



## **Strategic Plan**

**2003 - 2013**

**submitted to the Cooperative for approval  
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**by the Long Range Planning Committee**

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## INTRODUCTION

The strategic plan reflects eighteen months of concentrated effort on the part of a diverse committee to examine the course of Hilltown Cooperative Charter School (HCCS) in the next decade. Seizing the opportunity to think and plan proactively for the school, this Long Range Plan (LRP) committee examined the full spectrum of HCCS, including essential principles of learning, the role of the cooperative, essential community values, the HCCS role in the larger educational and local communities, staff, and facility. Discussions and investigations were thoughtful, provoking, and exhaustive.\*

The plan is anchored in a revitalized mission and philosophy as well as a statement of the critical elements of classroom practice. Recognizing the tremendous growth and development of the school since its inception eight years ago, the mission and philosophy are meant to clarify our ideals and principles. The critical elements of classroom practice are meant to describe our pedagogical approach. These points of reference will guide the school in fulfilling the action goals delineated by the plan. They are touch points to guide other decisions facing the school in the years ahead.

In examining the school, the LRP committee focused on areas that it identified as needing improvement or clarification. The plan addresses these new endeavors and considers them as additions to the many programs HCCS already successfully undertakes. The exclusion of thriving components, such as the art, music, and special education programs is intentional. It is assumed that these elements will continue their vital role in the school.

The future described by the strategic plan recommit to the principles on which the school has been based. The message is to “stay the course.” The school has grown from a tiny experiment envisioned nearly a decade ago by a small group of parents and educators into a thriving educational community. We enter the next decade with a roadmap, the strategic plan, which draws upon the accomplishments of our short past and prioritizes action goals to achieve our vision.

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\*The strategic plan is a concise, refined document, generated through a complex process. Documentation of the process, including meeting minutes, focus group and interview notes, and minutes from community forums, is available in a separate notebook, housed at the school and labeled “Strategic Plan 2003-2013 Process.”

## **MISSION**

The Hilltown Cooperative Charter School was founded in 1995 as a Massachusetts Public Charter School. Our mission is:

- a. To engage students in a school which uses experiential, hands-on activities, the arts, and interdisciplinary studies to foster critical thinking skills and a joy of learning.
- b. To sustain a cooperative, intimate community of students, staff, families and local community members, which guides and supports the school and its educational program.
- c. To cultivate children's individual voices and a shared respect for each other, our community, and the world around us.

## **PHILOSOPHY**

The Hilltown Cooperative Charter School (HCCS) was founded in 1995 as Massachusetts Public Charter School. Inspired by the pre-schools of Reggio Emilia in Italy, our educational approach is grounded in knowledge of children's development and in a commitment to teaching creative, critical thinking skills and strong basic skills.

At HCCS, we believe that children construct their understanding of the world through direct experience with teachers serving as guides and resources. We create an engaging and joyful learning environment using an interdisciplinary, project-based curriculum. Emphasis is placed on asking children and adults to reflect on and document the learning process. The expressive arts play a critical role in the academic and social curriculum, and create a common language that brings our community together in meaningful ways.

HCCS welcomes and relies on family involvement. Children, families, school and community form an integrated, interdependent system which operates through an inclusive, consensus-based governance structure. Beyond academic curriculum, children learn essential life skills through participation in an intimate, whole school cooperative. Involvement in the local environment and its communities inspires learning and encourages social and civic responsibility as well as stewardship for the earth.

Parents and teachers help children to care for and respect themselves and each other. We strongly believe that cultivation of each individual voice within a community leads to inclusion of and respect for differences and multiple perspectives.

## **CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF CLASSROOM PRACTICE**

A dynamic tension exists between the Hilltown Cooperative Charter School's educational philosophy and state mandates. This vibrant balance, coupled with our low student teacher ratio, creates a rich and stimulating classroom experience where each child acquires the skills to help him or her learn and grow in every setting.

### **Learning Environment**

Teachers and students create a safe, nurturing classroom community.

- Learning how to be a community member is a valued skill.
- Being a part of this community is necessary for the academic success of all students.

Teachers are flexible in their use of time.

