



Metrolina Regional Scholars Academy

Five-year Strategic Plan

2016-2020



Mission Statement

Metrolina Regional Scholars Academy provides a differentiated and challenging learning environment that supports the distinctive intellectual, social, and emotional needs of highly gifted children and enables them to form meaningful relationships with their intellectual peers.

Values of Our Community

At Scholars Academy, our guiding principle and true measure of success is fostering a learning environment that supports the distinctive intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted children. While accolades and recognition may be a welcome by-product, we are dedicated to the development of the whole child in a noncompetitive environment. The partnerships that form and grow between our students, teachers, parents, and alumni are based on thoughtful communication and mutual respect. Our shared values direct and shape the ongoing advancement of our school.

Our community values:

- Diversity, collaboration, and vibrancy
- Respect, appreciation, and trust
- Innovation, altruism, and creativity

By embracing these values, we perpetuate our desired learning environment, where:

Scholars students love to learn, to be challenged, and are able to persevere. They grow in intellect, empathy and self-awareness.

Scholars teachers love to teach; they inspire, nurture and guide students who have a wide variety of learning styles. Using a combination of proven methods and innovative practices, they cultivate each student's individual gifts and passions.

Scholars parents partner with faculty and staff as an integral component of the Scholars Academy experience. They understand and value the school's mission.

Scholars alumni are lifelong learners and engaged citizens; they are self-aware, confident and grateful for their Scholars education and friendships. They remain connected to the school community.



Vision for Our Graduates

Our learning environment celebrates individuality and supports the distinctive intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted children. We are dedicated to the development of the whole child and aspire to equip our graduates to be confident by fostering:

Intellectual Engagement

We provide a differentiated and challenging education so our graduates are:

- Insightful thinkers who are innovative and creative; able to productively challenge the status-quo and persevere when faced with failure or adversity.
- Lifelong learners who understand the value of hard work and find joy in the learning process.
- Thoughtful communicators who collaborate and organize effectively to make positive contributions.

Social Awareness

Through the partnerships between students, teachers, parents, and alumni, our graduates are:

- Compassionate, respectful and honest, demonstrating empathy and integrity.
- Self-aware with a realistic understanding of their own talents and limitations; able to understand their role in a global society.
- Flexible and able to embrace diversity of thought and ability; able to balance independence and positive social engagement with their peers.

Emotional Confidence

We nurture and guide students in a safe learning environment so our graduates are:

- Secure in themselves; willing to show and explore their unique intellect and character.
- Prepared to handle success with humility and failure with grace.
- Balanced with the tools to self-regulate.



Strategic Plan

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to develop the themes needed to realize our 2020 Vision while living by our Mission and Values. The Strategic Plan and all efforts around these themes are accomplished with an assumption of a financially stable model, which is based on routinely prioritizing our school's initiatives against available financial and human resources.

Theme #1: A Gifted Student-Centered Curriculum

[Owner: School Improvement Team¹](#)

Scholars Academy will strengthen its curriculum as it continues to meet the unique intellectual, social and emotional needs of highly gifted children.

Goal #1: On-going re-alignment of the curriculum to the Mission and Vision of the Scholars Academy.

- On a cyclical basis, perform complete standards evaluation for both alignment and content for each core and enrichment area.
- Intentionally integrate curriculum to develop social and emotional wellness that is specific to the needs of gifted children.
- Evaluate program offerings through parent, student and faculty input, and make adjustments to curriculum offerings that enhance the program.
- Ensure students and parents are well informed and prepared for successful transition from middle school to high school and beyond including the development of a high school transition package.

Goal #2: Implementation of innovative curriculum practices that improve the learning environment and increase student engagement.

- Develop new units in each curriculum area using educational best practices and strategies for gifted learners.
- On a cyclical basis, assess our core and enrichment course offerings to assess their effectiveness and determine any program or curriculum changes using best practices and up-to-date knowledge around new innovative course offerings and teaching practices.
- Implement a Scholars program at the Discoverers, Investigators and Apprentice Scholars level including self-selected independent study and real world learning experiences.
- Identify and implement creative solutions for scheduling, differentiation and flexible groupings to meet the needs of students of various ability levels.

Goal #3: Advancement of the abilities of all students using social and emotional learning programs, assessment data and strategic intervention.

