

Strategic Plan 2024: An Exceptional Experience for Every Student



children's academy



our mission

At Children's Academy, our mission is to educate children with speech and language challenges and learning differences in a supportive social environment, through collaborative evidence-based models recognizing the individuality of each child. We strive to develop a love of learning, friendships, expression, understanding and self-advocacy

our vision

Our vision is to be the premier model of education for children with speech and language challenges and learning differences, in order to:



Prepare our children to be confident members of their communities



Shape the way our children are integrated into society



Build a foundation for our students to lead full and productive lives



SINCE WE OPENED, WE'VE TAUGHT OVER

300 STUDENTS

from our board chair

Dear Children's Academy Community,

As we approach the 15th anniversary of Children's Academy's founding, we celebrate the many milestones our school has achieved:

- 🍏 We graduated our first class of high school seniors in 2022;
- 🍏 We have grown enrollment from 2 students in 2009 to 59 students this school year;
- 🍏 We relocated and expanded from our original 7,965 square foot space to our beautiful 15,000 square foot home on East 50th Street; and
- 🍏 We installed Cheval Bryant as our brilliant Head of School

Now seeking to build on our successes, we look ahead with purpose. In June 2023, we launched a strategic planning process aimed at charting our course for the next 3-5 years. We engaged faculty, staff, trustees, and parents in a dialogue to determine what we value most about Children's Academy, as well as where we see possibilities for change. The Task Force analyzed data, identified strategic challenges and opportunities, explored internal and external influences and trends, and drafted a framework of key priorities, goals, and strategies. At Children's Academy we know the power of a compelling vision, a comprehensive educational model, and a passionate community. Our strategic plan

leverages our strengths and anticipates our challenges, ensuring we meet the future with intention, inspiration, and information.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to share my gratitude to all who contributed to this important endeavor. In particular, I would like to thank former Board Chair Anne Prost and Head of School Cheval Bryant for their leadership in the strategic planning process. I also want to acknowledge the dedication of the 12 Task Force members who worked diligently throughout the summer to craft a plan that reflects our enduring commitment to nurture happy, confident students that are prepared for life.

Children's Academy owes its success to the tireless work and dedication of faculty, staff, parents, and school leaders that have partnered to create the strong foundation upon which we continue to build. We are eager to collaborate with this same team to meet the strategic goals set forth in this plan.

With appreciation,

Melissa Pearsall Hirsch

Board Chair, P' 23-24



our process

To guide our planning process, the school’s leadership engaged Educators Collaborative, a nationally recognized firm that assisted with the Head of School search in 2021 and knows Children’s Academy well. A Task Force composed of trustees, parents, and senior administrators worked collaboratively through a series of exercises designed to establish priorities based on trends, data, and feedback from our community.

Meeting throughout the summer, the Task Force crafted Strategic Goals, Strategies, and Work Plans with action steps. Estimated costs, metrics of success, and responsibility for implementation are in development, as Children’s Academy moves forward on the execution of the strategic plan.

strategic planning task force

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| Anne Prost, Co-chair, Past Board Chair, Parent | Melissa Pearsall Hirsch, Trustee, Parent |
| Cheval Bryant, Co-chair, Head of School | Vennette Ho Lee, Trustee, Parent |
| Chantal Aflalo, Trustee | Martin Lindberg, Trustee, Parent |
| Laura Davis, Trustee | Peter Volandes, Trustee, Parent |
| Christina DeGrazia, Parent | Margot Weil, Parent |
| Carly Dumbauld, Director of Advancement | Jordan Wishner, Director of Admission |

Identify the **Big Questions**

- Where do we need or have the opportunity to innovate?
- What do we need or want to preserve?
- Where do we see the risk?
- What are the issues we are trying to address?
- What additional information or data do we need?

Craft the **Strategic Goals**

- Do these Strategic Goals capture the opportunities and challenges we have identified?
- Do the Strategic Goals reflect the mission and values of Children’s Academy?
- Based on the information we have, is there anything missing?

Explore possible **Strategies**

- Do the strategies align with and/or enhance our mission?
- Do they build on and/or reinforce our competitive advantage?
- Are they financially viable?
- Do we have the organizational capacity to implement these strategies?
- What will we not do as a result?
- Do these strategies advance our vision for Children’s Academy?

Develop **Work Plans**

- Articulate the action steps
- Estimate the resources needed
- Identify metrics and deliverables
- Specify who holds responsibility
- Establish priorities

Deliver an Exceptional Experience for Every Student

At Children's Academy we meet students where they are. We strive to understand their unique strengths, needs, and aspirations, and individualize how we will support them. This requires authentic relationships, as well as a commitment to each student's intellectual, social, and emotional growth. It also calls for ongoing assessment, flexible learning plans and paths, a collaborative approach, and consistent communication with students and among the adults working on their team.



Strategic Goal

Children's Academy is unwavering in its mission to educate children with speech and language challenges and learning differences in a supportive social environment. Clearly articulating the learning profile of students that thrive at Children's Academy and developing a shared understanding of diversity, inclusion, and belonging will align our program and community outreach in support of our mission.

- Develop an updated and data-driven picture of our student diagnoses and learning profiles
- Gather demographic statistics to gain deeper knowledge of our community, including current and alumni students, faculty, and staff
- Utilize data to create updated promotional materials to increase understanding in the larger community about Children's Academy
- Deepen the understanding of the Children's Academy model and student profile for all faculty and staff, further equipping them to work in close partnership

Strategic Goal

Providing an academically robust and emotionally supportive learning experience is at the heart of our work at Children's Academy. We intend to strengthen our unique program to better meet the needs of students and families, integrating data collection, student outcome assessments, curriculum development, and reviewing the balance of academic rigor and therapeutic support.

