

# The Growing Place School Strategic Plan 2024-2028



Approved by TGPS Advisory Board  
November 13, 2024

**Contents:**

- A. Introduction and Mission ..... 1
- B. Strategic Plan Goals:
  - 1. Build a Replacement Facility..... 2
  - 2. Invest in Human Capital..... 3
  - 3. Develop and expand the Elementary School Program through Grade 5..... 4
  - 4. Develop a Marketing Plan to Spread the Word about TGPS ..... 6
- C. Afterword ..... 7

## ***Growing Faith, Hearts, and Minds***

### **Faith-Based Education:**

We believe in providing a safe, nurturing, and spiritual environment as we encourage children to broaden experiences, ideas, feelings, and understandings connected to faith, by:

- promoting Christian values;
- sharing opportunities to experience the power of God as children discover all God created;
- serving the community through altruism;
- understanding God’s love for all, including people of different beliefs, races, and cultures; and
- broadening experiences, ideas, feelings, and understandings connected to Christian faith through Bible stories, devotions, daily prayers.

### **We Believe:**

- We believe in nurturing the whole child to develop their individual strengths as a confident innovator, creative critical thinker, resourceful problem solver, and compassionate change maker.
- We believe happy children thrive in a safe, stimulating, innovative environment that honors the wonder of childhood and the beauty of nature.
- We believe in fostering an enthusiastic, caring community of learners dedicated to serving the world around them with respect.
- We believe educators are guides, mentors, coaches, facilitators, and co-learners who nurture children with meaningful learning experiences, based on children’s interests, that are geared towards creativity, self-expression, exploration, discovery, and investigation.
- We believe the school community is built on collaborative partnerships with parents and the church that embrace the greatest intentions for a child’s well-rounded development and success as a happy citizen.

### **We Value:**

- |                |              |                 |
|----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| • Spirituality | • Compassion | • Individuality |
| • Respect      | • Connection | • Knowledge     |

### **Our Mission:**

The Growing Place School is committed to providing an inclusive, faith-based education for children ages one year through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, preparing children for entrance into diverse community middle school programs, and cultivating a community of spiritual, compassionate, creative, and thriving world citizens.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Approved by TGPS Advisory Board 9/18/24

**Goal I      Build a Replacement Facility**

**Core Belief(s)**      We believe happy children thrive in a safe, stimulating, innovative environment that honors the wonder of childhood and the beauty of nature.

- Steps**
- Support the leadership role of the Church Building Committee.
  - Together with the Church Building Committee, create a construction timeline, inclusive of “What if?” scenarios and respective contingent plans.
  - Identify any spaces that will be deemed unusable during construction and make appropriate contingent plans.
  - Together with the Church Building Committee, plan a groundbreaking ceremony to increase community buy-in.
  - Inventory existing furniture, fixtures, and equipment (FF&E) and determine which items will be relocated to replacement building.
  - Determine needs for new (FF&E) for replacement building and budget accordingly.
  - Host periodic meetings to update the school community on the project and its benefits.
  - Host a dedication ceremony upon completion of the replacement facility to celebrate the accomplishment and build goodwill.

**Assessment**      Work products, contracts, meeting agendas/minutes, purchase orders, performance plans, etc.

**Time Frame**      Ongoing process with annual review; FF&E orders should be completed 4-6 months prior to completion of replacement facility.

**Goal II Invest in Human Capital**

**Core Belief(s)**

- We believe educators are guides, mentors, coaches, facilitators, and co-learners who nurture children with meaningful learning experiences, based on children’s interests, that are geared towards creativity, self-expression, exploration, discovery, and investigation.
- We believe the school community is built on collaborative partnerships with parents and the church that embrace the greatest intentions for a child’s well-rounded development and success as a happy citizen.

**Steps**

- Benchmark current staffing levels (positions and quantity) against other South Florida independent schools with similarly sized enrollments and grade level configurations.
- Benchmark current employee benefits (bonuses, health, professional development, PTO, retirement, tuition remission, etc.) against other South Florida independent schools to determine areas for additional investment.
- Consider recommendations proffered by the school’s accrediting agency to determine areas for improvement in personnel and possible solutions.
- Audit current job descriptions to determine if the current duties match the descriptions; revise as needed.
- Review requirements of all federal, state, and local programs implemented by the school and assess their impact on human capital and recommend adjustments accordingly.
- Apprise advisory board of findings on a continuous basis to secure their input and support.
- Identify revenue sources (e.g., tuition and fees) to support the staffing plan, bearing in mind that admissions and development positions are typically revenue-generating functions.

**Assessment**

Analyses, updated job descriptions, budget and staffing plans, and performance plans.

**Time Frame**

Ongoing process with annual review; based on current administrative workloads, investment in human capital should stairstep up in each year of the strategic plan.

### **Goal III      Develop and expand the Elementary School Program through Grade 5**

#### **Core Belief(s)**

- We believe in nurturing the whole child to develop their individual strengths as a confident innovator, creative critical thinker, resourceful problem solver, and compassionate change maker.
- We believe happy children thrive in a safe, stimulating, innovative environment that honors the wonder of childhood and the beauty of nature.
- We believe in fostering an enthusiastic, caring community of learners dedicated to serving the world around them with respect.
- We believe educators are guides, mentors, coaches, facilitators, and co-learners who nurture children with meaningful learning experiences, based on children’s interests, that are geared towards creativity, self-expression, exploration, discovery, and investigation.
- We believe the school community is built on collaborative partnerships with parents and the church that embrace the greatest intentions for a child’s well-rounded development and success as a happy citizen.

