



VERMONT
COMMONS
SCHOOL

STRATEGIC PLAN

2010 - 2020



MOVING OUT OF THE CLASSROOM AND INTO THE WORLD

COMMONS



MISSION STATEMENT

Vermont Commons School students experience a unique blend of academics and global immersion, master fundamental academic disciplines, grasp the profound interdependence of the natural and human systems they inhabit, and graduate with the values, knowledge, skills and commitment necessary to become ethical and engaged ecological citizens.



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VISION STATEMENT

Vermont Commons School will be a national leader among independent schools, recognized for connecting our classrooms to our communities in order that our students may discover context for their knowledge, directions for their energy, targets for their academic skills, and motivation for becoming engaged citizens.



MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL & CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

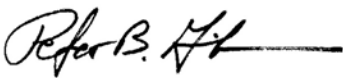
Dear Friends of Vermont Commons School,

From the moment the Mission and Guiding Principles of Vermont Commons School were set in place thirteen years ago, the community that formed around them has been one of vibrancy, excitement, and dedication. This, our first Strategic Plan, gathers up these very qualities and sets the direction of VCS for the future. We feel confident that the ideas, beliefs, and perspectives that make up the essence of VCS are reflected in each area.

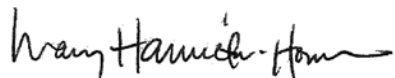
In brief, the plan addresses aspects of the school seen as vitally important at this time and in the foreseeable future. The four pillars of the plan stand to support our major areas of focus. Improving our Programs will insure an exceptional independent school education for our students, and provide the tools our faculty and administrators need to deliver it. Fostering our Community Connections will help us better engage in a world asking for solutions to its problems. Securing our Financial position will further build the firm foundation of our school for the years ahead. And developing the Commons Campus will identify our community with a sense of “place” that will be vital to accomplishing our broader mission here in Vermont and beyond.

We invite you to look at this plan and see the vision it sets before us. It is a bold view of a new future for this community. Our heartfelt thanks go out to everyone in the VCS community who helped craft this document. We greatly appreciate the energy, creativity, and hope that you all put into it.

Sincerely,



Peter Gilmore
Head of School



Mary Hamilton-Homer
Chair of the Board of Trustees

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our Aspirations Reflect Our Values

- We are all part of, responsible for, and have a direct impact upon our world. Productive citizenship requires that students thoroughly understand how their local and global communities work, and how individuals and communities affect each other.
- Understanding the relationships between humans and the world they share is the primary goal of education. For students to appreciate their place and role in their environment – and respond with wonder and confidence – their learning experiences must be embedded in multiple human and natural contexts.
- To thrive in an age in which complexity and opportunity are created at an ever-accelerating pace, students must become skilled in a balanced mix of the language arts, mathematics, and physical, natural and social sciences, as well as artistic, musical and athletic expression.
- Technological understanding and competence are increasingly essential for communication, competitiveness, and success in the information age.
- Students must interact directly with their environment in order to experience and appreciate the real-world value of their skills and knowledge. With the world as classroom, lab and shop, lessons are forever linked to vivid personal learning experiences.
- Respect for self and others, enjoyment of diversity, personal commitment to equality, devotion to stewardship, and acceptance of responsibility are essential pillars of the Vermont Commons education and values system.
- Recognizing that the relationships between students and adults form the fabric of the Vermont Commons experience, daily life in our school is organized to promote healthy, positive, mutually enjoyable interactions among students, teachers and staff members.

NOTE: The wordle (left) was created using words from the VCS Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles.



THE FOUR PILLARS OF OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

I PROGRAMS

Through the Strategic Plan we will create a student experience that sets high standards for academic competence, personal and intellectual development, and opportunities for leadership. By focusing the programs on increased local, regional and global engagement, as well as the tenets of sustainability and ecological citizenship, we will establish our reputation as a model school for experiential learning and global immersion.

