

**Imagine Environmental Charter School
Draft Core Strategic Plan
For Public Review and Comment
May 14, 2009**

The Strategic Planning Process

The preparation of this draft core strategic plan has been guided by the requirements in The Chapter 4 Guidelines of the Pennsylvania School Code of 1949 as amended and the requirements of the school's charter application. The requirements in the Chapter 4 Guidelines are: (1) Every charter school shall develop and file with the PDE a strategic plan once every 6 years; (2) the plan shall be reviewed and revised at the three-year mid-point; and (3) these requirements do not limit a school from conducting a continuous strategic planning process. Chapter 4 defines the process used to develop the strategic plan as follows:

- The active participation of stakeholder groups (students, teachers, school administrators, other school personnel, and business and community representatives) via surveys and focus groups.**
- A review of the final draft by the Board of trustees for their input/revision and the addition of goals related to the governance of the school.**
- Posting of the final draft of the strategic plan for public review and comment on our school's web site and at the nearest public library for a minimum of 28 days before the Board of Trustees approves the plan.**

A strategic plan shall remain in effect until it is superseded by a locally approved revision or a new strategic plan developed under the strategic plan section of Chapter 4 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

The Charter School Application for the Environmental Charter School at Frick Park...an Imagine School also further defines the process to be used to develop the strategic plan [called the School Excellence Plan (SEP)]. A Strategic Planning Steering Committee is to be convened composed of the principal, lead teacher, teachers, other school staff and PCO and Board of Trustees representation to be responsible for: (1) preparing, reviewing,

editing and assisting in the revision of draft versions of plan; and (2) recommending the drafts and the final draft of the plan to the Board of Trustees for their review and comment.

To date, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee has developed a draft of this core strategic plan and recommended it to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees has reviewed and commented on this draft and added goals for the focus area of board governance. On May 20, 2009, the Board of Trustees voted to approve the draft core strategic plan for public review and comment. The plan contains the Mission/Vision Statement; the school's shared values; and the key focus areas and their related goals, strategies and activities. The remainder of this document contains the draft core strategic plan, an explanation of the process used to collect data from stakeholder groups and the results of the analysis of this information.

The Mission/Vision Statement for the school is as follows:

The mission of The Environmental Charter School at Frick Park...an Imagine School is to educate each student to high academic standards. Our students will respect and preserve the environment for future generations.

The Shared Values, on which the school culture will be maintained and strengthened, are as follows:

- 1. The values of integrity, justice and enjoyment of learning influence the behavior of the entire school community.**
- 2. The school instills key integrated values of respecting self, peers, community, and the environment.**
- 3. Positive character development is an integral part of the school culture.**
- 4. The school encourages, embraces and celebrates diversity.**
- 5. Students and teachers engage in a rigorous curriculum, guided by Student Success Plans, which promote high academic achievement.**
- 6. The school takes full advantage of the community as a campus to fulfill its commitment to environmental education.**

- 7. The school maintains a safe, secure, healthy and nurturing environment.**
- 8. The learning gains of each student are measured annually by standardized and school-based assessments aligned with the Pennsylvania Academic Learning Standards.**
- 9. Parent choice and satisfaction are important indicators of the success of the school.**
- 10. Economic sustainability ensures the continuation of the school's mission.**

The Strategic Plan Data Collection Process

Part of the strategic planning process included distributing a 360 Survey, asking for viewpoints on various aspects of the operations of the school (student outcomes, student welfare, the environmental education program, school staff, communications, community relations, and the strengths of the school and areas where development is needed) to all constituents on the school's mailing list. A total of 35% of these surveys were returned. Additionally, over thirteen focus groups were held with staff, Board of Trustee members, Parent Community Organization members, pre-school parents and school neighbors to gather data on what participants felt were the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the school into the next three to five years.

