



Lamp Post



Lighting Our Path

The Lamplighter School
Strategic Plan 2012-2017



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Dear Lamplighter Community,

Founded in 1953, The Lamplighter School will soon celebrate 60 years as a premier educator of young children in Dallas, Texas. This exciting milestone occurs at a time of renewed spirit to celebrate the School's growth while steadfastly honoring its founding principles. Planning for the future has new meaning and importance since, for the first time in its history, Lamplighter owns the land on which it operates.

One year ago, the Strategic Planning Committee began in earnest to address the future priorities of the School. The Committee's first charge was to initiate a thorough review of the School's Mission with the Board of Trustees, the faculty and administration, and members of the Lamplighter community. The result of those thoughtful conversations is an updated Mission statement and accompanying Core Values that were approved by the Board of Trustees in May 2012. These carefully constructed and time-honored principles provided critical touchstones as the committee worked to draft goals for a new Strategic Plan.

The 2012 Strategic Plan represents the culmination of work and input from all members of the Lamplighter community. Faculty,

administrators, alumni, parents, and trustees crafted, considered, and affirmed the goals of the forthcoming plan. We hope you will read and carefully consider the Lamplighter School Mission Statement, Core Values, and 2012 Strategic Plan. Over the coming years, success against this plan will be shared with the Lamplighter community via the website as well as through communications from the School.

We invite all members of the Lamplighter community to review the plan and the reporting on its implementation, and to offer feedback along the way. Your participation will be the critical factor in the success of this plan... and of the School. We look forward to sharing the light of Lamplighter's future with you.

Sincerely,

Alex Nila K. Sharma

Chair, Board of Trustees

Catherine Rose

Board Vice Chair, Strategic
Planning Committee Chair



Our Missions

Dedicated to igniting the potential in each child, Lamplighter engages young children in the joy of learning through intellectual discovery in a creative, inclusive, and collaborative environment.

Core Commitments

Lamplighter promotes **academic excellence** through innovative curriculum and teaching that cultivates the potential in each child in an ever-changing world. Lamplighter actively engages young children in the **joy of learning**, teaching them to be tomorrow's problem solvers and laying the foundation for lifelong learning. Lamplighter develops **character, confidence, and collaborative skills** through its social and emotional curriculum. Lamplighter embraces diversity in all its facets, striving to be a genuinely **inclusive community**, respectful of social and cultural differences and seeking a broader understanding of the world. Lamplighter encourages **curiosity** and **creativity** through hands-on learning, prizing and preserving the **discovery** and wonder of childhood.

“Comprised of well-defined and measurable goals, the Lamplighter Strategic Plan outlines in great detail the path from future promise to reality.”

With great forethought, a new Strategic Plan has been created to guide the process of preparing for the future. Comprised of well-defined and measurable goals, the 2012 Lamplighter School Strategic Plan outlines in great detail the path from future promise to reality. The entire School community is invited to join in this momentous journey and directly impact the educational experience of young children for years to come.

As the strategic planning process unfolds, it is significant to note that Lamplighter’s original principles are still valid today. Years ago, Natalie Murray and Sandy Swain set out to build “the ultimate” school where children retain the joys of childhood, and teachers realize their full professional potential. The founders designed a seven-year program to lay out the “foundation and attitudes for all future learning.” It includes essential building blocks for students’ success as problem solvers, risk takers, and independent learners. Academic challenge and social and emotional growth are mutually supported and valued. True to its inception, the School

environment maintains an atmosphere in which each student can move at his or her own pace toward intellectual discovery and growth. In keeping with the founding pioneers’ vision, a Lamplighter education enables children to create lives in which learning matters.

Lamplighter’s curriculum continues to provide an active educational experience. The program of hands-on and team-oriented learning prepares students to think creatively and act responsibly. Discovery is an important key to the process. Students’ natural curiosities and interests are expanded through an integrated curriculum knitting together math, art, science, drama, literature, social studies, and physical education. Subject-area crossover is intentional and by design. Curricular innovation is prized, and faculty are encouraged to investigate, pursue, and share new ways of thinking. With teachers as facilitators and students as active participants, everyone is a learner at Lamplighter.



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Community



Community

Lamplighter's success in pursuing its mission and core values will be built through **partnership** with all of its stakeholders and on open and **transparent communication** with them. The School will work to build an **inclusive community** of the diversity of our larger society; to create a thriving community of learners, whether adult or child, that embraces discovery, **academic excellence**, and the **joy of learning**; and to raise awareness beyond Lamplighter of the School's philosophy and methodology in educating and nurturing children.



