

BIXBY SCHOOL

BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTHS

STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2021

EMPATHY | RESPONSIBILITY | RESPECT

May 31, 2017

Dear Bixby Family:

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the strategic plan for our school. This plan builds upon our strong past and charts a path forward for the near and foreseeable future. Complementing the board-approved school mission, it provides clear objectives and guideposts to navigate Bixby as we approach our 50th year of continuous service to the Boulder community in 2020.

The plan is the result of many hours of study by a committee comprised of members from our school community headed by our board president, Nina Lopez, and assisted by our incoming head of school, Beth Heller. This further reinforces my profound belief that Bixby is poised for continued success. Progressive education seems as relevant today as it was almost a half-century ago when Pat Baker and Harlan Bartram founded Bixby and turned what was a dream into reality. It has been a privilege to have led this wonderful school for the past two years, and its continued service to the children of Boulder has never been more assured.

Sincerely,

John Sutor
Interim Head of School 2015 - 2017

Our Mission

Bixby School serves preschool through elementary level children and their families, integrating academic, artistic, physical, and social development in a small community setting. Our mission is to cultivate critical thinking; promote independence and self-confidence; instill empathy, respect, and responsibility; and inspire a love of learning.

Our Core Beliefs

The Value of a Bixby Education

- Children learn best in a safe environment: physically, emotionally, and intellectually.
- Respect is the cornerstone of such an environment; respect among students, between students and teachers, and among all members of our community including parents and staff.
- At Bixby, children are viewed and responded to as individuals having their own unique abilities, interests, and needs.
- At Bixby, children are encouraged to take responsibility for their choices and actions.
- Bixby encourages and fosters the natural curiosity and intrinsic joy of learning in children.
- Bixby cultivates critical thinking skills and facilitates the mastery of underlying concepts, rather than simply imparting academic content.
- Children learn best in small groups with extensive opportunities for individual attention and interaction.
- Academic achievement is realized in a non-graded, noncompetitive setting where children are intrinsically motivated to learn.
- Committed, well-qualified teachers are fundamental to the success of our school.
- Support for families and continuity for children is provided with an extended day program that builds upon the rich learning environment and social setting of the school day.

HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

For more than 45 years, Bixby School has served preschool through elementary level children in a small community setting. In order to ensure that this unique institution continues to thrive and improve for the benefit of many generations to come, it is imperative that all Bixby stakeholders, including administration, faculty, Board of Trustees, parents, students and alumni actively come together to engage with Bixby in whatever manner is meaningful to them.

There are many important moving parts that make Bixby what it is, and every one of those pieces require some degree of attention, monitoring, maintenance or improvement to keep it flourishing well into the future. Those pieces at Bixby include: a rich school culture, an engaged student and parent population, excellent faculty, inspiring and effective leadership (board and administration), relevant mission-driven programming, a dynamic student body, robust fundraising, and safe and appropriate facilities. In order to ensure Bixby's long-term sustainability, sound financial performance is requisite.

The Bixby School was founded in 1970 by Harlan “Bart” Bartram and Pat Baker. Their goals were to build a curriculum that supported and encouraged children’s lively intellects and to create an environment that was flexible enough to respond to the individual child. In addition, both wanted to provide stimulating before/after-school care that offered opportunities for growth and learning, an unusual concept at that time.

Bixby's doors opened at the corner of Bixby Lane and 30th Street in 1970. All 11 founding students were preschoolers, most taking advantage of the before/after care provided on-site. By June of 1971, enrollment grew to 35. From that point on, it was the parents of these preschoolers who propelled the growth of Bixby. Not wanting their children to leave the environment, they began asking for extended-care kindergarten, then 1st grade, and in 1974, 2nd and 3rd grade. Today the school offers a full-time academic program for students in preschool through 5th grade. In becoming a not-for-profit organization, Pat and Bart’s leadership evolved to include a governing body of trustees to provide fiduciary and leadership oversight aligned with mission of school. The board is tasked with maintaining the long-term viability of Bixby School.

