



**Dutchess
Day School**

igniting learning



Strategic Plan 2009

Dutchess Day School Strategic Plan
September, 2009

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Dutchess Day School's Mission Statement

Dutchess Day School nurtures each child in mind, body and spirit and guides students towards responsibility for themselves, one another and the world around them.

Statement of Philosophy

Dutchess Day School is a pre-K through Eighth Grade community that values children's natural curiosity and fosters an enduring enthusiasm for learning. In a culture of trust, collaboration and mutual respect, students are encouraged to take intellectual risks and to develop independence, confidence and imagination. A talented and dedicated Faculty maintains high academic standards within a balanced curriculum, challenging students to discover their unique strengths as well as their role in the global community. Respect for the individuality of each child and for human differences is fundamental to Dutchess Day School's tradition and philosophy. Thus, the School seeks diversity and welcomes families of varied backgrounds. All parents are invited to work with the Faculty, Staff and students as partners in learning. Students explore and develop their talents through service to the School, the community, the larger world and the environment.

Goal One – Enrollment

Rationale: To draw new families and to retain current students to Dutchess Day School to ensure a healthy enrollment. Equal attention will be paid to both areas.

This task force will determine a course of action and initiatives to assure consistent and full enrollment based on a formula for class and School size determined by the Board and Administration.

Implementation Steps

Program Marketing: Develop a marketing plan to expand awareness of the School in the community with emphasis on attracting students to the Preschool and Upper School and keeping our own Lower School students. Determine an Upper School marketing plan. Identify and promote the aspects of the Upper School program that make it a unique and exciting draw for our own Lower School students and families.

Advertising: Engage parents in the outreach effort to attract more families to the School especially in the Upper School.

Admission Criteria: Develop clarity around admissions criteria, sibling policy and diversity goals. Continue to develop the School's website as a marketing and communication tool for current parents and students, alumni, prospective families and teachers.

Class Size: Determine the appropriate size range for each grade based on facilities, philosophy and culture of the School. Consider expanding class sizes as demands merit.

Transportation: Look into additional transportation possibilities particularly for younger children, so as to expand the geographic reach of the School.

Financial Aid: Examine the financial aid program. Develop an Upper School marketing plan and consider merit-based scholarships for talented Upper School applicants.

Retention: Clarify the School's philosophy about supporting students who are having difficulty succeeding at DDS either for academic or social reasons. Conduct exit interviews and analyze attrition data in order to re-focus attention on retention, especially of boys.

Goal Two – Faculty, Staff and Administration Support

Rationale: As with student enrollment, attracting excellent teachers, staff and administrators is as important as retaining them. Compensation and professional development are the two central strategies in reaching these goals.

Dutchess Day School will recruit and retain dedicated and highly skilled teachers, staff and administrators, who are committed to the DDS Mission, understand child development and model a belief in life-long learning.

Implementation Steps

Compensation: Provide as generous a compensation package as consistent enrollment, fundraising and endowment draw permit, taking into account levels of compensation at competing schools.

Professional Development: Assure that DDS teachers, staff and administrators are offered many opportunities for continued professional development and training in areas such as technology, learning styles and current research on child development, especially as it relates to gender differences. Offer support for graduate study, travel grants, grant writing, conferences, workshops and sabbaticals.

Assessment: Develop consistent and thorough assessment tools for assuring that DDS employees are as successful as possible and held accountable for maximizing the development of each child.

Recruitment: Recruit male teachers, especially at the Upper School level, and employees of color.

Employee Housing: Research ways in which the School might provide support for employee housing in fairly close proximity to the School.

Goal Three – Program

Rationale: Vibrant schools constantly look at what they teach and how they teach.

The Dutchess Day School Administration and Faculty will review the School's curriculum, activities and schedule, particularly current pedagogical approaches, integration of technology, understanding different learning styles, especially the differences between how boys and girls learn, curriculum offerings, environmental education, community service and global citizenship.

Implementation Steps

Technology: Seek ways to train teachers more consistently to integrate technology into the curriculum. Implement on-going teacher training and provide up-to-date equipment for the integration of academic technology into the curriculum, especially in the Upper School.

