



STRATEGIC PLAN
PHASE ONE

Adopted 2014



INTRODUCTION

The Aspen Academy Strategic Plan is the collaborative result of staff, administration, parents, and board members. The Strategic Planning Committee met monthly and was chaired by Wade Phillips, Noah Levie, and Jeff Lenzmeier. The Aspen Academy Administrative Team met weekly and consisted of Cynthia Sherar, Janelle Mellgren, Joan Arbisi Little, Maggie Rowan, and Lindsey Kesanen. We also contracted with John Johnson of Changemaking Systems.

The process involved an evaluation of Aspen's Mission and Vision statements, and discussion of our core organizational values (e.g. meeting the needs of individual students, character development, operational excellence, accountability, sense of community, etc.). This helped shape the strategic objectives, and finally creation of strategic goals for a "Phase One" that will lay a foundation for future strategic planning.

It is our intention that Phase One define and communicate who we are and what we do. As we move to Phase Two, we can then create specific measurable goals for the growth, improvement, and well-being of the school. It is extremely important to note that Phase One is not intended to have measurable outcomes as in "test scores will improve by 3%", but instead be a slate of important processes that need to be defined, established, or better communicated in order to lay the foundation for further strategic planning. Success will be measured in terms of completed stakeholder definitions, initiation of the project, and communication.

This report details the strategic objectives set by the Strategic Planning Committee and goals determined from the feedback from focus groups held during the summer of 2014. It then notes recommendations and steps seen as necessary for the completion of each objective so that Phase Two strategic planning can take place.



MISSION

Our Mission is to provide students with a well-rounded, Core Knowledge-based education which meets the intellectual, creative, and social needs of each child.

VISION

Our Vision is to prepare students for future educational opportunities and life in a global society by creating an academically rigorous, literature-rich environment where class sizes are small, and a strong sense of community is built and valued.

THINK

Tenacity
High expectations
Integrity
No excuses
Kindness



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Aspen Academy achieves intellectual, social, and creative growth for all students.

Aspen Academy maintains enrollment through recruiting and retention.

Aspen Academy develops and retains a highly qualified staff and board.

Aspen Academy develops and maintains strong student, parent, and community partnerships.

Aspen Academy practices exemplary financial and operational management.

OBJECTIVES, GOALS and FOCUS GROUPS

A workday was held at which the administrative team asked three key questions in relation to each of the strategic objectives:

- What do we do well?
- What are the gaps?
- Where do we want to leverage our resources?

The administrative team then did “targeted sampling in which stakeholders were interviewed for their input on these questions in each of the objective areas the board committee had identified.

Their responses were communicated back to the board committee and the admin team then formulated goals for each objective.

Three focus groups were created to which board members, teachers, and parents were invited to discuss the same three questions noted above, with respect to the objectives and goals.

One focus group was devoted to student growth. The second focus group was devoted to staff/board retention along with financial and operational systems. And the third focus group was devoted to enrollment/marketing and building community. Each of these is discussed in more detail.

OBJECTIVE:

Aspen Academy achieves intellectual, social, and creative growth for all students.

GOALS:

- **Define ways to strengthen intellectual, creative, and social programming**
 - 1) Train teachers/create varied opportunities for students to show what they know *intellectually*,
 - 2) Train teachers/ create varied opportunities for students to show what they know *socially*,
 - 3) Train teachers/ create varied opportunities for students to show what they know *creatively*.
- **Definition of, training for, and implementation of standards-based programming**
 - 1) Better define standards-based grading rubrics,
 - 2) Train staff to create standards-based grading rubrics,
 - 3) Communicate the use of standards-based grading rubrics to parents
- **Expand and Strengthen Data Driven Instruction (DDI)**
 - 1) Expand in Reading / to Science,
 - 2) Train MS Science Teachers in DDI,
 - 3) Implement DDI Science testing for students including a plan for conveying this information to parents.



OBJECTIVE:

Aspen Academy maintains enrollment through recruiting and retention.

GOALS:

- **Track attrition data and target retention strategies at key grades**
 - 1) Continue to track all attrition data looking for patterns by grade level and month,
 - 2) Identify reasons for leaving Aspen Academy,
 - 3) Identify retention strategies at key grade levels or months

- **Identify and pursue marketing opportunities in the community**
 - 1) Identify underserved populations as per MN State statute,
 - 2) Market to new and underserved populations in community,
 - 3) Market to current parents for retention (e.g. what to expect after Aspen, how things will transition, etc.)