Though Bart and Pat have moved on, their legacy thrives today. The learning environment continues to prioritize the natural inquisitive, open mind of a child and is not restricted by an academic program that predetermines each child’s path to success. The focus, rather, is on embracing the way that children intrinsically learn by providing them the freedom to venture out, explore and experiment in an unimpeded journey to knowledge.

The administration and teaching staff remain committed to the philosophical principles that inspired the creation of the school. Children are encouraged to pursue self-discovery through critical thinking.

As often happens following the retirement of a founder, Bixby has gone through several leadership transitions in the past five years. As a testament to the strength of the school, every administrator and a majority of faculty Pat hired is still in place. Happily, Bixby has gained leadership stability and is poised to advance and thrive.

Within the past decade, successful initiatives have included: building a new Preschool facility, building a new Kindergarten room; building an outdoor amphitheater; refinancing Bixby’s debt at a more advantageous rate; improving intra-school communications and the general working environment; creating a long-term financial plan that addressed the needs of Bixby to incrementally increase teacher compensation over many years; creating the Bixby Mission Statement and the Core Values, creating a more efficient and effective organizational structure that resulted in the creation of the Academic Director position; and improving the school management and governance practices.

Process

To address the school’s growing needs and create a roadmap for the future, the board of trustees embarked on a journey to create a strategic planning process.

- STEP 1: FORMED A COMMITTEE (members listed below)
- STEP 2: COMMITTEE IDENTIFIED KEY QUESTIONS
- STEP 3: INFORMATION GATHERING
- STEP 4: REVIEWED INFORMATION TO IDENTIFY KEY AREAS OF ATTENTION AND DRAFT GOALS
- STEP 5: REVIEWED DRAFT GOALS WITH BIXBY ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM
- STEP 6: COMMITTEE REVISED PLAN FURTHER
- STEP 7: DRAFT PLAN PRESENTED TO THE BOARD
- STEP 8: DRAFT PLAN PRESENTED TO THE COMMUNITY
- STEP 9: FINAL PLAN APPROVED

Strategic Planning Committee

Name	Affiliation
Mike Hannigan	Current Parent
Clo Butcher	Current Parent, Board Member
Lyndsee Frankel	Current Parent
Robert Mackenzie	Faculty/Administrative Staff
Cindy Benson	Faculty/Administrative Staff
Holly Sprenkle	Parent of Alumni, Board Member
Garrett Braun	Bixby Alumni, Current Faculty
Rachel Mahloch	Current Parent

Anne Pizzi	Current Parent, Bixby Alumni
Sharie Pulis	Current Parent
Patricia Jarvis	Current Parent, Faculty/Administrative Staff
Lee Strickler	Current Parent, Board Member
Nicole Speer	Current Parent, Board Member
Carol Achatz	Parent of Alumni, Board Member
Nina Lopez	Current Parent, Board Member
Mark Kalen	Faculty/Administrative Staff
Chris Lewandowski	Current Parent

GOALS

The plan is composed of 7 interconnected strategic goals, fortified by [#] Strategic Initiatives that, when executed together, will achieve the Vision for Bixby.

Overall Goals

- I. **SCHOOL CULTURE** – Foster a cohesive, mission-driven and joyful school culture reflective of Bixby’s unique identity
- II. **LEADERSHIP** – Cultivate strong and stable leadership
- III. **FACULTY** – Recruit, retain, and develop faculty with the capacity and passion to inspire students while implementing Bixby’s mission and core values
- IV. **PROGAM** – Bixby’s program delivers on its mission and is valued by our market
- V. **ENROLLMENT** – Bixby is fully enrolled with students and families that understand, embrace and nurture the school’s mission and core beliefs
- VI. **FACILITIES** – Bixby’s unique environment supports play, learning, community, and the Bixby mission
- VII. **FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY** – Bixby is a financially sustainable community with resources adequate to successfully deliver its progressive approach and programming to students and families

