

EAGLE RIDGE ACADEMY STRATEGIC DIRECTION

2015-2020 and beyond

Revised January 2016

Mission

The mission of Eagle Ridge Academy is to provide our students with a traditional, classical education that demands their best in academic achievement, behavior, and attitude and challenges them to attain their highest potential.

Vision

Eagle Ridge Academy will offer an academically rigorous, time-tested classical, liberal arts curriculum that:

- *Prepares students to be exemplary and knowledgeable citizens;*
- *Instills a life-long passion for learning;*
- *Values self-discipline, respect, perseverance, and achievement;*
- *Teaches truth, beauty, and goodness; and*
- *Fosters an appreciation for the United States of America and her unique role in the world.*

Aligned to our Founding Beliefs

While the environment around us may change, at Eagle Ridge Academy, we still share the same beliefs as our founding board members.

*“I believe that the most valuable gift we can give our children is the gift of a great education – one that fills them with substantive knowledge, challenges them academically, trains them to use their intellect to recognize and defend truth, inspires them to be great citizens, and sets the course for a life filled with a love and passion for learning. **That’s my vision for Eagle Ridge Academy.**”*

- Cindy Ripple, Founder of Eagle Ridge Academy

*“I believe there is **absolute truth** and all education must engage students, teachers and parents in a relentless search for truth. Education must structurally integrate the **character qualities** of integrity and morality with **factual knowledge**. Learning must take place in an environment where faculty, parents and students share responsibility for learning outcomes.”*

- Rodney “Bud” Becker, Founding Board Member of Eagle Ridge Academy

“I believe that all children deserve an excellent education. A solid academic curriculum coupled with a love for virtue and learning is my passion.”

- Mary Ellen Chamberlain, Founding Secretary; Licensed Teacher

“I believe today's students need a liberal arts education provided in a structured environment where class sizes are kept as small as possible. I also believe students need to be taught by highly qualified and enthusiastic teachers who will thrive in this kind of school. I believe in strict discipline in the classroom, so all students have an opportunity to learn without disruptions. Of course, to be completely successful, schools need parents who are highly involved and supportive of their children's education. I am pleased that another opportunity for learning that encompasses all these qualities exists in the form of Eagle Ridge Academy.”

- Loren Herbst, Founding Board Member; Former Commercial Lender, Small Business Counselor

“I am committed to the development of a school that highlights the infinite possibilities that are created by a solid, traditional education. I believe our Academy will not only meet required standards, it will surpass them.”

- Jim Ripple, Founding Treasurer; Accountant

Preface

Eagle Ridge Academy opened in September 2004 offering a classical education curriculum for grades 6, 7, and 9. Since that point, the school has expanded to offer a full K-12 program serving over 800 students. Eagle Ridge Academy is currently one of the largest charter schools in Minnesota and one of the few K-12 classical education programs in the state.

The school's past strategic plans have included a large number of very specific and detailed goals in select areas. The most recent strategic plan set forth detailed goals in the areas of:

- Academic Performance and Curriculum
- Community Engagement.
- Faculty Development and Retention
- Financial and Operational Stability

These goals helped to ensure Eagle Ridge Academy continued to move ahead with a unified vision for the short term future and provided tangible evidence of that growth through goals that had been met.

Based on the current level of maturity of the school and the administration, the current Strategic Plan is less focused on specific short term goals and more focused on general strategic direction in the form of 6 Strategic Dimensions:

- Physical Environment
- Operations
- Faculty and Staff
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Community
- Finances

Within each of these dimensions, the Board of Directors has thoughtfully crafted a statement pointing in the desired strategic direction. The Board of Directors has also provided definitions, where needed, to ensure a common understanding of some of the words and phrases that might have differing meanings. The Board of Directors has pointed the school in the desired direction for the future.

Building upon each of the Strategic Dimensions, the Administrative Team has specific and measurable and two year goals or objectives.