- **Develop marketing materials for different audiences, branding/marketing identity**
 - 1) Educate the public on what a charter school is and is not,
 - 2) Promote our successes more,
 - 3) Develop branding/marketing materials to communicate who we are/what we offer



OBJECTIVE:

Aspen Academy develops and retains a highly qualified staff and board.

GOALS:

- **Define criteria we look for in prospective employees / board members.**

Employees:

- 1) Aligned with the Aspen values of Data Driven Instruction and meeting the needs of individual students,
- 2) Practical and creative thinking that will help our students develop intellectually, socially, and creatively,
- 3) Instructional flexibility, innovation, and willingness to actively support our Aspen Community.

Board:

- 1) People who have experience on other boards or are willing to be trained,
- 2) People who recognize and remove personal agendas when sitting on the board

- **Define professional standards we expect employees / board members to meet.**

Employees:

- 1) Refine and further articulate school guidelines for professional relationships with parents and students,
- 2) Refine and further articulate school guidelines for professional dress,
- 3) Refine and further articulate school guidelines for curricular content.

Board:

- 1) Follow guidelines for policy oversight for the best interests of *all* students who attend Aspen,
- 2) Do the work of the committee/board,
- 3) Follow school guidelines for ethical conduct

OBJECTIVE:
Aspen Academy develops
and retains a highly
qualified staff and board.

(continued)

- **Define training/support/coaching we will provide employees / board members.**

Employees:

- 1) Continue and articulate to stakeholders (including parents and prospective teachers) Aspen's coaching process
- 2) Continue and articulate to stakeholders (including parents and prospective teachers) Aspen's staff development options
- 3) Create a sense of purpose (e.g. have everything tie back to the strategic plan).

Board:

- 1) Continue with self-evaluation and based on this data, invest in external board development as a group,
- 2) Continue with self-evaluation and based on this data, invest in external board development to optimally increase their roles as individual board members/officers,
- 3) Develop training and consistency in the committee processes and board meeting processes to demonstrate a high level of professionalism in our public forums



OBJECTIVE:

Aspen Academy develops and maintains strong student, parent, and community partnerships.

GOALS:

- **Develop and expand THINK-related programming.**
 - 1) Develop THINK posters for parents to use at home,
 - 2) Expand by pairing older and younger students around THINK related activities,
 - 3) Continue to communicate this on report cards

The following goals are written with the intention of purposefully developing and promoting students' intellectual, social, and creative growth in alignment with our Mission Statement. We recognize there are many opportunities for students in these areas. Those we choose to develop, pursue, or offer our students will those that we feel most closely align with our Mission.

- **Increase parent involvement opportunities.**
 - 1) Investigate and evaluate parent involvement opportunities outside of business hours,
 - 2) Investigate and evaluate parent involvement in clubs,
 - 3) Investigate and evaluate bringing businesses into Aspen programming
- **Expand after-school programming options.**
 - 1) Investigate and evaluate community partnerships,
 - 2) Investigate and evaluate expanding Eagles Nest to non-school days,
 - 3) Investigate and evaluate information on community options for parents.

OBJECTIVE:

Aspen Academy practices exemplary financial and operational management.

GOALS:

- **Finance Committee will meet at least quarterly and define reporting needed.**
 - 1) Set calendar,
 - 2) Determine priorities,
 - 3) Outline a framework for determining annual budgets.

- **Create/define/monitor organizational systems for clarity.**
 - 1) Define job descriptions,
 - 2) Articulate an organizational chart,
 - 3) Convey systems to stakeholders
 - 4) Evaluate facility capacity needs.

- **Implementation of TIES across multiple operational areas.**
 - 1) Provide ongoing training of key staff,
 - 2) Provide teacher training in fall 2014,
 - 3) Implement Lite Lunch for parents with the addition of more parent modules over time.

NEXT STEPS

PHASE TWO STRATEGIC PLANNING INCLUDING:

- Determine who is responsible for what in Phase One
- On-going communications about process and plans
- Move to a needs assessments – for both programs and operations
- Identify key stakeholders
- Determine MDE and Authorizer mandates that must be met in next 3-5 years
- Determine 3 and 5 year goals for Aspen
- Determine resources needed for goals
- Budget analyses and planning, including when enrollment flat-lines
- Establish priorities
- Make recommendations to the Strategic Planning Committee
- Start phase two of strategic plan including integration with World’s Best Workforce