

# THE ISLAND SCHOOL

## Sustaining What Matters Most

### Strategic Plan 2015

#### Mission

To educate our students and inspire in them a lifelong enthusiasm for learning and an appreciation and respect for themselves and others. At The Island School, every child matters.

#### Introduction

Entering its fourth decade, The Island School reaffirms its unequivocal commitment to meeting each child's unique needs. The school's educational practices continue to be firmly grounded in doing what is best for children, with current research echoing what The Island School has advocated since its inception: that children should enjoy school, should love learning, and should feel safe and celebrated in their school community. The Island School provides an environment that balances the needs and interests of each student with the needs and interests of the class and school community. Our approach to education is holistic, addressing the vital role our school plays in the social and emotional, as well as academic, education of our children. Values and expectations in our school include respect, compassion, inclusion, social responsibility and a celebration of differences, all of which create a safe haven that encourages children to take healthy risks and to try new things.

Today's students are preparing for positions that do not yet exist, using tools not yet developed to solve problems not yet identified. Therefore, our program provides a strong academic foundation by teaching critical thinking, creativity, flexibility, confidence, curiosity, adaptability and strong communication. The belief in these values and skills, along with the importance of play, of fun and of joy in learning, remains a hallmark of The Island School's educational experience. The School is committed to ensuring that, in addition to gaining an excellent education, children can be children in this cherished season of childhood as they learn how to be good people.

In order for The Island School to preserve this unique educational culture and experience, the next decade of its evolution must focus on long-term sustainability. The most effective way to achieve that during these uncertain economic times is to pursue a clear and thoughtful plan for maintaining the high quality of our program through the most effective use of our resources. This Strategic Plan, which reflects many months of dedicated and thoughtful discussion and work by many individuals from The Island School and the broader community, is offered as a dynamic and flexible set of guidelines intended to adapt to changing circumstances and to provide clear direction for our school's success, presently and forever.

The Island School now offers a rich and wonderful educational program in a beautiful setting, strong and diverse enrollment, a gifted and very experienced faculty, a highly effective administrative team, a mature and diversely talented Board, and full accreditation by the Pacific Northwest Association of Independent Schools (PNAIS). The school is financially secure due to careful and conservative budgeting and realistic strategic planning, both of which ensure the highest possible quality in our educational program. Having fully implemented all major goals outlined in its last Strategic Plan, The Island School is now ready to launch the next important phase of its development as a mature and sustainable school; thus we offer this Strategic Plan for a sustainable future.

## I. Best Educational Practices

Engage in an ongoing evaluation of The Island School's educational program, staffing and parent partnerships in order to recognize and cultivate each child's potential.

- A. Educational Programs
  - Continue to build the deeply collaborative relationship between faculty and administration.
  - Systematically review curricula to ensure that content and instructional practices continue to reflect the school's values and goals.
  - Appoint a faculty expert in each curricular area who will continually monitor and review the quality of the school's curriculum in his/her area of expertise.
  - Celebrate diversity in all aspects of the school's educational program and community, including incorporating additional multicultural education in the curricula.
  - Expand ethic of service through age-appropriate classroom learning and community-wide projects with other nonprofit organizations.
  - Incorporate a foreign language in the daily school curriculum.
  - Increase the librarian position to address the growing needs of the school.
- B. Faculty and Staff
  - Ensure that The Island School continues to be the most magnetic teaching environment in the community for retaining and attracting the best teachers, by utilizing school values and culture as selling points for prospective faculty and by developing a competitive compensation and benefits package.
  - Expand educational opportunities for the faculty, administration and board that build morale and that support professional development, program expertise and the school's culture.
- C. Parent Partnerships
  - Develop programs to continue bringing parents into a collaborative partnership with teachers and the school.
  - Educate all families about developmentally relevant topics and introduce new families to the school's culture using the Kindergarten Parent Night program as a model.
  - Expand opportunities for families to volunteer in the classroom and school.

## II. Cultural Continuity

Sustain, reinforce and build upon The Island School culture for future generations.

