

ONWARD & OUTWARD 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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University of Pennsylvania Partnership School

PREPARED IN COLLABORATION WITH:



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. PURPOSE

The Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander University of Pennsylvania Partnership School, also known as Penn Alexander School (PAS), is pleased to present the three-year strategic plan: *Onward & Outward*. PAS is the result of an historic partnership between the University of Pennsylvania (Penn), the School District of Philadelphia (SDP), and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT) to build a model university-assisted, kindergarten to 8th grade public school for West Philadelphia children. Befitting this “first” public-private partnership, the school was named for Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander, a distinguished graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and a woman of many “firsts.” Founded in 2001 at 43rd and Locust Streets in Philadelphia, the school is dedicated to providing high-quality public education to neighborhood children through a child-centered, research-based program.

PAS was developed with the participation of parent/guardians, teachers, university faculty, community members, and neighborhood groups. The school opened with kindergarten and 1st grade in September 2001. The phase-in of all grades (PreK–8) was complete in 2004. In 2016, the school earned the much-coveted US Department of Education National Blue Ribbon award for its exemplary accomplishment in closing in the achievement gap. As it concludes its second decade, PAS has engaged in a yearlong self-reflective strategic planning process under the leadership of Principal Michael Farrell. Committed to a thoughtful and deliberative approach, PAS’s leadership and stakeholders are poised to chart the future of the school and define what success looks like in a new era of realizing its mission over the next three years.

B. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

MISSION

PAS is guided by the following mission¹:

The school’s educational mission is to maximize the academic and personal competence of all its students to become successful life-long learners and productive citizens in a diverse and highly technological society. A challenging research-based instructional program leads children to mastery of fundamental ideas, skills, and learning strategies, and prepares them to meet the highest academic standards. At the same time, the school strives to develop students’ abilities to be independent and self-directed in pursuing high standards of learning. The school is organized into smaller units whose structures and approaches respond to children’s changing developmental needs and build community among students and staff. These small communities ensure that all children have ample opportunities to form positive bonds with adults and other students in a climate that models respect for learning, promotes appreciation for the unique qualities and needs of each child, and engages students in active participation and learning.

Because it is a community school, the local neighborhood serves as a laboratory and text for learning. There are also extensive opportunities for children to participate in learning

¹ Penn Alexander School Student Handbook, 2017-2018.

experiences through extended day programs, and for parents/guardians and other adults in the community to volunteer their talents and time in support of the educational program.

As a center for professional development, the school models a learning community where staff regularly engages in activities to advance their knowledge and skills. Team-teaching, mentoring teachers in training, graduate study, and research with Penn faculty are regular aspects of professional life at the school. Research and curriculum development conducted collaboratively by staff from the school and the University yield innovative approaches that ensure that all children succeed to the highest academic standards. Through a wide range of learning opportunities provided for teachers throughout the West Philadelphia and University area, the school will be an active site for cross-school collaborations, on-site residencies, study groups and other professional activities for teachers and school leaders. The community at large understands that many special features of the school will be implemented over a multi-year period.

CORE VALUES

At the start of the 2017–2018 school year, PAS introduced its five core values to the school community. These values were kept at the forefront of the strategic planning process and are reflected throughout the planning initiatives:

Learning	Responsibility	Collaboration	Equity	Reflection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are creators and builders of our education; this is our priority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our words and actions matter; they create our community and our world. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We work together, and we have much to learn from one another. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone matters, everyone is included, everyone listens, everyone leads. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are lifelong learners seeking continuous growth.

C. STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Excited about building on its strengths and committed school community, PAS has engaged in a thoughtful planning process to assess school needs and develop a strategy to foster alignment and clarity for all school stakeholders including students, teachers, and families. In a rigorous nine-month planning process, the PAS Strategic Planning Task Force, with the support of consultants from Bloom Planning, a Philadelphia-based strategic planning firm, gathered input from over 670 staff members, students, families, alumni, and community members and leveraged the expertise from multiple PAS partners including the University of Pennsylvania, the School District of Philadelphia, and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers.

This report is one of the outputs of this process and explains how PAS will leverage its strengths while also addressing those areas that currently need improvement.

WHAT IS A STRATEGIC PLAN?

