



The Journey Forward

THE GIRLS' SCHOOL OF AUSTIN
2024 - 2030 STRATEGIC PLAN





Dear GSA Families,

It is an exciting time at the Girls' School of Austin, and we are at a crucial moment in our school's history and in the lives of our students. Last year's strategic planning process began at an auspicious time. We had just celebrated the school's twentieth anniversary, and we were all curious and gearing up for what could be next. Furthermore, we were emerging from the pandemic, a moment that presented opportunities for decisive change.

Our strength is already in the people who believe deeply in the GSA's mission: the faculty, staff, parents, and board members who partner every day to uphold that purpose. "Developing confident young women who lead intellectually vibrant and fulfilling lives" is a mission that the GSA faculty and staff take seriously, and we demonstrate that every day in the classrooms, at recess, out and about on field trips, and on Friday mornings at Community Meetings. With research showing that girls are in a particularly vulnerable place socially and emotionally and AI becoming increasingly nimble and responsive, we are in a position to plan for a future that not only addresses those crucial issues but also maintains and elevates the unique educational experience that the GSA provides for girls in Austin. The Strategic Planning Design Team took all these things into consideration as we challenged ourselves to dream big and held ourselves accountable for being true to the GSA's mission, ethos, and culture.

The GSA community spent the past year exploring our "mission in action" in the past and in the present, and now we are poised to imagine and navigate the future. The history of the GSA has been one of ingenuity, tenacity, and adaptability; those qualities will continue to be part of our legacy in a rapidly evolving world. Now that we have finished the 20-year process of establishing the Girls' School of Austin, it is time to articulate and cultivate what makes it such an extraordinary educational environment. It is time to expand our reach and our impact on the girls of Austin. And it is time to amplify all the ways we are "of Austin" through connections and partnerships with other individuals and organizations whose missions align or complement our own.

As you read the dynamic strategic plan laid out in the pages below, you will follow signposts on a journey that begins on steady footing, expands our scope, and moves us forward. Like our GSA Graduate herself, we will take brave risks, elevate diverse voices, and lead for change. I hope you are as excited as I am to go on this journey over the next six years!

Watch Us Soar!

Rebecca Yacono
Head of School



ELEVATE OUR
GREATEST ASSETS

DELIVER ON THE
PROMISE OF DEI

AMPLIFY THE
MIDDLE SCHOOL

REDEFINE
THE CLASSROOM

INVEST IN A
THRIVING FUTURE



1.

**ELEVATE OUR
GREATEST ASSETS:**

**IDENTITY, EDUCATORS,
AND COMMUNITY**

OBJECTIVE

The GSA is poised to be a thought leader in girls' education; as we grow our size and program, we want to maintain that "special sauce" that makes us exceptional (and maybe even share it with other girls' schools...in other parts of the world!). Our belief that "curiosity, creativity, diversity, and a willingness to take risks advance intellectual growth" combined with our legacy of "dedicated, and inspiring teachers" set us apart in the landscape of K-8 schools in Central Texas. We have the opportunity now to make a solid commitment to our teachers and make the GSA a coveted place for the best teachers to teach and learn. Staff deserve to be compensated fairly for the exceptional level of teaching and commitment that is valued and expected at the GSA. Furthermore, faculty and staff want to partner with parents in their students' educational experiences through relationships that are rooted in mutual respect and trust. We know that positive parent-teacher partnerships increase student academic growth and pro-social development and improve staff morale and engagement.

THE GSA WILL...

- 1 Articulate the "GSA Way" to capture and scale the exceptional nature of our approach to curriculum, pedagogy, climate, and culture.
- 2 Revolutionize our approach to hiring and onboarding and develop an innovative model for salaries and traditional and non-traditional benefits to attract and retain the best faculty and staff in elementary and middle school education.
- 3 Design and establish a Parent-Teacher Partnership to steward communication, support, and understanding about mutual support of GSA students' learning, growth, and well being.



2.

DELIVER ON THE
PROMISE OF DIVERSITY,
EQUITY, AND INCLUSION:

BELONGING SETS
US APART



OBJECTIVE

Diversity at the GSA resides in the lived experiences of individuals; having a community that is racially and ethnically diverse makes all of us more creative, authentic, and connected, and it broadens our perspectives. In addition, diverse communities have the potential to be better at communication, problem-solving, and innovation than homogeneous ones. Embedded in our belief that diversity, among other qualities, advances intellectual growth, is the recognition that being a diverse and inclusive community is more than just a matter of demographics; it demonstrates the understanding that an educational community where members from diverse backgrounds and lived experiences know they have equitable access and a deep sense of belonging is a thriving, dynamic place where girls and young women will, in fact, develop “intellectually vibrant and fulfilling lives.” In order to be the school of choice for families of color in the Austin metropolitan area, it is imperative that we look in the mirror to identify how we can more effectively “walk the walk” of being a community of Inclusive Excellence.

THE GSA WILL...