This data was carefully reviewed by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and the Board of Trustees to identify key focus areas and related goals, strategies and activities for the strategic plan. The overall issues identified from analyzing the data are the need to:

- Maintain the culture as the school grows including academic rigor, the individual learning needs of students, the focus on environmental education, and the character education focus.**
- Develop the environmental curriculum to fully realize the infusion of this theme into all other courses and to integrate Pittsburgh "place-based" aspects into the curriculum (local environmental resources and partners).**
- Continue to provide significant, ongoing professional development related to the school's unique environmental curriculum to ensure all regular education teachers are skilled in its use.**

- **Provide ongoing professional development to faculty related to best instructional practices and the school's rigorous academic program.**
- **Place a priority on maintaining and expanding student and staff diversity.**
- **Improve the communications system for parents, staff and the overall marketing of the school to the wider community, including the civic, business and foundation sectors.**
- **Effect a greater infusion of technology into instruction and the curriculum.**
- **Provide more timely feedback on student assessments and grades to teachers and parents.**
- **Communicate more fully with parents and the community at large.**
- **Develop a student behavior incentive plan and consistently apply it across all grades**
- **Expand the emphasis on healthy nutrition.**
- **Effectively manage the development of the Board of Trustees.**
- **Have the Board of Trustees strategically promote and maintain the culture of the school as it grows.**
- **Have an annual plan to provide supplemental resources to support strategic initiatives of the school**
- **Address issues related to managing busses, other school traffic and parking.**
- **Expand the school in the same location.**

As a result of this analysis, the following chart of key focus areas: (1) academic achievement; (2) curriculum, instruction and assessment, (3) school culture; (4) communications and community relations; (5) board governance; (6) and supplemental resources were created and related goals, strategies and activities were established in each focus area. The following chart, which is the heart of the school's proposed core strategic plan, contains the strategic direction of the school over the next three to six years.

**Goal Focus Areas, Goals, Strategies and Activities Chart Draft
Recommended to the Board by the Strategic Plan Steering Committee
April 25, 2009**

Goal Title/Description	Strategy Title/Description	Activity Title/Description/Person Responsible
<p><u>Goal Focus Area 1: Academic Achievement</u></p> <p>Attain or exceed the following goals as required by the Pennsylvania No Child Left Behind Plan:</p> <p>Goal 1.1: At least 56% of all students will be proficient in Mathematics, as measured by the annual state-wide PSSA assessments.</p>	<p>Strategy 1.1a: Maintain benchmark assessments and unit tests</p> <p>Strategy 1.1b: Provide managed instruction for students who do not achieve benchmark levels.</p>	<p>Activity 1: Administer interim assessments on the school year schedule as developed.</p> <p>Activity 1: Provide timely assessment results to teachers; analyze the data; and conduct training for teachers on the curriculum and differentiated instruction related to the identified student needs.</p> <p>Activity 2: Implement the following initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom mathematics learning centers. • Small group instruction. • One on one instruction. • Direct instruction • Instruction on test taking strategies. • Math blaster exercises. • Coaching of teachers. • Tutoring students. • School-wide math events. • Homework designs. • Home-based computer programs
<p>Goal 1.2: At least 63% of all students will be proficient in Reading, as measured by the annual state-wide PSSA assessments.</p>	<p>Strategy 1.2a: Maintain benchmark assessments and unit tests</p>	<p>Activity 1: Administer interim assessments on the school year schedule as developed.</p>

	<p>Strategy 1.2b: Provide managed instruction for students who do not achieve benchmark levels.</p>	<p>Activity 1: Provide timely assessment results to teachers; analyze the data; and conduct training for teachers on the curriculum and differentiated instruction related to the identified student needs.</p> <p>Activity 2: Implement the following initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom literacy learning centers. • Small group instruction. • One on one instruction. • Direct instruction • Instruction on test taking strategies. • Coaching of teachers. • Tutoring students. • School-wide reading events. • Homework designs. • Home-based computer programs
<p>Goal 1.3: Student attendance will meet a 90% threshold and/or show growth.</p>	<p>Strategy 1.3: Maintain consistent application of attendance policies and the Compulsory Attendance & Truancy Elimination Plan</p>	<p>Activity 1: Train teachers to and hold them accountable for enacting school attendance policies.</p> <p>Activity 2: Hold school/parent conferences when necessary to develop a plan of action to ensure the regular attendance of students.</p> <p>Activity 3: Make recommendations to the Pittsburgh Public Schools for a referral to a District Magistrate Judge for necessary action when warranted.</p>
<p>Goal 1.4: At least 95% of eligible students will participate in required state-wide assessments.</p>	<p>Strategy 1.4: Implement a comprehensive internal and external communication's plan to faculty, students and parents.</p>	<p>Activity 1: Send parents a letter shortly before the administration of each assessment stressing the importance of student attendance on assessment dates.</p> <p>Activity 2: Teachers will reinforce to students the importance of preparing for the assessments and attending school on the days they are administered.</p> <p>Activity 3: Principal will regularly place the issue of the student attendance assessment goal on the agenda of Parent Community Organization Meetings for discussion.</p>

