



Strategic Plan 2020-2025

STEVENSON
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON SCHOOL



On behalf of myself and the Board of Trustees, I am pleased to present Robert Louis Stevenson School's five-year strategic plan. This plan is the result of a collaborative effort among all members of our community, including current and alumni parents, trustees, faculty, and administration. I commend this group for undergoing this important work while remaining committed to our mission to promote the emotional mastery needed for learning and living, bringing students into a strong academic and therapeutic environment and propelling them towards postsecondary independence and success.

The plan is composed of six strategies and initiatives designed to look towards Stevenson's future, including expanded reach, a strong financial foundation, and ongoing academic and faculty excellence. The strategic plan was formalized during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and this crisis served to highlight the strength and resilience of our community. At Stevenson, our focus goes well beyond textbooks, and in times like this we continue to hold safety and wellness as chief priorities. Throughout, Stevenson has maintained continuity of key components of our academic program, advisory, and clinical support. Although the pandemic was a disruption to our strategic planning process, we remain on track towards our goals with implementation on schedule. We aspire to have all students return to in-person instruction full time for the 2021-2022 school year.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Stevenson's dedicated faculty and staff for their commitment to our students and to cementing our place as a leader in the field of adolescent mental health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Ongaro". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chris Ongaro
Head of School



INTRODUCTION

The Robert Louis Stevenson School is at an important crossroads. Under the present leadership, the school has made dramatic strides in addressing past challenges, improving operations, and growing enrollment. Stevenson is now poised for the next step: to undertake a strategic plan that not only offers school improvement and reduces vulnerabilities, but also sets priorities and provides strategic direction to strengthen and position the School for the next five years and beyond.

This plan is the result of thoughtful review and detailed assessment of the school's mission, as well as consideration of the current position, environment, competition, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The planning process was undertaken by a dedicated, capable group of trustees, administrators, faculty, and parents appointed by the Trustees of the School in September 2019.



Members of the Strategic Planning Committee were:

Howard Spivak
Cochair Strategic Planning Committee,
Chair Board of Trustees, Alumni Parent

Duncan Webb
Cochair Strategic Planning Committee,
Trustee, Alumni Parent

Chris Ongaro
Head of School

Jonathan Bernstein
Treasurer Board of Trustees,
Alumni Parent

Pablo Calamera
Trustee, Stevenson Parent

Lana Farina
Clinical Director

Harvey Newman
Secretary Board of Trustees

Heidi Olson
Stevenson Faculty

Jerry Pavlon-Blum
Director of External Affairs and
Program Innovation

Carl Pozzi
Chief Financial Officer

Lakshmi Rao Sankar
Stevenson Parent

Mary Ross
Trustee, Alumni Parent

Barry Shapiro
Trustee

Joe Surak
Director of Admissions

Tina Tung
Trustee, Stevenson Parent

Paul Wexler
Trustee, Alumni Parent

The plan was presented to and adopted by the Trustees of the School on April 2, 2020.



M E T H O D O L O G Y

The Robert Louis Stevenson School Board of Trustees formed a strategic planning committee in September 2019 to organize and initiate a strategic planning process. That committee was led by Trustee Duncan Webb and Board Chair Howard Spivak with substantial support from Carl Pozzi and Chris Ongaro.

The Strategic Planning Committee was first convened on September 21, 2019. At that session, the planning process was reviewed and approved by the group. In addition, a presentation was made to the group by a leading education attorney on the current state of affairs at the Department of Education. Carl Pozzi presented the results of the recently completed market research, which tested perceptions of the School on the part of key internal and external constituents. At the end of the session, the Committee was split into three subcommittees, to conduct research on the internal environment, to conduct research on the external environment, and to review the School's current mission.

The Strategic Planning Committee re-convened on November 21, 2019. Each of the three subcommittees presented the results of their work, leading the group into a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses,

opportunities, and threats) analysis. That analysis was then the basis for the identification of strategies.

The next meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee was on January 13, 2020, to review and prioritize strategies. Subcommittees were again formed to develop implementation plans for each of the recommended strategies.

The Strategic Planning Committee then met on February 10 to review and refine strategies with the benefit of implementation plans that outlined all of the initiatives necessary to advance each strategy, as well as the potential cost of each step and required human resources.

The final meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee was on March 9 to review a draft of this report, including the final version of the prioritized implementation plan with budget implications.

Using this report as a guide, representatives of the Strategic Planning Committee presented a summary of the strategic planning to the Board of Trustees at the April 2, 2020 Trustees meeting. The report and plan were unanimously adopted at that meeting.

THE MISSION and VISION FRAMEWORK



As with all nonprofit organizations, the Robert Louis Stevenson School’s purpose is described in a mission statement. Over the course of the planning process, a subcommittee led by Lana Farina worked to update the School’s mission statement. Multiple versions of a new mission statement were reviewed with the Strategic Planning Committee, leading to a series of revisions and adoption of the following mission:

“The Robert Louis Stevenson School’s mission is to promote the emotional mastery needed for learning and living, bringing students into a strong academic and therapeutic environment and propelling them towards post-secondary independence and success.”