Role of the Board of Directors vs Role of Administration

To ensure clear responsibilities it is important to distinguish between the role of the Board of Directors and the role of the Administration. We believe the Board of Directors is accountable to set the strategy and long term direction for Eagle Ridge Academy. It is not the role of the Board to direct day to day operational activities for the Academy. We believe it is the Administrations role to set short term goals – aligned to the strategic vision – and to execute the plans to achieve the goals. While there certainly must be a strong partnership between the Board of Directors and the Administration, it is critical to ensure clarity of responsibility.



The diagram above illustrates how the Mission and Vision inform the Strategy. This is the accountability of the Board of Directors. Then, the Administration crafts the 1-2 year action plans following the Strategic direction set out by the Board. Finally, each member of Eagle Ridge Academy sets their own individual action plans aligned to the overall Administrative plans.

Moving Forward

The Strategic Dimensions in this document should be constant over time – just like the organization’s Mission and Vision.

However, the 1-2 year goals will certainly change and evolve from year to year. The intent is that this document is a “living document” that can be updated year after year – with the Board of Directors looking out 5-10 years to set long term strategic direction and the Administration setting new 1-2 year operational goals each year.

In November 2016, the Board of Directors met to review the Strategic Dimensions, Clarifying Definitions and Indicators of Alignment/Success to ensure they continued to reflect the Mission/Vision of the Academy. Following this, the administration updated the Indicators of Success and Goals. This document is the result of this review. Within the document, several additional Indicators of Alignment/Success have been added to help clarify. There are no significant changes or departures from prior intents within the changes made here.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Eagle Ridge Academy will continually develop a physical environment that supports and enhances the mission and vision and fosters community enrichment.

Clarifying Definitions:

- **Physical environment** includes the classroom space, extra-curricular space, outdoor green space, parking, etc.
- **Community enrichment** includes ability for fellowship to be fostered.

<p><u>Indicators of Alignment/Success</u> Completed by Administration; Reviewed and Approved by Board</p>	<p><u>Goals</u> Completed by Administration; Approved by Board</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spaces to support physical activity • Common space for collaboration and leisure • Age and program appropriate classrooms, common space, and restrooms • Safe and secure environment • Meeting spaces for large group • Clear separation of schools including clear thresholds when entering each of the schools • Event center space to foster relationship with outside community to include gym, theater and/or art exhibition space. • Safe, secure, and efficient parking lot traffic flow 	<p>2016-2017</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move existing playground and add adaptive equipment • Clear separation between PE space and Playground space • PE space for all grade levels • Common space will have chairs, stools, and tables to increase collaboration • Rooms and spaces labeled by grade and program • Art in the common spaces that align with our curriculum, mission, vision, Pillars • Intruder alert, security cameras, and blue light system in place • Gymnasium available to rent to outside organizations • Traffic flow plan • Plan for special services spaces for future <p>2017-2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green space added for activities and PE • 2nd Floor Commons added • Walking track added • Auditorium added to promote performing arts and outside relationships • School of Logic and School of Rhetoric separation of space • More art in school spaces • Implement necessary special services spaces • Finalize all warranty items • Add outdoor activity space

OPERATIONS



Eagle Ridge Academy will have operational systems that efficiently support and enhance the academic and instructional programs of the Academy.

Clarifying Definitions:

- **Operational systems** include health services, reception, communications, marketing, admissions, transportation, human resources, technology, food services, safety, security, and building/grounds maintenance.

<u>Indicators of Alignment/Success</u> Reviewed and Approved by Board	<u>Goals</u> Completed by Administration; Approved by Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Operations team will have clear roles and responsibilities with stability in leadership. • Each operational business system develops annual benchmarks • Technology systems will be implemented to increase effectiveness and efficiency • ERA will move from a generalist mindset to a specialist mindset in our operations • Identify guidelines and develop partnerships with other schools to decrease operations cost and increase collaboration • ERA will have an efficient transportation network for students 	<p>2016-2017</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement JD and PD Plan for operations staff • Provide vendors with annual performance reviews and have annual meetings to discuss performance expectations • Start operations cooperative with FOE Schools • Explore lunchroom choices for School of Rhetoric students • Review/improve transportation network • Study needs of operations for proper future staffing • Set indicators of success related to communications <p>•</p> <p>2017-1018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Special Education Cooperative with other FOE schools • Implement new transportation system/bus routes • Implement operations staffing plan based on study of needs • Develop a lunchroom space that is efficient and developmentally appropriate for all age levels

FACULTY & STAFF



Eagle Ridge Academy will create an environment that attracts and fosters classically-trained masters who exemplify the Pillars of the Academy.

