



HORIZONS[®]

Building Brighter Futures Since 1964

Hosted at New Canaan Country School

Strategic Plan 2019-2021

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Table of Contents

Introduction 2

The Planning Process 3

Table 1 3

Table 2 4

Horizons at NCCS Decisions and Long-Term Issues 5

Horizons at NCCS at a Glance 6

Guiding Statements: Vision, Mission, Values 7

Goals and Strategies 8

Action Plan by Critical Areas 9

Dashboard 14

Attachment 1. The Strategy Group’s Strategic Planning Process 16

Introduction

In 1964, the headmaster of New Canaan Country School (NCCS) had an exciting idea: to bring children from low-income families to the NCCS campus for an enriching summer experience. With this idea, Horizons was born and its mission remains essentially unchanged. Horizons encourages students from a diverse, low-income population to explore new worlds and realize their full potential.

It's been 11 years since the last Strategic Plan. Over the course of the last 10 months, the Strategic Planning Committee, has been hard at work on Horizons at New Canaan Country School's ("Horizons at NCCS") new Strategic Plan, refining their objectives, and reinforcing their commitment to a new mission and to the program activities that it supports.

Change is not easy. It takes vision and commitment. Horizons at NCCS challenged existing assumptions, defined new objectives, and built a Strategic Plan to achieve greater levels of impact. It has been an inspiring experience to have so many individuals focus on a new array of ideas and generate deep insight, creative strategy, and high resolve. This plan serves as the foundation for achieving growth goals and incorporates a long-term perspective, while focusing on today's pressing issues for the over 400 K through 12 students and their families from lower Fairfield County the program currently serves.

It is critical to point out that it took a coordinated and collective effort to accomplish this Strategic Plan. Volunteer Board Members, Board of Governors, educators, and an exceptional staff all shared their expertise, gave generously of their time, and worked together to achieve goals that will benefit Horizons at NCCS for many years to come. The Strategic Planning process was led by consultants from The Strategy Group LLC, Debra Hertz and Karen Brennan.

This plan sets a bold direction for Horizons at NCCS. Horizons at NCCS has a new vision, mission, and values that better reflect a new direction. The program will be using data to measure and report on its students' progress as early as this summer. The plan is to expand the summer program through 9th grade, strengthen the core curriculum, enhance the high school program, and refine the admissions policy. As Horizons at NCCS looks towards the future, the program will be developing a purposeful plan for post-secondary support as its students leave the program and look towards college or other life choices. There is much to be excited about.

Horizons at NCCS looks forward to implementing this Plan in 2019 and beyond with passionate people and new and trusted resources, so that it can continue to provide its students with high-quality programs, outside of the traditional school year, to support academic achievement and healthy youth development.

The Planning Process

This Strategic Plan is the product of a 10-month process that involved input from various stakeholders including Board Members, Board of Governors, office staff, teaching faculty, community partners, donors, foundations, parents, and students. Facilitated by The Strategy Group, the Plan followed the process outlined in Attachment 1. Key inputs to the planning process included:

Establishment of a Strategic Planning Committee. This was comprised of five Board Members, one Board of Governors Member, one Parent-Council Representative, two Horizons faculty members, the New Canaan Country School Head of School, and Horizons at NCCS's Executive Director. (See Table 1.)

Table 1. Strategic Planning Committee Members

Board Members/Parents	Staff Members
1. Nyiesha Arnold, Horizons Parent-Council Representative	1. Lilani Balasuriya, Horizons Faculty
2. Jennifer Barnard, Board Member	2. Aaron Cooper, Head of School, NCCS
3. Steve Bloom, Board Member	3. Jackie Roberson, Horizons Faculty
4. Lydee Hummel, Board of Governors Member	4. Nancy von Euler, Horizons Executive Director
5. Spencer Mallozzi, Board Member	
6. Carolyn Woodberry, Board Chair	
7. Elizabeth Zea, Board Member, Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee	

Environmental Scan. The Horizons at NCCS Environmental Scan had three parts: an internal review of documents, stakeholder interviews and focus groups, and two online surveys (one for parents and one for Board of Directors and Board of Governors). Over the course of the summer and into the fall, consultants from The Strategy Group completed focus groups and interviews with Horizons at NCCS faculty and staff, Board of Directors and Board of Governors members, major donors and foundations, community partners, parents, and students. In total, The Strategy Group spoke with 70 people.

