



HILLTOWN COOPERATIVE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL

Long Range Plan

2023 - 2028

Final Version to the Board of Trustees

April, 2023

The Long Range Planning Committee

Rebecca Belcher-Timme, Teacher

Laura Davis, Director of Teaching and Learning

Kathleen Hulton, Board of Trustees

Dan Klatz, Board of Trustees

Natalia Korczak, Parent

Lily Newman, Parent

Polly Normand, Parent

Kate Saccento, Director of Administration

Gina Wyman, Teacher



HILLTOWN COOPERATIVE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL

Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School Long Range Plan - 2023-2028

This is the third strategic plan in the history of the Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School (HCCPS). The first two plans, completed in 2003 and 2013 respectively, paved the way for structural changes to the educational program; major changes to the size of the school; and significant changes in the facilities including a move from Williamsburg to Easthampton. The current initiative was scheduled to begin in 2019, but was delayed for two years as a result of leadership changes and the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was fortuitous that the process of strategic planning was delayed, as the school and the world were very different in 2021. Many of the changes that occurred between 2019 and 2021 were directly related to the pandemic, but they extended much further. During this period, there were further leadership changes at the school. These stressors highlighted programmatic issues that had existed in previous years, including issues around race and equity, giving them a heightened sense of urgency.

The process of creating this plan began in the Fall of 2021. A Long Range Planning (LRP) Committee was formed that included board members, administrators, teachers, and caregivers. The first task of this committee was to look at the mission of the school. The LRP Committee and the Board of Trustees decided to affirm the current mission:

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

- 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.
- To sustain a cooperative, intimate community of students, staff, families and local community members which guides and supports the school and its educational program.
- To cultivate children's individual voices and a shared respect for each other, our community, and the world around us.

The next step was to obtain information regarding priorities from the community. Teachers and caregivers were surveyed electronically, and a focus group was held with the full Board of Trustees. The LRP Committee then discussed and synthesized information from these sources. Over the course of

many months, the LRP Committee drafted initial goals. These draft goals were distributed to the community, and sessions were held with all stakeholders to obtain further feedback. This feedback was discussed by the committee and goals were amended and finalized.

Unlike previous strategic plans, this plan is more limited. The scope of the plan is designed to last for five years. There is no hierarchy of priorities; the LRP Committee views all of the goals as highly important and demanding of action. Consequently, there are priorities that while valid, are not included in this plan. This is intentional, as the LRP Committee believes that a sustained, clear, and focused effort on the goals enumerated in this plan is paramount at this time. The priorities identified in this plan are as follows:

- Cultivate a vibrant culture and community
- Weave justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion into the fabric of HCCPS
- Align schoolwide systems and structures to a shared vision of excellence that meets the developmental needs of our students

Each goal includes the positions that are responsible for implementation as well as a means for progress monitoring. It was the intention of the LRP Committee to develop these goals, yet it is the responsibility of the HCCPS Board of Trustees and administrative leadership to create the implementation plan.

Goal 1: Cultivate a vibrant culture and community

HCCPS's Long Range Plan comes at a time of significant transition in education and for the school itself. The previous plan established the changes that settled the school into the Easthampton campus and addressed enrollment and other related changes as part of the relocation.

In the time since the last Long Range Plan was developed, the school has had significant changes in all program areas, and the impacts from the multi-year coronavirus pandemic have become increasingly clear as we try to adapt to a "new normal." This new normal demands significant changes in our school culture and approach to community to meet the evolving assets and needs of our students, families, and staff. Moreover, as a result of the pandemic and the years prior, staffing changes at all levels of the organization have meant that 40 percent of current teachers joined the team within the last three years. Our Director of Teaching and Learning is among the new staff members, having joined this year after the previous director's resignation at the end of school year 2021-2022. Other staff in critical leadership roles have been in those roles for less than three years. These transitions, especially in a small school, have a profound impact on the work of educators who must be guided to align with the shared school vision and deliver on the promise of the program to students and families.

Yet all this change also marks an opportunity. While our LRP process illuminated areas of concern from our community and staff, it also highlighted areas of celebration. We have an opportunity to build upon these areas of celebration and remake these areas of concern, shaping this "new normal" into one of our making. With this in mind and with the input and data from our myriad stakeholder surveys, interviews, discussion, etc., we believe it is imperative that the school begin the process of change with establishing a shared vision of our community at its best. using that as the north star to guide all other improvements.

