GERMANTOWN ACADEMY

STRATEGIC VISION

our PROCESS

Dear Parents, Colleagues, Students, Alumni, and Friends,

Since 2013, the trustees and the senior administration have engaged in conversations with you, our community, to determine the areas of school life that warrant primary focus in the coming years. We have entitled this initiative a "Strategic Vision," as the processes are designed to be ongoing and fluid as we track, evaluate, and determine how to address the inevitable evolutionary cycles of educational best practices. The strategies encompassed in the Vision are, of course, founded on and grounded in the five major tenets of our Mission Statement.

I am thrilled to write that these efforts have met with success. A "Strategic Vision for Germantown Academy" was approved unanimously and enthusiastically by the trustees at their June Retreat. Board President Judi Goodman 1760, Head Elect Rich Schellhas, and I share excitement and delight as we present this Vision to the entire school community. To us, the educational and governance leaders of GA, this document of purpose and promise is the latest iteration of Germantown Academy's abiding intention to provide the finest educational experience possible for our students.

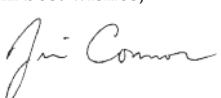
Our Vision's theme is "engagement"and the first goal is to "engage," educationally, our entire community - students and adults - in the core work of Germantown Academy. Adults are included because the strategic visioning work of the last two years has convinced us that we must continue to adapt to the ever-present challenges involved in preparing and presenting a world class education. Thus GA's vision includes the necessary professional growth experiences to do just that. The other four goals are designed, like roads leading to Rome, to supply the raw materials for the vigorous work of full communal engagement.

We chose this theme neither because GA's teachers are not already engaging students in learning nor because the term is au courant in educational circles. Instead, "engagement" was chosen after hearing from alumni and parents their opinions on what students will need to know to be prepared for the challenges of tomorrow, studying the research on the positive impact for students' emotional well-being and academic success, and witnessing for ourselves these past years the excitement brought about by pilot programs launched by pioneering GA faculty. Clearly, the tools and purposes of educational engagement are evolving at an unprecedented pace, and GA needs to adapt accordingly.

We will adapt in a measured way, of course. The implementation of our Strategic Vision process will mirror what GA has done so effectively over the centuries - keeping the best practices of the past while exploring and developing the best of the future. While Judi, Rich, and I are proud to announce Germantown Academy's Strategic Vision, we do so with all due humility, for we know that no process, no matter how thorough, can predict truly the educational tools our students will need a generation from now. Thus, while presenting this product of a two-year process, we are also presenting the beginning of a cycle of assessment, measurement, review, and refocus. You, as our community, will be a part of each cycle. We needed you to produce this vision; we will need your guidance as we grow into it and build upon it.

In closing, I want to express my gratitude to all of the students, teachers, staff members, trustees, parents, and alumni who participated in developing Germantown Academy's initial Strategic Vision Statement. Thank you for all of your previous hard work on the school's behalf, and thank you for your loyalty and support in the work to come. The school stands strong in 2015 because so many of you have cared enough to band together and make it so.

All best wishes,



James W. Connor 1760, Head of School

our VISION

Germantown Academy will distinguish itself as a leader in student engagement.

We will connect purpose and passion in learning within an educational model that blends innovative and traditional practices for our students.

We will commit to expanding learning experiences and opportunities to inspire students to explore, to discover, to design, and to apply their knowledge in meaningful ways.

We will prepare students for future success in college and life through the development of essential personal and intellectual skills.

We will recognize and honor the diverse contributions of each individual in our community as the foundation of collaborative learning.

We will pursue this strategy with cohesive, visionary leadership in a flexible operating model that allows us to collaborate closely with students, trustees, faculty, parents, alumni, and community partners.

our MISSION

We inspire students to be...

- Independent in Thought
- Confident in Expression
- Compassionate in Spirit
- Collaborative in Action
- Honorable in Deed

why ENGAGEMENT

While Germantown Academy teachers have engaged our students for over 255 years, *how and why we seek to engage* have evolved dramatically since our founding. Teachers and students now have equal, instant access to facts and content. While faculty are no longer in sole possession of the keys necessary to unlock the world of knowledge, gifted ones are still indispensable in drawing our children toward that world. The faculty demonstrate a genuine love of learning *with and from* their charges. This is 21st century engagement.

In a century that clearly prizes innovation, an entrepreneurial spirit, creativity, and invention, engaging students is undoubtedly urgent work not just as a means to a future, successful end; in fact, it creates instant advantages in the lives of our students. The data at GA and across an impressive range of American schools reveals that genuinely engaged students are also healthier, happier human beings.

GA is not on the engagement bandwagon; our teachers are leading the way. We are *engagement trailblazers*. By encouraging our students to pursue their passions and to express their voices in what they want - or better yet *need* - to learn, we seek to create a generation of learners who will strive to do what they love because they love what they do.

Together, our students and faculty actively defined the critical components of engagement which appear to the right. Inspiring this thriving community of engaged learners is how we will best fulfill our lofty mission. We will prepare our students to engage in the world around them, and, best of all, to lead happy, healthy lives where *they* are the authors of their own, genuine, self-determined success.

ENGAGED STUDENTS...

- Work Hard and Embrace Challenge
- Demonstrate Resilience and Perserverance
- Listen Well and Communicate Thoughtfully
- Develop Critical Thinking Skills
- Seek and Share Their Passions
- Create and Innovate
- Learn Actively and Collaboratively
- Express Curiosity and Ask Questions
- Take Academic Risks
- Connect to the World Beyond GA

ENGAGED and ENGAGING TEACHERS...