Clarifying Definitions:

- **Fosters** means continuing to provide opportunities to mentor, coach, and have healthy peer to peer interactions that supports the pursuit of lifelong learning.
- **A Classically-Trained Master** is someone who brings out the students' own learning, using wonder and awe; able to contemplate using an integrated approach while naturally and authentically integrating content and virtue instruction.

<u>Indicators of Alignment/Success</u> Reviewed and Approved by Board	<u>Goals</u> Completed by Administration; Approved by Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All employees understand WHY ERA exists and their role at the Academy • Eagle Ridge Academy will be a beacon of Classical Education and sought as a school of excellence including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Other Classical schools pursue us for training ○ Attract Classically trained masters ○ Operate as a hub for furthering Classical Ed philosophy • Classical master teachers are identified and recognized. • Effective coaching, mentoring and professional development system for all employees • Succession plan for all leaders • Department Chair/Grade Level Leader type positions in place to promote consistency and support for larger team • Explicit training on collaborative culture to connect new and existing staff • Teachers actively seek out professional development opportunities to learn and grow in their teaching (ie CTCP, etc) • Explicit recruitment and search program in place to find the appropriate faculty and staff. 	<p>2016-2017</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The coaching/mentoring plan will be implemented for operations and non-traditional positions • All employees will participate in an ERA specific Adaptive Schools one day training that promotes collaboration • Administrators will develop a plan for their individual departments that promotes the WHY of ERA • Hire and train Department/Grade Level Chairs • 35% of teachers will be enrolled in the CTCP • Host some type of Classical Education conference <p>2017-2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classical Teacher Certificate Program Cohort C Group (with minimum and maximum numbers set) • Teacher leader positions leading a large group staff/faculty meeting



CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

Eagle Ridge Academy will effectively utilize time-tested, Classical methodologies and curriculum.

Clarifying Definitions:

- **Time-tested** means long lasting, proven to be enduring.
- **Classical methodologies** include teacher directed instruction, Socratic seminars, dialectic/Socratic questions, memorization, writing and speaking eloquently from building blocks of knowledge to enrichment.

<u>Indicators of Alignment/Success</u> Completed by Administration; Reviewed and Approved Board	<u>Goals</u> Completed by Administration; Approved by Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videos, peer observations, and online tools will be available to help teachers observe and learn Classical Methodologies • Classical teaching methodologies, e.g. mimetic lessons, become a part of the vocabulary at ERA • Adherence to Classical education takes precedence over standardized testing results • Curriculum maps and lesson plans will be developed in order to provide guidance to new teachers • Teachers have the Curriculum they need to teach well including the appropriate use of technology as defined by the Classical Coop • A clear process is in place for teachers to request necessary curriculum & instructional supplies • ERA will effectively document our Classical education philosophy • DDI will be rigorous, organic, and led by Teacher Leaders 	<p>2016-2017</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher leaders will lead at least one data analysis meeting • New teachers will be trained on CMap and Classical Handbook prior to the start of the school year • EL program will be evaluated by an outside source • Survey for alumni will be redeveloped with new questions • All staff will be given Classical Handbook either online or electronically <p>2017-2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use data from alumni and constituent surveys to influence change • Feedback from EL program evaluation will be implemented • Articulation of curriculum review process by department (why, what, where they are in the process) • Curriculum will be differentiated/changed for special education in grades 4-12 (particularly Humanities/reading) • Tier 2 interventions in K-8 in reading/literacy will be implemented for students who struggle



COMMUNITY

Eagle Ridge Academy will be a wise and virtuous community which values Classical Education, appreciates the history of Western Civilization and traditions of Eagle Ridge Academy, and celebrates truth, beauty, and goodness.