- Schedule changes are required for in-depth studies.
- Flexibility is necessary based on the needs of different groups.

Students have cross age experiences.

- Multi-age classrooms foster these experiences.
- Mixed-aged opportunities throughout the school foster these experiences.

Teachers understand and utilize different learning styles.

- Teaching practice is adapted to meet various ways of learning.
- All classrooms have a materials rich environment.
- Teachers use a variety of assessment tools to evaluate student academic and social progress.

### **Curriculum**

Students' ideas, questions and interests are a part of the curriculum and the classroom community.

- The spark of interest in study comes from students in the context of the classroom community.
- Students' shared experience fires the imagination and builds the community.
- Students share expertise and inquiry.
- Students' authentic questions allow learning to grow from their perspective.
- Students have choices and options in learning.

Students build basic and life skills.

- Students develop basic skills as a means of communicating ideas, opinions, and knowledge.
- Some students require skills as a means of participating.

Teachers develop an interdisciplinary, project-based curriculum.

- Students understand the interconnected nature of what they learn.
- Hands-on projects facilitate learning.
- The arts are a valued means of expression.
- Technology is used as one of a variety of educational tools and as a means of expression.

**Relationships**

Teachers engage in substantial collaboration with one another.

- Teachers work in small groups and teams.
- Teachers and staff work together.
- Teachers and staff use and model the process of consensus.

Students engage in substantial collaboration with teachers and other students.

- Students learn and practice the process of consensus.
- Teachers and students work as partners and in small groups in the classroom and throughout the school.

Teachers and students use our community resources.

- Parents are used as classroom volunteers and resources.
- Children are connected with local community members and have opportunities to explore and appreciate our local environment.

## **ACTION GOALS<sup>1</sup>**

### **Education**

1. Formulate recommendations on possible expansion of the foreign language program. (*Ed Domain – B*)
2. Formulate recommendations on possible expansion of the physical education program. This program should include an emphasis on teamwork, skill building, and cooperation in addition to body awareness and health. (*Ed Domain – B*)
3. Evaluate grades 7-8 in 2006-7 (two years after the charter renewal) with decisions made at that time regarding continuation. (*Domain Council - A*)
4. Implement a system of multi-age, sequential classes within three years and evaluate its effectiveness three years thereafter. (*Ed Domain - A*)
5. Continue work on interpretation and implementation of mission and philosophy statement into daily classroom practice through staff professional development inside and outside of school and ongoing community dialogue. (*Ed Domain – A*)
6. Create and implement an integrated, multicultural curriculum that surpasses state frameworks and educates students in different world perspectives. (*Ed Domain - B*)
7. Ensure that parent and community volunteers are actively participating in the educational activities of each classroom in the school.
  - a. Develop and implement bi-yearly education forums on various aspects of the "Critical Elements of Classroom Practice" and other parent trainings as needed.
  - b. Develop and implement a yearly training for teaching staff on how best to utilize parents in the classroom. (*Ed. Domain and Community Domain - A*)

### **Governance**

#### **(Bylaw changes are 1 and 3)**

1. Change the by-laws to allow staff to serve on the BOT. (*BOT Development and Coordinators - A*)
2. Encourage staff participation in school governance activities through BOT and/or committee membership with allowance for flexibility to accommodate teachers' schedules. (*BOT Development - A*)

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<sup>1</sup> After each action goal, the responsible party and the time period in which work begins are listed.  
A ('03-'07), B ('07-'13)