Academics

- The VCS curriculum will consistently reflect the Mission and Guiding Principles in all disciplines.
- We will ground our curricula in a global context, addressing and reflecting the larger world within and across disciplines.
- We will create a Professional Development program, tailored to our mission and vision, for faculty, staff, administration, and Board members to ensure their personal and professional growth.
- We will create an integrated technology program that enhances student and faculty experience at every level, supports the administration of the school, and provides for the implementation of 21st century skills throughout the curriculum.
- We will actively seek ways to spread awareness of our vision, our curriculum and our achievements among independent and public schools in Vermont, New England, and beyond - becoming recognized for unique approaches to teaching and learning.



Health and Wellness

- VCS will devise and implement a Wellness Program that is informative and adaptable; provides age-appropriate knowledge to the students and guidance for faculty, administrators, and parents; and offers opportunities for student leadership.
- We will continue to develop and support a physical education program that is built on active participation of our faculty; fosters mutual respect and trust; and offers a safe environment for exploring healthy choices.



Extracurricular Activities

- VCS will have a Division IV-quality interscholastic sports program that focuses on athletic skill development and leadership opportunities; develops traditional school rivalries; and establishes the reputation of VCS as an inclusive and competitive independent school.
- We will design and implement an engaging and permanent after-school program as well as clubs created and directed by the students.
- We will expand our current menu of extracurricular programs to include a strong music program available to all students.



II COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

- We will create a VCS culture where students, faculty, staff, families, and trustees will make positive contributions to society by focusing on community engagement and building productive and reciprocal local, national and global relationships.
- VCS students will develop the vision, critical thinking skills, and awareness of community context that are the building blocks of proactive citizenship in the world.
- Students will participate in short- and long-term projects with sister schools and organizations at local, regional and global levels.
- VCS will emphasize the diplomacy, communication skills and mastery of tools needed to engage effectively in all relationships.
- VCS faculty and students will exhibit or publish the results of projects, innovations, and programs.
- Through academic and non-academic means, VCS will actively participate in and support programs and activities beyond the school that exemplify our mission and vision.



III FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP & SCHOOL GROWTH

- We will build a strong financial foundation to ensure that VCS succeeds in all aspects of this Strategic Plan, consistently achieves our mission, and secures our school for the future. We will strengthen and direct our fiscal resources to promote and sustain our values and priorities.
- We will increase enrollment to 120 students by FY2015 while evaluating potential further growth to 180.
- We will adopt financial benchmarks consonant with other schools in our cohort, and incorporate the financial needs of each initiative of this Plan in a five-year Strategic Financial Plan.
- To ensure our future financial stability and assist the daily operations of the school we will expand our endowment to \$1,000,000 by FY2015 through a Comprehensive Campaign and reserve fund transfers.
- We will bring employee salaries and benefits in line with our regional cohort of independent schools as our financial base allows.



IV THE COMMONS CAMPUS

- We will create a “Commons Campus” that provides a physical environment using sustainable design strategies to support enhanced programs and increased enrollment.
- VCS will establish a multiyear Capital Plan to develop and fund a Commons Campus with a commitment to sustainability and ecological citizenship. Students will participate from concept to construction.
- We will establish a Building Program Plan consonant with the program and facilities assessments. The plan will encompass a carbon-neutral strategy and additional green space.
- In alignment with the strategic financial plan, VCS will launch a Comprehensive Campaign to realize the creation of the Commons Campus.



2009 - 2010 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Strategic Planning Committee

Chairs: Ken Edwards and Mary Hamilton-Homer

Fran Carr

Rebecca Coll

Peter Gilmore

Peter Goff

Mike Rosen

Mike Russell

Pillar Groups

Programs

Chairs: Ken Edwards and Peter Gilmore

Chance Cardamone-Knewstub

Mary Hamilton-Homer

Cara Simone

Community

Chair: Rebecca Coll

Mark Cline Lucy

Lisa Fargo

Pat Heffernan

Finance

Chair: Mike Russell

Peter Gilmore

Mary Hamilton-Homer

Facilities

Chair: Fran Carr

Peter Goff

Bill Maclay

Ben Patrick

*Special thanks to the Committee Members and
to the entire Vermont Commons School community.*

“It is important that students bring a certain ragamuffin, barefoot irreverence to their studies; they are not here to worship what is known, but to question it.”

Jacob Bronowski

“It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.”

Albert Einstein



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