



Elevating

THE DALTON PLAN

The Dalton School
STRATEGIC PLAN 2030



Overview

From the founding of Dalton over a century ago, our school community has been the beneficiary of an extraordinary pedagogy – The Dalton Plan. The first decades of the 21st Century have challenged us to ensure that Dalton is fully equipped to execute on this pedagogy in a manner consistent with the demands and opportunities of our current environment. Sparked by this central insight from our strategic visioning process, the Strategic Plan 2030 is designed to elevate the Dalton Plan by driving resources to it through key inputs: thriving students, inspiring faculty & staff, and optimized facilities. In doing so, we affirm that our foundational pedagogy remains our north star, and that we are resolved in our commitment to academic excellence. Through our unique approach, we develop students within an inclusive community who are ideally positioned to pursue their passions through self-advocacy, substantiated viewpoints, and collaboration across difference. Our students will leave Dalton as engaged citizens even better prepared to "go forth unafraid."

The Strategic Plan 2030, as developed by The Board of Trustees and administration, is in service of the school's mission. As an academically rigorous, progressive school guided by the Dalton Plan, we "are committed to providing an education of excellence that meets each student's interests, abilities and needs within a common curricular framework and reflects and promotes an understanding of, and appreciation for, diversity in our community as an integral part of school life."

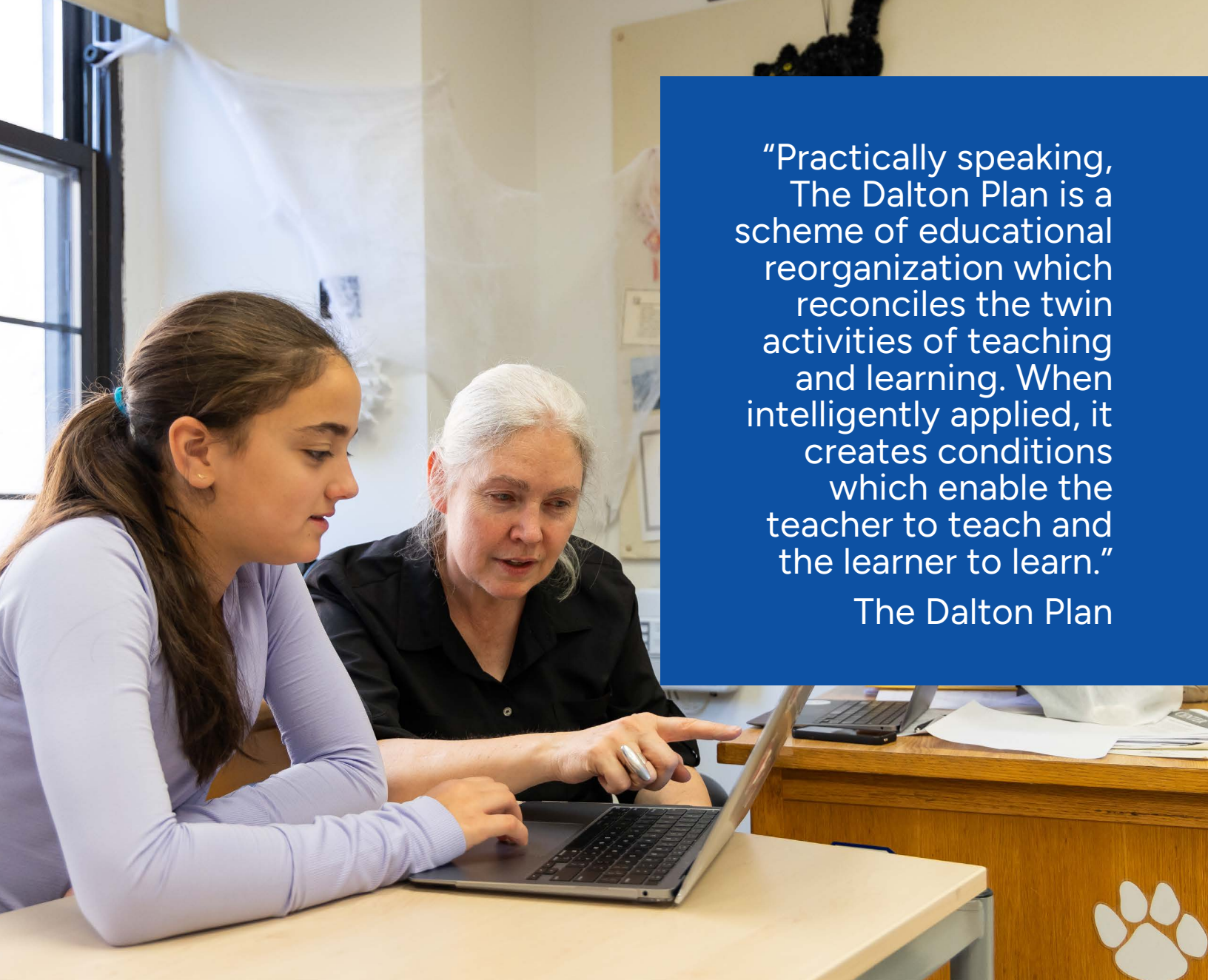
Our guiding principles align precisely with the needs of our time and call us to cultivate values of respect, integrity, compassion, and justice; to encourage community responsibility, combat prejudice, and engage students as participants in a democratic society and global community; and to develop intellectual independence and risk-taking through inquiry, direct experience, and collaboration. Our DEI Vision Statement equally meets the moment, as it lays forth the values that define our intentionally diverse community, as well as our dedication to ensuring that every student feels a sense of belonging.