- Utilize assessments to review student performance and determine student outcomes each year
- Leverage student data to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the academic program
- Use approved curriculums in conjunction with the scope and sequence, modifying as needed to meet individual student needs
- Work in partnership with parents to address areas of concern and determine if additional support is needed and available
- Strengthen integration of therapeutic supports into instructional practices
- Explore ways to further incorporate technology as a learning tool and for relevant skill development

Strategic Goal

Program excellence and strong relationships between students and teachers are paramount to a child's educational success at Children's Academy. We will strive to invest in recruiting and retaining faculty and staff who are highly skilled, passionate about our mission, and dedicated to the success of every child.

- Develop and implement a more robust recruiting plan for faculty and staff
- Continue to foster a culture of professional development for individual staff growth and school-wide learning to support cross-disciplinary engagement
- Provide faculty streamlined processes and tools that support greater efficiency
- Showcase and build on the professional expertise at Children's Academy to promote ongoing growth and advancement
- Nurture faculty and staff connections with one another and the Children's Academy mission
- Foster a "people first" supportive culture that centers health and wellness for faculty and staff

Strategic Goal

Children's Academy is committed to providing a learning environment that reflects the unique needs of our students. We aim to secure and develop additional learning spaces that support program excellence, student safety and well being, continued enrollment growth, student retention, and opportunities to build community among students, faculty, and staff.

- Assemble an internal working group to determine the current/future spatial needs of the Children's Academy
- Identify property to lease or purchase to meet the school's program needs and develop a financial plan to move forward with securing the additional space
- Assemble a team of professionals to partner with Children's Academy leadership to configure and ready the new facility areas for programming
- Periodically re-evaluate the security profile of the current facility and update the response plans for unanticipated or emergency situations.

Invest in Our People and Our Place

Children Academy's highly skilled and mission-focused faculty and staff are the heart of our school and the cornerstone of each child's success. We aim to enable our educators to do their best work and foster an environment that promotes successful learning and growth for all students. Providing educational spaces that support our unique program, nurture community connection, and allow for continued flexibility and innovation is vital for Children's Academy to flourish.



Grow and Steward our Resources

We must grow and steward our existing resources and align our investments with our strategic priorities, for the benefit of current and future generations. Generating engagement and support within the Children's Academy community and beyond is integral to our continued success. Cultivating and strengthening the school's leadership will ensure the unique mission of Children's Academy and the students it serves continue to thrive in the decades to come.



Strategic Goal

Ensuring financial sustainability in an ever-changing landscape is critical to the ongoing success of Children's Academy. We will develop a long-range plan and the necessary policies and procedures that encompasses key components of the school's financial model including access and affordability, faculty and staff compensation, facility investment, and fundraising.

- Develop a flexible 5-year budget that considers internal and external trends, including the unique special needs niche of Children's Academy
- Enhance the fundraising program, focusing on full community participation and increasing support
- Explore ways to provide greater access to our program and expand socio-economic diversity at Children's Academy
- Work toward creating a community relations program that will establish and reinforce relationships with internal and external stakeholders
- Develop and implement a practice of regularly evaluating staffing needs and compensation to ensure Children's Academy remains competitive in recruiting and retaining high quality faculty and staff

Strategic Goal

Approaching its 15th anniversary, Children's Academy is flourishing and poised for continued growth. Crucial to its future success is the ongoing cultivation of a strong, diverse, and sustainably structured Board that leverages institutional knowledge and governance best practices to set the strategic and fiscal direction of the school and support the delivery of its mission.

- Increase the size of the Board with members reflecting diverse experiences and backgrounds
- Develop an onboarding program to convey roles, responsibilities, and expectations to new Board members
- Implement a transfer mechanism for historical and institutional knowledge of the school
- Develop a strategy for Board communication and engagement with the Children's Academy community
- Continue to monitor compliance requirements and best practices to make sure the Board is operating in optimal fashion

from our head of school

Dear Children's Academy Community,

As I begin my second year as Head of School at Children's Academy, I continue to marvel at the endless enthusiasm, fierce determination, and unparalleled expertise within our community. From the moment I first visited our campus in early 2022, I recognized that this school is indeed a very special place. Embarking on the strategic planning process underscored this realization, as we reflect on all we have achieved and set our sights on where we would like to go.

I am excited to share the culmination of our planning efforts with you. Strategic Plan 2024: An Exceptional Experience for Every Student stands on three fundamental pillars:



Deliver an Exceptional Experience for Every Student

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This dynamic plan will guide our work to further strengthen our educational program, nurture our community, and secure the school's future. Strategic Plan 2024 is not a static document; it's a roadmap reflecting our commitment to continued improvement and adaptability. Annually, we will review, refine, and, if necessary, recalibrate our strategic goals to respond to the evolving landscape around us.

While the Board of Trustees holds ultimate responsibility for stewarding the school and its mission, we know that our future lives in the hands and hearts of our entire community. As we set out on this ambitious strategic path, I extend my deepest gratitude to each community member. Your dedication and unwavering conviction in our mission at Children's Academy have been instrumental in shaping this vision and integral to our success going forward. We can all take great pride in preparing every student for wherever their journey takes them, filled with curiosity, confidence, and compassion.

Thank you for your continued support.

Cheval Bryant
Head of School





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our mission

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Thank you to the members of our community who contributed to defining our next strategic steps.

Children's Academy
317 East 50th Street
New York, NY 10022

646.823.9909
www.canyc.org
info@childrensacademynyc.org

@ChildrensAcademyNYC