- Using the Multi-Tiered System of Supports ("MTSS") framework, efficiently identify and support students who are either advanced or struggling in any intellectual, social, or emotional area.
- Use assessment data to monitor student progress throughout the school year.

¹The School Improvement Team will be comprised of Scholars Academy administration and teachers, with as needed involvement from Board members, parents and outside experts.



- Improve communication about the unique needs of individual students by using a team approach to intervention that includes all subject area teachers, administrators, parents, and specialty service providers.

Theme #2: A Focus on Social and Emotional Learning for Gifted Students

Owner: School Improvement Team

Scholars Academy will provide an integrated, educational program that meets the social and emotional (SEL) needs of highly gifted children. (Note that Goal #3 of Theme #1 is a joint objective of this Theme).

Goal #1: Enhanced parent and student awareness of the social and emotional needs of highly gifted children.

- Create a full-time role for school counselor, whose responsibilities would include educating current and incoming students and their parents on the SEL needs of highly gifted children. Develop program for ongoing, deeper education of parents and students about SEL challenges that highly gifted children may face. This would include programs offered during new student orientation as well as in-school and after-school presentations.
- Identify and implement programs designed to prepare graduating students and their parents for transition to high school with respect to SEL needs.

Goal #2: Strengthened teacher leadership around meeting the social and emotional needs of highly gifted children.

- Create a teacher SEL needs “champion” in both the elementary and the middle school, who will become the leading expert within the school around specified SEL challenges through professional development.
- SEL champions would develop programs around their areas of expertise and provide programs for parents, students and other teachers around those areas.
- Develop program to disseminate conference / seminar learning from SEL champions or any staff / faculty member to Scholars Academy staff and faculty.

Theme #3: Exemplary Recruitment and Retention of Great Teachers of Gifted Students

Owner: Educational Excellence Committee²

Scholars Academy will be a premier employer for teachers who love to teach, inspire, nurture, and guide gifted students. We will recruit and retain talented, passionate, and innovative faculty members (i.e. high-performers) who are aligned with our Mission, Vision and Values.

Goal #1: Recruitment of high-performing teachers to come to Scholars Academy.

- Assess the drivers that led to bringing our highest performing teachers to Scholars Academy through focus groups and direct discussions.
- Develop a recruitment plan (through various resources including online, targeted conferences, and referral incentives).
- Develop interview process and hiring committee to aid in the identification of high-performing teachers.

²The Educational Excellence Committee of the Board is comprised of Board members, staff, parents and outside experts.



Goal #2: A great place to work for inspired teachers and staff that perform to their best with camaraderie and spirit.

- Consistently provide professional development opportunities for teachers to participate, attend and lead, including increased communication around upcoming programs and a process for making available time for teachers to attend.
- Develop mentorship program to inspire veteran teachers to share their knowledge with newer teachers and enhance internal relationships.

Goal #3: Removal of any barriers to teacher retention.

- Assess the drivers that led to teachers leaving or choosing to stay at Scholars Academy through focus groups and direct discussions with existing and former teachers.
- Identify barriers to retention which we can remedy.
- Develop an action plan to address the barriers through additional resources or programs.

Theme #4: A Collaborative School Community

Owner: Administration / Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) / Development Committee³

Build a collaborative school culture where stakeholders share a unity of purpose and strong learning partnerships.

Goal #1: A collaborative school community with students and staff.

- Ascertain our current culture as a school community through a relevant, effective annual survey for key constituents.
- Educate our students and staff on collaborative school cultures.
- Develop an infrastructure to help support our collaborative school community model.
- Intentionally incorporate our school's collaborative community model into our immediate and long range rituals, traditions, and practices.

Goal #2: A collaborative school community with current Scholars' families.

- Ascertain our current culture as a school community through a relevant, effective annual survey for key constituents.
- Educate our families on collaborative school cultures.
- Develop an infrastructure to help support our collaborative school community model.
- Intentionally incorporate our school's collaborative community model into our immediate and long range rituals, traditions, and practices.

Goal #3: A collaborative school community with external constituents.

- Identify meaningful, relevant opportunities for external community members to contribute to the school's Mission. Opportunities may include, but are not limited to: guest speakers, field trips, corporate partnerships, and sponsorships.