The social and emotional health of our community was stretched and challenged during the pandemic, and those experiences need time and support to heal and reconcile. This is true for our young people and adults alike, and it is with this purpose that specific and intentional action steps are outlined in this plan. In addition, the expansion of our middle school over the years at our new site requires that we look closely at how we support adolescents in developing the habits of success and interpersonal skills to foster a positive middle grades community that inspires our younger students to excel.

Our community connections and partnerships between families and the school were strained in the time of social distancing. As we have pushed ourselves to address justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI) in all aspects of the school, it has become increasingly clear that some of our approaches to family engagement and partnership fall short of embracing our community fully and ensuring that all members feel valued, celebrated and part of a meaningful partnership on behalf of their students.

Part of ensuring that all members of the community feel included is ensuring that each member's voice is heard and valued. Hearing and encouraging student, staff, and caregiver feedback and involvement has been part of the HCCPS mission and culture since its inception. However, the LRP Committee has

identified a lack of transparency around decision making at HCCPS. When community members have no clear understanding of how decisions are made and who is responsible for those decisions, it is difficult to feel heard and understood. Hence, the process of decision making, including the role of community feedback, should be clearly mapped out and communicated. Moreover, systems should be in place to ensure that this communication is reiterated and continuously understood. All these steps, increasing social and emotional supports, building stronger community ties through events and traditions, and mapping and communicating the decision-making processes will help to restore the HCCPS community to its former vibrancy and beyond.

Purpose: Build on our community foundations and our learnings from this period of disruption to positively transform the social and emotional experiences of students and staff and our community; respond to the immediate and long-term impacts of the pandemic on students, teachers, families, and the entire community; address the systems and practices that create coherent and sustainable solutions for the present and future.

Rationale: A strong community is at the core of the HCCPS mission. Our community has been challenged over the past several years, and further disrupted by the crisis of the pandemic. Disruptions include practical changes in how we interact, the effect of widespread stress, academic disruptions, and the impact of navigating difficult decisions on divisive topics. At the same time, we have learned from this challenging period and can apply those learnings to innovate together towards a new and more cohesive HCCPS.

- Social and academic dysregulation has been on the rise for the past decade
- Examples of logistical disruptions include: fewer parents in the building for pick-up and drop-off, fewer community events, loss of in-person teacher meetings, loss of in-person All School events
- Examples of stress-related disruptions include an increase in student behavioral health needs and delays in social problem-solving skills
- Examples of academic disruptions include a higher rate of students behind grade-level expectations in reading, writing, and math
- Examples of difficult decisions that have had an impact on the community include whether and when to return to school in-person, and whether and when to require masking
- Examples of learnings include the recognition of our very diverse social and emotional experiences, the understanding that we need developmentally appropriate, systematic, coherent and sustainable ways to support social and emotional learning (SEL) across all grade levels, and that teachers need their own SEL supports as well as curriculum and training for teaching SEL across nine grade levels in multi-age settings

Fiscal Implications: Moderate based on recommendations, and may include curricular materials, training, coaching, and staff

Action Steps:

A) Social and Emotional Supports

1. Confirm our shared vision of an excellent SEL approach, identify where we are now and what it will take to close the gap
2. Develop an action and monitoring plan for reaching our vision with clear indicators for success (i.e., data, look-fors)
3. Refine the scope and sequence of our SEL curriculum and approach
4. Enhance personnel resources to address behavioral needs of students
5. Develop and refine a whole-school schedule centered on offering consistency and predictability for staff and students
6. Determine and implement high-impact strategies for staff wellness and sustainability

Accountability: Director of Teaching and Learning

Progress Monitoring: The Director of Teaching and Learning will provide updates to the Board of Trustees and the whole school community twice a year for four years

B) School Culture/Family Engagement

1. Reintroduce and reinvigorate in-person events
2. Redefine family engagement at HCCPS aligned to our current and evolving community
3. Refine existing strategies that work and establish new ways of involving families/caregivers
4. Reinvigorate our traditions and rituals in culturally relevant ways to bring our community together

Accountability: Director of Administration, Community and Family Engagement Coordinator

Progress Monitoring: The Director of Administration and the Community and Family Engagement Coordinator will provide updates to the Board of Trustees and the whole school community twice a year for four years

C) Communication and Decision-making

1. Map organizational decision-making processes to create clarity and transparency
2. Revisit the idea of staff Board members being voting members
3. Organize and update the Board Book, which contains policies related to the governance of the school
4. Establish new ways of effectively communicating our decision-making process to the community

Accountability: Board of Trustees President, Board of Trustees, Domain Council

Progress Monitoring: The Board President will lead a process to complete these goals one year from the adoption of this Long Range Plan

Goal 2: Weave justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion into the fabric of HCCPS

The second goal of the HCCPS Long Range Plan is to center justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) into the school's policies and practices. JEDI promotion is increasingly becoming a top priority for schools around the world. Since its founding in 1995, HCCPS has addressed these issues, but the ways in which it has done so have been largely dependent on the initiative of individual staff and community members. Over the next five years, HCCPS seeks to center JEDI in the culture, policies, practices, and curriculum of the school at all levels.