- A self-created road map to guide decisions, growth, and change and help us realize our collective mission and vision for the future
- A process of stakeholder engagement yielding a set of carefully considered pathways and goals that bring our core priorities—students, educators, curriculum—into focus for the next five years
- A living document that will be revisited and revised on a regular basis

A STRATEGIC PLAN IS NOT...

- A tactical plan
- A static document
- Everything everyone wants nor everything the system does

Importantly, this plan includes critical SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound) objectives and accompanying metrics for each initiative area to help PAS gauge progress and achieve success. Further, planners reviewed each initiative through the lens of the school’s core values. This strategic plan is intended to be a living, working document that PAS will continuously monitor and improve.

D. PROCESS OVERVIEW: VISIONING IMPACT & PRIORITIZING SUCCESS

PAS embarked on a strategic planning process to create a new vision and design the pathways to achieve it. This process was grounded in meaningful discovery activities (e.g., surveys and focus groups) and sound decision-making processes.

Discovery Phase

The first step in the strategic-planning process involved a robust discovery phase to gather stakeholder input and develop leadership perspectives about the school’s areas of strength and growth. Through a variety of feedback opportunities, stakeholders from across the PAS community had the opportunity to reflect on the school’s strengths, areas for improvement, threats, and opportunities, as well as provide feedback on general satisfaction. The results of these efforts produced four summary reports (*Stakeholder Interview Report, Stakeholder Survey Report, Staff Focus Group Report, State of the School Report*), which were then synthesized into a comprehensive *Discovery Phase Executive Summary*.

DISCOVERY PHASE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Discovery Phase Executive Summary* identified trends from across the discovery methods and identified seven key considerations. These headlines formed the basis for the visioning process in the next phase of planning.

1. Meeting the needs of all learners
2. Operational assets and challenges
3. Sustaining and building leadership and staff quality
4. Pursuing enrichment opportunities
5. Sustaining diversity as healthy for students and staff
6. Hearing all voices
7. Maximizing the Penn partnership

Stakeholder Interviews

- **12 interviews (7 phone; 5 written)**
- Representatives from Penn. SDP, PAS parent/guardians, PAS staff, PAS alumni, and PAS community members
- **Stakeholder Interview Report**

Stakeholder Surveys

- **653 survey respondents**
- 47 staff members
- 323 parent/guardians
- 206 students
- 77 alumni/ community members
- **Stakeholder Survey Report**

Staff Focus Group

- **13 participants**
- Representation from across grade levels and subject areas
- **Staff Focus Group Report**

State of the School

- **Review of:**
- Demographics and enrollment
- Academic performance
- Climate and culture
- **State of the School Report**

Visioning Phase

To make meaning of the extensive information gathered during the discovery phase, PAS staff and leadership convened multiple sessions to build understanding and refine planning options.

- PAS Leadership Review: January 9, 2018
- PAS Community Review: January 23, 2018
- PAS Strategic Planning Task Force Review: February 6, 2018 and March 7, 2018

Informed by this feedback process, the PAS Strategic Planning Task Force developed the following vision statement:

Vision: By providing an equitable and purposeful learning experience that pushes us to build a just community, we ensure that all students are prepared for a vibrant future, responsible to each other, our city, and our world.

Our school serves as a learning hub of professional practice for Philadelphia educators seeking to maximize their own and their students' growth, and a space for our school community to come together to grow and learn.

Planning Phase

In the planning phase, the task force divided into working groups with six to eleven members each to engage in the detailed work of shaping and planning five core pathways for achieving the long-term vision for the school:

Academic Program, Meeting All Students' Needs, Social & Emotional Development, Learning Hub, Families as Partners. Each group brainstormed and finalized a big goal and four to five strategic initiatives and corresponding SMART objectives. Groups then created detailed year 1 plans articulating tasks, outputs, owners, and timelines. A separate *Implementation Tool* accompanies this narrative and includes the comprehensive list of granular planning detail to support execution and accountability.

Five Planning Pathways



PATHWAY 1: Academic Program

The Academic Program pathway took on the work of reinforcing and strengthening PAS's already strong curriculum and instructional approach, designed to meet or exceed the state standards.