Since our last strategic plan, the school has navigated tumultuous domestic and worldwide uncertainty: a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, a racial reckoning, rising local inequality, fiercely divisive national politics, and global conflict. Continually reflecting and learning, the school has emerged in a position of strength with boundless possibilities for the future. On the eve of the school's 105th anniversary, the task at hand is to reinforce our foundation by turning our attention to what is core to our community and defines us as singularly Dalton.

The Dalton Plan

The Dalton Plan has withstood the test of time. The possibilities and promise that the Dalton Plan holds are as alive as they were when Helen Parkhurst published her seminal book, "Education on the Dalton Plan" in 1922. Conceiving of and drafting this vision was an exercise in innovation and thoughtful pursuit of a better way to educate children.

Like Dalton today, the Dalton Plan calls for a student-centered approach to learning that leans heavily on the dynamic relationship between teacher and student. The framework of the Dalton Plan – House, Assignment, Lab – is designed to offer students mastery over a wide body of knowledge, the acquisition of which issues from an emphasis on inquiry, experimentation, research, and analysis. The Dalton Plan creates the conditions for students to develop and pursue passions through its first two principles: individual freedom to direct intellectual pursuits and cooperation within the school community. It calls for students to develop a clear sense of self within the context of the community, simultaneous independence and interdependence, and a sense of responsibility to others.



“Practically speaking, The Dalton Plan is a scheme of educational reorganization which reconciles the twin activities of teaching and learning. When intelligently applied, it creates conditions which enable the teacher to teach and the learner to learn.”

The Dalton Plan

Our charge for the next several years is to ensure that we cultivate and nurture the conditions necessary for the Dalton Plan to flourish. This strategic plan will lay the foundation for revitalizing the Dalton Plan for 21st century opportunities, challenges and technologies. To that end, this strategic plan will focus on strengthening the system of core elements of the school as drivers of the Dalton Plan so that our singular school continues to stand apart as a model for other educational institutions.

THREE PRIORITIES

This strategic plan prioritizes the three key inputs in the Dalton Plan:



We have taken an inquiry-focused approach with this strategic plan to identify how, in Parkhurst's words, to intelligently apply and create the conditions for teaching and learning for the next 100 years at the Dalton School. The strategic plan is organized by these priorities and key questions that, when answered, will create the conditions necessary to realize the promise of the Dalton Plan. Following each key question is a set of strategic objectives, which provide the actionable steps that the Board and administration will take over the next five years to move the school forward. These objectives will be tracked and measured to ensure the Dalton Plan is supported organizationally, culturally, and financially to meet the opportunities and challenges of the first trimester of the 21st century.



