



Tower School

Strategic Plan 2009

*A Vision for Excellence:
Preparing for Tower's Second Century*



The Planning Process

The entire Tower School community contributed meaningfully to the development of this new Strategic Plan. After engaging Ms. Kathleen (Kiki) Johnson of Carney, Sandoe & Associates as our consultant, the Strategic Planning Committee developed a survey to solicit opinions from parents, alumni, parents of alumni, and faculty. Ms. Johnson visited the school for two days in October 2007 as well as in January 2008, during which she met with groups of parents, trustees, alumni, and faculty.

In January 2008, Ms. Johnson led a two-day workshop with trustees, faculty, alumni, and parents to examine the feedback from the survey and focus group meetings that identified the central issues facing the school: program, faculty, resources, and communications. Subsequent meetings refined the work of the committee as we developed a set of goals and implementation plans to address these issues.

The Board of Trustees anticipates that this will be a “living document” and is committed to providing the leadership and resources that will support this plan. The Board is committed to regular measurement and evaluation of the school’s efforts to reach these goals.

The Board of Trustees and the Strategic Planning Committee share great enthusiasm for Tower’s future. The committee thanks the entire community of Tower for many valuable insights and helpful suggestions.



Introduction

We introduce Tower’s 2009 Strategic Plan by affirming distinctive elements of the Tower culture that will remain central to our community in the years to come. This new plan will guide the school toward its centennial year in 2012.

At Tower, we are committed to making decisions based upon the best interests of each child. A symbol of that commitment is “The Orange Chair” — an ordinary classroom chair painted a vivid orange to highlight the uniqueness of each child. The chair, which sits in the Head of School’s office, serves as a reminder to teachers, administrators, and parents that students are the focus and heart of our community.

We believe that learning should be fun. We celebrate our students as eager learners who enjoy school. We seek to preserve childhood. We value the wonder and opportunity of the years from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade.

We embrace the Tower Code.

1. Respect all people: teachers, staff, students, parents, visitors, and others.
2. Respect the rights of students to learn and teachers to teach.
3. Be kind and helpful. Include others.
4. Be honest with yourself and others.
5. Respect school and personal property and help keep our school clean.

In 2005, the Board of Trustees approved a philosophy statement on diversity and developed a diversity action plan. The Strategic Plan reaffirms Tower’s commitment to be an inclusive, multicultural, and cohesive school community. Our commitment to diversity informs all facets of this Strategic Plan.

For families committed to inspiring their children’s lives through education, Tower represents the most dynamic pre-kindergarten through eighth grade program on the North Shore of Boston.

- We nurture, challenge, and inspire our students.
- We are focused on excellence.
- We spark a lifelong love of learning.
- We have a creative, vibrant culture.
- We focus on character and moral development.
- We have a strong, tight-knit community.
- We prepare students to be contributing members of society and careful stewards of the environment.

The goals and implementation plans articulated here map our path as we build upon Tower’s strengths so that the school may truly serve as a beacon of excellence.

Mission Statement

To spark a lifelong love of learning

Tower School aims to spark a lifelong love of learning in our students by providing a stimulating education in a supportive environment. We encourage children to strive for personal levels of excellence and to develop fully across a broad range of academic, physical, creative, and social endeavors. Tower seeks to nourish a spirit of inquiry, to impart an appropriate body of knowledge, to set high standards, to instill strong learning habits, and to help students become secure in themselves while respecting the dignity of others.



Statement on Diversity

Tower School embraces the value of an inclusive, multicultural, and cohesive school community. Central to our mission is our belief in the inherent dignity and humanity of all persons. We are committed to an environment in which differences among all members of our community — including, but not limited to, differences in race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, learning style, age, gender, physical attributes, and ability — are recognized as a vital and integral force in fostering a community of respect and tolerance. Diversity brings multiple perspectives to our environment; it cultivates the exchange and the challenge of new ideas; it honors varied traditions and cultures; and it teaches, in conjunction with our academic curriculum, the humanistic skills necessary for functioning ethically and effectively in our community and in our increasingly complex, global society.

Core Values

- The years from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade are of primary importance in sparking a lifelong love of learning in children.
- Skilled, passionate, innovative, and creative teachers form the backbone of our vigorous educational program.
- We educate children in a program that integrates the best of traditional and contemporary educational practices. We encourage each student to reach his or her full potential.
- The arts and athletics contribute meaningfully to our students' educational experience.
- Decency, respect, and a sense of joy in learning are hallmarks of Tower School. We promote qualities of good character, support a strong ethical foundation for life, and seek to develop an appreciation of the responsibilities and opportunities for leadership.
- We encourage community service and a sense of public purpose. Cultural competency and environmental stewardship are essential skills. We prepare our students to be respectful and responsible citizens.
- We encourage our students to view themselves as members of a global society. This requires that we seek to build a diverse, multicultural, and cohesive school community.
- As a small school with a strong sense of community, we take the time to understand, know, and support our students.
- We value cooperative, enthusiastic involvement and partnerships with faculty, families, alumni, and trustees.



