



Hill School's Strategic Plan 2021-2026

I. Purpose

The governance and administration of an independent school are based upon a shared mission, vision, and values. An effective Strategic Plan will reify those abstract principles through concrete goals to be pursued over a five year period.

II. Context for the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan

This Plan was developed by the Board of Trustees and the Administration over a two and a half year period culminating in its final approval in June of 2021. By ratifying it we reaffirm our Core Qualities.

III. Core Qualities of Hill School

Hill's Core Qualities are powerfully articulated in the School's Mission, Philosophy, and its Core Attributes. These central documents have been affirmed by the Board of Trustees as a key part of the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan, and they are regularly reviewed by faculty and staff in meetings and published each year in the School's Handbook, the Annual Report, and a variety of Admissions materials, ensuring that they are familiar to present school families and families who are interested in the School.



MISSION STATEMENT

The goal of a Hill School education is to build character, self-confidence, and scholarship through academic and co-curricular excellence, individualized attention, and a strong sense of community.

PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES

The school's goal is to help children grow strong and happy. In doing so we prize certain abilities: the abilities to think, to demonstrate essential academic skills, to be curious and resourceful, to communicate with oneself and with others, to trust, to be grateful, to wonder. And we prize certain qualities: honesty, humility, empathy, and compassion.

To preserve or achieve these attributes, we believe that one must possess a sense of worth and a sense of belonging - a child who feels alienated or unsure will be neither a good citizen nor an efficient learner. Therefore the school's first concern is to be a family, so that students may be secure enough to be able to appraise their own strengths and weaknesses, to risk succeeding and failing.

We believe that confidence derives partly from experience, therefore that students should have opportunities to participate in many and varied activities - academic, artistic, social, athletic - intimately and realistically. A class overnight camping trip is as integral to the curriculum as is division, care of a salamander in the science lab as germane as learning how to study for a test. Students need not only to read and discuss plays, but write and act them; not only to listen to symphonies, but play instruments; not only to participate in sports, but compete in them. There should be time to practice as well as study democracy; time to teach, as well as be taught.

Students also need opportunities to make choices: simple choices - whether or not to attend carefully to today's test review; and complex choices - whether or not to show disapproval of an irresponsible act by an important friend. They need freedom, often encouragement, to make such choices. Mistakes need to have as realistic consequences as possible, yet if adult intervention is required, it should be forthright, but also sympathetic and optimistic. Similarly, responsible conduct should be rewarded as naturally as possible, but when necessary, with adult confirmation.

Finally, we recognize that the most sensible and ambitious philosophy is achieved only by parents and teachers who maintain high expectations of themselves and their children, who are patient, and who are not discouraged by failure, or afraid to love.

THE SCHOOL'S GOAL IS TO HELP CHILDREN GROW STRONG AND HAPPY

As a school we are mindful that our mission is quite simple, and that it is important to keep our eyes on the horizon. Our goal is to help children become happy, successful adults. We often say that we are not raising children; we are raising adults.

There are three qualities that we believe children will need to become happy, successful adults. And we know that, in partnership with parents, we can have a disproportionately powerful effect on helping children get started on this path during these years.

Self-Educating: We want children to be naturally curious, to have the skills and habits they will need to be lifelong learners, and to know that they can affect their lives. That what they do matters. For example, by working hard they get better.

Self-Monitoring: We want children to develop an internal code of values that will guide their decisions and actions, so that they behave the same way whether or not they are being monitored.

Psychologically Mature: We want children to be honest. Honest as in telling the truth, but honest also in that they know their strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, they have the strong intrapersonal knowledge and interpersonal skills that they will need to become successful adults.



Hill School Core Attributes

Core attributes refer to qualities that are the essence of the identity of the School. The Board affirms these Core Attributes of The Hill School.



Hill School Five Year Plan

Hill School's Strategic Plan 2021-2026

Consequently, the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan focuses on three areas that are central to the School's present and future success. The financial health of the School provides an essential foundation for Hill's current and future operations. We have chosen to address governance to ensure the School's leadership is well trained, proactive, and strategic. Finally, the educational program is at the center of the school, and we must ensure that it remains rooted in our educational principles while also continually improving as we look to the future.



FINANCIAL HEALTH

While standing on a foundation of programmatic excellence, The Hill School has the freedom to look beyond tactical and cyclical themes to ensure long term operational success.

Goal: Build a sustainable funding model that fully supports operations across a range of conditions.