At the request of the Strategic Planning Committee and in an effort to hear from a wider base of participants, two online surveys were created and sent to the parent email distribution list (250 people) and to the Board of Directors and Board of Governors email distribution list (76 people). In total, 65 parents responded and 37 Board of Directors and Board of Governors responded.

A brief summary of the key themes is offered in Table 2.

Table 2. Key Themes from Environmental Scan

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horizons at NCCS's has a long history of providing an exemplar six-week summer program that combines academic enrichment with summer fun • Swim program is one of best parts of the summer • Staff members, many of whom were once Horizons students, are well-respected and make the program a special, caring, and nurturing environment • Strong parent/family involvement and parent programming offered during both the summer and school year • Deep commitment to helping students through high school graduation with school year programming through tutoring, social events, music, sports, and winter program offerings • Overall feeling of community, friendship, caring, love, and safety
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data and metrics are the most critical to implement – donors are impatient to see more substantive data and staff need data to internally evaluate program impact and inform key decisions • Parent engagement strategies are not working well and need to be reexamined • Board self-assessment should be done to determine needs and skill sets for an optimal working board • Staff would like more professional development and stressed the need for more open communication • Many expressed the need to improve relationship with NCCS
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were a number of exciting programming opportunities introduced including: Extending the summer program through 9th grade, providing college-bound high school graduates with some support into college and through college, and adding additional school year programming (such as more sports and arts programming during the fall and spring) • The idea of regionalization was noted as an opportunity with affiliate clusters thought to bring efficiencies around program quality, fundraising, and the ability to serve more kids • Opportunities to fundraise were mentioned with looking past New Canaan for dollars – possibly for consortiums or partnerships and/or employing other methods to fundraise such as a capital campaign for the endowment
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intense competition for private and corporate dollars • Funders are giving less money to organizations • Funders have expressed frustration with not seeing Horizons at NCCS grow in recent years • Concern about strong affiliation Horizons at NCCS has with New Canaan Country School – the relationship is not always clear and often confuses parents and others

Strategic Planning Committee Meetings

A half day retreat was held in November of 2018 for the Strategic Planning Committee. Early versions of the vision, mission, and values were drafted; and the following critical issue areas were identified:

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Programming: | 2. Partnerships: | 3. Data |
| a. Current | a. Relationships with Other Horizons | 4. Fundraising |
| b. High School | b. Relationship with NCCS | |

From November to February, the Strategic Planning Committee met to strategize and brainstorm recommendations for each of the critical issues identified. The strategic recommendations that follow are intended to provide Horizons at NCCS with a roadmap to continue strengthening its infrastructure and programs. A small workgroup also met to work on Horizons at NCCS's vision, mission, and values.

Horizons at NCCS Decisions and Long-Term Issues

It is important to recognize that the Strategic Planning Committee created this plan with some key priorities firmly in place:

