

Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School
Strategic Plan
October 2012

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Introduction: First Edition

Parker's strategic plan was developed in 2012 by students, teachers, parents, trustees, and community members who not only share a commitment to the school's mission, to the Ten Common Principles, and to the ideals of progressive education, but also were interested in shaping Parker's priorities for the next five years. We chose a plan development process that was inclusive, deliberative, and iterative; you're reading the first edition of a plan that will continue to evolve as we undertake the work outlined therein.

The first phase of plan development took place during a two-day Future Search conference in April, 2012. Future Search is a facilitated protocol in which eighty participants from all stakeholder groups reflected on the past, described present realities, and expressed preferences among possible futures for Parker. The complete Future Search Conference Report was published in June, 2012.

During the second phase of the work, a task force of volunteers took the themes and ideas expressed at Future Search and clustered them into nine areas of strategic focus for Parker. They then developed measurable objectives and timelines for each strategic focus (in this first edition you'll notice that some timelines are to be completed by a group that will come together to work on a particular strategic focus). The task force reported out the draft strategic plan in August, 2012.

In early September, 2012, Future Search conference participants came back together to review the draft and confirmed its fidelity to the themes and priorities expressed by the larger group at the conference.

Thanks to all who participated in these planning activities. The thoughtfulness, passion, and wisdom they invested in the process give all of us confidence that the following pages represent our community's best effort to name and claim the future we want for Parker. Please join us as we begin to roll up our sleeves and get to work!

--Todd Sumner, Principal
October, 2012

Parker Charter Essential School Vision Statement

Parker is a beacon of transformative education committed to its core principles, a robust student-centered education, and substantive connections with multiple communities and strategic partners.

Strategic Focuses

#1: The Parker Teacher Corps

Parker creates a highly satisfying work environment for new and experienced educators through its transformative teaching and learning, substantive and individualized opportunities for professional development, and a competitive compensation package.

Objectives:

1. Gather data to determine what attracts teachers to Parker and what factors create a highly satisfying work environment. Study the aggregated data already collected both about these topics and about why teachers leave Parker. Complete this evaluation phase by January 2013.
2. Develop a clear professional feedback system that meets with external expectations and integrates individualized professional development plans with the evaluation cycle to promote professional growth by June 2013.
3. Determine a financially sustainable staffing model for an essential school that balances Parker's mission to be a teacher training ground with its goal to be a school where excellent teachers can afford to spend a portion of their careers by June 2013.
4. Clarify the school's stance on professional career leveling and desired longevity by June 2013.
5. Use the results of steps 1-3 to determine an appropriate compensation package for each level of staff. Integrate the proposal into the budget for 2014-2015.

#2: The Parker Student Body

Parker embraces the unique needs and strengths of each individual as a learner, collaborator, and human being. We seek opportunities for our student body to become a more diverse group and for those enrolled to engage with a range of perspectives, experiences and backgrounds. We seek to create thoughtful citizens able to thrive in a complex world.

Objectives:

1. Address the “diversity question” in a thoughtful public way that frames the Parker experience within a larger world view. Consider additions to curriculum, changes to our facilities and transportation around it, strategic partnerships with communities in the region, student projects etc. as options or opportunities.
2. Survey the students to determine how to enhance their opportunities for student voice in governance, operations, and the daily life of Parker.
3. Develop and formalize metrics and means for students to track their engagement with “a diverse range of perspectives, experiences and backgrounds” over the course of their school year/tenure at Parker.
4. Document and archive initiatives, activities, and projects that have provided Parker students with diverse experiences to enable these kinds of experiences to be replicated or expanded by other students or groups of students over time.
5. Identify other schools with whom Parker might partner to increase or broaden students’ range of experiences, exposure to different cultures, ethnicities, races, activities, populations, or academic subjects.
6. Identify non-governmental organizations, non-profit organizations, museums, etc with whom Parker might partner to increase or broaden students’ range of experiences, exposure to different cultures, ethnicities, races, activities, populations, or academic subjects.
7. Determine what kind of partnerships would be most beneficial and how they would be integrated into the curriculum.

8. Develop those partnerships through the mechanisms created in the strategic partnership portion of the plan.

#3: Parker Parents and Alumni

Parker has dynamic, fully engaged parent and alumni networks that support and spread Parker's mission, share resources and connections to enhance student experiences, and build community among members.

