Greene Hill School is an independent lower and middle school for children that serves the need of the Fort Greene/Clinton Hill and surrounding Brooklyn communities for affordable and progressive education.

We actively involve families in their children's school and children in their own education. We promote learning through an interdisciplinary curriculum, appreciation of critical thinking and open-ended investigation of neighborhood and beyond.

Founded with the understanding that community is the backbone of society, Greene Hill School (GHS) guides children to become dedicated members of a diverse, democratic society.
INTRODUCTION

Sustaining our future.

Greene Hill School has come a long way since 2009. We began with 8 kindergarteners in an apartment and are now graduating 8th graders. In a very short time, we have assembled two full school divisions, a uniquely talented and devoted group of faculty and staff, and an engaged community of families and supporters — all deeply committed to the principles of progressive education, diversity and democratic citizenship.

As our first graduating class goes out into the world, we are looking ahead to the challenges and opportunities of being a more mature institution. Above all we must sustain this extraordinary achievement and build on it. We must shore up our financial operations, explore ways to extend our core values, and nurture the vitality of our community. Furthermore, after a period of setting up the School’s internal foundation, we believe it is also time to proudly take our place in the world, to outwardly express our values and play our role in supporting the movement for progressive education.

To that end, the Board of Trustees, with support from parents and faculty volunteers, drafted this three-year strategic plan, developing four committees: (1) Community, (2) Development, (3) Finance, and (4) Marketing + Advocacy.
Greene Hill School (GHS) is a progressive independent lower and middle school founded in 2009 by parents and educators to serve families in Fort Greene/Clinton Hill and surrounding Brooklyn communities. It offers affordable and progressive education and fosters a socially responsible community of active learners. GHS’s progressive philosophy is embodied in small class sizes and staff dedicated to supporting children as they become confident in their abilities to explore, learn, demonstrate compassion, and be inspired.

GHS created this three-year strategic plan with community support from faculty and staff, parents and community partners between September 2015 and November 2016 in order to support strategic decision making by the Board and school leadership and ensure alignment with our mission and plans for future growth.

IN DRAFTING THE PLAN, THE GHS BOARD WAS GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

- Provide a clear roadmap that GHS can follow for the next three years in alignment with our mission.
- Set realistic goals for the upcoming school year.
- Promote collaboration amongst all GHS community members.
- Continue to meet NYSAIS accreditation requirements.
COMMUNITY VISION

OBJECTIVE
To strengthen partnerships between families and staff and local community in order to increase communication and empathetic, compassionate relationships.

STRATEGIC MESSAGE
Knowing each other better will encourage and allow us to strengthen our community and create a culture of mutual respect and open exchange of ideas in a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment.

COMMUNITY GOALS
- Continue to build and strengthen a safe, supportive, nurturing and respectful educational environment for our GHS community of families and faculty.
- Expand, multiply and develop partnerships with cultural and neighborhood organizations and other schools.
- Increase the broad spectrum of family and faculty diversity.

COMMUNITY TACTICS

2016-2017
- Expand the ways GHS communicates with families through class buddies, coffee chats and grade level parent orientations.
- Engage in dialogue with school community about Identity and Social Justice.
- Share more of student life through website, Facebook and other social media.

2017-2018
- Develop events with a public presence in the local community like a fun run, or stall at farmer’s market.
- Plan Middle School dance with other Brooklyn pre-k through 8th grade schools.
- Work with PATHS and local organizations to increase conversations about diversity at GHS.

2018-2019
- Establish partnerships around topics of interest with other schools.
- Engage in activism in partnership with community organizations.
- More opportunities for shared family experiences outside school.
DEVELOPMENT VISION

OBJECTIVE
To raise sufficient funds to maintain the long-term sustainability of the sliding scale tuition model. To build a culture of giving while empowering all community members to be ambassadors of the school.

STRATEGIC MESSAGE
Make progressive education available to the broadest community possible.

DEVELOPMENT GOALS
- Build a culture of giving.
- Create a community where all constituents serve as an advocate or ambassador.
- Identify and obtain support beyond GHS or 39 Adelphi Street.
- Increase fundraising objectives with an awareness of current trends to guide the school’s development.
DEVELOPMENT TACTICS

2016-2017

- Create and maintain a fundraising calendar and integrate it with main school calendar.
- Educate the GHS community about the sliding scale tuition and how it affects our ability to raise funds.
- Explore ways to engage Greene Hill families in fundraising beyond written/text communications.
- Build a development committee of parents to support and advocate for fundraising efforts.
- Engage fundraising professionals & volunteers at other independent schools to understand local giving landscape.
- Pursue funding opportunities with Taproot including proposal for website redesign.

2017-2018

- Identify new constituencies for giving at GHS including targeted campaigns aimed at grandparents.
- Build a fundraising committee of people from outside the Greene Hill community.
- Increase sponsorship opportunities for local businesses at existing GHS events. Plan a new public event as a fundraiser and community builder.

2018-2019

- Identify potential new community partners for collaborative events or fundraising opportunities.
- Explore social media opportunities and crowd-sourcing platforms for fundraising and community building campaigns including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Kickstarter.
FINANCE VISION

OBJECTIVE
To enhance our financial model in order to provide for the growth and financial stability of Greene Hill School in support of our mission.

STRATEGIC MESSAGE
Through a rigorous analytic process financial decisions will be made to ensure the financial health of the school and maintain the sliding scale tuition.