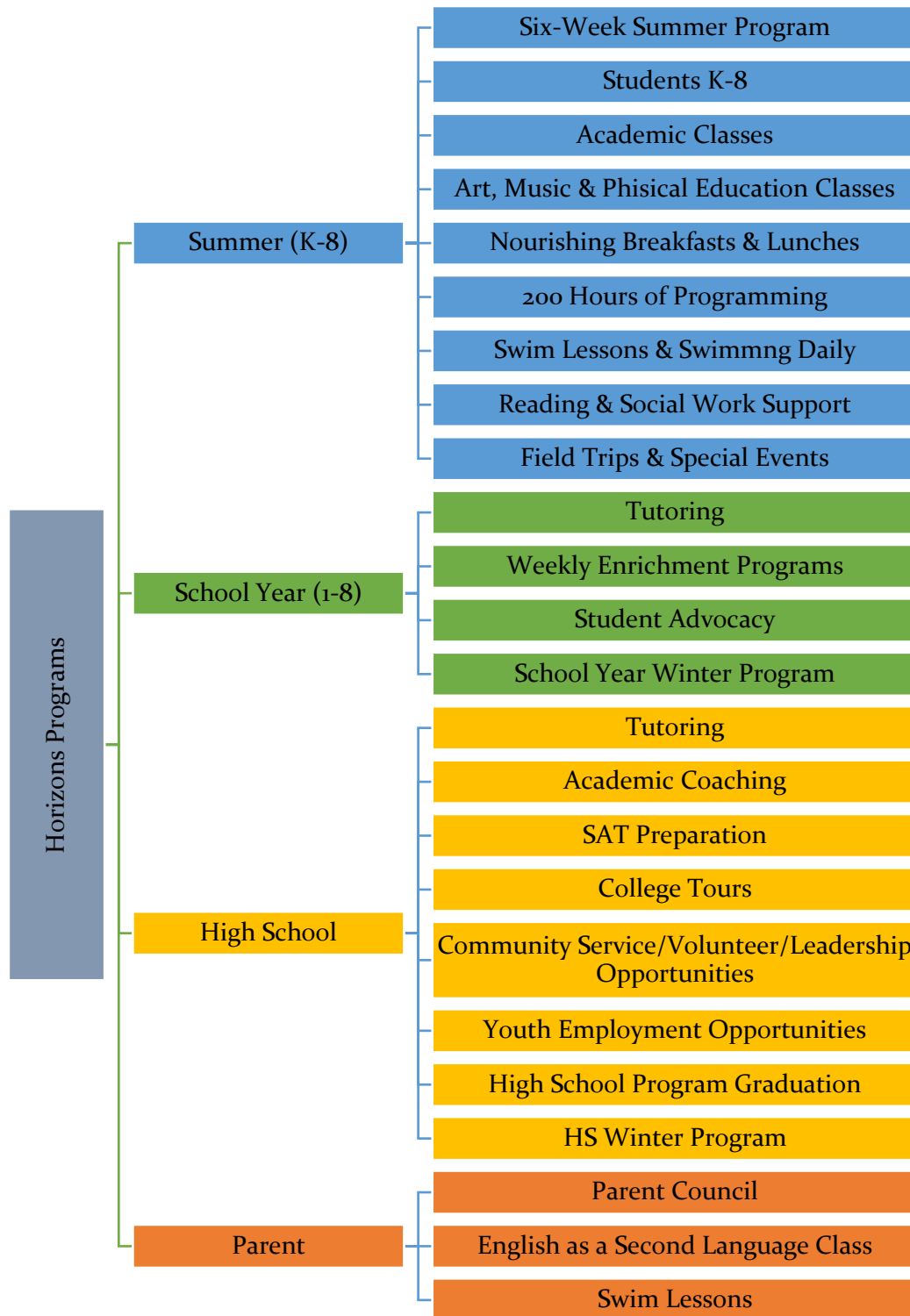
1. The anchor of the Horizons at NCCS' program will remain the intensive Summer Program for students in grades K-8.
2. Horizons at NCCS will provide school year programming for students in K through high school.
3. Horizons at NCCS will begin to explore providing limited support for graduates as they move on to college and/or into careers.
4. Horizons at NCCS will continue serving students in Stamford and Norwalk.
5. Horizons at NCCS will remain vigilant about the impact of changing demographics in the applicant pool to ensure that the program remains inclusive and all families feel represented.

A number of longer-term issues were raised and will be addressed as planning unfolds:

- Horizons programs are considering regionalization to strengthen efficiencies, program quality, and fundraising. There is a natural affiliation between Horizons at NCCS and Horizons at Norwalk Community College, for example, to share programming and to work together to figure out how serve more Norwalk students. Both have limited facilities, but together through regional integration, they may be able to expand to add capacity. This is something Horizons at NCCS should evaluate as it continues to evolve and focus on making a greater impact with the children it serves.
- Horizons at NCCS is interested in expanding its reach and impact by serving more children in Stamford and Norwalk through partnerships.
- Horizons at NCCS plans to reach out to both the Stamford and Norwalk school district personnel to explore the idea of targeting distinct schools to recruit students from.

