Where We Begin

Welcome to Dalton today — and tomorrow

Planning is in Dalton’s DNA. We were founded on a progressive plan. We are always looking for ways to thoughtfully pursue new ideas, new possibilities and new ways to be the best version of ourselves.
The plan you see before you was developed at an important moment in our societal and institutional history.

Our society is experiencing rapid change. There are daily revolutions in technology and communication; major advances in the way we understand how people learn, grow and adapt; seismic shifts in the social, political, economic and environmental landscape, locally and globally.
Our school is changing as well.

We’re expanding and re-stacking Big Dalton — the largest single investment in the School’s history — presenting opportunities for growth and innovation. We are pursuing progressive and inclusive practices, adopting new methodologies and offering wider perspectives to broaden and deepen our curriculum. We are advancing a successful capital campaign.
Dalton is in a position of tremendous strength.

We have reached record numbers in Admissions applications, our endowment is historically high, our student body is historically diverse and our teachers are continually inspired and inspiring. We are guided by an enduring ethos of engaging in responsible innovation, of exploring possibilities and of saying yes to smart, strategic opportunities.
Our response to this moment is not revolution — it is evolution.

We are not overhauling Dalton’s mission; we are making it sustainable. We go forth with open minds and open hearts. We go forth with a commitment to new ideas, and fresh perspectives and the willingness to execute them. We go forth empowered by Helen Parkhurst’s directive: to change with the changing world.
Our Bright Tomorrow

Choices, Assumptions and Ambitions: an Introduction to the Strategic Plan
by Head of School Jim Best

At Dalton, a strategic plan is never a rote exercise. We put our hearts and souls into it, because it is, after all, the horizon we set for ourselves.

The process of developing this plan has been intensive and inclusive. We began by conducting quantitative surveys and qualitative focus groups with every constituency in the Dalton community. Our Board provided feedback, guidance and structure at every stage of revision and re-imagining. The following pages are the result of more than a year of listening to the people of Dalton — their hopes and dreams, their concerns and critiques, their ambitions and aspirations.

Every plan is in some sense a set of strategic choices. The choices we are making in the plan are worth setting out here:

- Instead of narrowing the school’s focus, we are choosing to commit ourselves to the comprehensive — and sustainable — Dalton experience. And instead of making Dalton feel exclusive, we are choosing to explore inclusivity in its broadest, deepest sense, considering the wide range of human experience.

- We are choosing to embrace the power of place — to engage in tangible, possibly transformative ways with our campus, our city and the global educational community.

- We are choosing to behave in specific ways as an institution — to make decisions informed by research and data, to listen intently to our people and their stories, to formalize and extend our shared willingness to experiment, test, adjust and advance.

Every plan also contains certain institutional assumptions, implicit or explicit. I am an advocate of transparency, so I will name three assumptions that I feel sure are at work in the plan.

First, we are advancing our dynamic mission. We are purposefully aligning our programs, resources and practices with our core values and more effectively utilizing The Dalton Plan (House, Lab, Assignment) to meet the evolving needs of our students.

Second, we are re-committing to the concept of citizenship. As a community, we are modeling the affirmative, inclusive and responsible leadership that we believe inspires our students to “go forth unafraid” while they are at Dalton and as they take next steps in life.

Third, we are embracing the willingness of spirit that characterizes our community. We are encouraging innovative ideas and pledging to carry out ambitious endeavors in bold, informed, sustainable ways.

This process has been enlightening and energizing. And it is only the beginning. We see our horizon. Now, together, we go forth unafraid.
Dalton: Going Forth

FIVE PRIORITIES

01 THE DALTON STUDENT
Supporting and challenging students to be ready to engage with the world

02 THE DALTON TEACHER
Inspiring progressive faculty, experienced mentors and contemporary scholars

03 THE DALTON CITIZEN
Cultivating ethical, purposeful citizens of a diverse community

04 THE DALTON ENVIRONMENT
Creating spaces and establishing practices that reflect our mission

05 THE DALTON TRAJECTORY
Stewarding our resources in visionary, pragmatic ways
Supporting and challenging students to be ready to engage with the world

**GOALS**

Improve and enhance our range of exceptional offerings to meet the interests and needs of students while maintaining our high degree of academic rigor and bringing multiple voices and stories into the conversation.

Create more opportunities for students to understand risk and failure as part of the learning process while pursuing and deepening their passions.

Ensure a consistent, equitable student experience while maintaining flexibility and creativity in our curriculum.

Find additional ways to balance the emotional, physical and intellectual well-being of students.

**ACTION ITEMS**

Adjust practice and pedagogy, in line with The Dalton Plan, to create more opportunities for students to experiment, explore, create, test and take intellectual risks. Promote a broad array of assessment tools that allow students multiple ways to demonstrate knowledge, skills and progress.

Survey students and alumni to assess the variety, quality and content of current course offerings, consider strengths and challenges of our curriculum, reflect on equity and inclusion efforts, and gather suggestions on how to make our curricular and co-curricular programs most meaningful and relevant in today's dynamic environment.

Refine and amend Dalton's K-12 Health & Wellness mission and program to help students navigate today's complex world, and develop a companion curriculum for Dalton's faculty, staff and parents to deepen their understanding of the challenges Dalton students face.

Offer students enhanced academic, cultural, service and internship options throughout the calendar year for enrichment, experimentation and intellectual risk-taking.