<p>Attain the following additional Academic Achievement Goals:</p> <p>Goal 1.5: Over the first five-years of our charter the percent of students scoring in the below basic and basic quartiles on the PSSA in reading and mathematics will be reduced from 1 to 3 percentage points annually to consistently move more students toward proficiency.</p>	<p>Strategy 1.5a: Maintain benchmark assessments and unit tests</p> <p>Strategy 1.5b: Provide managed instruction for all students who do not achieve benchmark levels, to include special education non-native English speakers, and at-risk students as per their Student Success and Individual Education Plans.</p>	<p>Activity 1: Administer interim assessments on the school year schedule as developed.</p> <p>Activity 1: Provide timely assessment results to teachers; analyze the data; and conduct training for teachers on the curriculum and differentiated instruction related to the identified student needs.</p> <p>Activity 2 Implement the following initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom mathematics and reading learning centers. • Small group instruction. • One on one instruction. • Direct instruction • Instruction on test taking strategies. • Math blaster exercises. • Coaching of teachers. • Tutoring students. • School-wide math events. • Homework designs. • Home-based computer programs
<p>Goal 1.6: Over the first-five years of our charter, the percent of students in the advanced quartile on the PSSA in reading and mathematics will increase by 1 to 3 percent.</p>	<p>Strategy 1.6a: Maintain benchmark assessments and unit tests</p> <p>Strategy 1.6b: Provide managed instruction for students who are capable of advanced work.</p>	<p>Activity1: Administer interim assessments on the school year schedule as developed.</p> <p>Activity 1: Provide timely assessment results to teachers; analyze the data; and conduct training for teachers on the curriculum and differentiated instruction related to the identified student needs.</p> <p>Activity 2: Implement the following initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom mathematics and reading learning centers. • Small group instruction. • One on one instruction.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct instruction • Instruction on test taking strategies. • Math blaster exercises. • Coaching of teachers. • Tutoring students. • School-wide math events. • Homework designs. • Home-based computer programs
<p><u>Goal Focus Area 2:</u> <u>Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment</u></p> <p>Goal 2.1 Infuse a local footprint into the Green Woods Environment as an Integrating Context Curriculum (EIC)</p>	<p>Strategy 2.1a: Align themes and topics in the EIC curriculum for grades K-8 with local natural and built environments and out of doors learning to the greatest extent possible.</p> <p>Strategy 2.1b: Integrate the use of environmental organizations as partners in the curriculum to the greatest extent possible.</p>	<p>Activity 1; Conduct annual curriculum writing in the initial year for grades K-4 and in subsequent years for each additional grade until the curriculum is fully developed for grades K-8.</p> <p>Activity 1: Work, with key partner organizations to align with topics and themes in the EIC, including Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, The Frick Environmental Center, Nine Mile Run Watershed Association, Riverquest, and the Audubon Society of South Western Pennsylvania.</p> <p>Activity 2: Conduct planning sessions with partner organizations to determine curriculum content overlap.</p> <p>Activity 3: Conduct annual curriculum writing in the initial year for grades K-4 and in subsequent years for each additional grade until the curriculum is fully integrated.</p>
<p>Goal 2.2: Infuse environmental themes into the content areas of Language Arts, Library Sciences, Mathematics, Social Studies, Art, Music, Health and Physical Education.</p>	<p>Strategy 2.2 Identify themes and topics from the EIC that can be infused into these subject areas.</p>	<p>Activity 1: Conduct annual curriculum writing to develop the integration units in the initial year for grades K-4 and in subsequent years for each additional grade until these content areas are fully infused.</p>
<p>Goal 2.3 Select character education curriculum and instructional materials that includes stewardship and integrate them into the academic content areas as appropriate.</p>	<p>Strategy 2.3 Identify themes and topics in the character education materials that can be infused into the academic content areas.</p>	<p>Activity 1: Establish a Task Force to review and select curriculum and instructional materials.</p> <p>Activity 2: Conduct annual curriculum writing to develop the integration units in</p>