THRIVING Students

“Learning through inquiry and direct experience and encouraging students to be active constructors of knowledge.”

The Dalton Plan

There are no members of the community more central to our mission than our students. Through the Dalton Plan, we create the conditions necessary for students to engage fully in the curriculum, to take intellectual risks, and to be active constructors of their knowledge. Key to this pursuit is to tend to the wellness of our students, to further the work of ensuring that every Dalton student feels they belong, and to prepare our students to be engaged participants in a pluralistic, democratic society. Graduates of Dalton will take the skills they learn through Lab – self-advocacy, developing a viewpoint substantiated by evidence, sharing a divergent opinion, and collaborating across difference – to be well prepared for the next phase of their lives and education.

How do we ensure that our academic and co-curricular programs deliver a differentiated experience meeting our standard of excellence for each student?

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Advance our commitment to academic excellence through the Dalton Plan, including by defining clearly what it means to be an academically rigorous, progressive K-12 school.
- Engage faculty and administration to construct a scope and sequence map to enhance the K-12 curriculum to ensure the highest quality selection of curricula, consistency in core material, and smooth transitions of students across divisions, to provide an outstanding and seamless educational journey for all students.
- Renew our focus on civil discourse and inquiry through the new Unafraid Project to help students build essential interpersonal skills for engaging in respectful dialogue and discourse reflecting multiple viewpoints.
- Ensure that our arts, athletics, and co-curricular programming provide students with opportunities to pursue their passions, strive for excellence, and compete at the highest level, while remaining aligned with the Dalton Plan and the school's values.
- Develop policies related to the use of generative AI that allow students to develop the crucial skills necessary to use AI productively and skillfully while maintaining academic honesty and integrity.



How do we foster a learning environment where every student can thrive given their unique perspectives and experiences?

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Ensure that our programming and curricula align with the Dalton DEI Vision statement as part of our aims to make all community members feel valued in their commonalities and differences and to maintain a diverse community as integral to academic excellence.
- Expand opportunities for students to contribute to the Dalton community, New York City, and beyond, nurturing a sense of responsibility to others.
- Expand the school's alumni program by developing lifelong relationships that strengthen the school community, providing opportunities for alumni to serve as resources to students and teachers, and creating avenues for inspiring excellence within the student body.
- Evaluate whether our financial aid program meets our mission and values in a city with rising income disparities.



How do we support students in meeting their academic and co-curricular expectations and goals, while also retaining a sense of balance and wellness?

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Implement key recommendations from the Mental Health & Wellness Task Force, including conducting a review of staffing and support structures to ensure that Dalton remains a meaningful and joyful place in which to learn and grow.
- Provide students the necessary skills and support for developing healthy habits as they engage in a rapidly changing technological landscape.
- Develop clear guidelines for modeling collaborative partnerships and effective communication across the school, including establishing community norms around communication and engagement in the school community.

INSPIRING

Faculty & Staff

“...the teacher’s part being to accompany the unfolding life step by step. This is not to relegate the instructor to an inferior plane. To understand the child and to keep pace with his growth she must grow herself.”

The Dalton Plan

For Parkhurst, education is a cooperative endeavor in which the successes and challenges of students and teachers are integrally connected. The nurturing relationship between teacher and student is fundamental to our approach and is valued as a key to our success. Just as our faculty commit to valuing all dimensions of their students, we commit to supporting a thriving culture of educators who model lifelong learning in and out of the classroom. A primary objective of this strategic plan, as of the Dalton Plan, is developing a teaching and learning culture that nurtures curiosity and inspires academic excellence. Our dynamic faculty use the Assignment, not just to drive specific learning today, but also to develop skills applicable across a Dalton graduate’s life.



How do we attract and retain the highest quality faculty and staff in the field?

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Strengthen our robust compensation and benefits package for our faculty and staff to better meet the demands of living in New York City and to support a culture of professional excellence and commitment to progressive education.
- Cultivate an exceptional faculty and staff culture by exploring strategies to affirm that our faculty and staff are appreciated by the administration and held in high regard by parents.
- Expand our professional growth systems to identify opportunities to invest in effective and meaningful training that strengthens the skills of our faculty and staff, fosters professional fulfillment, and provides support for ongoing intellectual pursuits.
- Assess the systems and structures in place to ensure Dalton continues to attract and retain a diverse faculty and staff who are reflective of the school community.