Objectives:

1. Establish a contact database for all alumni. Make provisions and assign responsibility for maintenance and routine updates. Include the addition of each graduating class. Complete the initial effort by June 2013.
2. Establish a contact database for all parents. Make provisions and assign responsibility for maintenance and routine updates. Complete the initial effort by June 2013.
3. Create a Parent Advisory Council by October 31, 2012.
4. Determine the mission of the Parent Advisory Council, the structure for the Council, the process for populating the Council, and the terms of service of parents on the Council. Consider using this group to centralize volunteer coordinators so that positions are well known and accessible; to create opportunities for parental involvement in both fund raising and in the educational setting; and to coordinate continuing parent education on how Parker works beyond Parker 101. Complete the mission and structural work by December 31, 2012.
5. Develop a parent survey to help identify parent needs and concerns. Make this survey separate and distinct from the end of the year survey. Complete the development of an electronic survey by (TBD: timelines for completion of this and other objectives will be developed by the new parent organization and published in a subsequent edition of the strategic plan).

6. Provide the Leadership Team and the Parent Council with the tabulated the results and utilize the Parent Advisory Council to assist in developing responses to needs and concerns.
7. Determine the role and responsibilities the existing outreach coordinator will play in relation to creating and maintaining data bases, working with the new Parent Council, and other outreach initiatives in the strategic plan. Articulate this role by January 2013.
8. Promote and maintain a social networking site for alumni. Consider the use of Facebook. Develop the site/group by November 2012.
9. Develop a questionnaire for all parents about their skills and the ways in which they might contribute to the Parker experience. This should include the full range of potential opportunities for volunteers. Complete the questionnaire by (TBD).
10. Develop a teacher on-line questionnaire through which teachers can identify needs that parents or alumni might fulfill. Determine how the process of matching needs to parent and alumni skills will be done. Complete the questionnaire by (TBD) Implement the matching process by (TBD).
11. Create an interactive data base of parent skills, volunteer interests, and potential contributions. Include best contact information. Make this available to all faculty and staff and to the Parent Council. Complete the data base and link to the website by (TBD).
12. Identify student interests that might be served by connecting them with a parent or alumni mentor. Utilize the data base to make connections.
13. Educate current students on the importance of their involvement as alumni in the sustaining of Parker. Explore options for engaging graduating students with alumni before graduation.
14. Initiate parent support groups around Division specific needs. Provide on-going guidance to parents on what happens, what to expect in a given division.
15. Establish, develop and support more affinity groups for various Parker communities e.g. ParkerPac, Nutrition, Sports Activities, Theatre, Music etc.

16. Create a "Frequently Asked Questions" place for parents on the website. Complete by (TBD).
17. Review current communications with parents and consider alternatives and additions to create common conduits for communications and to make it easier for parents to find out what's available, what is happening, events preparation, manage expectations, etc. Complete this by (TBD).

#4: Parker Facilities

Parker's facilities support and enhance the total education program of an essential school. Our facilities reflect our community's priorities.

1. Complete a facilities assessment; include available information such as pre-existing plans, restrictions, and covenants. Explore the needs and interests identified at the Future Search Conference including additional athletic facilities; a media center; and a performing arts center. Determine the extent of the needs for additional facilities in all areas. Include information gathering from students and teachers. Complete the assessment by (TBD: completion timelines for each objective will be developed by the Facilities and Capital Planning Committee and published in a subsequent edition of the plan).
2. Share the assessment results with the Future Search community and with parents.
3. Review the current capital improvements plan and expand it to include all physical plant improvements projected for the next 10 years for the existing facilities. Include a detailed time line and a project annual budget. Complete the capital improvement plans, timeline, and budgets by (TBD).
4. Develop a plan for the expansion or improvement of the current physical plant in relation to the academic program in alignment with the assessment. Complete by (TBD).
5. Develop a plan and a design for the expansion or improvement of the athletic facilities if indicated, and as supported by the assessment results. Complete by (TBD).
6. Develop a plan and design for a performing arts space, if indicated and aligned with the assessment results. Complete by (TBD).

7. Develop a plan and design for media space, if indicated, and aligned with the assessment results. Complete by (TBD).
8. Prioritize the physical plant needs and develop a capital campaign for the fiscal year (TBD).
9. Develop a time line for physical plant improvements.
10. Execute the capital campaign.

#5: Sustainable Funding

We recognize that essential schooling may cost more than other models and that charter schools face unique funding challenges. Parker accesses the needed resources through tuition revenue, user fees, fundraising, passionate advocacy, and entrepreneurial initiatives to create a sustainable funding model.

