

**VILLAGE COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

THE NEW YORK LEADER IN K-8 EDUCATION

# STRATEGIC PLAN

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**2014**

VCS

# VILLAGE COMMUNITY SCHOOL MISSION

## MISSION STATEMENT

Village Community School develops self-motivated students who value the challenging and rewarding process of learning as an integral part of life. We choose to be a diverse community where equity, creativity, and critical thinking are essential to the rigorous education we provide. Our graduates are skilled and confident, able to advocate for themselves and others. They are well prepared for high school and for their futures in an increasingly complex and dynamic world.

## DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Village Community School is strengthened and enriched by the diversity of our students, families, and staff. We are committed to cultivating intellectual, social, and emotional growth in an inclusive environment where diverse experiences and perspectives are essential to the rigorous education we provide.

STRATEGIC  
PILLAR:  
**BUILDING  
FROM  
STRENGTH**

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STRATEGIC  
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**PROGRAM &  
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STRATEGIC  
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STRATEGIC  
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## STRATEGIC PILLAR: BUILDING FROM STRENGTH

As we approach our 45th year, VCS is an established, sought-after school operating from a position of tremendous strength. We can now see the evidence of our work in the faces of hundreds of highly successful adults, university students, and teenagers who are VCS graduates. Our alumni are leaders – independent thinkers driven to achieve great things for themselves and the common good.

VCS enjoys an excellent reputation in the educational community. Our ambition is to be known by families and educators alike as **the New York leader in K-8 education**. The recommendations in this Strategic Plan endorse that Vision Statement as VCS moves boldly into the future.

Our ambitions reflect our core identity. VCS has proudly chosen to remain a K-8 school. It is our heritage, our expertise, and our point of differentiation. Current research in neuroscience affirms VCS's K-8 pedagogy. Many of the techniques we intuitively believed optimal for young learners are now empirically proven to be ideal for cognitive development and academic performance. We will build upon that powerful foundation as we welcome thoughtful innovation that enhances learning for the current student population.

We composed this Strategic Plan with an eye to 2020. When VCS celebrates its 50th anniversary, we will also be celebrating the accomplishment of many of the objectives delineated here.

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”

- William Butler Yeats

### PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

VCS uses the recommendations in its Strategic Plan to guide the myriad decisions that must be made to **wisely use our resources** of talent, time, and funds. Whatever the final outcome of any single recommendation, the ultimate purpose of the Strategic Plan is to enhance the school's service to its students.

### STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Every few years the VCS Board of Trustees initiates a **review and reconsideration of the school's goals in the context of an ever-changing world**. This process prioritizes certain key areas – Strategic Pillars – and includes analyzing data to produce forward-looking recommendations. These recommendations facilitate development of implementation plans to be undertaken over the next three to five years.

The creation of the 2014 Strategic Plan was a highly inclusive, Board-led process. VCS administrators, current parents, alumni parents, staff, and the Board worked diligently together over several months.

VCS received additional input via a National Association of Independent Schools [NAIS] survey of prospective and current VCS parents, as well as parents who considered VCS but ultimately did not enroll. NAIS chose VCS to pilot this survey – the only New York school chosen to participate – because of our leadership position. The survey results were overwhelmingly positive, affirming VCS's current direction and reinforcing our intention to be even more ambitious.

The process culminated in the creation of this Strategic Plan document. Some of the Strategic Pillars and recommendations overlap by design. The success of our educational program and teachers depends upon robust diversity, excellent facilities, innovative technology, and strong financial sustainability. The Pillars are, in fact, interdependent.

## STRATEGIC PILLAR: **PROGRAM & FACULTY**

A great school requires a **challenging curriculum and exceptional teachers.** Innovative faculty and a dynamic program are pivotal to our leadership position in K-8 education and to the outstanding intellectual achievement of our students throughout their academic and professional careers.