How do we build and sustain structures that provide teachers with the tools they need to be joyful, effective practitioners of the Dalton Plan?

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Develop the Parkhurst Academy through a scaffolded pilot program to ensure that our faculty, both new and returning, are well-versed and supported in utilizing the Dalton Plan as our central pedagogical approach.
- Facilitate more collaboration among departments and divisions, and develop strategies for continuous curriculum reassessment and evolution.
- Build an evaluation framework that celebrates excellent teaching, develops expert practice, defines teacher responsibilities, clarifies reporting structures, and defines accountability.
- Ensure that best practices on AI are evaluated and implemented in support of the Dalton Plan and school mission and that teachers and staff learn the skills necessary to leverage powerful AI tools.
- Assess our leadership framework to ensure that we possess an effective and appropriately scaled team to promote excellence in teaching and learning, thereby solidifying The Dalton Plan as the foundation to realize our educational goals.

OPTIMIZED Facilities

“The conditions under which the pupils live and work are the chief factors of their environment, and a favourable environment is one which provides opportunities for spiritual as well as mental growth.”

The Dalton Plan

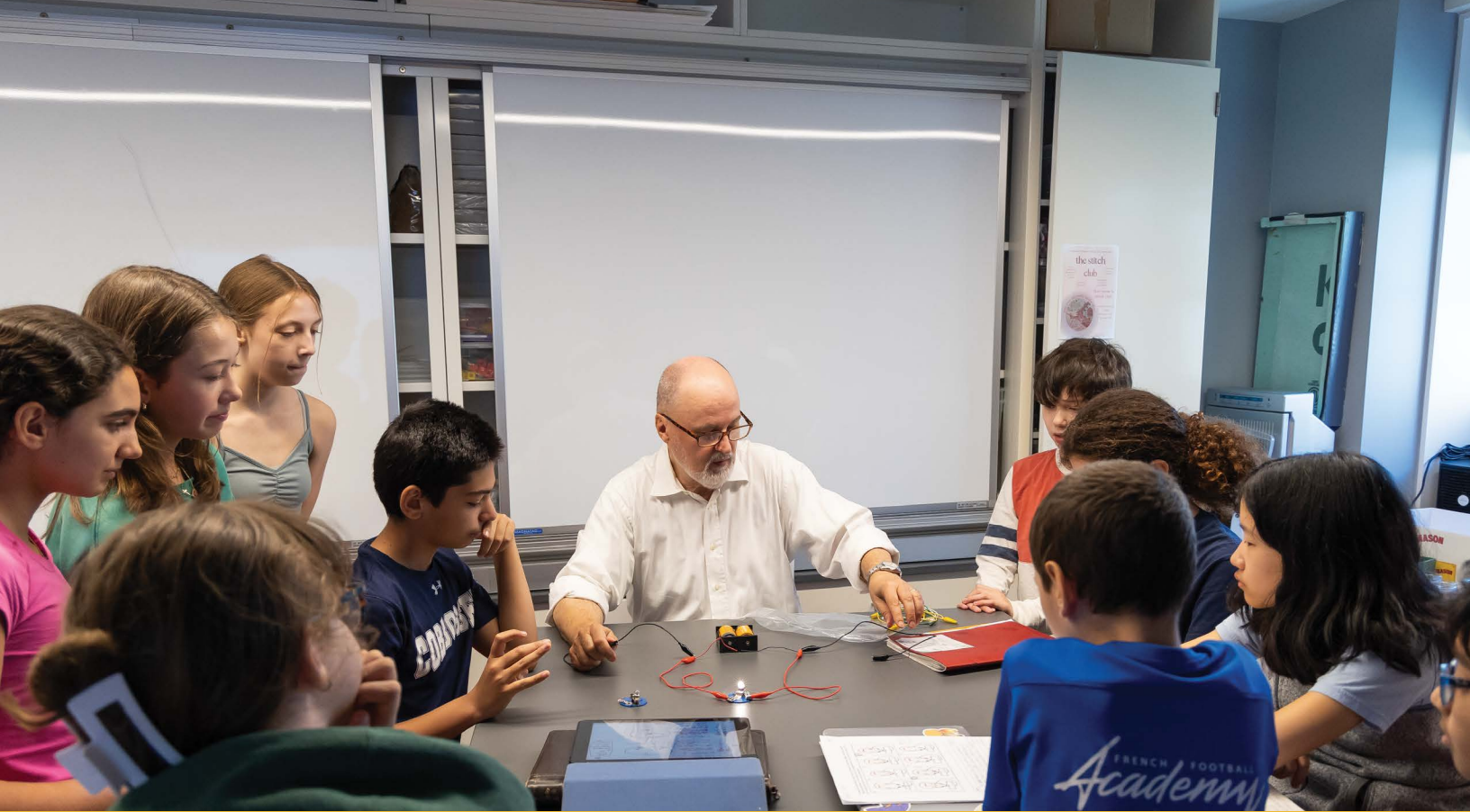
Creating the conditions for the Dalton Plan to thrive begins with providing optimal spaces where our educators ply their craft and our students learn. In recent years, the school has developed spaces that are organized and equipped for carrying out the Dalton Plan, including makerspaces, woodshops, art and dance studios, the Teaching Kitchen, and department labs. We are at the perfect moment to consider how our other campus spaces and the related infrastructure might be used more effectively and efficiently to allow students to explore, work, and create. Much like House, optimized facilities not only provide a physical space for learning, but also afford students the stability and security of an integrated environment of supportive adults and abundant resources for success.