- A. Clarify, articulate and document the culture of the school.
  - Identify how the school communicates its culture from person to person and class to class, and find ways to sustain and enhance that process with a focus on the unique culture of inclusion and a firm commitment to the core, non-negotiable values.
  - Establish a Board committee to oversee documenting and sharing past and present "stories" through the Web site and other media to celebrate and capture The Island School's diverse and eclectic community of unique individuals with shared values.
- B. Develop a retention and recruitment strategy that ensures the faculty, administration and Board of Trustees are representative of the school's values and culture.
  - Continue to develop and document selection criteria and processes for new faculty that effectively evaluate a prospective faculty member's compatibility with the school's values and culture.
  - Ensure the composition of the Board of Trustees reflects a balance of the school's needs and constituencies across the entire community.

- C. Expand upon traditions and special events for students and parents, beginning at kindergarten and continuing through graduation.
- Create a “buddy system” of experienced parents to partner with new parents at The Island School for their first year, to serve as a resource and to help convey the culture.
  - Create more opportunities for active communication with alumni and their families.
  - Expand opportunities to share the culture of The Island School with new families at the school and with the broader community.

### III. Community Relevance

Explore ways to become more relevant and valuable to the greater community.

- A. Continue to develop ways to better connect to the local community through people, programs and services.
- Create opportunities for each class to participate in a developmentally-appropriate community service project each year to meet various community needs and expand the school's contact with the broader Kitsap community.
  - Become the regional expert on developmentally-appropriate education for children in kindergarten through fifth grade by sharing faculty expertise in this area.
  - Create a volunteer committee to pursue connections with local community organizations and to develop more opportunities for The Island School's students to pursue natural, cultural and historical learning.

### IV. School Advancement

Establish that every member of the Kitsap community will know about The Island School and that every family with school-age children will consider The Island School as an educational option.

- A. Achieve full enrollment so that the school can continue to offer, and build upon, its unique educational program.
- Recruit a diverse student population that matches the school's mission and culture.
  - Increase Director of Advancement to a full-time position responsible for marketing, admissions and development, and increase resources accordingly.
  - Extensively revise the Web site to better communicate "The Island School story," to become a more interactive site designed to engage prospective families in a rich dialogue, and to increase inquiries and applications.
  - To support enrollment and diversity, visit community leaders in Bainbridge Island, Poulsbo, Suquamish, Kingston, Indianola and Hansville to share information about the school and facilities and to invite them to visit the school.
  - Clearly articulate and capitalize on The Island School's unique marketing niche by focusing on what differentiates the school from other educational programs and what makes it invaluable to the community.
- B. Explore ways to position The Island School as the authority on elementary education within the broader community.
- Offer a parent education series based on areas of greatest interest to parents of children this age with the school's faculty positioned as the experts.
  - Explore liaisons and co-sponsored presentations with other mission-appropriate nonprofits in the community (Boys and Girls Clubs, arts organizations, Cedars Church, other PNAIS schools, IslandWood) to broaden the school's market and to share marketing expenses.

## V. Financial Sustainability

Strengthen The Island School's financial sustainability by continuing to pursue budgetary discipline, diversifying revenue sources and building reserve capital.

- A. Develop a long-range financial plan that incorporates the elements defined by the Strategic Plan and that supports the growth of the school, ensures competitive compensation for the faculty and administration, expands the financial aid program, and builds operating and plant replacement reserves.
- B. Ensure an administrative structure that fully supports the effective operation of the school and provides the necessary resources to do so.
- C. Explore and pursue opportunities for purchasing properties adjacent to the school.
- D. Create new sources of revenue that are consistent with the school's mission and that raise the school's profile within the broader community.
  - Develop and implement a plan to expand extended day enrichment offerings.
  - Develop and implement a summer program.
  - Develop and implement a plan to offer adult and community education programs.
  - Develop a promotional campaign for marketing the school facility for lease to other nonprofits in order to generate incremental rental income.
- E. Continue to develop a comprehensive strategic development plan to support implementation of the Strategic Plan goals.
  - Develop an ongoing major gifts fundraising strategy, and expand fundraising capabilities by nurturing relationships with existing donors and fostering relationships with new donors.
  - Develop Board capacity to support relationships with major donors.
- F. Develop and implement an endowment campaign to increase the endowment fund.