THE COURAGE TO WORK

IN A WORLD OF NEW NEEDS, NEW PROBLEMS, AND NEW IDEAS

A FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN  2018 - 2023
Dear Friends,

Over a hundred years ago, our founder, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, implored us—children, teachers, and members of society—to summon “the courage to work, unafraid and efficiently, in a world of new needs, new problems, and new ideas.” For generations, the Bank Street School for Children has been at the forefront of progressive education, merging excellence with equity, rigor with relevance, and purpose with passion. At a time when others are discovering the importance of 21st Century Skills, we are doubling down on our longstanding belief that children learn best when engaged in critical thinking, creative problem solving, meaningful collaboration, perspective-taking, and civic literacy. Indeed these skills have been at the core of our educational philosophy and program since our inception.

At the same time, there is no shortage of “new needs, new problems, and new ideas” in the current world order—a world of mass information, rapid globalization, instant gratification, disruptive innovation, and neuroscientific advancement. As a school located within the Bank Street College of Education, we reside at the nexus of theory and practice, and we know that we cannot merely rest on our laurels. It is with this spirit that the School for Children embarked upon a rigorous and vigorous, and deeply democratic, strategic planning process over the course of two school years. All ideas were on the table, all constituents were engaged, and what resulted was an honest and ambitious articulation of the important work in store for our community.

A good strategic plan serves several purposes. First, it energizes the community around a finite number of key priorities, providing focus, clarity, and traction. Second, it guides informed decision making around the allocation of limited resources—time, treasure, talent, and turf. And third, it ensures accountability to ongoing improvement through regular and public reflections on progress and, as needed, adjustments to the plan itself. All of these benefits are dependent upon the courage to work, a courage and willingness that define the spirit of the Bank Street School for Children.

We invite you to peruse the enclosed plan, and more importantly, to engage with us as we move from ideation to implementation and impact. Our goal is to preserve the best of what has served our community and our children for over a century while courageously tackling these new needs, new problems, and new ideas from a place of possibility, open-mindedness, joy, and scientific discovery—all hallmarks of the Bank Street Credo.

Here’s to the work, and The Courage to Work, in the days ahead.

All best, always—

JED LIPPARD, ED.D.
Dean of Children’s Programs | Head of School
The Bank Street School for Children embarked upon a comprehensive strategic planning process during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years. The first round of community engagement took the form of a listening tour focused on four key questions:

1. **What are we doing that works?**
2. **What are we doing that needs work?**
3. **What are we doing that we don’t know why we’re doing?**
4. **What aren’t we doing that we should be doing?**

Once this data was collected, a Strategic Planning Task Force, comprising sixteen individuals and representing all stakeholder groups (Trustees, administrators, faculty, parents, alumni, and students) was formed. This group analyzed the data and generated eleven concept papers reflecting the big ideas of the community. Through a series of targeted engagement sessions, the Task Force then gathered feedback from more than 300 community members before determining the five key priorities for 2018-2023.

In addition to the school’s ongoing commitment to diversity, equity, and social justice, the Plan aims to deepen understanding and practice in the areas of student support and differentiated instruction; school culture through the enactment of a shared behavioral framework; faculty support and development; Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) articulation and programming; and overall curricular alignment within and across age levels.

As Lucy Sprague Mitchell, Bank Street’s founder, professed more than a hundred years ago, to develop the full potentiality of every human being—children, teachers, and ourselves—we must exhibit “the courage to work, unafraid and efficiently, in a world of new needs, new problems, and new ideas.” This Plan calls upon us to do precisely that.
A Bank Street School for Children Graduate:

- Thinks critically and independently
- Can hold various perspectives simultaneously
- Possesses a deep academic foundation across various disciplines
- Seeks constantly to understand the why and how behind the what
- Walks through the world with a strong sense of self
- Views and embraces adults in the community as allies
- Collaborates with skill and grace
- Expresses thoughts with poise and confidence
- Willingly challenges oneself and others to improve and grow
- Holds the Bank Street community dear
- Is an informed and engaged citizen of the larger global community
- Advocates for social justice
- Exhibits empathy towards others from a range of backgrounds

At the outset of the strategic planning process, the Strategic Planning Task Force reviewed the mission and Credo of Bank Street College. In turn, the community engaged in a visioning exercise whereby constituents were asked to articulate the value of a Bank Street education in the form of the essential qualities of an eighth grade graduate. From this exercise, the following qualities were identified:

VISION OF THE BANK STREET SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN GRADUATE

Bank Street School for Children 4
At the core of all that we do at Bank Street is a commitment to diversity, equity, and social justice, values that are embedded throughout our strategic plan. Likewise, the success of the School for Children is dependent upon the engagement and support of the broader community—parents, alumni, and our colleagues from across the divisions of Bank Street College. This plan is broken into three sections, Children, Culture, and Curriculum, and encompasses five strategic goals aimed at deepening and strengthening our practice across key programmatic areas of the school.
Augmenting Student Support and Differentiated Instruction

The Bank Street School for Children educates a diverse range of learners who access curriculum in different ways. Faculty, including teachers and learning specialists, use a child-centered approach to differentiate instruction and provide accessible curricula to a range of learners in the school.