Parents

Strengthen Lamplighter's partnership with parents

Lamplighter is committed to providing parents with a comprehensive overview of the complete program in order to instill understanding of the foundational and lifelong benefits of Lamplighter's innovative curriculum. A partnership with parents reinforces the School's unique approach to fostering the joy of learning and preserving the wonder of childhood.

- **Engage parents in the Lamplighter learning experience**

The School values two-way communication with parents and is committed to sharing the Lamplighter learning experience with parents and families.

- **Collect, track, and share student achievements and information regarding the fulfillment of the School's mission**

Information about student achievements and successes at Lamplighter, through middle and high school and beyond, is critical both to measuring how well Lamplighter succeeds in pursuing its mission and values and to heightening awareness of the program's benefits with parents and the community at large.

- **Inform parents about the key transitions in the Lamplighter experience**

Lamplighter will actively, and often, share information about transitions between Early Childhood and Lower School, between grade levels and, finally, to fifth grade at the completion of the full program. Through a robust plan to share information about Lamplighter's unique philosophy and curriculum as well as student placement and achievement data, parents will have a more vibrant understanding of:

- Early childhood: igniting curiosity and intellectual development in each child.
- Early childhood to Lower School: reaping the benefits of the full program.
- Lower School to fifth grade: sustaining academic excellence and the joy of learning beyond Lamplighter.

- **Integrate families into the Lamplighter community and culture to generate more robust connections among families and the School**

Every family should feel valued and welcomed on the Lamplighter campus. To deepen family connections to Lamplighter, its philosophy and community, the School will extend opportunities for substantive and mission-relevant parent education initiatives, extracurricular and enrichment programs, including athletics, and service learning. Lamplighter will show sensitivity to family and childcare challenges when offering opportunities for parent involvement with the School. The School will collaborate with Lamplighter Parents' Association to ensure that new families are welcomed and introduced to opportunities to be involved in the Lamplighter community.

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intellectual
s unique

External Community

Broaden awareness of Lamplighter’s offering of the premier early childhood and elementary education program in Dallas

Since its founding, Lamplighter has been “a place for childhood” where “a child is not a vessel to be filled but a lamp to be lit.” These founding commitments are still relevant today; however, the practicalities of educating young children in the Lamplighter way have not remained static. A thorough branding process and implementation of recommendations will assist Lamplighter in successfully communicating what we do and how we do it to internal and external communities. In addition, it will be critical to differentiate Lamplighter from its peers through efforts to serve as a leader in early childhood education.

- **Ensure compelling and consistent messaging to all constituents**

The School will complete a comprehensive branding effort in order to fulfill the intent of this strategic plan and to advance the institution. The results will yield a shared understanding among stakeholders of the mission, values, and strengths of the School. In order to continue to attract and retain students from increasingly diverse communities, successful branding and differentiation is required to heighten awareness of and interest in the program.

- **Promote the value of Lamplighter’s unique early childhood learning environment that embraces the discovery and wonder of learning**

Lamplighter will use internal communications, traditional print media, the School’s website, and social media to share research-based data underscoring the School’s mission, values, and program. The School will increase visibility of alumni on campus as well as online in order to build a more inclusive and cohesive Lamplighter community. To heighten broader awareness of Lamplighter’s active learning environment and integrated program, the School will invite local and national educators, and thoughtful and creative leaders to visit campus.

- **Establish Lamplighter as a center for professional development in early childhood education**

Lamplighter was founded as a place of learning where “teachers can be the very best teachers they can be.” Early childhood education continues to be Lamplighter’s focus, and the School will embark upon an initiative to convene others to share and learn best practices in professional development that is in line with the School’s mission and values.



Admission & Retention

Attract, admit, and retain a diverse community of qualified students

Lamplighter respects diverse experiences, backgrounds, ethnicities, talents, and thought. The School strives to be a genuinely inclusive community and will continue to seek a student base reflective of diversity in all of its facets. Lamplighter will increase visibility among all appropriate audiences in order to attract more applicants.

- **Expand the base of students from which the School draws**

Lamplighter will work to ensure that the delicate balance of tuition increases needed to sustain program excellence will not disrupt the School's ability to attract and retain an inclusive mix of students in the Lamplighter community. The School will dedicate adequate resources to financial aid and will ensure that the process for financial aid is clear and accessible.

- **Maintain an admission process that best serves students and the mission of the School**

The admission process is the first critical step parents take when entering Lamplighter. A warm, welcoming, professional, and consistent process in line with Lamplighter's mission and values will build parent confidence and enthusiasm for completing the full program. The School will engage and prepare faculty, staff, and volunteers to play appropriate and active roles in this process.

