

March 28, 2018
Parent Association Meeting

Presentation by Mike Hanas:
SFFS Strategic Direction Toward a More Caring and Just Society

1. Introductory Remarks

- Highest hope for this presentation: that parents will have a more detailed understanding of strategic process, receive answers to some common questions (for example, regarding: future expected tuition increases; high school plans; changes to curriculum; and changes to physical space), and above all discover something new that will change their mind and pique their interest about the future direction of the school.
- Process of strategic planning à lots of reasons why SFFS has been deliberate about most recent strategic plan.

2. Why do a strategic plan now? Several reasons ...

- Reason 1: After 15 years, we have cultivated a strong sense of identity and purpose.
- Reason 2: transition from Cathy Hunter to Mike Hanas.
- Reason 3: California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) requires of its accredited schools that they do a strategic plan, and CAIS has recommended that one be done.
- Reason 4: challenging economic circumstances.

3. Our process

- Strategic planning is a labor of exploration that lends itself to discovery of possibilities ... and a labor of endurance.
- Prior strategic plan was interrupted / took a turn with transition from Cathy Hunter to Mike Hanas.
- 2015-2016 CAIS Self-Study Process – accreditation team visit was an initial step.
- There has been lots of information gathered to inform the process – surveys, coffees with parents and Mike.

4. Process has been Grounded In Quaker Values

- *“Always Trust Your Cape”* (song by Guy Clark) -- spread arms, hold breath, always trust your cape. Here, the cape has been the identity and purpose of SFFS, motivated by Quaker values.
- Reflection and query has supported discernment of priorities most important to fulfilling our mission, keeping with our testimonies.

5. Assessment Revealed Strengths and Weaknesses

- Strengths:
 - Outstanding professional community recruited nationally with low turnover and appetite for growth;
 - Success of students in acceptance to selective high schools;
 - SFFS 8th graders are going to 25 different schools, which is a reflection that students are being met where they are.
 - Mike considers that SFFS isn't the place for applicant families who would measure success by the placement of SFFS students at some particular high school, or within a set of some few high schools. Mike deems unhealthy the tremendous pressure on 8th graders during the application process generally
 - High demand, reflecting by number of applications to SFFS;
 - Increasing racial, socioeconomic, Spanish-speaking and LGBTQ diversity; and
 - Quaker identity that guides us and solidifies our purpose, unique among Bay Area peer schools.
- Challenges
 - Economy/cost of living creating stress on professional community and families;
 - The current building facility limiting program opportunities, including imaginative & effective scheduling;
 - Limited space for Physical Education. SFFS program scheduling revolves around gym availability;
 - Fundraising relatively small compared to peer schools, including endowment;
 - Time for us to learn how much SFFS can raise;
 - Ability to raise funds determines how many goals SFFS can realize; and
 - With increased diversity, need to pay attention to improving inclusion of all community members in meaningful ways.

6. Facilities Master Plan Process

- Need for more Multipurpose Space – limited outdoor spaces restrict program usage / schedule, with educational scheduling revolving around gym access.
- Other space and facility needs:
 - K-2 program – desire for specific dedicated 1st Floor Space
 - Building & Breaking Space (K-2 Science/Integrated Lab)
 - Dedicated Art Space (independent of Extended Day area)
 - Break-Out Spaces for small group meetings
 - Spaces for 2, 3, 4-group meetings without distractions of being in a class with 16 other students
 - Two large Middle School Science Class rooms and better programmed Science Common
 - Want to do more with science
 - Science commons to be developed
 - Applied Science Classroom (“Sandbox”) for 3-8
 - Existing Restrooms converted to Gender Neutral (“All Gender”) Restrooms

- More Welcoming & Functional Entry Space – including also addressing noise issues, lunch, et al.
- Library Traffic Flow – storage and potential reconfigured use
- Quaker Meeting Room – noise, light, thermal comfort, and all-community issues to address
 - One integrated meeting space
- Community Outreach programs flexibility & growth
 - Horizons students coming into 5th grade
 - Dedicated office and storage space for Horizons staff
- Integration of 260 Valencia possibility into program and facilities plans
 - Business of pizzeria is for sale
 - In discussion re purchase of building, not just business

7. Three (3) Strategic Pathways—slide info needed

8. Our Vision: People and Programs

- Facilities for staff: southwest corner “Pub” for teachers to gather at workstations—not just rushing through. Mike would like to see collaborative work there on curriculum, rather than discussions affording to live in SF.
- Professional staff recruitment: emphasis on recruiting, retaining, and developing professional credentials of teachers.
 - Mike hopes to send a recruiting message to prospective faculty that they should come to SFFS because their work as educators, teachers, is more valuable to parents than anything else.
- Students: imagining use of time to create more robust experiences with hands and heads, e.g., having scheduling to accommodate 80 minutes of classroom / collaborative work.
- Community: maybe nothing more important to see people like yourself having a seat at the table & building new tables like no one’s seen before.
- **Emphasis on facility**
 - New floor plan of 1st floor.
 - Front yard is the place where they’d add space, underground.
 - Digging 18’ down, beneath the existing front yard allows them to reimagine use of time / scheduling, presently restricted due to gym limits
 - Spaces to be developed:
 - One large multi-use space under front yard (to edge of basketball court);
 - Another “breaking space” under the front yard’s basketball court;
 - 26’ down is creek ... and water ... much more expensive to go down that far.