		<p>the initial year for grades K-4 and in subsequent years for each additional grade until the curriculum of these content areas are fully infused.</p> <p>NOTE: Also see professional development goal 2.5, Activity 1 for staff training related to the school curriculum.</p>
<p>Goal 2.4: Fine-tune the school's assessment and reporting systems.</p>	<p>Strategy 2.4: Install a student information system that includes a platform for quality and timely feedback and reports on benchmark assessment data to students, parents, faculty and administration.</p>	<p>Activity 1: Review available systems and select the one that that best meets our school's needs.</p> <p>Activity 2: Train staff in the effective use of the information system.</p> <p>Activity 3: Create an annual reporting schedule for student data and assign staff responsibility.</p>
<p>Goal 2.5: Provide ongoing professional development for faculty related to best instructional practices and the school's curriculum</p>	<p>Strategy 2.5 Conduct summer and bi-weekly school year professional development sessions.</p>	<p>Activity 1: Provide professional development for faculty in the areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental science content and inquiry-based instructional practices. • Environmental education as it is infused into the other academic content areas. • Language Arts and mathematics education. • Special Education and English Language Learners • Effective use of student success plans and IEPs. • Effective use of the SIS system. • Timely analysis of student achievement data. • Differentiated instruction related to the analysis of student achievement data. • Cross-curricular approaches to outdoor learning techniques and problem solving and higher order thinking. • The cross-curricular integration of character education. • The use of technology to support best practices. • Classroom management techniques.

	<p>Strategy 3.1.d Maintain active parent involvement in the school</p>	<p>NOTE: Also see Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Focus Area, and the strategies and activities for Goals 2.3 and 2.5. related to the character education program.</p> <p>Activity 1: Streamline the parent volunteer system including: (1) providing opportunities for working parents to become involved in the school; (2) providing venues for parents to be involved in the daily operations of the school, assisting in the classroom, chaperoning, tutoring, augmenting library classes, and serving on the Parent Advisory Group.</p>
<p>Goal 3.2: Maintain and expand student and faculty diversity.</p>	<p>Strategy 3.2.a: Sustain a state-of-the art student recruitment plan which places special emphasis on minority recruitment.</p> <p>Strategy 3.2.b: Sustain a state-of-the-art recruitment plan for faculty and staff that includes best practices for minority recruitment.</p>	<p>Activity 1: Create a minority parent committee to provide advice and counsel for the plan.</p> <p>Activity 2: Conduct on-going recruitment activities.</p> <p>Activity 1: Build communication networks with professionals in the educational community to assist the school with outreach activities to identify potential candidates.</p> <p>Activity 2: Conduct on-going recruitment activities.</p>
<p><u>Goal Focus Area 4: Communications and Community Relations</u></p> <p>Goal 4.1: Develop and implement a comprehensive communications plan for the school.</p>	<p>Strategy 4.1a: Develop a communications system for parents of students in the school.</p>	<p>Activity 1: Install a parent web portal on the school website that has capacity to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework assignments • Information on events and activities of the school. • Environmental information • Student grades • Character development • Parent/teacher communication