How can our spaces set up the conditions for realizing the Dalton Plan?

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Enhance our current facilities to best position faculty and staff to carry out the Dalton Plan, with special attention paid to House and Lab, and determine if additional square footage is necessary to support our learning community.
- Develop our public gathering spaces to create a “hearth,” a vibrant, dynamic place in the school that appeals to all community members.
- Invest in our facilities so that they can better meet the diverse needs of the community, ensuring that Dalton continues to set the standard for inclusive practices in schools.
- Optimize student enrollment numbers for The Dalton School by considering student-teacher ratios, affordability, and resource allocation to ascertain the student population that best aligns with institutional objectives.
- Invest in information systems to deliver a world-class education and to ensure our data and information systems are protected from cyber threats.



How can we reinforce the long-term sustainability of the school?

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Apply findings from the long-term facilities planning process to ensure the best utilization of the school's footprint following the 2020 expansion and plan to restructure Dalton East.
- Maintain world-class security measures in both our physical locations and our technological infrastructure.
- Upgrade external communication vehicles to demonstrate differentiation from peer schools, and ensure our internal communication practices and strategies enhance transparency within the school community.

Ongoing Work to Maintain Dalton's Foundation

Driving the necessary resources to the Dalton Plan includes ensuring that our long-term financial resources are in place, which we will approach in two significant ways. The Advancement Office in conjunction with the Board will continue to connect the school's ongoing needs with donors' priorities through the Annual Fund.

Additionally, as part of our long-term planning, we will prepare for a capital campaign of significant proportion focusing on students, educators, and facilities. The campaign effort will include identifying ways to substantially grow the school's endowment for the long-term sustainability of our programs, faculty and staff compensation, financial aid offering, and facilities.

The Board will partner with the administration in actualizing this strategic plan through collaboration and support. This strategic plan is essential to fostering a stable and supportive climate across our institution, and, as such, the Board and administration will provide regular updates to the school community on the progress of meeting the objectives outlined in our efforts to elevate the Dalton Plan.

The Strategic Planning Process

In developing this strategic plan, we prioritized a thorough and inclusive process. We began by conducting surveys and focus groups of every constituency in the Dalton community, collecting substantial quantitative and qualitative feedback. The Board and administration worked hand in hand to evaluate the responses and identify our priorities for the next half of a decade. The Strategic Plan Steering Committee was led by Board members who are parents and thoughtful members of the school community.