Horizons at NCCS at a Glance

Horizons at NCCS meets many critical needs and has a robust set of program offerings:

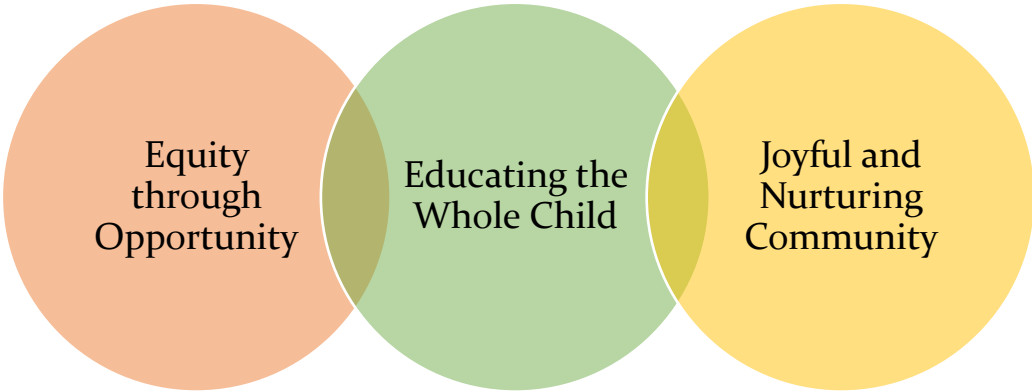


Guiding Statements: Vision, Mission, Values

VISION
Building a more just and equitable society.

MISSION
Transforming the lives of underserved children and youth through year-round academic and enrichment programs to inspire learning, encourage success, and close the opportunity gap.

HORIZONS AT NCCS VALUES



Goals and Strategies

During the Strategic Planning process, the Strategic Planning Committee completed an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT); identified four critical issue areas; and developed goals and an action plan for each area. The Action Plan that follows outlines strategies for achieving each goal and target completion dates.

1. **PROGRAMMING** – *To strengthen K-12 programming to ensure that each student graduates from high school and is college eligible.*
2. **DATA** – *To create a set of data that helps us track clear and measurable outcomes that drive impact.*
3. **PARTNERSHIPS** – *To expand and cultivate partnerships and collaborations to strengthen our impact and to further our mission.*
4. **FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY** – *To secure resources from a diversified donor pool in an effort to increase giving target by 5% annually.*

Action Plan by Critical Areas

Goal 1 – Programming		
<i>To strengthen <u>K-12</u> programming to ensure that each student graduates from high school and is college eligible.</i>		
Strategies	Who	When
SUMMER PROGRAMMING		
1.1. Redefine admissions policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift entry points • Focus on taking more K students and accepting students in 5th grade 	Executive Director	Q1, 20/21 Completed September 2020
1.2. Develop policy and practices around gender inclusion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ed programming • Exploration of facilities • Consultation with other Horizons colleagues 	Executive Director	Q4, 19/20 Completed May 2020
1.3. Update discipline values and philosophies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma-informed and consistent to strengthen impact 	Family & Program Director	Q4, 19/20 Completed May 2020
1.4. Develop a curriculum framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear learning objectives for each grade 	Academic Director	Q4, 19/20 Completed May 2020
1.5. Launch 9th Grade program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program focused on college and career exploration • Opportunity for partnering 	Executive Director	Q4, 19/20 Completed May 2020
SCHOOL YEAR PROGRAMMING		
1.6. Implement purposeful school year enrichment program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on gaps and maximizing impact • Engages a high percentage of program participants 	Family & Program Director	Q1, 20/21 Completed September 2020

HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMMING			
1.7.	Implement purposeful high school program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community service • Internships/apprenticeships • Job shadowing, job fair, intern fair, college tours • Financial literacy • Peer learning, online tutoring • Summer youth employment 	Academic Director/Family & Program Director	Q1, 20/21 Completed September 2020
1.8.	Strengthen Academic Coaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine model (differentiated model; 1:1 and group learning) • Establish staffing strategy, job descriptions, training 	Academic Director	Q1, 19/20 Completed September 2019
POST SECONDARY PROGRAMMING			
1.9.	Research a plan for post-secondary needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial scholarships • College/alumni mentors • Help navigating college • Financial literacy • Internships • Networking with other Horizons 	Executive Director	Q3, 19/20 Completed January 2020
PARENT PROGRAMMING			
1.10.	Strengthen parent involvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify parent engagement expectations • Social networking • Cultural collaborations • Parent survey 	Family & Program Director	Q1, 19/20 Completed September 2019
1.11.	Increase parent education by having one workshop per quarter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial literacy • College admissions process (early in high school) • ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences) 	Family & Program Director	Q1, 19/20 Completed September 2019

Goal 2 – Data

To create a set of data that helps us track clear and measurable outcomes that drive impact.