JEDI goes beyond the promotion of “celebration of difference” or “tolerance” to instead critically examine the effects of historic systemic racism and other forms of oppression. Focusing on JEDI issues will help HCCPS to meet its stated mission by working toward ensuring that students with diverse identities and life experiences have access to what they need in order to succeed, and for families, faculty, and staff members from all backgrounds to be welcomed and feel a sense of belonging in our school community.

This goal will focus our efforts to strive toward equity at HCCPS regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality, disability, or other aspects of identity. We acknowledge that HCCPS's policies, practices, and structures to date have sought to provide a school environment that supports access for a wide range of students and families in Hampshire and Franklin Counties, and to build a supportive community. By making JEDI an explicit priority, we acknowledge that improvements are possible, and that we are committed to continuing to work toward creating a safe and equitable school option for all current and future students, staff, and families. By committing to these practices, HCCPS will be better equipped to serve historically marginalized groups of students and to better ensure that all students succeed.

Purpose: Define what JEDI means at HCCPS, and codify it in policy and practices with intentional plans for sustainability. Better reflect the population of our sending districts in the HCCPS population

Rationale/Context:

- HCCPS has committed to JEDI, but the definition, practices and plan for implementation and monitoring need to be clearly defined
- Presently, it is unclear what groups, individuals, and positions are responsible for JEDI in the school, how they work together, and who does what
- HCCPS is a public school, but does not reflect the population of area public schools
- Word of mouth about HCCPS spreads amongst a homogeneous cross section of families in the Valley
- Current outreach practices have not yielded significant results.

Fiscal Implications: Minimal to significant, based on recommendations

Action Steps:

A) Develop a clear progression and integration of JEDI goals in the curriculum K-8, including parity between grade level partners

1. Respond to Equity Audit curricular-related recommendations
2. Formally document relevant areas of the curriculum and establish cycles of implementation review and updating
3. Include all relevant co-curricular activities
4. Include JEDI in the HCCPS Community Compact

Accountability: Director of Teaching and Learning

Progress Monitoring: Initiate activity in 2022-23. The Director of Teaching and Learning will provide updates to the Board of Trustees and the whole school community twice a year.

Complete by the end of 2024-25

B) Evaluate and revise schoolwide structures to integrate JEDI purpose and language

1. Respond to Equity Audit administrative-related recommendations
2. Ensure sure there are JEDI responsibilities embedded in job descriptions
3. Decide on a number of defined JEDI events per year: staff trainings, board trainings, community events, student events (e.g., once a month, All School has a JEDI component)
4. Design community-building to be meaningful for English Learners

Accountability: Director of Teaching and Learning, Director of Administration, Community and Family Engagement Coordinator

Progress Monitoring: Initiate activity in 2023-24. Progress updates to the Board of Trustees twice a year. Complete by the end of 2025-26

C) Evaluate and revise Board of Trustee structures to integrate JEDI purpose and language

1. Respond to Equity Audit Board-related recommendations
2. Clearly articulate JEDI work in Board member responsibilities
3. Actively work to increase Board diversity, specifically in community member representation
4. Communicate structures to the school community: clearly defined roles, jobs, committees with clearly defined responsibilities
5. Create a JEDI mission statement (e.g., anti-racism statement) that clearly defines what JEDI ideally looks like, and what is encompassed in JEDI at Hilltown

Accountability: Board of Trustees, Board President

Progress Monitoring: Initiate activity in 2022-23. Progress updates to the Board of Trustees annually. Complete by the end of 2024-25.

