

STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

2023-2026



Our Focus

Community First School will tap into the strengths of the community – the skills of residents, the power of local associations, businesses, and the supportive functions of local institutions – to support the growth and development of children in North Hartford and beyond.

While executing its model of place based, whole child and family education, CFS will stress local determination, investment, creativity, and autonomy to produce positive outcomes. CFS will invest in staff growth and development to ensure quality, strengthen retention, and build organizational capacity.

A neighborhood that is seen as resourceful and gifted will be more likely to draw upon the time, talents, and treasures of local people to support the sustainability of the school. CFS will prioritize resident engagement, partnering and collaboration, constantly building and rebuilding relationships between and among stakeholders, associations, and institutions. CFS believes that this approach will attract local, city-wide, and regional champions, donors, and supporters to sustain the organization.

Lastly, CFS will reasonably and intentionally scale one grade level a year, up through 5th grade, with 5-8 students, for the next 3-5 years.

Strategic Objectives

1. Enhance Hiring, Development, and Retention of Neighborhood Teachers and Staff
2. Enhance Sustainability through Local Partnerships and Expanding Collaborative Opportunities
3. Optimize Financial Strength
4. Strengthen Our Model of Education
5. Support Parents as Partners in Their Child's Learning Journey



1. Enhance Hiring, Development, and Retention of Neighborhood Teachers and Staff

Objective Statement:

Hire, develop, and retain neighborhood teachers, fostering a strong sense of community and educational excellence.

Rationale:

This objective recognizes the significant value of neighborhood teachers who possess a deep understanding of the local community, its culture, and its unique needs.

This objective aligns with our commitment to providing high-quality education while fostering a sense of belonging and continuity within our neighborhoods.



Key Actions

A. Strengthen Recruitment Efforts:

- Establish partnerships with local educational institutions and community agencies to attract aspiring teachers from the neighborhood.
- Through targeted marketing and social media, promote teaching at CFS by sharing the rewards of teacher autonomy, working in one's own community, and the relationship-based approach.

B. Create a Supportive Work Environment:

- Implement competitive compensation and incentives to attract and retain neighborhood teachers.
- Foster a supportive and inclusive work environment that values the contributions of neighborhood teachers and recognizes their unique insights and perspectives.
- Establish clear communication channels between administration, teachers, and the local community to address concerns, provide feedback, and ensure transparency.

C. Engage the Local Community:

- Utilize partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and community leaders to create opportunities for neighborhood teachers to connect with and learn from community members.
- Continue monthly Family Dinners to foster meaningful engagement and collaboration between neighborhood teachers, students, parents, and community stakeholders.
- Encourage teachers to participate in community service projects and extracurricular activities that promote civic responsibility and strengthen the bonds between our school and neighborhood residents.

D. Support Professional Development and Evaluation:

- Offer ongoing professional development focusing on cultural sensitivity, community engagement, and curriculum development.
- Seek financial support for neighborhood teachers to pursue advanced degrees, attend conferences, and participate in professional learning communities.
- Establish measurable indicators, such as feedback surveys and student achievement data, as well as goal setting and self-evaluation measures to assess staff effectiveness, starting with the Executive Director and including all teaching personnel and volunteers.

2 Enhance Sustainability through Local Partnerships and Expanding Collaborative Opportunities

Objective Statement:

Seek sustainability through partnership by strengthening existing local partnerships and maintaining a mindset that actively seeks collaboration, with the aim of promoting sustainable practices, driving innovation, and creating shared value for all stakeholders.

Rationale:

This objective recognizes the significant value of community partners who possess a deep understanding of the local community, its culture, and its unique needs. This objective aligns with our commitment to providing high-quality education while fostering a sense of belonging and continuity within our neighborhoods.



Key Actions

A. Strengthen Existing Partnerships:

- Conduct comprehensive assessments of current partnerships to identify areas of improvement and opportunities for growth.
- Foster open and transparent communication channels with existing partners to ensure mutual understanding, alignment, and continuous collaboration.
- Develop joint sustainability goals and metrics to measure progress and drive collective impact.

