. Foster community within grade levels and between classrooms. Develop and schedule opportunities for parent education, teacher and parent collaboration, and community-building among parents at each grade level. Use parent education events as well as teacher and parent collaboration activities to achieve community inclusiveness.
4. Make the The Center website the “go to” school resource. Use the website as a vehicle for education, dissemination of information and transaction with the school.

Identify and Sustain Leaders

Grow leaders for the future, and prepare for the eventual succession of current leaders. Attract, develop and retain individuals who will preserve and build upon the school’s Mission, ethos, history and programmatic legacy.

1. Enlist Trustees who will ensure that the Board can successfully perpetuate itself and capably select future school leaders.
2. Consider ways of bringing new talent, thinking and energy to the school.
3. Identify top quality leadership candidates, who will support, sustain and build upon the Mission and ethos of an already strong school, thereby continuing its excellence.
4. Identify and systematically develop employees to maximize their leadership potential and professional growth.
5. Design recruitment materials to attract teachers of specific subjects and with talents that enhance the curriculum.
6. Make funding for professional development a priority.
7. Revise and publish an organizational structure of the school that reflects the needs identified in the strategic plan.
8. Review job descriptions so that responsibilities are clear and job scope is comprehensive. Use job descriptions to ensure appropriate placement of all employees.
9. Review the school’s professional assessment process for all employees. Ensure that assessment evaluates, supports and recognizes fulfillment of the Mission and Strategic Plan. Include a path for continued professional development in each employee’s professional assessment.
10. Compare professional assessments to job descriptions for all employees. Ensure that The Center has the right employees in the right positions to fulfill the school’s Mission.
11. Communicate the goals and nature of the assessment process and the organizational structure to the school community.
Global Citizenship

Prepare students to be global citizens. Design curricula and programs to focus on prudent use of natural resources, community service, participation in societal and political life, and understanding of cultures other than their own.

1. Focus community service on The Center's goals for global citizenship. Assess community service programs to ensure that they are addressing real needs. Expand community service with activities that are curriculum related to support service learning. Encourage students to find joy in community service.

2. Expand Center involvement with other schools and institutions, other communities, and other countries. Encourage Center students, their families, faculty and staff to join together for common causes in community involvement activities.

Technology

Support The Center's Mission to encourage life-long learning with exceptional student proficiency in the use of technology. Integrate technological skills into teaching and learning. Be responsible for the growth of students, faculty and staff, parents and grandparents in the uses of technology through curricula, training and events for each of these constituencies.

1. Expand the IT department with a new position to design a global technology plan and oversee its implementation.

2. Led by the newly expanded IT department, assess hardware and software to improve operational efficiency and ensure that The Center's constituencies are using the right tools to achieve desired outcomes.

3. Make technological competency a goal for faculty and staff. Provide adequate training. Assess faculty and staff use of technology.

4. Promote the Curriculum and Technology Endowment Fund through current and future major gifts campaigns.
Mission-Driven Admissions

Admit students and families who demonstrate the greatest capacity to advance the Mission of The Center. Base Admissions decisions on criteria that include willingness to participate in the life of the school, support of diversity and inclusiveness, and commitment to the partnership between the family and the school.

1. Revise Admissions materials to further Mission-driven Admissions, including marketing The Center to under-represented racial, ethnic and socioeconomic constituencies.
2. Keep tuition affordable for as many socioeconomic constituencies as possible.
3. Offer financial aid to families who qualify. Invite the applications of underrepresented constituencies by marketing the ways that families with financial aid are included in the life of the school.
4. Educate families about the Mission of our school and the expectations we have for our community members during Admissions open houses and interviews. Educate current families about our Mission and expectations through handbooks, covenants, the website and appropriate school communications.

Constituencies

Draw alumni, parents of alumni and grandparents more closely into the life of the school. Value their wisdom, knowledge, experiences and resources. Offer them opportunities to interact with Center students and contribute to the enrichment of the school community.

1. Expand current programs for alumni, parents of alumni and grandparents. Allocate resources to these growing programs. Communicate program goals and outcomes to the entire school community. Recognize involvement by alumni, parents of alumni and grandparents.
2. Develop a ‘legacy’ policy for Admissions to address the expectations of alumni and parents of alumni.
Understanding Early Childhood Education

Develop a transition experience within the Early Childhood Program. Clarify parent and student expectations and improve communications about moving from EC to Kindergarten and the Elementary School.

1. Coordinate the EC to Kindergarten transition among teachers in both divisions. In Early Childhood through Kindergarten, establish a team approach to preparing students to enter the Elementary School.

2. Clarify the philosophy and goals of the Early Childhood program during the Admissions process. Use the Admissions Open Houses and the interview process to ensure that parents understand and support The Center’s approach to early childhood education.

3. Focus on parent education as a critical component of the Early Childhood curriculum.

4. Develop literature about the Early Childhood Program that accurately communicates the program’s philosophy and goals.

5. Pursue accreditation for the Early Childhood Program.