Objectives:

1. Develop briefing materials and presentations for all constituencies that explain how Parker is funded, identify its funding challenges, and shape expectations for the process of moving toward sustainability during the time horizon of the strategic plan. Develop these materials by January 2013.
2. Increase awareness of funding challenges and opportunities among all constituencies by rolling out the briefing materials and presentations prepared above by March 2013.
3. Create a task force to integrate the funding implications of staffing plans, facilities plans, capital budgets, Teachers Center plans, and other initiatives called for in the strategic plan. Create the task force by June 2013. Complete a draft sustainable funding plan by January 2014.
4. Circulate the sustainable funding plan in draft form in early 2014 as other initiatives (notably the capital planning activities) are drawing to a close. Refine the draft plan in response to feedback from all constituencies. Integrate final capital projections and finalize sustainable funding plan by June 2014.
5. Execute the portion of the funding plan that coincides with the strategic plan.

#6: The Sizer Teachers Center

The TRSRTC (Teachers Center) is a powerful catalyst for transforming individual practice, supporting institutional change, and influencing broader conversations about teaching and learning.

Objectives:

1. Create a task force whose purpose will be to accomplish the objectives. Form the task force by October, 2013.
2. Assess the current position, activities, reach, impact, viability of the Teachers' Center. Include gathering relevant data about the role, vision, reach, and impact the Teachers Center could have. Utilize the work from the Future Search Conference 2012 as part of the data. Complete the assessment by June 2014.
3. Determine a clear mission for the Teachers Center and its programming and define the relationship of the Teachers' Center to the Parker School.
4. Determine the structure needed to carry out the mission/vision, develop the organization chart, and make recommendations to the Board of Trustees.
5. Develop a strategic plan for the Teachers Center that aligns its work clearly with the mission of the Parker School, and considers leadership, staffing, budget, funding, and potential partners or partnerships.

#7: Strategic Partnerships

Parker's strategic partnerships provide for institutional advancement and create opportunities for experiential learning, advanced study, service learning, and internships.

Objectives:

1. Conduct an assessment to identify areas in which Parker could benefit from a partnership with an external resource. Conduct this assessment by January 2013.
2. Create an evaluation tool to evaluate current partnerships and determine how to maintain those relationships. Determine who will be the point of contact for each external partnership.
3. Consider creating a group of parents, alumni, and teachers, to serve as a working group on this topic.
4. Identify the criteria for selecting appropriate partnerships, such as but not limited to, experience partnering with schools, the types of resources available, such as money, mentors, technology, internships, student projects, sponsorship of events, geographic location, etc.
5. Identify potential partners who meet the criteria and initiate contact to create partnership.
6. Develop a promotional effort to market Parker as a potential partner in the Central Massachusetts region.

#8: Technology

Parker's well-integrated technology optimizes communication, supports innovative teaching and learning, and furthers institutional advancement goals.

Objectives:

1. Explore meaningful applications of technology to enhance personalization, collaboration and innovation consistent with the essential school model.
2. Create a specific plan for updating and replacing hardware and software. Develop a long term budget projection for the annual update of technology.
3. Determine what partnerships might be available for Parker in providing hardware, software, professional development, or learning opportunities in technology for students.

4. Create a task force to review, revise, and update the existing technology plan so that it maps onto the time horizon of the strategic plan. Include measurable objectives and implementation timelines. Complete a new technology plan by June 2014.
5. Develop capital budgets, professional development programs, and system designs needed to execute the revised technology plan. Complete these by June 2014.

#9: Verified Claims of Excellence

Parker clearly defines and articulates its criteria for educational excellence, and develops measures for validating its claims.

Objectives:

1. Determine what is important to measure to verify Parker's claims of excellence. Determine who will measure it, and how and when will it be measured. Decide how validity will be determined. Determine how to quantify qualitative measures. Determine ownership and maintenance responsibility for the data gathering system and for the data itself. Determine who and how data will be analyzed. Complete this phase by June 2015.
2. Investigate other models, organizations, schools, that use or wish to use this kind of data gathering system and/or wish to be part of a consortium to promote the data as evidence of the success of essential charter schools. Complete this exploratory work by January 2015.
3. Establish policy about how verification data will be disseminated and utilized by June 2015.
4. Develop the measurement system by January 2016.
5. Implement the measurement system by June 2017.