B. Explore New Partnership Opportunities:

- Review CFS partnership document (School as the Center of Community Support Services) to determine partnerships achieved, those to be expanded upon, those to be de-emphasized or removed.
- Conduct an analysis of potential new partners in the local community, including businesses, organizations, and academic institutions, to identify shared values, complementary expertise, and resources.
- Engage in proactive outreach efforts to initiate conversations and establish new partnerships with relevant stakeholders, emphasizing sustainability as a core focus.
- Identify pathways to middle school.

C. Develop Collaborative Initiatives:

- Facilitate forums, workshops, and networking events to foster dialogue and knowledge exchange among existing and potential partners.
- Co-create and implement joint initiatives, such as pilot projects and community outreach campaigns, to drive sustainable development.
- Continue to explore joint initiatives to secure a new building or expanded facilities at Swift as CFS space needs increase.
- Leverage partnerships to enhance the organization's ability to access funding, resources, and expertise necessary for sustainability.

D. Measure and Communicate Impact:

- Establish metrics to measure the effectiveness and impact of collaborative sustainability initiatives.
- Communicate the outcomes and successes of collaborative initiatives through various channels, including reports, case studies, and public events, to inspire and engage other stakeholders.
- Share best practices and lessons learned with partners, the local community, and industry peers to promote knowledge sharing and replication of successful sustainability models.

3. Optimize Financial Strength

Objective Statement:

Discern appropriate and sustainable enrollment and staffing levels, as well as a facilities search, while leveraging and enhancing the primary avenues to financial strength: Individual donors, foundations, corporate entities, houses of worship, and volunteers.

Rationale:

This objective recognizes the significant value of maintaining our financial sustainability through communicating our unique origin story and the continued story of success as we promote our very different school model.



Key Actions

A. Enrollment Analysis and Planning:

- Evaluate the school's capacity and resources to determine the optimal enrollment levels that align with its mission and long-term goals.
- Develop a strategic enrollment plan that includes targeted recruitment strategies, retention initiatives, appropriate admission criteria, and stays true to our goal of accepting and working with all students.

B. Staffing Assessment and Alignment:

- Perform a thorough review of the current staffing structure, roles, and responsibilities, and determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the existing staff and volunteers and determine adjustments or reallocations as necessary.

C. Tuition:

- Evaluate the current tuition structure to ensure it is aligned with the school's financial sustainability goals.

D. Revenue Generation:

- Use our unique data including: enrollment, test scores, family satisfaction metrics, media reports, social media, and staffing stories to develop marketing that drives funding.
- Identify and assess potential opportunities for generating additional revenue through our story, such as fundraising campaigns, corporate partnerships, grants, or community collaborations.
- With the Board of Directors, regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of revenue-generating initiatives, adjusting strategies as needed to achieve sustainable financial growth.

E. Facilities

- Conduct a search of facilities in the Promise Zone Neighborhood which could serve as a school home, as we are currently at our maximum capacity in the White House.
- Continue our collaborative nature by working with others to secure a school home, perhaps partnering to share expenses associated with a new building.

F. Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Conduct a detailed review of the school's budget and expenditure patterns to identify areas of growth and potential savings.
- Establish key performance indicators to track progress towards the strategic objectives related to financial strength.
- Periodically review and update the strategic plan, incorporating feedback and insights gained from the monitoring process to ensure ongoing improvement and adaptability.

4. Strengthen Our Model of Education

Objective Statement:

Extend, deepen, and sustain a vibrant intellectual program that places the whole child and family at the center of learning, and strengthen our hands-on model of education that embraces culture, identity, and place-based perspectives.

Rationale:

Through this objective, we aim to help students see their learning, history and education in a broader context that resonates with their culture and identity. And, maintain our very different, yet effective model of education for urban children and families.