D) Achieve enrollment parity with our sending districts

1. Increase admissions access to HCCPS for all students in Hampshire and Franklin counties
2. Create a more robust recruitment process with specific strategies for historically underserved populations that are underrepresented at HCCPS
3. Investigate and make recommendations regarding transportation options in Hampshire and Franklin Counties
4. Evaluate before- and after-school programs with an eye toward serving the needs of a more diverse student population

Accountability: Director of Administration, Community and Family Engagement Coordinator

Progress Monitoring: Initiate activity in 2022-23. Progress updates to the Board of Trustees annually. Relevant fiscal recommendations to the Board prior to budget decisions annually. Transportation cost estimates to the Board of Trustees by January, 2024. Decision by Board of Trustees by May, 2024

Goal 3: Align schoolwide systems and structures to a shared vision of excellence that meets the developmental needs of our students

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated that the school's primary attention be focused on issues of health and safety. In its wake, HCCPS must turn its attention back to creating a shared vision of excellence, evaluating the academic strengths and needs of our students, examining the configuration of our mixed-grade classrooms, and considering our weekly school day structure.

Teachers have been immersed in important work in the area of literacy and the science of reading. The school has committed to approaching reading instruction based on the results of their research. These best practices in the science of reading have implications for how to best group students to support emerging reading skills. At this and other levels, the school must examine the current grade level configurations to meet the needs of the curriculum and developmental needs of our students.

In alignment with the JEDI goals in this Long Range Plan, the school must evaluate whether the current half day Wednesday model in grades K-5 is equitable. The current model requires K-5 families to make a child care plan from 12:30-3:00 every week. There is a strong need to closely examine the impact this and other school structures have on our community, and determine if they may be barriers in attracting and retaining students from a wide variety of demographics.

Purpose: Better meet the developmental, academic, social, and emotional needs of all students, including grade level alignment, curricular choices, administrative and teaching staff, and whole-school schedule

Rationale/Context:

- There are unique developmental needs at all levels, some of which demand different grade level groupings than currently exist
- Academic structures, strategies and curricular materials require alignment and coherence to be effective. HCCPS is committed to balancing essential skills instruction with authentic, project-based learning
- There are unique demands of our varied assessment systems. There are unique technology needs for different age groups
- Structures should address the unique social-emotional, developmental, and academic needs of all students
- HCCPS is committed to providing the necessary support for staff to support all students to thrive

Fiscal Implications: Moderate to significant.

Action Steps:

A) Evaluate the academic strengths and needs of our students, and identify detailed goals and implementation plans to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment to our vision and priorities (e.g., pacing curriculum implementation and integrated projects; establishing assessment systems and processes; establishing common high-leverage instructional practices)

1. Define what an excellent arts-integrated academic program and culture looks like that matches the vision of our school and developmental and learning needs of students
2. Conduct a data “deep dive” to identify where we are excelling towards this vision and where we need to improve (e.g., student outcomes, curriculum and instruction)
3. Identify top priority areas for focused work, including structures and academics. Consider how our structures (i.e., grade levels, course offerings, groupings, etc.) advance our priorities, and where they create barriers

Accountability: Director of Teaching and Learning, Director of Administration

Progress Monitoring: Initiate activity in 2022-23. Progress updates to the Board of Trustees annually. Complete by the end of 2024-25.

B) Examine alternative mixed-grade classroom reconfigurations and establish a final plan and implementation steps if change is recommended

1. Engage the Education Domain in a comprehensive review
2. Obtain feedback from caregivers
3. Develop a draft approach and action plan and criteria for success

Accountability: Director of Teaching and Learning, Director of Administration

Progress Monitoring: Complete during the 2023-24 school year. Make recommendations to the Board by May 2024. If changes are recommended, implement beginning in Fall 2025

C) Consider realignment of the school day to better meet the needs of the community

1. Examine the impact of how we use time and the supplemental after-school care we provide on our community including the impacts of half days and possible solutions to maintain staff collaboration time and enrich the student experience
2. Determine innovative strategies to better meet the needs of our community with our schedule including the feasibility and impact of before- and after-school care on access to and retention in our program
3. Determine if the length of the day would change if we went to five full days

Accountability: Director of Teaching and Learning, Director of Administration

Progress Monitoring: Initiate activity in 2022-23. Progress updates to the Board of Trustees annually. Complete no later than the 2024-25 school year

