Looking Back, Looking Ahead

Empowering Allen-Stevenson To Become Future-Ready

A Position Paper

1. What makes Allen-Stevenson’s educational experience profoundly relevant, valuable and transformative for our boys?
2. What can make the components of their educational experience better, even stronger?
3. What should be the right balance between stability and change?

Over the last several years many members of the Allen-Stevenson community have helped to formulate responses to these questions. As we prepare our students to become passionate learners and compassionate achievers, this position paper describes how the School will continue to thrive as an institution. This position paper, one of a series, is organized as follows:

1. Strategic Planning
2. Campus Master Plan
3. Next Strategic Steps

1. Strategic Planning

Just over two years ago, the Strategic Planning Committee of the Board of Trustees began a formal process to envision Allen-Stevenson’s future and to chart its strategic direction. We engaged the services of Leadership + Design to refine and strengthen our approach to educating boys today. Based on the work of the Design School of Stanford University, Leadership + Design uses a “design thinking” approach to help schools create the future. We were guided by Carla Silver and Ryan Burke in this process.

Over many months, under the leadership of Trustee Jim Wilson and Winnie Barnes, Director of Organizational Initiatives, the research process engaged multiple constituencies—current and former parents, Trustees and former Trustees, faculty and staff, students and alumni. To augment the research process, a significant number of educators in other schools were also interviewed.

Two additional planning tracks were pursued to extend the strategic planning process. A thorough, data-driven analysis was conducted by William Kummel of Rational Partners to develop a financial roadmap reflecting Allen-Stevenson’s opportunities, challenges and a range of possible choices. In
addition, Maria Kadison and Barbara Friedsam of EdwardsCo, an education marketing company, did
extensive research to refine the School’s brand messaging and communications. We are now pulling
together these parallel planning results.

The strategic planning process identified three important pillars to organize our priorities, goals and
next steps. These are: *Educating the Whole Boy, A Purposeful Place, and A Connected Community.* Each
pillar includes steps that can be taken to make Allen-Stevenson’s educational experience profoundly
relevant, valuable and transformative for our boys. They will also sharpen the School’s competitive and
financial position.

- **Educating the Whole Boy**, for example, encompasses steps to develop programmatic and
  professional excellence to strengthen our expertise in educating boys.
- **A Purposeful Place** includes the optimization of our schoolhouse, development of an ideal
  environment for educating boys, review of the School’s annual calendar, and the greater use of
  New York City as part of our extended campus.
- **A Connected Community** strengthens our ongoing work on DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion),
  parent education, service learning and alumni engagement.

Additionally, throughout the process, steps to achieve financial sustainability and to present our
educational message with clarity and appeal have been central.

2. **Campus Master Plan**

Allen-Stevenson has also been engaged in an exciting construction project, which is ongoing, as well as
the capital campaign to fund it. Since December 2012, when the Board of Trustees acquired a second
townhouse next to the main schoolhouse, planning for our construction has been informed by
essential program needs. We always asserted that new facilities are not just ends in themselves, but
that they should support the best learning for boys and should foster deeper learning for every boy. As
it should, the campus master plan provides beautiful spaces for Academics, Athletics and the Arts
(what we often call “the 3 A’s”).

Construction in the heart of New York City has been neither easy nor fast, but the School can be very
proud of what this long-term project is accomplishing for Allen-Stevenson and many future
generations. Transformative new facilities can now beautifully support a vigorous educational program
for our students and teachers. Moreover, our strong belief in a robust program combining Academics,
Athletics and the Arts has continued to inform how we can best educate boys today. These educational
requirements helped to determine what we would need to build.

A year ago, the School unveiled and began to occupy the new Townhouse building, a modern structure
connected directly to the schoolhouse behind its 1866 Landmarked façades. This addition gave us
amazing new space and facilities: splendid new classrooms, four exceptional science and engineering
labs, an enhanced visual arts suite and woodshop, a new performing arts studio to supplement the
Landis Assembly Hall, additional new space for the Tisch Library Tech Commons, and an upgraded,
well-equipped kitchen that features fresh daily menus from the School’s on-site chef. Fortunately, we have been able to use many of these additional facilities during the pandemic to achieve the social distancing protocols required to reopen the schoolhouse safely.

Additionally, this week the School has just begun to use the brand-new Middle School regulation-sized gymnasium on the north side of the schoolhouse. This complicated construction marvel, an achievement some doubted would ever even be possible, will serve the athletic needs of many future generations of students handsomely. Over the next several months, a new teaching greenhouse, one of only a few in New York City, will also come online for instructional purposes.

The last phase of the project will be to add three floors on the south side of the schoolhouse, facing Lenox Hill Hospital. It will fill out the goals for our athletics and physical education program by adding an additional spacious gymnasium with a rock-climbing wall, the locker room, a wrestling and multipurpose room, and appropriate cardio and fitness spaces. All of these facilities would be accessible from our entrance at 132 East 78th Street, a huge competitive advantage for the School. With less travel to separate distant facilities, every boy’s time at school can be put to use much more efficiently.

