

# Giddens School

*inspiring children to better their world*

November 2009

Dear Faculty, Staff, Families and Other Members of Our School Community,

On behalf of the 2009-2010 Strategic Planning Steering Committee, I am pleased to provide you with a report on the strategic planning process at Giddens School.

## **Brief History**

For those of you here last year, you know that we kicked off the strategic planning process in the Fall of 2008. The Board of Trustees:

- Formed a small Steering Committee that was charged with insuring effective planning, implementation and completion of the strategic planning process
- Convened a Community Committee made up of parents, alumni, faculty and staff members, which was charged with insuring effective and inclusive participation in the strategic planning process
- Hired a strategic planning consultant, Leah McCullough, to offer consultation and facilitation support to the process.

We set a goal of completing the process by March of 2009 with the end-goal of having a visionary and realistic strategic plan to guide the school's growth and development over the next 3 to 5 years.

After an initial round of data gathering, which included brainstorming sessions with the Board and the Community Committee as well as thorough review of existing school data, our consultant - Leah McCullough - died unexpectedly in January 2009. Her sudden death also coincided with one of the Steering Committee Chairs needing to step down in her role as Chair for personal reasons.

The Board of Trustees, while clear that we were unable to meet our original timeline, did make a commitment to resume the process as quickly as possible. A newly formed Steering Committee recruited and selected a new consultant. Gail Ransom, a local consultant with experience in strategic planning and fundraising, particularly in independent schools, was chosen in April 2009.

Since then, the Steering Committee has worked with Gail to review all materials generated last year and design a process moving forward that will result in the identification of the highest priority goals and strategies to ensure a strong future for the school.

## **Fall 2009 – Where We Are Now**

The process of reviewing and categorizing data gathered last year resulted in a grouping of issues and focus areas. These are:

- Financial Stability
- Facilities
- Admissions/Marketing
- Fund Development
- Academic Excellence
- Internal & External Communities
- Governance

You'll notice we have chosen not to separate out social justice as its own issue or focus area. This is intentional and recognizes that, consistent with the school's mission, social justice is something that must manifest itself in each of these areas.

During the month of October, small work teams made up of 3 to 4 individuals - faculty, staff, board and community members – met to take a first stab at drafting goals and strategies for each of the issue areas. Work team members were selected based upon their day-to-day interaction and responsibility to the issues and work teams were intentionally kept small in order to enable efficient work.

### **Next Phase of Planning – Gathering Input from Internal & External Community Members**

In the coming months, the steering committee will be moving into an input gathering phase, soliciting feedback from both internal and external stakeholders – teachers, parents, alumni, and donors – to ensure goals and strategies are reflective of the community’s priorities and values.

While we know we are heading into a busy time of year, we hope to gather input between December and February. In thinking about the different ways we can gather input and perspective, the steering committee will seek to balance soliciting and incorporating input from a broad and diverse audience with the very real time constraints we have as a busy community. We feel confident we have the time and energy to reach out to our internal and external community in meaningful ways and we know that these groups are highly engaged and committed to the school’s future success.

### **How You Can Be Involved**

Teachers, parents, alumni and donors are all groups we care to engage in giving us feedback on our draft goals and strategies and offering suggestions for building a visionary strategic plan. Soon you will be hearing from the Steering Committee about the different ways in which you can participate. In the meantime, should you have questions about the process, please feel free to reach out to any of the following steering committee members:

- Julie Edsforth, Co-Chair, Current Parent, Board Member
- Wendy Nakatsukasa-Ono, Co-Chair, Alumna Parent, board member
- Robert Kogane, Interim Head of School
- Reba Utevsy, Faculty Representative to the Board
- Samara West, Faculty Representative to the Board, Current Parent

With thanks,

Julie Edsforth  
Co-Chair, Strategic Planning Steering Committee  
Trustee, Giddens Board of Trustees