THE MISSION and VISION FRAMEWORK



To accompany that mission statement, the mission and vision subcommittee developed and worked on a new vision statement, which is intended to express a vision for the fully realized version of the school. Thanks to the core components identified by the subcommittee, here is that vision:

“Our vision is that Robert Louis Stevenson School grows and develops as the premier therapeutic day school in New York City. The School attracts a strong faculty that delivers a competitive independent school curriculum plus a set of enrichment programs that build a sense of pride and engagement for a diverse set of students and families. The School maintains a strong connection to and relationship with the therapeutic community, becoming a leader in the design and delivery of support to young people and their families. Finally, the School prepares and supports students in their pursuit of postsecondary education, sending them to excellent programs and colleges around the country.”



STRATEGIES and INITIATIVES

Here are the six strategies and underlying initiatives that are the basis of the strategic plan for Robert Louis Stevenson School moving forward. Note that these strategies are neither prioritized nor ordered to suggest a priority. The Strategic Planning Committee took the position that all six of these strategies are important, while accepting the economic reality that priorities must be reflected in the implementation plan as scarce resources are allocated to various initiatives.

- Establish Stevenson as a **Mental Health Connector**. Position Stevenson as an expert and resource on the Continuum of Care related to Educating Students with Mental Health Issues.
- Implement an **Enrollment Management** approach to grow awareness, referrals, inquiries, applications, and yield. Develop ways to increase retention and reduce attrition.
- Implement plans to improve the **Financial Health** of the school and ensure Stevenson remains financially sustainable.
- Enhance **School Pride, Student and Family Life** by assuring that students and families' experience at Stevenson is similar to what they encounter at other independent schools.
- Systematically and purposefully improve use of **Technology**.
- Implement plans to ensure **Academic and Faculty Excellence**.



STRATEGIES and INITIATIVES

STEVENSON AS A MENTAL HEALTH CONNECTOR

Establish Stevenson as a Mental Health Connector. Position Stevenson as an expert and resource on the Continuum of Care related to Educating Students with Mental Health Issues.

Initiatives designed to advance this strategy:

- Strengthen relationships with other schools and professionals
- Offer referral assistance for non-RLSS students and related professionals
- Create and deliver presentations and/or publications
- Strengthen relationships with relevant organizations
- Conduct mission-driven original programming (e.g. P2P Support network)



STRATEGIES and INITIATIVES

ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

Implement an enrollment management approach to grow awareness, referrals, inquiries, applications, and yield. Develop ways to increase retention and reduce attrition.

- Implement computerized admissions system to track inquiries, accept online applications, and gather admissions data
- Simplify admissions process to become more user friendly to prospective families
- Strengthen relationships across schools to increase collaboration
- Improve communications (e.g., mailings; website)

FINANCIAL HEALTH

Implement plans to improve the financial health of the school and ensure Stevenson remains financially sustainable.

Initiatives designed to advance this strategy:

- Develop culture of giving at Stevenson
- Ensure school is right-sized
- Expand Board of Trustees
- Plan for capital maintenance and improvements



STRATEGIES and INITIATIVES

SCHOOL PRIDE AND THE LIFE OF STEVENSON STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

Enhance School Pride, Student and Family Life by assuring that students and families' experience at Stevenson is similar to what they encounter at other independent schools.

LANGUAGE

- Use positive program language
- Improve group communications

INTERNAL PRIDE

- Improve facility appeal
- Grow PA
- Create and distribute Stevenson merchandise

BEYOND STEVENSON

- Expand and deepen relationships with postsecondary program options
- Expand and deepen alumni connections

TECHNOLOGY

Systematically and purposefully improve use of technology.

Initiatives designed to advance this strategy:

- Monitor Info systems for safety and security
- Improve IT operations for data management and infrastructure
- Enhance EdTech



STRATEGIES and INITIATIVES

ACADEMIC AND FACULTY EXCELLENCE

Implement plans to ensure academic and faculty excellence.

Initiatives designed to advance this strategy:

- Strengthen understanding and service of mission and vision
- Engage in academic program review focused on mission alignment and preparation for success after Stevenson
- Comprehensive review of factors in recruitment and retention. Use competitive levels of compensation, more proactive recruitment, and programs.
- Develop intentional approach to diversity
- Invest in enrichment programs to broaden opportunities and to deepen classroom experiences

IMPLEMENTATION



The final portion of the strategic planning process was the development of an implementation plan that will guide the School through the execution of strategies towards the achievement of its mission over the next five years.

The plan shows how each initiative for each of the six strategies is implemented over the coming five years, including the need for human and financial resources. Priorities have been set by the Strategic Planning Committee and are reflected in the timing and the resources allocated for each step. The monitoring of the implementation of the Strategic Plan will be a priority of the School's Board of Trustees over the next five years, with the Strategic Planning Committee to be reconstituted as a committee of the Board to specifically monitor and evaluate the progress of the School in the pursuit of these strategies towards the achievement of mission and fulfillment of vision for Robert Louis Stevenson School.