Strategic Goal I. SCHOOL CULTURE

Goal: Foster a cohesive, mission-driven, and joyful school culture reflective of Bixby's unique mission

Rationale: A healthy school culture is the foundation for all sustainable advancement

Strategy #1: Clearly identify how Bixby's unique identity fits into the educational market

Strategic Outcome: Understanding, through data, who Bixby serves and how Bixby fits in the local and national educational settings, facilitates decisions that ensure Bixby's success

Strategy #2: Determine and articulate Bixby's unique identity

Strategic Outcome: All constituents consistently identify with and articulate what makes Bixby unique. They understand and are invested in the mission and core beliefs of the school

Strategy #3: Advance communication

Strategic Outcome: Communication at Bixby at all levels from all persons is clear, transparent, and reflective of our mission. As a result, all stakeholders adopt and fulfill communications commitments, and their expectations for communications from others are generally met

Strategic Goal II. LEADERSHIP

Goal: Cultivate strong and stable leadership

Rationale: Strong, cohesive, collaborative leadership is critical to ensuring that Bixby thrives. Components of that include a mutually satisfying board/head of school relationship, an effective board, and an effective administration

Strategy #1: Bixby leadership formally adopts and implements best practices in its governance and leadership, adapted as necessary to meet Bixby's unique needs

Strategic Outcome: Bixby benefits from stable, consistent leadership that features a supportive, transparent, and effective board/head relationship; the board is a model of best practice under NAIS guidelines; the administration is organized effective to support the needs of parents, students, and teachers

Strategic Goal III. FACULTY

Goal: Recruit, retain, and develop faculty with the capacity and passion to implement Bixby's mission and core beliefs

Rationale: Extraordinary faculty are critical to the success of Bixby. Bixby faculty are responsible for motivating our children to learn and offer innovative ways of inspiring students that also draw from and enhance Bixby's core values

Strategic Outcome: Bixby recruits, grows, and retains extraordinary faculty that maintains and enhances Bixby's culture

Strategy #1: Continue to foster and support a community of expert teachers who connect with students

Strategic Outcome: Teachers who are experts in their content area and have a strong pedagogical alignment with Bixby's mission deeply know, connect with, and inspire students. Faculty and staff are positive, joyful members of the Bixby community

Strategy #2: Recruit new staff, as necessary, that are experts in their areas, align with Bixby's core beliefs and mission, and enhance the culture and community of the current staff

Strategy Outcome: To account for increased enrollment or staff losses, hire high caliber staff that believe in Bixby's mission and enhance the culture at Bixby

Strategy #3: Increase staff compensation to make it competitive with peers in the surrounding area

Strategic Outcome: Hire and retain high quality staff that promote the Bixby mission, teach and motivate students academically, emotionally, and socially. Maintain a staff that feels valued, motivated, and promotes Bixby's values to students and community

Strategic Goal VI. PROGRAM

Goal: Bixby's program delivers on its mission and is valued by our market

Rationale: Bixby offers a unique program to students and families in the highly competitive Boulder market. By intentionally and collaboratively assessing our programmatic strengths and challenges, then making advancements where necessary, the resulting Bixby experience will remain unique and will be clearly defined and universally understood. These processes are critical to Bixby's sustainability

Strategic Outcome: The Bixby experience is one that inspires excellent faculty, engages families as true partners, and instills a sense of wonder and empowerment amongst students.

Bixby protects and nurtures its unique strengths while being open to make changes that reflect the evolving needs of our world and strengthen our program

Strategy #1: Continue to develop a rich, research-informed and pedagogically and developmentally sound academic program

Strategic Outcome: Bixby's academic program results in students being highly educated, critical thinkers who are engaged problem-solvers and able to advocate for their needs as learners.