Examine structures, encourage practices and set conditions that allow students to pursue passions, reflect on their learning and take full advantage of The Dalton Plan.
GOALS

Provide time and resources for faculty to pursue professional development opportunities and collaborative ventures with peers within and beyond Dalton.

Support faculty by making informed decisions, offering clear career paths, cultivating leadership opportunities, promoting equity efforts and providing additional occasions for professional growth.

Encourage and enable teachers to test and apply new pedagogies and curricula — including transdisciplinary approaches to contemporary problems — in measured, inclusive, mission-consistent ways.

Use state-of-the-art technologies to pursue curricular innovations and maximize teaching efficacy.

ACTION ITEMS

Create additional faculty leadership opportunities by reviewing and revising current roles, responsibilities, structures and terms.

Establish a department review cycle focused on the development of departmental mission statements and student learning goals to inform K-12 curriculum, assessment, programs and practices.

Conduct annual surveys and develop additional assessment tools that gauge teacher satisfaction, cultivate creativity and strengthen mission alignment.

Establish and build the Ellen C. Stein Faculty Fund, in addition to other faculty and staff support initiatives, to attract and retain teachers as well as to cultivate and advance innovative ideas that prepare students to thrive in a diverse, dynamic world.

Align The Professional Review and faculty professional development to encourage best practices, advance teachers’ passions, support inclusivity and promote innovation in concert with the School’s mission and strategic priorities.

Develop a process and procedure to ensure that faculty compensation remains competitive with comparable peer institutions in New York City.

02 Inspiring progressive faculty, experienced mentors and contemporary scholars

THE DALTON TEACHER

Inspiring progressive faculty, experienced mentors and contemporary scholars

THE DALTON SCHOO L
PRIORITY

03 Cultivating ethical, purposeful citizens of a diverse community

GOALS

Set and reinforce expectations of what it means to be a Dalton citizen — as a student or alum, a faculty member or staff member, an administrator or parent — building on a foundation of character, kindness, inclusivity and empathy.

Curate new opportunities to engage with our city, our country and our world, including an enhanced and innovative service learning program.

ACTION ITEMS

Define and communicate Dalton's community norms and values for all constituencies.

Provide orientation opportunities for all community members at important school entry points to align students, teachers, parents and others with the School's core values, The Dalton Plan, and essential school practices and structures.

Create a K-12 Service Learning program that emphasizes service in New York City and beyond as an essential part of the Dalton experience and prioritizes time for reflection on issues of ethics, equity, inclusion and social justice.

Expand the number of opportunities and spaces in which all community members can engage with a broad range of respectful views as we increase our understanding of responsible citizenship at Dalton and beyond.

Partner with students, faculty, staff, board members, parents and alumni to ensure that issues of community, citizenship, equity and inclusion remain top strategic priorities for the School.

Plan and host conferences for internal and external audiences that establish Dalton as a beacon of equity practices locally, nationally and internationally. Use these experiences to explore challenging societal issues, promote civil discourse and reinforce core values of the Dalton community.
GOALS

Ensure that our facilities, methodologies and actions align with and enhance the depth and quality of our offerings and our progressive, inclusive and creative ethos.

Create inviting and accessible spaces for all community members that accommodate growth in our current programs and meet the potential demand for new programs.

ACTION ITEMS

Complete the 89th Street Building Expansion project, bringing to life the School’s vision for a space that facilitates new, more collaborative ways of learning and inspires creativity, inclusion and excellence among all community members.

Launch a master planning process for all Dalton facilities to ensure that capital investments are well managed, that the school’s physical resources support innovative teaching and learning, and that spaces encourage reflection, embrace a diverse community and provide opportunities for school-wide community building.

Continue to gather data from students, faculty, staff, parents and alumni through surveys, focus groups and other measures to better appreciate school culture and determine mission alignment. Use this data to inform decision making, build community and support an inspired and inspiring Dalton environment.
PRIORITY

05 Stewarding our resources in visionary, pragmatic ways

GOALS

Ensure that our resource allocation reflects our priorities; create flexibility to adapt our budget to our evolving needs.

Optimize current resource use based on qualitative and quantitative metrics; track outcomes; use that information to help determine new priorities and new revenue sources.

Research, test and develop initiatives that ensure that the Dalton experience is accessible to students from all socio-economic backgrounds — and that the Dalton community acknowledges, embraces and protects this broad diversity.

ACTION ITEMS

Create an actionable, measurable and prudent financial roadmap for each Strategic Plan initiative, understand the implications of initiatives on current and future operating budgets, and develop new sources of revenue and/or identify offsets to achieve strategic objectives.

Continue to support and enhance Dalton’s socioeconomic diversity by researching and implementing best practices that create an environment where all students, regardless of financial means, can participate equitably in all school activities.

Develop a comprehensive budgeting process that audits and enhances core programs while allowing for the sustainable creation of new initiatives.
Where We are Going

Moving forward together

This is a five-year plan—long enough to establish a vision, short enough to put it into practice. It is a plan that assumes a constant process of re-examination and re-invigoration. It should leave Dalton nimble, refreshed and well-resourced in 2023.

As we move forward, we will use Dalton’s founding principles as a touchstone for our priorities, initiatives and actions. As we bring the plan to life, we want to make sure that:

- Our generosity gives us the resources to live out our enduring vision: meeting the needs and ambitions of our students.
- Our environment reflects our values: collaboration, community, innovation.
- Our behaviors align with our convictions: equity and inclusivity, wellness and balanced living, support for student and faculty creativity and exploration.