- 1 Hold ourselves accountable for creating an inclusive climate and culture where community members can experience a true sense of belonging.
- 2 Be the K-8 school of choice for educators, staff members, and families of color in the greater Austin metropolitan area.






3.

AMPLIFY THE MIDDLE SCHOOL:

EXPLORATION ABOUNDS AT THE GSA

OBJECTIVE

Middle School is in our DNA: the first students at the GSA were Fifth and Sixth Graders, and our school grew from the Middle School downward instead of starting with Kindergarten like many new schools do. Now that we are no longer a “new” school, our mission is well-suited to a K-8th Grade model. The Portrait of the GSA Graduate sets forth the vision of the lenses and approaches our students will have when they walk onstage at Eighth Grade graduation, and that is a legacy worth sustaining. Growing the Middle School student body to two class sections in each grade level in 6th through 8th Grades will give the GSA the flexibility to make thoughtful, developmentally and educationally sound decisions about how to group students and who their teachers should be. Students will find themselves in settings that promote healthy social interactions, increased opportunities to develop and apply social/emotional skills, and a more diverse student body.



In addition, the increased size of the Middle School student body will enable the GSA to expand program offerings at a crucial time in girls' development; the preteen and early adolescent years are precisely when young people need exposure to a variety of opportunities and activities as they develop their identities and feed their curiosity. The revenue generated by the increased number of students in the Middle School will enable the GSA to expand programs through a variety of levers, including the ability to fund the salaries of specialty staff in both education and operations and funding to enhance and supplement facilities for classrooms, labs, studios, etc. It is time to amplify our Middle School academic and extracurricular program and in turn, nurture our 6th, 7th, and 8th Graders within this community that "fosters creating learning and personal excellence."

THE GSA WILL...

- 1 Increase the size of the classes in 6th through 8th grade from 18 students per grade (one class section each) to 30 students per grade (multiple class sections each) for a total of 108 Middle School students in grades 5-8.
- 2 Strengthen and expand curricular, extracurricular, and interscholastic opportunities in the Middle School that support the GSA mission and set the GSA apart as a thought leader in girls' education and program.



4.

REDEFINE THE CLASSROOM:

HANDS-ON AND MINDS-ON LEARNING

OBJECTIVE

The GSA is at a pivotal juncture, poised to equip young women to enter a world of immersive technology and job markets where skills like systems design, new media literacy, virtual collaboration, decision-making, and empathy will be some of their greatest assets on their way to “leading intellectually vibrant and fulfilling lives.” When students know their learning has “real world” applications, their learning is meaningful and deep. In addition, it gives students a genuine sense of purpose to have the community around them be where they learn and grow. Not only do digital and virtual learning platforms and environments offer expansive opportunities and contexts for learning, it is also essential for students to become adept at operating and navigating those environments in developmentally appropriate ways as they become increasingly part of how the world works.



Having classrooms, studios, labs, and gathering places where students can learn and practice those skills and develop those mindsets will ensure the school mission will have deep relevance going forward. In classic GSA form, those facilities would enhance the school's position as our constituents' "Third Place" - the hub to and from which the community ebbs and flows.

Those real world applications become even more relevant when students actually go out into the real world to learn, contribute, and build relationships. Being "in Austin and of Austin" should entail more than just the physical location of the school campus; it should also include the surrounding community. The Austin community is rife with organizations and people who can offer expertise, experiences, and resources beyond what we have on campus on a day-to-day basis.

THE GSA WILL...

- 1 Build additional facilities and modify current facilities to provide for state-of-the-art learning environments and gathering spaces where technology, design, visual and performing arts, and community converge for grades K-8.
- 2 Ensure adequate classroom facilities for the increased size of the Middle School.
- 3 Evolve our definition of "classroom" to include digital, virtual, and off-campus learning environments in ways that make the GSA a thought leader in girls' education and future-oriented pedagogy.
- 4 Evolve our definition of "curriculum" to include authentic learning, technology skills integration, and design thinking in ways that make the GSA a thought leader in girls' education and future-oriented knowledge and skill development.



5.

INVEST IN A THRIVING FUTURE

PLANT THE SEEDS
FOR FINANCIAL STABILITY



OBJECTIVE

At the GSA, we dream big, as evidenced by Strategic Pillars 1-4. Some of those initiatives will emerge from our day-to-day work as we channel our ideas and actions in a coherent direction. Other initiatives will require us to sketch out blueprints and pour foundations, both literally and figuratively, and those initiatives will require financial resources. So, too, will ensuring the future of the GSA. Building a sustainable tuition model, committing to tuition assistance, and initiating an endowment are investments in the future of all GSA students, now and twenty years from now. We can't leave those things to happenstance.

THE GSA WILL...

- 1 Develop a comprehensive financial plan that optimizes the benefits of growth and secures the resources needed to build and renovate facilities, invest in a diverse community and a future-focused program, and endow the future of the school.
- 2 Explore and commit to a tuition structure that is equitable based on families' ability to pay and that meets the annual needs of the operating budget without having to fundraise annually to fill the gap.





The Girls' School of Austin
2024