³The Development Committee of the Board is comprised of Board members, staff, parents and outside experts.



- Identify meaningful, relevant community outreach opportunities for students and staff. Opportunities may include, but are not limited to: partner with another school, partner with a local and/or global community project.
- Identify meaningful, relevant opportunities to share and/or exchange knowledge and information with the greater community, including, but not limited to: other gifted schools, programs, groups and organizations, and other charter schools, and local colleges & universities.
- Develop an infrastructure to help support our collaborative community model.
- Intentionally incorporate our school's collaborative community model into our prospective relationships with external constituents.

Theme #5: Become a Trusted Resource of Information about Giftedness and Best-Practices in Gifted Education

Owner: School Improvement Team

Scholars Academy will disseminate resources and knowledge to the gifted community, both within our school and externally. We will be a trusted resource for parents and teachers who are seeking innovative means to meet their students' needs.

Goal #1: An integrated strategy to share information about giftedness and trends in gifted education with internal stakeholders.

- Enhance Scholars Academy website to provide resources about gifted education, including social and emotional challenges.
- Increase use of Facebook page, community newsletter, and other social media where possible, to share new resources as they become available.
- Develop calendar of educational events targeting Scholars parents (i.e., guest speakers, teacher presentations, staff presentations).

Goal #2: Dissemination of information with external gifted educators.

- Ensure our school is on the agenda for site visits during the 2017 National Association for Gifted Children ("NAGC") convention being held in Charlotte.
- Continue encouraging interested teachers to attend and apply to present at education conferences such as the NAGC and North Carolina Association for the Gifted and Talented.
- Expand programming and promotion of our annual gifted conference.
- Build collaborative relationships with area schools, allowing for site visits and on-site training opportunities.
- Partner with colleges of education to ensure all new teachers, whether in AIG program or not, have access to most accurate and up-to-date information regarding gifted students and their unique traits and needs.

Goal #3: Share knowledge externally so gifted children at other schools can benefit.

- Increase promotion and outreach of our annual gifted conference.
- Invite external families to participate in educational events.
- Share online resources through social media and other channels so external families can access our insights.



Theme #6: Attract / Retain Diverse Students

Owner: Diversity Committee¹/ Administration/ Parent Teacher Organization

Scholars Academy values diversity and inclusion. We believe that both diversity and inclusion increase the richness of ideas, creative power, problem-solving abilities, respect for others and contribute to a more positive global community.

Blacks, Latinos and students of lower socio-economic status (SES) are under- represented at Scholars Academy as compared to the available student population in the Metrolina region.

Goal #1: Scholars Academy will increase the proportion of highly-gifted underrepresented minorities (Blacks and Latinos) and highly-gifted students of lower SES to a level whereby each group represents 13% of the student body.

- a. Enhance annual applications from Blacks, Latinos and students of lower SES by partnering with organizations to recruit diverse families and finding opportunities to engage with new audiences in the greater Charlotte area
- b. Institute changes to the admissions process that seek to provide weighting or other options to meet this goal (subject to charter amendment and/or approvals from the Office of Charter Schools)

Goal #2: Scholars Academy will always be an inclusive learning community.

- a. Ensure that current and future school events reflect our desire to be truly inclusive and break down stereotypes about families and people from different backgrounds and ideologies
- b. Collaborate with Scholars school leaders and Board members to evaluate the school handbooks (parent, student, staff), school policies, and daily procedures to ensure such practices are equitable and inclusive
- c. Actively recruit diverse teachers and staff
- d. Plan and create opportunities for families & faculty to learn more about people from different backgrounds and ideologies