Long Range Plan Accountability Chart

Goal 1: Cultivate a vibrant culture and community										
A. Social and Emotional Supports	2023-2024		2024-2025		2025-2026		2026-2027		2027-2028	
1. Confirm our shared vision of an excellent SEL approach, identify where we are now and what it will take to close the gap										
2. Develop an action and monitoring plan for reaching our vision with clear indicators for success (data, look-fors)										
3. Refine the scope and sequence of our SEL curriculum and approach										
4. Enhance personnel resources to address behavioral needs of students										
5. Develop and refine a whole-school schedule centered on offering consistency and predictability for staff and students										
6. Determine and implement high impact strategies for staff wellness and sustainability										
B. School Culture/Family Engagement	2023-2024		2024-2025		2025-2026		2026-2027		2027-2028	
1. Reintroduce and reinvigorate in-person events										
2. Redefine family engagement at Hilltown aligned to our current and evolving community										
3. Refine existing strategies that work and establish new ways of involving families/caregivers										
4. Reinvigorate our traditions and rituals in culturally relevant ways to bring our community together										
C. Communication and Decision-making	2023-2024		2024-2025		2025-2026		2026-2027		2027-2028	
1. Map organizational decision-making processes to create clarity and transparency										
2. Revisit the idea of staff Board members being voting members										
3. Organize and update the Board Book, which contains policies related to the governance of the school										
4. Establish new ways of effectively communicating our decision making process to the community										

Goal 2: Weave justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion into the fabric of HCCPS										
A. Develop a clear progression and integration of JEDI goals in the curriculum K-8 including parity between grade level partners	2023-2024		2024-2025		2025-2026		2026-2027		2027-2028	
1. Respond to Equity Audit curricular-related recommendations										
2. Formally document relevant areas of the curriculum and establish cycles of implementation review and updating										
3. Include all relevant co-curricular activities										
4. Include JEDI in the HCCPS Community Compact										
B. Evaluate and revise school-wide structures to integrate JEDI purpose and language	2023-2024		2024-2025		2025-2026		2026-2027		2027-2028	
1. Respond to Equity Audit administrative-related recommendations										
2. Ensure JEDI responsibilities are embedded in all job descriptions										
3. Decide on a number of defined JEDI events per year: staff trainings, board trainings, community events, student events										
4. Design community building to be meaningful for English Learners										
C. Evaluate and revise Board of Trustees structures to integrate JEDI purpose, language	2023-2024		2024-2025		2025-2026		2026-2027		2027-2028	
1. Respond to Equity Audit Board-related recommendations										
2. Clearly articulate JEDI work in Board Member responsibilities										
3. Actively work to increase Board diversity, specifically in community member representation										
4. Communicate structures to the school: clearly defined roles, jobs, committees with clearly defined responsibilities										
5. Create a JEDI mission statement (e.g., anti-racism statement) that clearly defines what JEDI ideally looks like, and what is encompassed in JEDI at Hilltown										
D. Achieve enrollment parity with our sending districts	2023-2024		2024-2025		2025-2026		2026-2027		2027-2028	
1. Increase admissions access to Hilltown for all students in Hampshire and Franklin Counties										
2. Create a more robust recruitment process with specific strategies for historically underserved populations that are underrepresented at Hilltown										

3. Investigate and make recommendations regarding transportation options in Hampshire and Franklin Counties										
4. Evaluate before- and after-school programs with an eye toward serving the needs of a more diverse student population										

Goal 3: Align schoolwide systems and structures to a shared vision of excellence that meets the developmental needs of our students										
A. Evaluate the academic strengths and needs of our students, and identify detailed goals and implementation plans to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment to our vision and priorities	2023-2024		2024-2025		2025-2026		2026-2027		2027-2028	
1. Define what an excellent arts-integrated academic program and culture looks like that matches the vision of our school and developmental and learning needs of students										
2. Conduct a data “deep dive” to identify where we are excelling towards this vision and where we need to improve (e.g., student outcomes, curriculum and instruction)										
3. Identify top priority areas for focused work, including structures and academics. Consider how our structures (i.e., grade levels, course offerings, groupings, etc.) advance our priorities, and where they create barriers										
B. Examine alternative mixed-grade classroom reconfigurations and establish a final plan and implementation steps if change is recommended	2023-2024		2024-2025		2025-2026		2026-2027		2027-2028	
1. Engage the Education Domain in a comprehensive review										
2. Obtain feedback from caregivers										
3. Develop a draft approach and action plan and criteria for success										
C. Consider realignment of the school day to better meet the needs of the community	2023-2024		2024-2025		2025-2026		2026-2027		2027-2028	
1. Examine the impact of how we use time and the supplemental care we provide on our community including the impacts of half days and possible solutions to maintain staff collaboration time and enrich the student experience										
2. Determine innovative strategies to better meet the needs of our community with our schedule including the feasibility and impact of before and after care on access to and retention in our program										
3. Determine if the length of the day would change if we went to five full days										