Strategies	Who	When
2.1. Start using STAR Program	Academic Director	Q1, 19/20 Completed July 2019
2.2. Begin tracking: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PSAT/SAT• College Persistence	Academic Director	Q1, 19/20 Completed September 2019
2.3. Explore using Social Emotional Learning measurement tool	Family & Program Director	Q1, 20/21 Completed July 2020

Goal 3 – Partnerships

To expand and cultivate partnerships and collaborations to strengthen our impact and to further our mission.

Strategies	Who	When
3.1. Expand partnership with community-based Enrichment Programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tennis • Soccer • Horseback riding • Swimming • Dance 	Executive Director	Q1, 20/21 Completed September 2020
3.2. Strengthen relationship with New Canaan Country School community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate NCCS staff about Horizons • Invite NCCS staff to visit summer programs • Highlight Horizons at NCCS in NCCS communications • Look for relationship-building opportunities with parents and students 	Executive Director, NCCS Head of School, and Head of Parent Associations Horizons at NCCS and NCCS	Ongoing
3.3. Deeper collaboration with Horizons at NCC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school program • Admissions policies • School year programming • Staff training • Parent programs 	Executive Director	Ongoing

Goal 4 – Financial Sustainability

To secure resources from a diversified donor pool in an effort to increase giving target by 5% annually.

Strategies	Who	When
4.1. Implement comprehensive development plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine committee structure with regular meeting schedule • Define roles for staff and board • Launch planned giving program • Aim to identify 2-3 new institutional donors a year • Identify volunteer opportunities 	Development Committee	Q1, 19/20 Completed September 2019
4.2. Strengthen community outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define clear messaging • Opportunities to show people the program in action • Donor/volunteer cultivation 	Board	Ongoing
4.3. Create alumni association <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donor/volunteer cultivation • Mentors • Education and professional network for students • Chair, as ex officio board member (<i>proposed, to be considered</i>) 	Executive Director	Q3, 19/20 Completed January 2020
4.4. Build a more diverse and impactful board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit board members outside of NCCS parent circle • Have representation from Stamford and Norwalk • Look for members with varied skill sets 	Board/Executive Director	Q4, 19/20 Completed June 2020

Dashboard

Critical Issues:

1. Programming (Blue)
2. Data (Yellow)
3. Partnerships (Orange)
4. Financial Sustainability (Green)

	July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020				July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2.1. Start using STAR Program	Q1 7/19							
1.8. Strengthen Academic Coaching	Q1 9/19							
1.10. Strengthen parent involvement	Q1 9/19							
1.11. Increase parent education by having one workshop per quarter	Q1 9/19							
2.2. Begin tracking: PSAT/SAT and College Persistence	Q1 9/19							
4.1. Implement comprehensive development plan	Q1 9/19							
1.9. Research a plan for post-secondary needs			Q3 1/20					
4.3. Create alumni association			Q3 1/20					
1.2. Develop policy and practices around gender inclusion				Q4 5/20				
1.3. Update discipline values and philosophies				Q4 5/20				
1.4. Develop a curriculum framework				Q4 5/20				
1.5. Launch 9 th Grade program				Q4 5/20				
4.4. Build a more diverse and impactful board				Q4 6/20				
2.3. Explore using Social Emotional Learning measurement tool					Q1 7/20			
1.1. Redefine admissions policy					Q1 9/20			
1.6. Implement purposeful school year enrichment program					Q1 9/20			
1.7. Implement purposeful high school program					Q1 9/20			

3.1. Expand partnership with community-based Enrichment Programs					Q1 9/20			
3.2. Strengthen relationship with New Canaan Country School community	Ongoing							
3.3. Develop collaboration with Horizons at NCC	Ongoing							
4.2. Strengthen community outreach	Ongoing							
ISSUES FOR LONGER TERM CONSIDERATION								
Regionalization with Horizons at NCC	Ongoing							
Expansion							Ongoing →	
Explore targeting distinct schools within Stamford and Norwalk	Ongoing							