Bank Street faculty are deeply committed to and knowledgeable about many aspects of learning diversity. Drawing from advances in neuroscience and the connection to teaching and learning, Bank Street aims to offer its students even richer learning opportunities by strengthening its approach to differentiation, articulating who it can appropriately serve and how, and enhancing faculty capacity in this area.
KEY GOALS

• Clearly articulate Bank Street’s approach to supporting a range of learners with different needs

• Assess the School for Children’s current strategy and staffing around diverse learners to identify potential improvements

• Develop teachers to have a shared toolkit to address a range of learning needs

• Communicate effectively and in a timely manner with families when Bank Street is not able to appropriately serve students

• Develop a system of data gathering and communication to ensure that student support needs are consistent from teacher-to-teacher and year-to-year

• Raise capital to dedicate and build a Student Support Center designed for small group and individualized instruction

Bridges to...

DIVERSITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND EQUITY

• Bolster teacher skills to support a wider range of learning needs

• Provide additional professional development opportunities to expand faculty repertoire of curricular and instructional strategies to support learners with different needs

• Consider how historical and systemic structures influence learning and conversations about students and with families

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

• Provide more frequent student progress and information updates to families, including a clearer and more consistent pre-referral process

• Pursue partnerships, where appropriate, with the Graduate School to augment Bank Street’s approach and practice in the area of learning diversity
Promoting Positive School Culture: Toward a Shared Behavioral Framework

Research shows and the Bank Street School for Children believes fundamentally that the social and emotional domains of learning are as essential as the academic and the cognitive. Approaches to curriculum development and instructional practice reflect a deep commitment to the values of respect, decency, community, and justice.

As Bank Street strives to respond to the needs of an ever-changing society, the school will benefit from building consensus around its beliefs and values, investing in learning around what effective discipline looks like in a progressive environment, and enacting a consistent approach to student behavior intervention that is aligned with the school’s ethos.
KEY GOALS

- Maintain a safe environment where children can learn from their mistakes
- Integrate values-aligned and research-based Best Practices in the area of positive school culture and discipline
- Build consensus around the school’s cultural values with faculty, staff, parents, etc.
- Determine differentiated responses when student behaviors challenge shared community values
- Clarify protocols related to parent communication
- Continue to construct accessible language that allows faculty to address a variety of behavioral situations

DIVERSITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND EQUITY

- Identify underlying drivers related to student behavior
- Leverage clear and consistent expectations to disrupt bias in conversations about and reactions to student behavior
- Provide ongoing staff development in the area of pro-social and culturally-responsive classroom management practices

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Hold parent education opportunities that enhance the school’s efforts to promote positive school culture and discipline and foster even greater home/school communication

Bridges to...
Sustaining & Supporting Faculty

Bank Street School for Children faculty and staff are the most important resource of the school. Leading practitioners in their fields, they possess and exhibit expertise in the areas of child development, curriculum, and instruction. As children benefit daily and directly from the work of their teachers, it is essential that the school continue to sustain and support faculty and staff. By tapping into the broader resources of the institution and exploring creative pathways for career development and professional growth, Bank Street School for Children faculty and staff will remain connected, engaged, and at the forefront of educational reform and practice.
KEY OBJECTIVES

• Identify appropriate growth areas for faculty and staff, including new hires, and coordinate supportive, equitable, impactful professional development

• Recognize and share opportunities within the institution for career advancement, including potential collaboration with the Graduate School and the Bank Street Education Center

• Promote faculty and staff recognition and highlight strengths, such as by identifying professional work that can be shared either internally or externally (i.e. conferences)

• Continue to promote diversity in the faculty and staff

• Leverage the expansion to reassess workloads and scheduling options for faculty

• Explore the possibility of launching a Bank Street Teachers Center as an incubator of Best Practices in progressive education

DIVERSITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND EQUITY

• Continue to promote and recruit for diversity among faculty and staff

• Critically examine hiring and promotion protocols to ensure equity and guard against unchecked bias

• Consider formalizing affinity-based peer mentoring program for faculty and staff

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

• Engage parents and alumni to explore new pathways for professional development

Bridges to...
Defining, Documenting, and Aligning Curriculum

The Bank Street School for Children is proud of its rich, progressive history with teacher-designed, child-centered, thematic, and emergent curriculum. In concert with their deep training and expertise, teachers are empowered to generate curriculum that combines personal passion with student interest and aligns with developmentally-informed skill and content expectations for a particular grade level.