3. Change by-law to specify that every person involved in HCCS is a member of the cooperative, with voting rights accruing to those members who fulfill the work requirement. *(BOT Development - A)*
4. Evaluate participation of students in governance and make recommendations to ensure their regular participation, including a training program in the HCCS mode of consensus. *(Management Team - B)*
5. Clarify and codify governance structures
  - a. Review existing documentation regarding school governance, including GECCO<sup>2</sup> and FRED<sup>3</sup>.
  - b. Compare this documentation to current practice and address any discrepancies
  - c. Evaluate and make recommendations being sure to address the following: making and remaking of decisions, inter domain relations and communication, roles and responsibilities of each domain, parent role in Community Domain, channels for input into decision-making, and BOT size.
  - d. Implement recommendations.
  - e. Produce a document to describe school governance.
  - f. Develop and implement an ongoing education program for staff, parents and students addressing decision-making and HCCS governance structures.
  - g. Create and implement a system for regular evaluation of governance structures.  
*(Ad Hoc Board Committee -A)*
6. Develop and implement a 3-year goal setting plan for each domain with specific, manageable, annual goals. *(Domain Council - A )*
7. Create and maintain good documentation of all decisions made in each domain, including rationale for decision, benchmarks, and a schedule for evaluation. *(Domain Coordinators, BOT Clerk - A)*
8. Develop a process for supervision/evaluation/termination of domain coordinators and termination of other staff. *(BOT/Personnel Committee- A)*
9. Evaluate current participation of parents in governance (committees, governance-oriented meetings and forums), and create and implement recommendations to increase future participation, including a training program in the HCCS mode of consensus. *(Community Coordinator - A)*

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<sup>2</sup> Governance Evaluation Committee Report; March, 1999

<sup>3</sup> For Review of Domains Report; December, 1999

**Site/Facility** (*Administrator with BOT Site Committee*)

1. Stay in the Brassworks with 10-year lease if we are assured that the building is safe, as determined by the BOT, and if our need for improved outdoor space is adequately met within a reasonable amount of time. (A)
2. Develop complete list for space needs to support strategic plan using the following list as well as input from teachers, parents, students, and BOT members. (A)

Space configuration needs:

- ✓ Staff room
- ✓ Another classroom
- ✓ Improved storage
- ✓ Meeting room for whole community (students and families)
- ✓ Centralized atelier and music/movement space
- ✓ Library
- ✓ Movement space without poles
- ✓ Kitchen
- ✓ Sinks in classrooms
- ✓ Improved office space
- ✓ Improved parent gathering space
- ✓ Improved entry way

3. If we must relocate, abide by results of all school survey completed last year; locate so that we are geographically accessible to school's current population (A,B)
4. In 2007/2008 begin researching where school will be located in 2013. (B)

**Fund-Raising** (*Ad Hoc BOT Committee - A*)

1. Create Ad Hoc BOT Committee for Fundraising to include Community Coordinator, Administrative Coordinator, one BOT member, one Friends of Hilltown member, and at least one other member.
2. Clarify roles and responsibilities of BOT, Friends of Hilltown, and Management Team in regards to fundraising.
3. In conjunction with Friends of Hilltown, create and implement a clear, efficient and integrated system of fundraising.
4. In conjunction with Friends of Hilltown hire a development consultant to help implement a realistic Annual Fund Drive.



## **Staff**

1. Address the issue of teaching staff retention, growth and rejuvenation; this may include research into policies and support at other schools, a needs assessment, and action plan. *(Ed Domain and Personnel Committee - A)*
2. Give the teaching staff additional, paid time to work in an intense, collaborative process focusing on program development. *(Ed Domain & Personnel Committee - B)*
3. Develop and implement a support plan for new staff. *(Ed Domain and Personnel Committee – A)*

## **Diversity**

### **(By-law change is 1)**

1. Create a BOT standing Diversity Committee. *(BOT/By-Law change - B)*
2. Using the existing infrastructure and building on the work of the previous diversity committees, develop diversity goals, as appropriate, regarding pedagogy, staff, student enrollment, and BOT membership. *(BOT - A)*
3. Develop a support plan on how to accommodate non-English speaking students within 5 years or sooner as needed. *(Administrator & Ed Coordinator - A)*

## **External Relations**

1. Create and implement a system to develop appropriate advocacy among parents about legislative issues. *(Administrator & Community Coordinator - A)*
2. Create a liaison with Williamsburg and Northampton school committees, select boards and city council. *(BOT - B)*
3. Create collaboration with targeted Schools of Education. *(Ed Domain - A)*
4. Share successful curricular and non-curricular aspects of HCCS, including parent involvement, with the wider community. *(Domain Council- A)*