	<p>Strategy 4.1b: Develop a communications system for faculty and staff in the school.</p> <p>Strategy 4.1c: Develop a communications system for marketing the school to prospective parents.</p> <p>Strategy 4.1d: Develop a communications system to provide information about the school to the neighborhood, the school's wider service area, community organizations, and to the corporate and foundation community.</p>	<p>Activity 2: Prepare a folder wherein once a week all of the paper communications for parents go home via students.</p> <p>Activity 1: Provide regular information on the events and activities in the school via faculty meetings, information in faculty mailboxes and e-mail blasts.</p> <p>Activity 1: Maintain annual recruitment activities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several school open houses throughout the enrollment period organized and run by staff and PCO members. • Community events in the diverse cross-section of neighborhoods served by the school. • Newsprint, radio, and direct mail advertisements that reach the diverse cross-section of neighborhoods served by the school. • Parent Community Organization (PCO) outreach to prospective parents via coffee klatches, presentations to community organizations, and representation at city-wide events. • Information disseminated via the school website. <p>Activity 1: Provide information on the school's education program, academic achievement results, accomplishments of the faculty, unique elements of the school, and wider charter school issues to these constituents making it available on the school website and through the bi-monthly PCO newsletter.</p> <p>Activity 2: Maintain updated information on the school's outdoor bulletin board and regularly submit information to the Regent Square Civic Association.</p>
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		Activity 3: Collaborate with the school's environmental partners to have them include articles and information about the school to their constituents.
Goal 4.2: Maintain and expand organizational partnerships with the school.	<p>Strategy 4.2a: Build effective partnerships with key environmental organizations.</p> <p>Strategy 4.2b: Inform area businesses and the corporate and foundation community of the school's programs, successes and the opportunities for partnering to enhance the school's programs and activities.</p>	<p>Activity 1: Note: See Goal 2.1, Strategy 2.1b and the related activities.</p> <p>Activity 1: Publish regular articles in the Pittsburgh Business Times related to the school's program, uniqueness, successes, and the charter school movement.</p> <p>Activity 2: Request and establish partnerships with the school when appropriate.</p>
Goal 4.3: Maintain effective bus and car traffic patterns adjacent to the school.	Strategy 4.3a: Conduct a comprehensive traffic study to determine best practices.	<p>Activity 1: Implement the recommendations of the traffic study to effectively manage school day traffic and event parking.</p> <p>Activity 2: Develop regular communications to near neighbors to inform them of the after-school and weekend activities and events at the school.</p>
Goal Focus Area 5: Board Governance		
Goal 5.1. Effectively manage the development of the Board of Trustees	<p>Strategy 5.1a Maintain regular training sessions for the Board of Trustees</p> <p>Strategy 5.1b. Streamline the process to nominate people to become Trustees.</p> <p>Strategy 5.1c. Further develop the processes for conducting Board of Trustees' meetings.</p>	<p>Activity 1: Conduct at least one annual retreat to have Trustees receive training on building an effective board, laws and regulations pertaining to charter schools, and the strategic direction of the board.</p> <p>Activity 1: Develop a succession plan that includes identifying the skill sets needed on the board in the future, the board's need for diversity, and a process to use when vetting candidates for possible board consideration.</p> <p>Activity 1: Examine current meeting structure including frequency and length and revise the structure if necessary.</p>
Goal 5.2: Strategically promote and maintain the culture of the school as it grows.	Strategy 5.2 a. Engage the board in regular training in the culture of the school and of other charter schools.	Activity 1: Have regular faculty presentations at Board meetings about school programs, which include the skill sets and needs of the teaching staff.

		<p>Activity 2: Have periodic conversations with exemplary charter school programs in the area to learn how they have grown and developed.</p> <p>Activity 3: Keep abreast of emerging best practices in public and charter schools.</p> <p>Activity 4: Revise existing and establish new policies when necessary to support the culture of the school as it evolves and moves toward transformation with a special eye toward: (1) preventing burnout and retaining competent staff over the long run; (2) maintaining effective parent involvement; and (3) accommodating the growth of the programs in the school.</p>
Goal 5.3: Expand the school facility in a timely fashion to successfully accommodate school growth.	Strategy 5.3.a: Review information on all of the options for the Trustees to consider from school design, to financial and cultural impacts.	Activity 1: Make an informed decision that continues the school on a trajectory of growth and development.
Goal Focus Area 6: Supplemental Resources		
Goal 6.1: Provide supplemental resources for strategic initiatives designed to move the school from good to great.	Strategy 6.1 b: Prepare a fundraising plan.	Activity 1: Develop a framework, which aligns strategic program and school initiatives with potential funding sources and a plan of action for securing these resources.