Goal 1: Program

We will provide a distinctive and excellent program.

Rationale:

We offer our students a vigorous and challenging program in a nurturing and supportive environment. We expect our students to present their work in a way that demonstrates discipline and attention to detail. Our program's distinctive strength is found in its integration of contemporary and traditional approaches to education. Tower graduates are prepared for success in secondary school and beyond because they have been encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning.

Implementation Strategies:

- Maintain our focus on essential skills that have traditionally defined our distinctive program. Continue to focus on the learning process so that we impart skills of lifelong value. For example:
 - Our students will be taught to become fluent readers and effective writers. They will have strong mathematics and problem-solving skills.
 - We will promote the importance of learning skills such as time management, research, organization, critical thinking, and the scientific method.
 - We will retain our focus on interpersonal skills and we will continue to encourage teamwork to build collaborative skills.
 - Our students will continue to develop fluency and literacy in a second language.
 - Physical education, athletics, and the arts will continue to be recognized as essential elements of our program.
- Promote characteristics critical to success in a fast-changing world — many of which are already important parts of our program.
 - Introduce our students to the excitement and opportunity represented by the interconnected nature of the 21st-century world. Prepare them to be responsible global citizens.
 - Provide an educational environment that supports and articulates the educational benefits of a diverse community where the curriculum, regardless of discipline, fosters our students' development of cultural competence.
 - Support and encourage our students to become efficient and responsible users of developing information technology.
 - Encourage the natural creativity and innovative potential of our students and teachers.
 - Continue to develop programs that encourage student participation in outreach, community service, and environmental stewardship.
- Support and challenge our students as they learn.
 - Continue reasonable adjustments to the curriculum and instructional techniques within each classroom so that teachers meet the needs of all students.
 - Evaluate our program to ensure that we appropriately support the individual potential of each student.

Goal 2: Faculty

We will attract, support, and retain excellent faculty to serve as teachers, mentors, and role models.

Rationale:

Tower's faculty remains the school's greatest asset. We intentionally devote a very significant percentage of annual operating expenses to the people responsible for implementing Tower's distinctive program. Our teachers are motivated, educated, skilled, diverse, creative, caring, and innovative. They possess a range of experiences that contribute meaningfully to their work with students. Our teachers are committed, lifelong learners who enjoy their work.

Implementation Strategies:

- Offer a compensation package that ensures the school's ability to attract and retain excellent people.
- Increase the diversity of our faculty so that our teachers more accurately reflect the world in which we live. The day-to-day experiences of all students will be enriched by teachers who come from diverse backgrounds.
- When considering applicants for faculty positions, be mindful of the need for skilled and passionate coaches for our athletic program.
- Consider an internship program with one of the area graduate schools of education.
- Review the professional development program in an effort to support our commitment to excellence.
- Enhance the evaluation and mentoring program.
- Support new teaching tools, competencies, techniques, and strategies.
- Support opportunities for creativity and innovation.
- Sustain and enhance the positive work environment and distinctive faculty culture at Tower.



Goal 3: Communications

We will encourage a culture of open communication within the Tower community. We must also communicate more broadly the strengths of Tower's distinctive program to the communities of the North Shore.

Rationale:

As a small-school community, we depend upon cooperative, enthusiastic involvement and partnership among faculty, parents, alumni, and trustees. While people who are familiar with Tower recognize its strengths, the school must better communicate those strengths to emphasize Tower's student-centered environment and distinctive program. Without compromising our small-school culture, we seek to be a beacon of excellence for education.

Implementation Strategies for the Tower Community:

- Encourage all members of the community to embrace and model the Tower Code.
- Embrace the value of an inclusive, multicultural, and cohesive school community.
- Support wide participation in community-building experiences.
- Establish communication protocols for administrators, teachers, trustees, and parents that will promote a positive culture.
- Establish regular communications between the Board and the community, especially around the implementation of the goals set forth in this plan.
- Improve electronic communications, thus reducing the school's use of paper:
 - Improve administrative efficiency and information access.
 - Improve emergency communication among members of the school community.
- Communicate the school's commitment and efforts to support students and parents in the secondary school placement process, as well as the quality of the program as preparation for success in secondary school.
- Effectively communicate Tower's finances and planning, as well as its philanthropic goals.