**TIMELINE (also see accompanying chart on page 12)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Action Goal # and explanation</b>	<b>Financial implications</b>
<u>Actions to be taken within a specific year</u>		
03-04	<b>E4</b> Sequential classes Staffing Materials When/if additional classroom is added  (Additional revenue: \$50K-110K)	\$50,000/year \$3000/year. \$10-15,000 rent/year.
	<b>G1,G3</b> By-laws changes,	no \$\$
	<b>G2</b> Staff participation;	no \$\$
	<b>G8</b> Evaluation/termination policies;	no \$\$
	<b>S/F2</b> Space configuration needs (potential costs over 10 years)	\$0-100K
04-05	<b>S/F3</b> Abide by survey results	no \$\$
04-05	<b>S/F1</b> Lease renewal (added outdoor space is 10% above current rates)	\$12K/year
06-07	<b>E3</b> Evaluation of Prisms program	□time/no \$\$
<u>Actions to be taken within a range of years</u>		
03-05	<b>F1–F4</b> Ad Hoc BOT Committee on fundraising Clarify roles and responsibilities Create integrated system of fundraising Hire consultant for Annual Fund Drive	no \$\$ no \$\$ no \$\$ \$5K
03-06	<b>S1</b> Address teaching staff retention	\$0-10K/year
03-07	<b>S3</b> Support plan for new staff	no \$\$
03-08	<b>G5</b> Governance analysis (consultant)	\$0-2K
03-08	<b>D3</b> Non-English speaking students	time/no \$\$
03-13	<b>ER3</b> Collaborate with Higher Schools of Education	time/no \$\$
03-13	<b>ER4</b> Share successful aspects of HCCS with wider community	time/no \$\$
03-13	<b>E5</b> Refine pedagogy	\$10K/wk
03-13	<b>E7</b> Parent and community volunteers	time/no \$\$
03-13	<b>G7</b> Documentation of domain decisions	no \$\$
03-13	<b>G6</b> Domain goal setting	no \$\$
03-13	<b>G9</b> Participation of parents in governance	no \$\$
03-13	<b>D2</b> Develop diversity goals	no \$\$

□ time = teaching staff time is required. For all items with 'no \$\$' significant administrative staff time may be required.

07-13	<b>E1</b>	Foreign language	\$0-40K/year
07-13	<b>E2</b>	P.E.	\$0-15K /year
07-13	<b>S2</b>	Increase staff time for collaboration	\$10K/wk
07-13	<b>S/F4</b>	Research future school site	\$0-50K
07-13	<b>G4</b>	Student participation in governance	no \$\$
07-13	<b>D1</b>	Diversity Committee	time/no \$\$
07-13	<b>E6</b>	Multicultural curriculum	\$5-7K
07-13	<b>ER1</b>	System for advocacy	no \$\$
07-13	<b>ER2</b>	Liaison with Williamsburg, Noho Schools	time/no \$\$

### CHART OF TIMELINE AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Action	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	TOT
E1					0-40K	0-40K	0-40K	0-40K	0-40K	0-40K	0-240K
E2					0-15K	0-15K	0-15K	0-15K	0-15K	0-15K	0-90K
E3				X							\$0
E4	53-68K	53-68K	53-68K	53-68K	53-68K	53-68K	53-68K	53-68K	53-68K	53-68K	530-680K
E5	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-100K
E6					3-4K	2-3K	X	X	X	X	5-7K
E7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	\$0
G1	X										\$0
G2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	\$0
G3	X										\$0
G4					X	X	X	X	X	X	\$0
G5	X	X	X	0-2K	X						0-2K
G6	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	\$0
G7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	\$0
G8	X										\$0
G9	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	\$0
S/F1		12K+	12K+	12K+	12K+	12K+	12K+	12K+	12K+	12K+	108K+
S/F2	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-100K
S/F3		X									\$0
S/F4					0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-60K
F1	X	X									\$0
F2	X	X									\$0
F3	X	X									\$0
F4	X	X									\$0
S1	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-10K	0-100K
S2					0-20K	0-20K	0-20K	0-20K	0-20K	0-20K	0-120K
S3	X	X	X	X							\$0
D1					X	X	X	X	X	X	\$0
D2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	\$0
D3	X	X	X	X	X						\$0
ER1					X	X	X	X	X	X	\$0
ER2					X	X	X	X	X	X	\$0
ER3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	\$0
ER4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	\$0