BIG GOAL: By 2021, Penn Alexander's research-based and comprehensive learning plan showcases a vertically and horizontally aligned curriculum, with embedded hallmark educational experiences at each grade level, and ensures a shared student experience. The plan supports cross-subject collaboration, teacher collaboration and development, and connections with our local and global communities, in order to prepare our students for their next level of learning.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES & SMART OBJECTIVES

<p>1.1 High School Readiness</p>	<p>By September 2019, the PAS community has defined a comprehensive and inclusive vision for high school readiness and adopted profiles that clearly define the distinguishing mindsets, roles, responsibilities, skills, and capacities of students, teachers, leaders, and administrators for achieving that vision.</p>
<p>1.2 PAS Teaching Philosophy</p>	<p>By September 2020, PAS has implemented research-informed “high-impact” teaching strategies in connection with the school’s articulated philosophy of pedagogy and child development.</p>
<p>1.3 Curriculum Alignment</p>	<p>By June 2021, there is program/curriculum/technology continuity in the four content areas (reading, writing, math, science) within grade bands (K–2, 3–5, 6–8) and integration with art, music, PE, and technology within each grade.</p>
<p>1.4 Teacher PD System</p>	<p>By June 2021, PAS has implemented an annual process for creating systematized PD based on an annual needs assessment for teachers.</p>
<p>1.5 Social Studies Curriculum Development</p>	<p>By June 2021, each grade has a social studies scope and sequence that contains all content and learning objectives ready for school-wide full implementation.</p>

PATHWAY 2: Meeting All Students’ Needs

Building on a consistent theme from the discovery phase, this pathway aims to create a more inclusive and cohesive approach to student support services across the school, including programming for English learners, students with disabilities, and students in need of additional academic supports. The working group set the following big goal:

BIG GOAL: By 2021, Penn Alexander’s Student Support Program is embedded into school practices, ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all students. All students have the opportunity to grow every day. Students grow through multiple means of expression and experiences (arts, music, sports, etc.) as well as academically. As a school, we use a data-informed approach to help meet students’ needs. Students’ progress is assessed, reviewed, and celebrated, and supports ensure student growth is maximized.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES & SMART OBJECTIVES

<p>2.1 Shared Ownership</p>	<p>By June 2021, supported by clear, role-specific expectations and professional development, PAS staff realizes a shared ownership of student support and growth in order to provide students with effective resources across all settings to maximize their potential and ensure equitable access to Penn Alexander opportunities.</p>
<p>2.2 Communication Structure</p>	<p>By June 2021, all staff—general education teachers, student support teachers, administration, support staff, and external providers—use formal communication structures to regularly and clearly communicate student needs and ensure continuity of supports throughout a student’s PAS experience.</p>
<p>2.3 Program Coordination</p>	<p>Based on a regular formal needs assessment, by June 2021, data-informed and evidence-based student support programs are available and accessed during the school day (and outside of the school only when appropriate).</p>

	They are regularly monitored to ensure effectiveness, accessibility, and appropriate resource allocation, while providing a full continuum of supports to address a range of student needs.
2.4 Data Systems	By June 2021, PAS has an implementation-ready school-wide data collection system that includes the methods and tools for each grade band and a plan for teacher training. Data includes achievement testing, growth progress monitoring, and student data portfolio collection, and is differentiated by student need.

PATHWAY 3: Social & Emotional Development

Honoring the important work of ensuring students receive a well-rounded education that develops their social and emotional well-being as much as their academic achievement, this pathway focuses attention on the areas of wellness, positive identify development, and student leadership.

BIG GOAL: By 2021, Penn Alexander has an intentional culture based on a social-emotional wellness model that serves as a foundation for student success both socially and academically. Our evidence-based practices recognize and adapt to the changing developmental needs of our students and community to nurture healthy minds and bodies.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES & SMART OBJECTIVES

3.1 Social-Emotional Wellness Model	By June 2021, the PAS community has designed a school-wide developmentally appropriate social-emotional wellness model that includes evidence-based grade-band (K–2, 3–5, 6–8) practices and benchmarks and is grounded in the school's core values.
3.2 Positive Identity Development	By June 2021, 80 percent of returning PAS staff report increased self-awareness around racial identity and the intersectionality around other identities and how it impacts their teaching practice and student and community relationships.
3.3 Health & Wellness	By 2021, PAS has implemented school-wide student health (nutrition, sex ed, mindfulness) and physical activity benchmarks, with dedicated time in the schedule (or integrated into core subjects).
3.4 Student Leadership	By 2021, teachers and staff lead a systematic and consistent school-wide student leadership and recognition program (by grade band) that leverages diverse student strengths and is responsive to community needs.