Clarifying Definitions:

- **Community** includes all faculty, staff, students, parents of the school, as well as vendors, residents, and businesses located near the school.
- **Classical Education** at Eagle Ridge is further defined [here](#).
- **Truth, Beauty, and Goodness** - ERA acknowledges these exist and we aspire to the pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness.

<u>Indicators of Alignment/Success</u> Completed by Administration; Reviewed and Approved by Board	<u>Goals</u> Completed by Administration; Approved by Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eagle Ridge Academy will model the Pillars to the community • Traditions of Eagle Ridge Academy will be celebrated and communicated, while supporting the pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness • Eagle Ridge Academy families & staff will participate in community events • Student, teacher, parent, and alumni will be engaged and contributing to the success of the Academy. • Parents will seek out and participate in opportunities to learn and grow as parents and individuals. • Community members will be recognized for their contributions • ERA will leverage and appreciate the diversity of our community while staying true to the vision and mission of the Academy. • ERA will be recognized by staff as a “family friendly workplace” • Parents clearly understand their responsibilities when they enroll their children at ERA 	<p>2016-2017</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer tracking program • ED and DC will interview diverse group of parents in order to get ideas of how to engage all representative cultures at ERA • ERA will incorporate activities and athletics as a way to add traditions and community events that will align with valued traditions • ERA facilities will be available for community use • Volunteer recognition celebration will be implemented <p>2017-2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of individual or group contributions as volunteers • Promote community use of building

FINANCES



Eagle Ridge Academy will use financially sound practices in order to provide an effective learning environment and the ability to fund desirable programs.

Clarifying Definitions:

- **Financially sound** means programs that are sustainable by legal and ethical means.
- **An Effective learning environment** is one that has the resources necessary to teach effectively. **Desirable programs** are programs, either curricular or co/extra-curricular, that fit within and further supports the mission and vision.

<u>Indicators of Alignment/Success</u> Completed by Administration; Reviewed and Approved by Board	<u>Goals</u> Completed by Administration; Approved by Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget decisions will be made with the primary consideration given to impact on student learning • A fund balance adequate to withstand increased holdbacks and significant emergency expenses • Five-year budget will be in place • A strong development program • FERA & ERA will have a clear statement of intent outlining their relationship and decision making practices. • Teachers will have full visibility to the budget process and will understand its impacts on their classrooms (leadership, dept chair, & board members are able to effectively articulate why principals don't always approve everything teachers ask for) • Teacher salaries within 90% of surrounding district (total comp is comparable to neighboring districts) • School operating expenses are proportional to the budget and or size of school 	<p>2016-2017</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase of 2% to fund balance FY17 • FERA oversee development director and develop strategic plan • Monies in place for Phase II construction <p>2017-2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet benchmark of 14% for Fund Balance <p>2018-2019</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet benchmark of 17% for Fund Balance <p>2019-2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve 20% Fund Balance as mandated in FOE contract

Conclusion

At Eagle Ridge Academy, we are committed to our mission of providing our students with a traditional, Classical Education that demands their best in academic achievement, behavior, and attitude and challenges them to attain their highest potential. First and foremost, our strategy must always support this mission and vision of the school. As a Board of Directors, we are committed to providing long term vision for the school while empowering the administration to effectively manage the day to day operational activities of the Academy. By crafting these strategic dimensions, we believe this sets a clear long term direction in support of the mission and vision while allowing the administration to set the short term operational goals.

The Strategic Dimensions in this document should be constant over time – just like the organization’s Mission and Vision.

However, the 1-2 year goals will certainly change and evolve from year to year. The intent is that this document is a “living document” that can be updated year after year – with the Board of Directors looking out 5-10 years to set long term strategic direction and the Administration setting new 1-2 year operational goals annually.