9. Process has included discerning what we will not pursue at this time, e.g.:

- High school -- need \$90M to \$125M to create a high school program
 - Not a goal at this time(not ruled out, but just not something that will be pursued at this time)
 - Adding a high school is a threat to other, more pressing priorities
 - Adding a high school changes community priorities, and not beneficially. Often, in K-12 programs, you hear that “high school runs the show.” In the SFFS community, 8th graders do not run the show.
- Middle school expansion
 - SFFS lacks capacity to add a full class.
 - Need to be careful about how many more students added
- Non-tuition revenue streams
 - Programs use space here in off times.
 - Limits to latitude to generate rental income

10. Toward a More Caring Just Society – strategic pathways & goals

- Educational Experience
 - Attract, retrain, and support professional community
 - Develop mission-driven facility master plan
 - Implement refinements to curriculum, program, and staffing in order to support our learners
- Community
 - Augment equity & inclusion in hiring, enrollment, and board membership to increase diversity across multiple demographic areas
 - Refine practices to further more inclusive and equitable experience for all
 - Engage with students, family, and community to further our vitality as Quaker school with a public purpose
- Financial Sustainability
 - Fortify financial model to advance attracting, retaining and supporting talented professionals
 - Explore new revenue potential, including but not limited to re-imagining fundraising strategies.

11. Process has also allowed work to begin without waiting for final plan

- Faculty salary increase above cost-of-living raise approved by board
 - Faculty salary pool increased 6.5%
- Development Support staffing increased for 2018-19
 - Double mental health support staff time (4 days, not 2 days per week)
 - Tutoring work to be brought back in house
- New assessments piloted by academic team
 - ERBs are current assessment tool; others wanted
- Professional community survey completed to confirm priority of benefits and work climate elements

- Facilities needs assessment completed; architectural plans in progress
- Admin Review process designed for implementation in 2018-19
- Reimagined lower school science program being implemented
- Applied science programs
- New schedule models developed; to be implemented 2019-20
- Spanish Translation and Event Planning program established

12. Expected Outcomes of Our Work Toward a More Caring and just Society – identifying outcomes – slide info needed

- Educational Experience
- Community
- Financial Sustainability
- Responsibilities for these are divided among board and professional community.

13. Slide: Next Steps

- Board committees and professional community are moving forward on specific activities to support goals
- Feasibility study planning for Fall 2018 to inform how fast we can proceed with activities requiring additional funding
- Board will continue to review progress against goals and refine activities and metrics as needed

14. Concluding remarks

Strategic Planning is a labor of love, working involving the expression of ideas and possibilities. Process has been informed by love, which has made room to feel, forgive, and explore.

15. Questions

- Change to schedule
 - Read Circle Back articles “Committing to the Air” and “Lesson Study”
 - A schedule committee has been established.
 - Two necessary criteria for any schedule change:
 - First, it must yield a less fragmented experience for SFFS students.
 - “Shadow a student” project – it’s exhausting to follow a student moving through 40-45 minute experiences, at one turn computing numbers, then writing a poem, then learning about the human body ... all in succession, while needing to get somewhere else in 3-4 minutes & have a social life in between
 - Second, the schedule must have designated time and space for teachers to be in substantive conversations about curriculum

- Homework
 - Mike – we may be misrepresenting experience of students in our admissions tours: we aspire not to overload students, but we might be.
- High school applications
 - High expectations of students
 - Culture too intense surrounding the high school application process. Substantial time and energy is directed towards executing tasks related to high school admission.
 - Not fair to kids.
 - Immensely taxing on families.
 - Disservice to 14- and 15-year-olds to be in a position where they define themselves on where and whether they get in to a few select schools or not. High school admissions are not 100% based on “who is most compelling applicant.” Other factors play a significant part that are not within the control of 8th graders, e.g., who’s best for basketball team, and the differences among the philanthropic capacities of their parents.
 - Application process is not inherently evil, but it creates a lopsided, unbalanced experience for 8th graders.
 - SFFS’s goal is to focus on what’s best for kids, no matter where they should go to high school.
- High school program
 - Expectations of Mike when coming in, given his expertise in implementing a high school program and the intensity of interest among parents for that program.
 - Mike’s thinking has changed: fortify the foundation.
 - SFFS’ work now is to set the stage for work to come. Good stewardship of resources. Building on strengths and attending to vulnerabilities.