PATHWAY 4: Learning Hub

This pathway focuses on the second part of the vision, which emphasizes PAS’s desire to serve as a model for strong pedagogy and adult learning. It involves coordination with PAS’s partners at Penn, SDP, and PFT to codify research-based best practices, build teachers’ leadership skills, and eventually open the school’s doors to educators who want to visit and grow their knowledge and skills.

BIG GOAL: By 2021, in collaboration with our school partners, the Penn Alexander Learning Hub provides structures and opportunities for educators to be lifelong learners and leaders resulting in continuous improvement and high performance.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES & SMART OBJECTIVES

4.1 PAS Beliefs about Adult Learning	By June of 2019, the PAS Learning Hub has implemented a defined theory of action regarding adult learning, prioritizing continuous improvement, recognizing that adults need to learn about teaching through multiple modalities (didactic, observational), and understanding that teaching is a multi-modal practice.
4.2 Blueprint for Learning Hub	By June of 2021, PAS has created a pilot-ready blueprint that articulates services, roles, and opportunities for PAS teachers/teacher-leaders, PAS student teachers, and visiting teachers.
4.3 PAS Teacher-Leadership Program	By June of 2021, all returning teachers self-identify as leaders and articulate their mode of leadership (e.g., student teacher host, student activity sponsor, instructional leadership).
4.4 Student Teacher Program	By June of 2020, PAS ensures a cohesive student teacher (pre-service teacher) experience based on a specific set of core practices, aligned to the Learning Hub blueprint.

PATHWAY 5: Families as Partners

This pathway values the incredible family community that surrounds PAS. Its initiatives seek to create stronger connections between PAS families and staff, expand programming by capitalizing on parent/guardian strengths, and ensure that families feel included and engaged in the PAS community.

BIG GOAL: By 2021, the Penn Alexander community draws upon, and contributes to, the vitality of the school community through active engagement with families, community members, partners, and friends in support of mutual student and community growth. By engaging diverse voices and creating space to co-learn and co-lead, we ensure everyone has an opportunity to participate at all levels of school and community development.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES & SMART OBJECTIVES

5.1 Family Onboarding & Communication	By June 2021, PAS has an annual plan for needs assessment, communications, and programming to support new and current families in being part of the PAS community.
5.2 Equity & Empowerment	By June 2021, school staff and families lead purposeful work to ensure that PAS is an inclusive and just school community. Through facilitated engagement around gender and sexual identities, abilities, race, and cultural and economic backgrounds, the PAS community is empowered and mobilized to acknowledge and overcome inequities in our community.
5.3 Fundraising for Program Support	By June 2021, the PAS school staff, Home and School Association, community organizations, and the newly formed Friends of Penn Alexander group collaborate to develop a multi-year fundraising plan to support PAS programming and operations.
5.4 Family Programming & Leadership	By June 2021, the PAS principal will coordinate a semi-annual meeting with current school group leaders (e.g., HSA, SAC), to review community programming, participation, and future leadership needs. Reflections will be used to plan future programming, develop leaders, and expand leadership opportunities that represent the diversity of our school community.

5.5 Classroom Connection

By June 2021, through in-class and out of class volunteer opportunities, family workshops, and student celebrations/performances, every grade level (K–8) has a calendar of regularly scheduled opportunities for families to become more connected to their child's classroom community.

Accountability Phase**ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN**

In June 2018, Bloom facilitated a discussion with PAS leadership to develop an accountability plan that ensures impact through full-scale implementation. Specifically, this plan scopes the parameters that leadership will follow to support implementation accountability. Leadership reached agreement on the following critical components: 1) key players in regular plan progress monitoring; 2) reporting structures for implementation teams; 3) progress monitoring practices; and 4) key risks and contingency plans.

METRICS, MEASURES & DATA

PAS recognizes that creating effective, targeted metrics is essential to monitoring the school's success, particularly as it takes on bold and innovative initiatives. PAS will use a comprehensive set of metrics to monitor progress toward achievement of each pathway's strategic initiatives. These metrics are described in the pathway sections of the strategic plan and articulated in detail in both the strategic plan as well as an accompanying *Implementation Tool*.