- **Manage enrollment in the best interests of students, their families, and the School**

Lamplighter will develop a comprehensive enrollment management plan to optimize student retention in the Early Childhood and Lower School programs; to gain a thorough understanding of the levers driving enrollment and retention; to ensure successful financial planning for the School; and to yield successful implementation of strategic initiatives.





Infrastructure

Infrastructure

To succeed in fulfilling Lamplighter's mission and values, the School will be **thoughtful** about the future, prudently **innovative**, committed to best practices, and a **careful** steward as it manages, **supports** and adds to the School's infrastructure, operations, and physical plant.

Administration

Lead and manage the School to best serve its mission

In order to realize the strategic vision for the School, Lamplighter will align organizational capacity and actions with programmatic objectives.

- **Align the organizational structure to support the mission**

The School will ensure that the administrative team has the structure, staffing, and resources necessary to plan and execute strategic initiatives of this plan.

- **Identify, hire, and retain a strong leadership team**

Lamplighter will maintain a leadership team that embodies 21st-century thinking; leaders will be adaptable to change, willing to grow in their positions, and demonstrate expert knowledge of their areas.

- **Operate the School based on best practices and informed innovation**

Lamplighter's administrative team will incorporate best practices in all aspects of the management of the School's operations, resources, and physical plant.



structure



Financial Stability

Secure and manage the financial resources necessary to fund Lamplighter's program, operations, and future growth

To ensure the financial sustainability and growth of the School, Lamplighter will initiate a long-range financial planning process to examine annual and multiyear budgets and best practices in financial policies. The financial planning process will set benchmarks for tuition increases and financial aid in order to maintain affordability and access to the School, while also ensuring that Lamplighter achieves the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. To further grow the resources of the School, Lamplighter will continue to develop the School's philanthropic culture to yield increases in overall giving.

• Ensure ongoing stewardship of financial resources

Lamplighter will evaluate and modify current financial policies, organizational capacities, and best operating practices as needed to ensure optimization. To aid in future planning and sustainability, the School will maintain sufficient financial reserves. Lamplighter will work to be affordable to a diverse population through management of tuition and financial aid, without compromising the financial resources required to achieve and maintain excellence.

• Increase giving across all constituencies

Nurturing the School's philanthropic culture and giving across constituencies and contribution types, including annual fund, endowment, and capital campaigns, is critical to Lamplighter's sustainability and future growth. Lamplighter, its leadership team, trustees, and other volunteers will work together to educate families about the importance of philanthropy to the success of the School's program and aspirations. The development team will place equal emphasis on the creation of new donor relationships and careful stewardship of current donors.

• Fully fund strategic priorities

Lamplighter is committed to raising the resources required to realize the vision of this Strategic Plan while maintaining the excellence of the program. To remain competitive among peer independent Schools, Lamplighter will set benchmarks for financial aid, faculty compensation, and facilities, and will work to raise current funds and to build endowment resources to fund these efforts.



Facility

Provide and maintain a physical campus aligned with the School’s mission and able to fulfill the School’s strategic vision

The role of the Campus Master Plan is to ensure that Lamplighter’s facilities meet the quality, needs, and aspirations of our program. The Master Plan will provide overall direction for future development but will serve also as a working document to allow planning for current and anticipated future needs of the School. Expansion and future development of the campus will honor the School’s architecture and the founders’ educational philosophy. All new construction projects will aspire to meet sustainable building standards.

• Manage facilities and infrastructure

Completing a comprehensive Campus Master Plan will enable prudent management of existing buildings and clarify objectives around the strategic growth of the campus. In stewarding existing facilities, Lamplighter will honor the School’s unique architecture and aesthetic philosophy. Lamplighter will continue to examine opportunities to improve the environmental sustainability of the existing campus.

• Plan and execute strategic interventions and additions to the campus

Over the last five years, strategic planning efforts have identified a number of facility enhancements in the areas of science, outdoor education, and additional classroom spaces. In light of current and anticipated program requirements developed in the 2012 Strategic Plan, the Head of School and the Board will develop a consensus on needs and priorities for expansion recommendations. The School will then plan and conduct one or more capital campaigns to fund facility projects. Future development and expansion of the campus will honor the School’s architecture and the founder’s educational philosophy. Lamplighter will aspire to meet sustainable building standards in all new construction projects.



**“Do not go where
where there i**

A photograph of a park-like setting. In the foreground, a paved path curves around a circular stone well on the left and a stone bench on the right. The path is dappled with sunlight and shadows from trees. In the background, there is a building with large windows and a red roof, partially obscured by lush green trees. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

**the path may lead, go instead
s no path and leave a trail.”**

—Ralph Waldo Emerson



The
Lamplighter
School