- Align revenue sources and expenses to be sustainable in the long term through a multi-year budget model
- Annually define, analyze, and evaluate metrics to ensure the sustainability of funding and utilize the multi-year model to identify future areas of insufficiency
- Significantly increase support for financial aid from the endowment
- Transition to a conservative operational reliance on annual fundraising through a combination of tuition alignment and endowment growth
- Develop sufficient operational reserve funds to maintain program depth and quality during cyclical downturns

Goal: Design and successfully execute a Comprehensive Centennial Campaign.

- Use the Strategic Plan to guide Campaign themes and priorities
- Finalize the Campaign's timeline, funding commitment, reporting structure, and cadence
- Establish framework for Campaign events and marketing materials

Goal: Ensure long-term funding by significantly expanding planned giving.

- Educate Board, faculty, staff, and constituents at the impact of planned giving
- Significantly expand membership in the 1926 Society
- Define and secure funding for affinity-based gifts
- Develop and fund naming opportunities



GOVERNANCE

High performing Boards do not simply happen. They are always the result of Boards making governance a strategic priority and having a proactive approach to governance training, education, and knowledge.

Goal: An effective, high performing Board that serves as stewards of Hill School's mission, vision, and purpose.

Board Governance Survey: Recommend a Board survey wherein Trustees evaluate their knowledge and understanding of key governance issues such as Board structure, operation, and purpose. The survey will also explore communications flow to the Board and within the Board, and it will include an evaluation of its effectiveness. The survey will serve as a guide for future Board governance education, training, and focus.

Annual Board Governance Refresher: Recommend an annual Board refresher session on Trustee roles and responsibilities at the start of each Board year. Such a session would also provide a focused opportunity for the exchange of ideas/thoughts on Board organization, management, and structure.

Governance Workshop: Recommend an independent school governance workshop led by a professional consultant to be held every three years as part of the annual retreat. The purpose of such a workshop is to offer a professionally led in-depth discussion of independent school governance, trends in Board governance, and governance issues unique to our Board.

New Trustee On-Boarding Process Review: Recommend a review of the new Trustee on-boarding process to strengthen new Trustee's understanding of the role, purpose, structure, and functioning of the Board. This will include a review of the existing "Trustee Job Description" and "Trustee Handbook".

Goal: Enhance the Board's role as stewards of Hill School's mission, vision, and purpose by making governance a strategic priority.

Performance Measurement: An important aspect of independent school Board governance is knowledge and understanding of how their institution is performing against stated goals and objectives. Recommend creation of a Board sponsored performance review, wherein the Board and school administration identify key performance indicators that can measure and assess the School's performance against its goals and objectives.

Community Survey: Effective Boards and school administrations strive to understand the ecosystem of the communities they serve. Recommend the creation of a process wherein the Board and school administration periodically conduct an environmental scan to uncover economic, demographic, technological, educational, and social trends within the community that may affect the health and well-being of the school or offer new opportunities for growth and development. Understanding this ecosystem and adjusting for change can assist in the formation of strategic plans that will strengthen the School's future.

Board Self-Evaluation: Recommend the creation of a Board self-evaluation process to inform on Board functioning and to strengthen its performance. Further recommend that this process include a professional consultant led Board workshop on the value, purpose, structure, and use of Board self-evaluations.

PROGRAM

The Program of the School is the heart of what defines the students' experience and makes Hill School distinctive and special. We should remain true to our educational principles while constantly improving our program.

Goal: Develop a culture of Inclusivity and Multiculturalism (I&M) in which all students, faculty, and staff feel proud of their identity and connected to the community and can participate fully in school life.

- Raise awareness of discriminatory behavior, prejudice, and unconscious bias.
- Provide opportunities for students, parents, faculty, and staff to appreciate their own culture and celebrate the diversity of other cultures.
- Continue expanding recruiting methods in order to reach a diverse group of potential candidates.

Goal: Ensure students receive the most comprehensive education by creating space and time for innovation in curriculum and teaching methodologies.

- Develop a plan that captures teacher/grade level input, encourages a growth mindset, and focuses on current research-based learning strategies, collaborative problem solving, and innovation.
- Develop a comprehensive wellness program to focus on educating the whole child.

Goal: Keep Hill School's conscientious commitment to be a community school.

- Promote a common understanding of what it means to be a "community school" to include our responsibility to the campus and town, a commitment to our need-based financial aid program, the importance of maintaining relationships with our parents and alumni, and our philosophy that students ought to feel that Hill School is "their place."

Goal: Maintain an exceptional faculty and staff.

- Regularly review positions to make sure we are properly staffed throughout the school.
- Offer competitive compensation to all faculty and staff.
- Support and expand faculty housing.