II. PLANNERS

This strategic plan represents hundreds of hours of work by many members of the PAS community, including PAS staff, parent/guardians, and partners. PAS's leadership team and task force drove the initial phases of work, and then additional planning team group members joined during the planning phase to create initiatives and action plans.

PAS Leadership Team

- Michael Farrell, Principal
- Ann Kreidle, Planning Coordinator, Penn Liaison
- Megan Wapner, Dean of Students

PAS Strategic Planning Task Force

- Rotonya Carr, PAS parent, HSA representative
- Michael Farrell, Principal
- Zachary Herrmann, Director and Lecturer, Penn GSE
- Tarik Johnson, Teacher Leader (Student Supports)
- Theresa Knight, School Counselor
- Erica Koplove, Kindergarten Teacher

- Ann Kreidle, Planning Coordinator, Penn Liaison
- Jessica McCollum, PAS Parent, SAC Member
- Maria Ottinger, 4th Grade Teacher
- Tiffany Settles, 7th/8th Grade Literacy Teacher
- Melissa Trusty, Teacher Leader (K–3)
- Megan Wapner, Dean of Students

Bloom Planning

- Ingrid Boucher, Founder and Principal
- Katy Tipson, Operations Manager and Research Associate
- Alyssa Matteucci, Research Analyst

PAS Pathway Planning Team Members**ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

- Michael Farrell, Principal
- Abby Gray, Senior Researcher, Penn Consortium for Policy Research in Education
- Zachary Herrmann, Director and Lecturer, Penn GSE
- Erica Koplove, Kindergarten Teacher
- Erin Lane, Children's Literacy Initiative
- Maria Ottinger, 4th Grade Teacher
- Tiffany Settles, Literacy Teacher (6–8)
- Farrell Sharkey, Kindergarten Teacher
- Melissa Trusty, Teacher Leader (K–3)
- Megan Wapner, Dean of Students

MEETING ALL STUDENTS' NEEDS

- Alexis Adorno, Special Education Teacher
- Elsie Camp, ESL Specialist
- Tamika Diggs, PAS Parent
- Michael Farrell, Principal
- Tarik Johnson, Teacher Leader (Student Supports)
- Cheri Micheau, ESL Specialist

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Ali Caccavella, PAS Parent
- Beth Clauss, Penn Social Work Supervisor
- Michael Farrell, Principal
- Daniel Hartzog, Kindergarten Teacher
- Theresa Knight, School Counselor
- Amy Kurland, 5th Grade Literacy Teacher
- Brianna McNamara, 5th Grade Social Studies Teacher

LEARNING HUB

- NancyLee Bergey, Associate Director for Teacher Education, Penn GSE
- Caroline Ebby, Adjunct Associate Professor, Penn GSE
- Michael Farrell, Principal
- Caroline Fylypowycz, Professional Development Leader, PFT Health and Welfare Fund
- Rosalind Jones-Johnson, Education Director, PFT Health and Welfare Fund
- Sarah Kavanagh, Research Assistant Professor, Penn GSE
- Ann Kreidle, Planning Coordinator, Penn Liaison
- Tia Larese, 3rd Grade Teacher
- Janine Remillard, Associate Professor and Faculty Director of Teacher Education, Penn GSE
- Tiffany Settles, 7th/8th Grade Literacy Teacher
- Kate Sharp, 1st Grade Teacher
- Anna Varano, 3rd Grade Teacher

FAMILIES AS PARTNERS

- Monica Calkins, PAS Parent, SAC Member, President of Spruce Hill Neighborhood Association
- Rotonya Carr, PAS Parent, PAS HSA Representative
- Darnell Coleman, PAS Parent
- Angela Curry, PAS Parent, PAS HSA Volunteer Coordinator
- Michael Farrell, Principal
- Elizabeth Johnson, PAS Parent, PAS HSA Secretary
- Ann Kreidle, Planning Coordinator, Penn Liaison
- Jessica McCollum, PAS Parent, SAC Chair
- Maryann Milewski, 2nd Grade Teacher
- Hannah Jane Sassaman, PAS Parent, PAS HSA Vice-President