- Inspire Interest in and Passion for their Subjects
- Offer Varied Multi-Sensory Learning Experiences and Assessments
- Teach Critical Thinking Skills
- Stimulate Intellect, Curiosity, and Academic Risk Taking
- Challenge and Support Appropriately
- Strive for Growth and Improvement
- Draw Connections to the World
- Cultivate Problem Solving and Resilience
- Promote a Creative, Innovative Spirit
- Know Students as Learners and as Individuals

my next steps.
Be brilliant, be confident - you'll be

GOAL: EXCEPTIONAL LEARNING THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

Germantown Academy will offer learning experiences that are personalized, innovative, relevant, and meaningful. GA will also ensure that current and new academic programs align with our mission and 21st century skills. Because learning happens in and out of the classroom, we will focus on building student leadership, collaboration, and opportunities for creative learning, service, and social impact in our co- and extra-curricular programs.

students

We will continue to develop the essential skills for every student that will guide learning, teaching, curriculum, and assessment for the future.

We will build on previous programs to promote student engagement, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, and innovation inside and outside of the classroom.

We will make student engagement the first priority in all extra- and co-curricular activities—athletics, arts, and clubs—developing competitive and recreational programs in alignment with students' abilities and interests.

faculty and staff

We will embed professional development in the culture of the school by creating the conditions and setting clear expectations for collaboration, learning, research, and development for all faculty and staff.

We will foster a culture of professionalism by continually developing standards for the best teaching, mentoring, and instructional practices in partnership with our faculty.

parents and alumni

We will engage parents and alumni in the learning and growth at school and communicate in meaningful ways to keep them connected to the community.

We will partner with parents around the developmental needs of their children—how they learn best and what they need to be healthy and successful.

community

We will strive to understand the needs and backgrounds of our community, foster mutual understanding and respect, and create a community which reflects the world around us in order to truly engage each individual.

GOAL: COMMITMENT TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AS THE FOUNDATION FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Germantown Academy will emphasize and strengthen our commitment to early childhood education (ages four through eight), recognizing that these years are the building blocks for the development of engaged, curious learners and healthy, purposeful lives.

engaging learning experiences and environments

We will build upon an engaging curriculum that encourages students to be curious and take initiative in their education.

We will create indoor and outdoor learning environments that reflect best practices around young children's need to engage in multisensory and nature-based experiences.

We will create intentional and authentic learning experiences that harness the growth that comes from a healthy challenge.

developmentally appropriate

We will offer an education that emphasizes the development of the whole child, providing for each child's social, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs.

We will base our learning experiences on the understanding of general patterns of growth in the early years as well as children's individual development.

academic foundation

We will create a rigorous academic foundation that meets each student's individual trajectory and reflects the GA mission and prepares students for life.

GOAL: VISIONARY LEADERSHIP ACROSS GA

Germantown Academy will enhance its culture of engaged leadership between and across the divisions to position the school for long-term success.

leadership development

We will be intentional about developing leaders and aligning these efforts with ongoing strategies and the school's human resource needs.

governance

Our Trustees will embrace the critical role of oversight for the school and its strategic vision and priorities. The Board will ensure stewardship and philanthropic support of GA.

Our Trustees will continue to partner with the Head of School and leadership to ensure continuity of vision, values, and strategic focus.

Our Trustees will commit actively to examine policies and practices in order to ensure the highest level of governance.

organizational dynamics

We will examine organizational design to foster a culture of active, collaborative leadership throughout and across all aspects of school life as part of continuous succession planning.

GOAL: MASTER PLANNING ALIGNED WITH OUR STRATEGIC VISION

Germantown Academy will continually adapt the Campus Master Plan and align priorities and phases with the objectives and goals of our student engagement-centered vision for the future.

campus plan leadership

The Board of Trustees will work with school leadership to adapt the Campus Plan and recommend prioritization of timing and resources to support engagement.

key needs

We will analyze existing needs in campus planning and follow the Strategic Vision for the school when making key decisions around academic and extra- and co-curricular space.

financial sustainability

We will examine the Campus Planning process in conjunction with the financial and environmental sustainability goals for the school.

We will coordinate the necessary resources with the Campus Master Plan, determining where to invest strategically and why.

GOAL: INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH NEW APPROACHES TO GROWTH

Germantown Academy will build and develop a flexible and innovative model for the future in order to best support the needs of our students.

innovation and collaboration

We will create new opportunities, partnerships, and capabilities that strengthen learning experiences and expand our impact in the region without burdening the cost structure.

non-tuition sources of revenue

We will pursue additional sources of revenue to become less tuition dependent, to support the great programmatic work already happening at the school, and to open our vast resources to the larger community.

GA community engagement

We will strengthen our culture of philanthropy and stewardship by engaging our community in the promise of GA's present and its future as a leading learning institution.

A CALL TO ACTION

Germantown Academy's Board of Trustees is a dedicated partner with the school's administrative leadership. Together they provide students with academic and extra-curricular opportunities, outstanding faculty, and quality facilities. Specifically, the Board establishes broad policy goals that align with the operation of the Academy and further its mission; provides fiduciary oversight of the Academy; appoints and oversees the Head of School; and engages in and supports long-range strategic planning.

The Board, along with school administration, is pleased to share this Strategic Vision to establish Germantown Academy as a leader in student engagement. The Vision has exciting and ambitious goals, and the Board will look to the entire GA community – alumni, parents, faculty, and students – to join in moving the school toward our shared future. Our community's gifts of time, talent, and resources will be called upon as the school works toward these vital goals, while always continuing our common commitment to the mission of Germantown Academy.

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HEAD ELECT AND HEAD OF UPPER SCHOOL
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