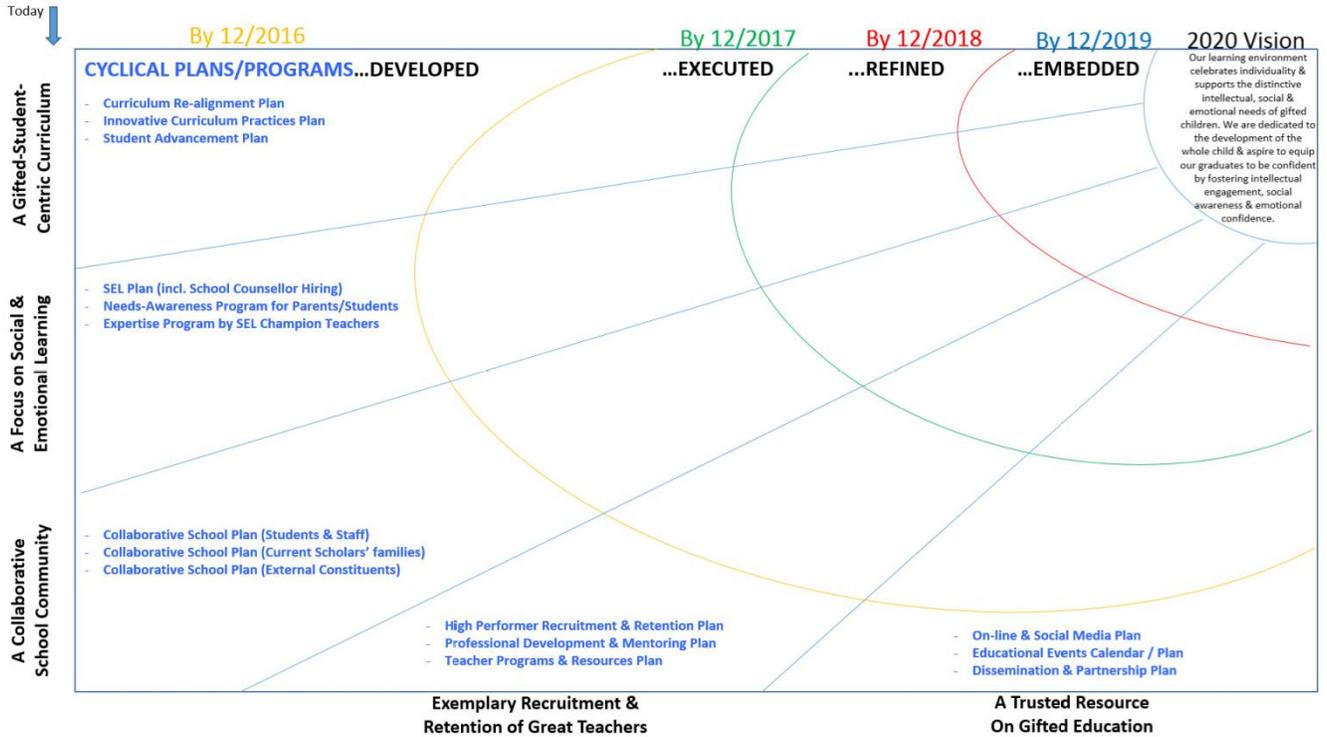
Goal #3: Removal of any barriers to attracting and retaining diverse students

- a. Identify any barriers to attracting underrepresented minorities or students of lower SES to Scholars Academy
- b. Remediate any known and economically feasible barriers to attracting underrepresented minorities or students of lower SES to Scholars Academy
- c. Identify any barriers to retaining underrepresented minorities or students of lower SES to Scholars Academy
- d. Develop an action plan to address the barriers through additional resources or programs

¹The Diversity Committee of the Board is comprised of Board Members, parents, teachers and the administration.



Transition Map





Strategic Planning Committee

Rob Watson, Board Member, Parent, Chair
Jen McClave, Board Member, Parent
Makila Scruggs, Board Member, Parent
Jessica Cuneo, Executive Director
Ari Pieper, Associate Director
Toni Hemming, Development Director, Past Parent
Curt Atkins, SA Teacher
Christy Hinkelman, SA Teacher
Tammra Granger, Parent
Sat Pillai, Parent
Craig Wheeler, Parent
Lee Keel, ex-Officio, Board Chair, Parent

Special Thanks to the Hiring Committee, who worked together with the Strategic Planning Committee to develop the Values of Our Community and Vision for Our Graduates statements, as well as aided in streamlining our Mission statement. Those members include:

Renee Alsop, Board Member, Parent, Chair
Karen Cleary, Board Member, Parent
Dr. Cindy Gilson, Gifted Education Expert
Emme Barnes, Parent, CMS teacher
Melissa Bernard, Parent, SA Teacher
Brad Chatigny, Parent, Former Board Chair
Lee Keel, ex-Officio, Board Chair, Parent