All of the engineering and most of structural work to support the additional weight of three new floors has already been completed, as has the fast new elevator to reach them, all the way to the 8th floor. Replacement of the old elevator with a second new fast one is currently underway. Significantly, completion of this last phase will accommodate the emergency generator that is required to use the planned covered play roof, also a great intended addition to the School.

At the beginning of the pandemic last spring, the Board of Trustees chose to pause this final construction phase temporarily. Although the timeline for completion has not yet been determined, it is strategically important to complete this last phase as part of the current vision. In the interim, however, the School has equipped the current 6th floor with a large play area, a temporary locker-room, offices for coaches, and restroom facilities to serve the North Gymnasium and other adjacent spaces supporting the athletics and physical education program. These will serve the School temporarily.

Next summer the contractors will finish renovation of the Main Hallway and reception area, the Tisch Library Tech Commons, and the remainder of the 2nd and 3rd floors. Enhanced security systems for the schoolhouse will be installed as well. Additionally, we anticipate that removal of the scaffolding on 78th Street will soon reveal the beautiful 1866 Landmarked townhouse façades.

3. Next Strategic Steps

The late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg once observed, “Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time.” These next strategic steps taken by the School will make the educational experience even more profoundly relevant, valuable and transformative for our boys.
As it has turned out, 2020 has been a transitional year, an inflection point, one that offers Allen-Stevenson many opportunities for strategic alignment. No one expected the disruptions the School has faced, but 2020 has opened new ways of working, schooling, maybe even thinking. Indeed, the COVID pandemic has forced everyone to learn new skills, to adapt, to change, and in the process to become more resilient.

Adding to the three pillars identified through the strategic planning process—Educating the Whole Boy, A Purposeful Place, and A Connected Community—will be the Foundation of Financial Sustainability, boosting the School’s capacity to thrive, and strengthening its future-readiness as the premier institution for educational standards to be set.

The framework to support these strategic pillars is as follows:

**Educating the Whole Boy**
- We plan to embrace concept-based inquiry learning and focus faculty professional development towards the end of deeper learning.
- We plan to develop a clear scope and sequence to support deeper learning.
- We plan to reimagine the way we use time in school by devising a new master schedule that gives both boys and teachers time for collaboration, lesson design and reflection.
- We plan to preserve time for SEL and advisories and look to increase service learning, to optimize the outcomes of deeper learning.
- We plan to focus professional development resources for professional development to intensify the School’s focus on promoting great teaching and learning.
- We plan to review the balance of time devoted to Academics, Athletics and the Arts as well as the balance among the humanities, the sciences and other ways of knowing.

**A Purposeful Place**
- We plan to be intentional in our approach to teaching styles, so as to emphasize not just the “what” but also the “how” we teach.
- We plan to consider how the School’s annual calendar can be arranged to support concept-based deeper learning.
- We plan to complete the Campus Master Plan as soon as possible, so as to optimize flexibility and efficiency in how we can use our facilities.

**A Connected Community**
- We plan to build on the accomplishments of the Community Life and Diversity (CL+D) committees in both the Parents Association and our professional community.
- We plan to fulfill the promise of the new Board-level committee on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB).
- We plan to formalize offerings and events for parent education.
- We plan to develop a comprehensive program of after-school and summer programs.
- We plan to increase opportunities for alumni to be engaged with the work of the School.
- We plan to look for age-appropriate opportunities for community service and service learning.
• We plan to look for future ways to use the resources of New York City as extensions of our campus.

**Foundation of Financial Sustainability**

• We plan to continue to attract excellent teachers, compensate them competitively, and consider ways to retain them, including opportunities for them to grow as leaders within the School.

• We plan to implement some of the recommendations made by the financial analysis of Rational Partners with regard to tuition, enrollment, productivity and philanthropy.

• We plan to review, and possibly reorganize, our academic division structure.

• We plan to consider moving to three sections in each grade, so as to foster manageable class sizes and the possibility of growing our enrollment over time.

• We plan to consider reorganizing our administrative structure that supports our academic divisions, recognizing that complexity is cost.

• We plan to finish the three remaining floors in the Campus Plan, when feasible, so that campus use and rentals to other groups can be optimized.

• We plan to make the financial investments that ultimately will enable the School to thrive.

Notably, the Strategic Planning process identified several ambitious “moonshots” that may also be long-term aspirations. These include:

• **The Center for the Teaching and Learning of Boys** – a formal program that teachers apply to and spend a year with us as student teachers and taking our program of courses on the teaching of boys.

• **A-S Afterschool and Summer Programs for students (and perhaps adults)** – a full program of educational offerings for children and adults that run online, evenings, and during the summer.

The School has already begun to plan for and implement many of these transformative strategic steps. Updates will be provided periodically to the Allen-Stevenson community.

Metin Negrin, President, Board of Trustees

David R. Trower, Head of School

Jim Wilson, Chair, Strategic Planning Committee, Board of Trustees

*January 2021*