Key Actions

A. Curriculum Development:

- Develop a comprehensive curriculum that integrates local history, cultural heritage, and community experiences into the educational framework.
- Collaborate with educators, community members, and cultural organizations to incorporate diverse perspectives, narratives, and local knowledge into the curriculum.
- Ensure alignment with academic standards and pedagogical best practices while allowing flexibility for personalized and contextualized learning experiences.

B. Professional Development and Sharing Best Practices:

- Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for educators to enhance their understanding of place-based education, cultural competency, and the integration of diverse perspectives.
- Offer workshops, seminars, and training sessions focused on equipping educators with the necessary tools, resources, and strategies to implement place-based education effectively.
- Promote key attributes, transferable to public school, CFS values including: parent engagement strategies, whole family mental health services, infusion of culture into the curriculum, and place-based experiential outdoor learning activities and global experiences.
- Encourage educators to engage in reflective practices that promote continuous improvement and innovation in their teaching approaches.

D. Community Engagement:

- Forge partnerships with local community organizations, museums, historical sites, and cultural institutions to create meaningful learning opportunities beyond the classroom.
- Organize field trips, guest lectures, and community service initiatives that foster active engagement with the local community and reinforce the relevance of education in students' lives.
- Encourage students to undertake research projects, oral histories, and community-based initiatives that contribute to their understanding of history, culture, and the broader social fabric.

E. Technology Integration:

- Leverage technology tools and platforms to support interactive and immersive learning experiences related to local history, cultural traditions, and heritage.
- Develop online resources, multimedia content, and virtual field trips that enable students to explore their local community's historical and cultural richness.
- Ensure equitable access to technology resources and digital platforms, addressing the digital divide and ensuring that all students can actively participate in place-based learning.

F. Assessment and Evaluation:

- Establish a framework for assessing student learning outcomes in the context of place-based education, focusing on critical thinking, cultural understanding, and historical interpretation.
- Develop authentic assessment methods that allow students to demonstrate their learning through projects, presentations, and creative expressions.
- Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the place-based education model through student feedback, teacher observations, and academic performance indicators.

5. Support Parents as Partners in Their Child's Learning Journey

Objective Statement:

Provide services and support that builds the skills and capacity of parents to become effective and confident co-educators for their children, promoting early childhood development and lifelong learning.

Rationale:

This objective recognizes the deep challenges parents face building trust in institutions and navigating systems. We aim to build trust that leads to effective lifelong relationships with families.



Key Actions

A. Establish Parent Support Networks

- Increase parent advocacy skills. In the same way we want to value children, we aim to value parents.
- Foster a sense of community by establishing parent support networks that facilitate knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and mutual support among parents.
- Host monthly family dinners, community engagement meetings, parent/student centered conferences, and workshops, seminars, and discussion groups where parents can exchange ideas, ask questions, and learn from one another's experiences.
- Develop parent teams to help with school initiatives such as breakfast, reading explosion, and securing political support for expanding the school.

B. Develop Parenting Education Programs:

- Create comprehensive parenting education programs that focus on child development, effective communication, positive discipline strategies, and nurturing a love for learning.
- Collaborate with child development experts and educators to design evidence-based curricula tailored to the needs of parents at different stages of their child's development. And, teach History leading to empowerment, and skills providing greater access to employment opportunities.
- Partner with HPU and other parent organizations to establish best practices.

C. Offer Individualized Parent Coaching and Therapy:

- Forge partnerships with local community organizations, museums, historical sites, and cultural institutions to create meaningful learning opportunities beyond the classroom.
- Organize field trips, guest lectures, and community service initiatives that foster active engagement with the local community and reinforce the relevance of education in students' lives.
- Encourage students to undertake research projects, oral histories, and community-based initiatives that contribute to their understanding of history, culture, and the broader social fabric.

D. Utilize Technology for Remote Learning:

- Leverage technology to provide remote learning opportunities for parents, ensuring accessibility and flexibility.
- Explore the development of online courses, webinars, and interactive platforms that allow parents to learn at their own pace, regardless of their geographical location.



www.communityfirstschool.org

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