### **OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, VCS SHALL:**

- Define excellence in K-8 education and communicate it to our community
- Explore ways to share our leadership in K-8 education with other schools and educators, disseminating our accumulated knowledge
- Continue to formalize the scope and sequence of the core program, knowing that classroom experiences will include much more than these baseline content and skills parameters
- Continue to evaluate the program and formalize the evaluation process to ensure consistency
- Continue attracting, hiring and retaining leading K-8 faculty and staff
- Continue to focus on innovation as a means to faculty and program excellence
- Explore ways to ensure that each staff member can perform to his/her best ability as we allocate space and other resources including time and money
- Communicate the value, strength and design of each program division: Early Years, Middle Years, Upper School

“Once something is memorable, it’s living and you’re using it.  
That to me is the foundation of a creative society.”

**- Yo-Yo Ma, Cellist and Composer**

## STRATEGIC PILLAR: **DIVERSITY**

Diversity is a cornerstone of a VCS education. We believe **diversity is essential to academic vitality.** We know that a heterogeneous community provides students with the richest learning experience and develops the crucial empathic skills that serve alumni for a lifetime.

VCS students do more than appreciate people and perspectives different from themselves. They act as global citizens, seeing the world from multiple angles and arguing persuasively from different viewpoints.

### **OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, VCS SHALL:**

- Better define and communicate how diversity is embedded in the entirety of VCS education – from admissions choices to global outreach experiences – showing how diversity is a core strength and part of our identity
- Evaluate admissions and hiring practices with a goal to increase acceptance and retention of a diverse VCS community
- Explore ways to measure the success of VCS diversity
- Analyze New York demographic trends to ensure our diversity efforts reach and retain a heterogeneous community
- Share our diversity leadership and programming with others in education and beyond

## STRATEGIC PILLAR: **FACILITIES**

Students thrive in our aesthetically pleasing, inspiring school setting. VCS has built facilities that change and grow as our program does. Adding additional space and flexibly using our existing physical plant will enable VCS to **proactively prepare for changing needs** before they occur. As we make decisions about our facilities, environmental best practices will continue to be key considerations.

### **OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, VCS SHALL:**

- Evaluate and modify existing space allocations to align with current and anticipated program needs of a leading 21st-century school
- Seek opportunities to share space and facilities with other schools and organizations
- Build and/or acquire additional space to meet the school's requirements
- Use digital storage solutions whenever possible to reduce physical storage needs
- Communicate the value and positive program impact of our facilities and showcase that strength to the VCS community and prospective families

“We now accept the fact that learning is a lifelong process of keeping abreast of change. And the most pressing task is to teach people how to learn.”

– **Peter Drucker, Author, Professor and Management Consultant**

## STRATEGIC PILLAR: **TECHNOLOGY**

As a forward-thinking school, VCS welcomes opportunities to pilot new technologies, swiftly evaluating the costs and benefits. We foresee many new ways to enlist technology as a means to advance learning, global experiences, communication, and efficiency.

### **OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, VCS SHALL:**

- **Remain eager adopters of technology to enhance education** and embrace pilot programs, testing, and nimble responses to changing tech options
- Use technology to optimize curriculum for individual learners – providing more advanced/ additional classes, assistive/remedial classwork, opportunities to learn with others in ways that transcend time and space constraints
- Undertake regular technology audits to ensure optimal resources are both in place and in use, reducing overlap, obsolescence and under-utilization
- Use technology resources more creatively to maximize efficiencies of time, staff, space, and money
- Continually evaluate the available and upcoming technologies for opportunities to enhance student performance
- Explore and use the most effective forms of technology for communications and marketing to prospective, current, and alumni families

## STRATEGIC PILLAR: FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

“We need to choose our century.  
The students have chosen theirs.”

— Heidi Hayes Jacobs,  
Author, Speaker and internationally recognized Education Leader

**Fiscal strength allows VCS to act on its ambitions.** Being leaders in K-8 education requires financial support from all who will benefit or have benefited from the VCS program. We must create and foster a culture of giving that ensures VCS's continued success. We must also examine the impact of demographic trends on all aspects of access, affordability, and enrollment.

### OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, VCS SHALL:

- Continue prudent financial management of the school's resources
- Increase revenue from existing and new fundraising streams
- Explore new revenue sources
- Begin a Capital Campaign to fund priority initiatives based on this Strategic Plan
- Ensure that our tuition assistance model enables the school to maintain a socio-economically heterogeneous student population
- Shift from “admissions culture” to “enrollment management” – building a more comprehensive, proactive model to manage admissions and retention through changing times
- Grow the culture of philanthropy at VCS
- Invest in new marketing initiatives reinforcing our vision as the New York leader in K-8 education

### 2013-2014 VCS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

|                       |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| <b>Head of School</b> | Eve Kleger       |
| <b>Chair</b>          | Cara Marriott    |
| <b>Vice-Chair</b>     | Allison Russo    |
| <b>Treasurer</b>      | Mark Howard      |
| <b>Secretary</b>      | Natalie Judelson |

|                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Member-at-Large</b>  | Scott Corrigan       |
| <b>Member-at-Large</b>  | Norma Katz           |
| <b>Member-at-Large</b>  | Adviti Muni          |
| <b>Member-at-Large</b>  | Jim Taylor           |
| <b>Staff Member</b>     | Tammy Dunn           |
| <b>Staff Member</b>     | Harry Hancock        |
| <b>Community Member</b> | Judith Journey       |
| <b>Community Member</b> | Hila Cohen Rosen     |
| <b>Community Member</b> | Tory Ruffolo         |
| <b>Community Member</b> | Steve Skulnik        |
| <b>Community Member</b> | Jennifer Allan Soros |

### 2013-2014 VCS STRATEGIC PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

|                 |                             |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Tory Ruffolo    | <b>Co-Chair</b>             |
| Jim Taylor      | <b>Co-Chair</b>             |
| Eve Kleger      | <b>Head of School</b>       |
| Denise Frazier  | <b>Asst. Head of School</b> |
| Cara Marriott   | <b>Board Chair</b>          |
| Susanna Aaron   |                             |
| Obie Benz       |                             |
| Laurence Hagan  |                             |
| Harry Hancock   |                             |
| Beverly Israely |                             |
| Norma Katz      |                             |
| Pauline Nakios  |                             |

### 2013-2014 VCS STRATEGIC PLAN SUB COMMITTEE MEMBERS

|                  |                             |
|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Eve Kleger       | <b>Head of School</b>       |
| Denise Frazier   | <b>Asst. Head of School</b> |
| Cara Marriott    | <b>Board Chair</b>          |
|                  |                             |
| Karen Azoulay    | Peter Meinke                |
| Obie Benz        | Adviti Muni                 |
| Marc Blazer      | Jasmin Norwood              |
| Alexis Bleich    | Thomas Novembre             |
| Judy Calixto     | Sarah Paley                 |
| Renée Chung      | Ruben Parra                 |
| Scott Corrigan   | Christina Pelekanos         |
| Mindy Dehnert    | Alison Ramsey               |
| Tammy Dunn       | Jessica Romero              |
| Mark Howard      | Hila Cohen Rosen            |
| Beverly Israely  | Allison Russo               |
| Parisa Jaffer    | Craig Schlanger             |
| Natalie Judelson | Steve Skulnik               |
| Judith Journey   | Connie Sopic                |
| Jill Kaplan      | Jennifer Allan Soros        |
| Michael Katz     | Kathleen Tait               |
| Norma Katz       | Richard Vermillion          |
| Joan Kjelleren   | Sarah Williamson-Broadman   |
| Jiyuen Lee       |                             |

“In the world of education, now is not the time for small steps. This moment requires a giant leap. VCS continues to find innovative ways to prepare students to succeed in a continuously changing world. We challenge norms and encourage children to think deeply, broadly and creatively in ways that are not typical in education today.

The time has come for VCS to lead the way.”

**Eve Kleger, Head of School**

Exploration  
Encouragement  
Excellence

Village  
Community  
School