By better defining and refining its curriculum development and documentation processes over the next five years, Bank Street will be able to facilitate even greater alignment and coherence between and across grade levels and divisions.
KEY OBJECTIVES

• Affirm and articulate a shared understanding of what constitutes curriculum
• Chronicle Bank Street’s curriculum for all grade-levels and teachers
• Develop and utilize regular curricular decision-making processes to inform curriculum evaluation and potential improvements
• Ensure equitable experiences in student learning

DIVERSITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND EQUITY

• Define what academic experiences all Bank Street children should be guaranteed regardless of their particular teacher, year of study, or class placement
• Audit curriculum to ensure that students feel that their stories are reflected and that they have insights into the stories of underrepresented populations

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

• Partner with parents and alumni to understand societal demands in order to better evaluate Bank Street curriculum

Bridges to...
Strengthening STEAM Programming and Articulation

Bank Street delivers comprehensive math, science, and arts programming across all grade levels. In the upper grades, a dedicated lab and team teaching model contribute to high-quality teaching and learning experiences for all students. In the Middle School, children engage with an integrated approach to art and science, for example, the 7/8s Hudson River project and the 9/10s study of food insecurity. In the Lower School, students explore interdisciplinary concepts through hands-on learning, such as when making bread or when measuring the length of a sprout. Above all, Bank Street kids become analytic problem solvers who understand the “why” behind the “what.”

In today’s world, technology and engineering are becoming increasingly prominent in society and our personal lives. In order to leverage this integration, it is important to develop proficiency with new tools and technologies which are pivotal in transmitting information and can help foster a thriving 21st century democracy espoused by the Credo. To ensure that Bank Street students continue to gain the necessary skills to succeed in and improve our society, the School for Children will benefit from further integrating and promoting the role of science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) throughout the curriculum, culture, and marketing of the school.
KEY OBJECTIVES

• Inventory and evaluate Bank Street’s current approach to teaching STEAM
• Define and communicate Bank Street’s approach to STEAM curriculum
• Raise capital to designate and build STEAM Center/Service Design Lab
• Implement philosophically aligned technology and engineering curriculum

DIVERSITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND EQUITY

• Embed social justice topics into STEAM curriculum to further align our philosophy and practice
• Seek and promote stories of underrepresented groups in the STEAM fields

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

• Devise clear guidelines on the ethics and use of technology for students, parents, and faculty
• Partner with alumni in STEAM fields to bring innovative programming to Bank Street School for Children students
STRATEGIC PLANNING TASK FORCE

Coy Dailey  
Nicholas Fleisher ’19  
Felice Friedman GS ’75  
Jenel Giles GS ’08  
Yanna Glogov ’19  
Laura Guarino P ’09, GS ’94  
Adrian Hill P ’27, P ’27  
Jed Lippard P ’22, P ’22

Rajit Malhotra  
Dave Mortimer P ’25, P ’27  
Sandra Pinnavaia P ’07, P ’09, P ’14  
Eve Selver-Kassell ’94, P ’28, GS ’10  
Zoe Sperduto ’18  
Emily Stein P ’23, P ’26  
Kate Sussman ’85, P ’15, P ’23, GS ’98  
Charlie Vergara ’95

OUR CREDO

What potentialities in human beings—children, teachers, and ourselves—do we want to see develop?

A ZEST FOR LIVING that comes from taking in the world with all five senses alert

LIVELY INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITIES that turn the world into an exciting laboratory and keep one ever a learner

FLEXIBILITY when confronted with change and ability to relinquish patterns that no longer fit the present

THE COURAGE TO WORK unafraid and efficiently, in a world of new needs, new problems, and new ideas

GENTLENESS COMBINED WITH JUSTICE in passing judgments on other human beings

SENSITIVITY not only to the external formal rights of the “other fellow,” but to him as another human being seeking a good life through his own standards

A STRIVING TO LIVE DEMOCRATICALLY in and out of schools, as the best way to advance our concept of democracy