Bixby's academic program is well understood by its constituents

Strategy #2: Develop a comprehensive program for character education and social/emotional learning

Strategic Outcome: Bixby's social/emotional program results in students who are respectful, self-aware, kind, independent individuals who self-advocate and are successful in working with both peers and adults. Bixby's social/emotional and character education program is well understood by its constituents

Strategy #3: Bixby's program is strengthened by innovative experiences that reflect its mission

Strategic Outcome: Bixby's offers a dynamic program comprised of unique experiences that result in students who are innovators, calculated risk-takers, and who are confident in pursuing their passions. Bixby's unique programmatic offerings are well understood by constituents

Strategy #4: Bixby's After-School Program is aligned with Bixby's mission and delivers a unique, rich and engaging after-care experience that is valued by our constituents

Strategic Outcome: Bixby provides a seamless whole day experience for families that choose to enroll their children beyond the school day. The full-day program experience reflects Bixby's mission and core beliefs

Strategic Goal V. ENROLLMENT

Rationale: The financial viability of school is tied to its enrollment, retention and accessibility. Additionally, a fully enrolled school of families that understand, embrace and nurture the school's mission and core beliefs is key to (although not sufficient for) overall community health/morale

Strategic Outcome: Families that understand, embrace and nurture the school's mission and core beliefs are aware of Bixby and enroll their children from Pre-K through 5th grade

Strategy #1: Bixby successfully enrolls new families that understand, embrace and nurture the school's mission and core beliefs

Strategic Outcome: The Bixby student body is comprised of children whose needs can be met successfully by Bixby teachers and staff. Families understand, value, and actively support the school

Strategy #2: Bixby nurtures and retains existing families that embrace and perpetuate the school's mission and core beliefs

Strategic Outcome: Bixby grows its culture of retention, resulting in our current families becoming strong ambassadors for the school

Strategy #3: Ensure Bixby is accessible to a wide variety of families that embrace and perpetuate the school's mission and core beliefs, and embrace an inclusive community

Strategic Outcome: Bixby experiences robust interest from external families with diverse backgrounds increases overall enrollment

Strategy #4: Evaluate all admissions-related processes, creating sustainable systems that improve Bixby as a whole

Strategic Outcome: Through collaborating strategically, Bixby's admissions program is systematized, sustainable, uses data to inform decisions, and supports the school mission and goals

Strategic Goal IV. FACILITIES

Goal: Bixby's unique environment supports play, learning, community, and the Bixby mission

Rationale: Bixby's indoor and outdoor spaces are critical to the success of our school, both to optimize faculty/student experiences and enrollment

Strategic Outcome: Bixby's inspired environment is preserved and built upon strategically, supporting student and faculty outcomes and enrollment goals and growth

Strategy #1: Create a strategic master facilities plan

Strategic Outcome: Facility updates are intentionally planned and budgeted for, ensuring the highest use of every dollar and every space

Strategic Goal VII. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Goal: Bixby is a financially sustainable community with resources adequate to successfully deliver its progressive approach and programming to students and families

Rationale: Establish and maintain long-term financial stability to support a superior educational program and facility, as well as exemplary faculty and staff, through an increased tuition base and a variety of internal and external revenue streams to ensure that Bixby can continue to grow, adapt, and meet the needs of the Bixby programs and philosophy

Strategy #1: Bixby's annual and multi-year strategic financial operations support the school's mission and ensure long-term sustainability

Strategic Outcome: Through effective business operations and financial planning, Bixby's future is financially secure

Strategy #2: Continue to cultivate donations of time, talent, and treasure that support the financial success of Bixby

Strategic Outcome: Bixby's sustainability is supported through a robust culture of philanthropy

Strategy #3: Commemorate Bixby's 50th anniversary in 2020 through a strategic fundraising campaign designed to raise funds that can sustain key programs or initiatives into the future

Strategic Outcome: Bixby's sustainability is supported through a targeted giving campaign