Implementation Strategies to Reach the Communities of the North Shore:

- Communicate value.
 - The purposefully small size of our school creates a distinctively student-centered environment.
 - The school's comprehensive program prepares students to learn well, to think clearly, to be creative and innovative, and to participate actively in and contribute eagerly to the world of which they are a part.
 - Tower is committed to serving as a beacon of excellence.
- Expand our applicant pool so that we attract students from the diverse communities of the North Shore.
- Continue to expand the school's partnerships with other educational and cultural institutions.

Goal 4: Facility

We will continue to improve Tower's facility in ways that support our distinctive program of excellence.

Rationale:

Tower has been well served by its facility master plan, first developed in 2004. While that plan must remain fluid to meet the program's evolving needs, it represents a road map for Tower as we seek to make the best use of our property and plant. We will continue to embrace environmentally sustainable building models as we make any improvements.

Implementation Strategies:

- Complete renovations to the current facility, including:
 - Modernizing the library.
 - Enhancing the visual arts facilities.
 - Relocating administrative offices into appropriate spaces.
- Support the program's emphasis on contemporary skills by providing the setting and tools necessary to take advantage of developing information technology.
- Improve the outdoor and indoor athletic facilities. Consider the addition of a practice field and additional indoor space for athletics and locker rooms.



Goal 5: Finance

We will sustain Tower's financial security through prudent planning.

Rationale:

Tower, like all independent schools, must focus attention on efforts to enhance its financial position. These efforts will provide appropriate support for the current program and secure the school's future. We will maintain a carefully designed financial plan. This work will build upon the success of the Beacon of Excellence Campaign.

Tower's facility has substantially improved over the past fifteen years thanks to generous philanthropic support from many donors. We now must shift our philanthropic efforts to growing the support of our Annual Fund and increasing the endowment. The Annual Fund is a critically important component of Tower's operating budget. As it grows over time, it reduces pressure on tuition increases and protects the endowment from large withdrawals. The endowment also contributes meaningfully to the school's operating income each school year, while providing long-term financial security for the school.

Implementation Strategies:

- Sustain tuition revenue.
 - Maintain a close watch on tuition growth and continue comparisons of tuition to market competition and economic dynamics.
 - Plan for a full enrollment of between 310 and 320 students.
- Maintain admission criteria and standards.
- Maintain small class sizes and low teacher-student ratios.
- Build our culture of philanthropy.
 - Increase Annual Fund giving each year. The Annual Fund provided 7% of the school's operating income in 2007-2008.
 - Increase the school's endowment from its current level of approximately \$5 million.
 - Prepare a Centennial Fundraising Campaign.
- Build a compensation package that ensures the school's ability to attract and retain an excellent faculty.
 - Evaluate the school's salary and benefits structure.
 - Implement changes (if required) to the compensation program.
- Employ financial aid as a strategic tool to support the school's core values.
 - Maintain the school's commitment to financial aid spending as 12%-14% of tuition revenue.
 - Support a broad range of students of socioeconomic and cultural diversity.
 - Aim to support more middle-income families with financial assistance.

Strategic Planning Committee

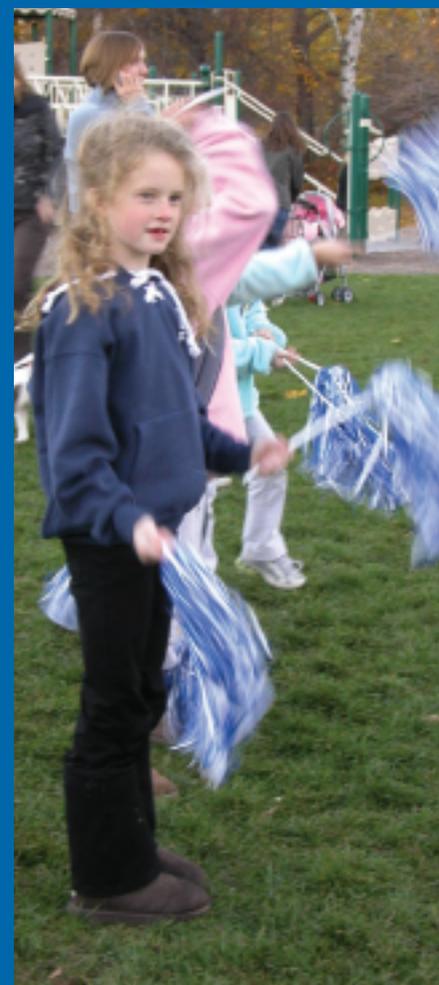
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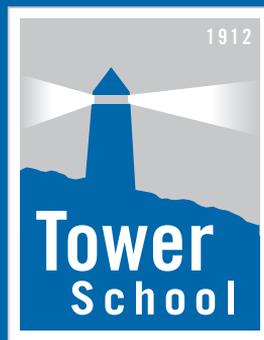
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