Different Learning Styles and Gender Differences: Provide on-going professional development for teachers in the latest research on brain development and children's learning styles. Form a Faculty committee to review latest research on gender differences in academic and social development of boys and girls.

Co-curricular and Curricular Offerings: Review co-curricular offerings – athletics, music, drama, art, health and computer -- to see if they support the Mission of the School and meet the needs of our students. Research language programs in comparable schools and consider offering one language for K-8. Review and consider rethinking the math program.

Character: Develop on-going programs, activities and expectations to support the development of character to reinforce considerate and caring behavior in a forthright and consistent manner.

Global Perspectives: Consider ways to reorient areas of the curriculum to provide a more global perspective including off-campus, hands-on opportunities made available through an on-going community service program.

Coaching Expertise: Look for ways to attract new teachers and/or members of the community who have experience and skill in coaching.

Support for Learning Differences: Develop systematic ways to support children with learning differences and communicate consistently with parents about the need for outside support or ultimately a different school environment. Retain and/or make available the part-time services of a counseling professional/ learning specialist to work with students, teachers and parents in training them to address specific learning or social needs.

Goal Four – Facilities

Rationale: A campus that is well maintained and provides the necessary facilities to meet the needs of the students, teachers and program will fulfill and enhance the Mission of the School.

DDS will develop a Campus Master Plan to determine and prioritize important facilities needs, and over the next few years seek to plan, finance and execute a number of physical improvements to the campus.

Implementation Steps

Campus Master Plan: Institute a Campus Planning Committee that includes people with educational and facilities expertise to oversee development of a Master Campus Plan – look at previous studies done for DDS.

- Improve area in front of School.
- Plan for renovating, expanding and/or reconfiguring of classrooms, Upper School library, Music Room, Art and Science wings and storage space.
- Convert “bathroom offices” into legitimate office or storage space.
- Consider creating an arts facility separate from the dining hall to accommodate music and drama.
- Add small group, separate spaces in the Lower School for “pull-out” programs like reading and writing.
- Plan to endow the cost of maintenance for additional facilities.

Greening: Plan to include “green” systems and standards in all renovations and additions – seek cost-effective alternative energy sources for the School.

Gyms: Utilize new and old gym facilities more effectively.

Land: Consider contiguous land opportunities.

Faculty Housing: Analyze the potential for acquisition or construction of Faculty housing.

Goal Five – Finances and Fundraising

Rationale: The School must move beyond relying on healthy enrollments and tuition increases to meet its financial goals. By expanding the endowment, building a larger base of generous donors and educating parents and Alumni about the importance of giving, DDS will be able to plan for its healthiest financial future.

Dutchess Day School will seek additional sources of financial support from a broader base of donors to provide for both current operating expenses and endowment growth. Further assure the School's financial future by reaching and maintaining full enrollment.

Implementation Steps

Fundraising: Formulate a master fundraising plan that incorporates, prioritizes and sequences 1) the annual needs of the operating budget, 2) the facilities additions and renovations recommended in the Campus Master Plan, 3) the goal for endowment growth and 4) other initiatives proposed in the Strategic Plan, such as Faculty housing.

- Establish targets for fundraising needs over the next 3 to 5 years for the Annual Fund, capital projects and endowment growth and special projects.
- Identify and analyze DDS's diverse donor base and develop multiple strategies to assure consistent support, leveraging, in particular, new database software.

Parents: Educate parents in the financial realities of independent school education and ensure that in-coming families understand that the tuitions and fees don't cover the cost of the program and that annual and capital contributions are necessary to support the Faculty, enhance the program and maintain the financial stability of the School.

Financial Model: Build a model that projects financial results based on key variables such as student counts, tuition, Faculty levels, Faculty salaries, etc, as we anticipate the projects and goals of the other task forces.

Planned Giving: Develop a planned giving program.

Communication: Develop strategies and communication methods for explaining the "value added" of attending an independent school like DDS.

Alumni: Develop plans to capitalize on the affection the Alumni have for DDS.

Case Statement: Begin planning a "case statement" and a fundraising target for a capital campaign to be pursued over the next five years based on the goals articulated in the Strategic Plan.

Committees: Develop Board and parent fundraising committees to work closely with the Development Office in planning and executing fundraising programs for both annual and capital campaigns, including foundation grants to fund projects.