#### **Steps**

- Reaffirm TGPS’s mission, beliefs, and values as a faith-based, independent school and make all curriculum-related decisions through this lens. Maintain who you are as school.
- Leverage the resources available through the Florida Council of Independent Schools’ (FCIS) accreditation process and (imminent) membership to inform and support continuous improvement to TGPS’s curriculum:
  - Self-Study process (analysis);
  - Visiting Committee Report (recommendations);
  - Response to Recommendations (action);
  - FCIS member-discounted professional development; and
  - Serving on an accreditation evaluation committee.
- Assess admissions expectations at desired feeder secondary schools to determine student entry requirements, test score expectations, prerequisite coursework, service-learning expectations, and extracurricular experiences. Engage in “backward planning” to ensure TGPS graduates possess the required skill sets and prerequisites for acceptance.
- Evaluate and select an annual standardized test option that best fits the needs of TGPS, the data reporting requirements for Step-Up scholarships, and the admissions expectations at feeder secondary schools.
- Develop a list of recommended professional development activities and conferences based on expectations for TGPS’s instructional staff.
- Continue to allocate time on a regular basis for the purpose of curriculum development/mapping, classroom visitations, and vertical and grade-level team meetings; consider alternative scheduling options to meet this objective.
- Provide a unified format for continued curriculum mapping that includes assessment of goals with a schedule for periodic review.

**Goal III      Develop and expand the Elementary School Program through Grade 5**

- Marshal resources to support curriculum development and professional development.
- Create additional service-learning opportunities for older students to be mentors for younger students, e.g., reading buddies, tutors, etc.
- Investigate adding academic acceleration opportunities as part of TGPS’s extracurricular program.
- Provide admissions counseling for graduating Grade 5 students.
- Monitor and share the success stories of TGPS alumni.

**Assessment**      Work products, Self-Study, Visiting Committee Report, Response to Recommendations, professional development logs/calendars, budget line items, meeting agendas/minutes, purchase orders, etc.

**Time Frame**      Ongoing process with annual review.

## **Goal IV      Develop a Marketing Plan to Spread the Word about TGPS**

### **Core Belief(s)**

- We believe happy children thrive in a safe, stimulating, innovative environment that honors the wonder of childhood and the beauty of nature.
- We believe the school community is built on collaborative partnerships with parents and the church that embrace the greatest intentions for a child's well-rounded development and success as a happy citizen.

### **Steps**

- Identify the reason(s) why TGPS community wishes to spread the word about the school as this will determine the type of marketing plan developed, e.g., recruitment of students, enhancing the school's profile, or both? The following may or may not be implemented depending on the intent:
  - Assess TGPS's presence on *Google*, *Great Schools*, and *Niche* and enhance its profile through solicitation of parent reviews and addition or correction of content. (This step could also be contracted to an expert.)
  - Assess TGPS's presence on Instagram and Facebook to determine if pages are intended for student recruitment or providing content to the existing school community. Focus should be on one or the other. If providing content to the existing community, the pages should be made private or moved to a learning management platform such as FACTS or Veracross.
  - Meet with admissions directors at feeder secondary schools to provide them with information about TGPS; invite same directors to tour TGPS.
  - Invite local realtors to tour TGPS.
  - Attend Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce or other community/business meetings to create awareness of and to promote TGPS.
  - Provide collateral materials for the offices of local doctors specializing in pediatric medicine.
  - Advertise in publications, such as the *Private School Guide*.
  - Promote the replacement facility once renderings become available.
  - Maintain acceptance data of TGPS graduates and share the results.
- Assess to determine if the advisory board, church and in-house leadership have the capacity to develop a marketing plan and adjust resources accordingly, e.g., contracting a marketing consultant and/or social media guru.

### **Assessment**

Work products, calendared meetings, contracts, web screenshots, online data tracking, performance plans, etc.

### **Time Frame**

Ongoing process with annual review. If the decision is to hire a marketing expert, this should be done early-on in the process (if financially feasible) to realize the most bang for the buck on this strategic goal.

**Afterword:**



*“If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll end up someplace else.” – Yogi Berra*

The Growing Place School’s (TGPS) leadership team secured the services of Mr. Michael Bell, Florida Council of Independent Schools (FCIS) Advisor, to lead them through the strategic planning process in preparation for their initial accreditation evaluation. During the seven-months spanning May through November 2024, Mr. Bell led TGPS’s advisory board through this thoughtful process. The advisory board represents the entirety of the school’s stakeholders: clergy, finance, leadership, parents, and staff. Based on the dedication of all involved, TGPS’s leadership attests that the strategic plan conforms to the expectations of FCIS Standard 3: Strategic and Long-Term Planning. The concomitant five-year budget exists as an artifact under separate cover. As a “living” document, TGPS’s board and leadership welcome all recommendations to enhance the school’s journey of continuous improvement.

The strategic plan honors the principles of good governance; to wit:

- The board has one employee – the head of school (HOS). The board hires and supervises the work of only the HOS.
- Meetings of the board should be more about the long-term future of the school, rather than the short-term. The core focus of the board meeting is strategic planning. The agenda for each board meeting should be derived from the strategic plan.<sup>2</sup>

The Growing Place School’s strategic plan articulates a “big picture” direction for the organization. Omission of names and/or titles responsible for the strategic goal action steps was purposefully omitted from the plan to avoid any appearance of the advisory board’s evaluation of staff members—other than the HOS—by proxy. The goals in the plan will be incorporated into the annual evaluation of the HOS, who may include the work of other staff members in the fulfillment of this plan. As a living, breathing document, TGPS’s strategic plan is intentionally untethered from rigid implementation timelines within its five-year period. Evidence of progress will be documented with collateral materials, reports, data, meeting agendas/minutes, and staff evaluations.

---

<sup>2</sup> DeKuyper, Mary Hundley. *Trustee Handbook*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition, NAIS, 2003.