FINANCE GOALS
- Continue to prioritize competitive salary and benefits for faculty and staff.
- Maintain the sliding scale tuition model.
- Build a financial reserve toward programs and facility.

FINANCE TACTICS

2016-2017
- Increase benefit package to include life insurance (covered by school) and voluntary vision, dental, life and disability.
- Continue to explore options for appropriate educational programs that can provide additional revenue.
- Research lines of credit for the school.
- Create common and clear language about the sliding scale tuition model for use within school communications, on the website and for other Committees (Advocacy + Marketing/Fundraising).

2017-2018
- Explore establishing a capital fund and research bond options.
- Ensure that all operations align with NYSAIS best practices.
- Create a financial policies and procedures manual.
- Continue to align teacher’s salaries with benchmark schools.
- Plan and host a new public event as annual fundraiser.

2018-2019
- Continue to build operating reserves in sustainable ways.
- Consider partnerships with other institutions.
- Conduct a real estate survey.
MARKETING + ADVOCACY VISION

OBJECTIVE
To raise awareness of GHS's current structure and future vision and extend admissions outreach in order to broaden and deepen our community diversity.

STRATEGIC MESSAGE
Telling the story of progressive education vs. testing, our sliding scale tuition, small class sizes and community.

MARKETING AND ADVOCACY GOALS
- Extend our admissions outreach in order to broaden and deepen our community in support of our mission and to keep the school sustainable.
- Influence opinion, correct misunderstandings about progressive education and nourish community dialogue.
- Create and sustain engagement (admissions and fundraising).

MARKETING + ADVOCACY TACTICS

2016-2017
- Join Ravenna — national admissions system — to increase presence and attract more applicants.
- Engage current parents in admissions process.
- Publicly celebrate first 8th grade graduates & engage the press.
- Host pre-k administrators to tour GHS & attend events designed to promote GHS to diverse families.
- Identify part-time communications position.
- Diana elected to PENNY (Progressive Education Network of NY) Board.

2017-2018
- Invite alumni back to school events.
- Participate as organizers and presenters in national conferences.
- Investigate advertising options and create annual plan for getting the word out about GHS.
- Survey website against benchmark schools and redesign to make more comprehensive and user friendly.

2018-2019
- Host High School fair for peer Middle Schools.
- Benchmark our outreach and visibility efforts against our vision and mission.
- Assure that GHS is in forefront of conversations about progressive education for all children through public forums, press, op-eds etc.
We want to extend special thanks to the following members of the Greene Hill School Community who participated in the four strategic committees:

**COMMUNITY COMMITTEE:**
Amanda McCarthy, Board Secretary + Committee Chair
Dionne Grayman, Lower School Parent
Jaime Quackenbush, Lower School Director
Lia Broomes-Currie, Lower School Parent
Sharyne Beza, 7s Head Teacher

**DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE:**
Beth Schneider, Board Chair + Committee Chair
Jason Leahey, Development Associate
Johanna Pfeltzer, Middle School Parent
Rachael Burton, Development Director
Wendy Dorr, Middle School Parent

**FINANCE COMMITTEE:**
Nils Mellquist, Board Treasurer + Committee Chair
Joyce Yang, Lower School Parent + Board Member
Leah Krigger, Board Member

**MARKETING + ADVOCACY COMMITTEE:**
David Horowitz and Carrie Mauer, Committee Co-Chairs + Board Members
Laurie Baum, Middle School Director
Anna Lundgren, 8s Head Teacher
Lauren Shenkman, Middle School Parent
James Choi, Former GHS Teacher
Matthew Tynan, Lower School Parent

Diana Schlesinger
School Director sits on all committees
APPENDIX 1: PLANNING PROCESS

In September, 2015, Greene Hill School began a strategic planning process to provide the Board and school leadership with clear, strategic guidance over the next three years including the successful completion of the NYSAIS self-accreditation process.

The GHS Board of Trustees, alongside the School Director, began by reviewing the strategic planning process recommended by Independent School professional organizations, final plans from other schools and in talking with Heads of these schools, the plans for Greene Hill’s process took shape. In October, 2015 the GHS Board fielded a school-wide survey completed by 85 adults (out of 115 families), the results of which helped confirm and shape the School’s strategic planning goals.

Starting in January, 2016, a strategic planning committee comprised of 25 GHS faculty and staff (current and former), Board members, and parent volunteers was formed and divided into the following sub-committees: Community, Development, Finance and Marketing + Advocacy. These committees met on several occasions (2/22/16, 3/28/16, 4/20/16, 5/16/16 and 6/16/16). Now board committees continue to meet regularly in support of the strategic work.
APPENDIX 2: SCHOOL HISTORY

The idea for Greene Hill School began when a group of Fort Greene and Clinton Hill parents, educators, and friends were looking for a progressive school with small class sizes for their children. As the notion to create a new school took hold, the planners wanted to ensure that the progressive education values of critical thinking, lifelong learning, and a dedication to social justice were matched with a focus on accessibility to families with a variety of incomes and resources. Designed as a small school where all children are well-known, GHS has one class per grade level. In the fall of 2009, the first class of eight four- and five-year old children started learning together in a sunlit loft in Clinton Hill. In 2010, the school more than doubled in size, sharing space with the FGCH Coop Preschool. We will graduate our first class of 8th graders in Spring, 2017.

We offer tuition along six different tiers, with families paying tuition at whichever tier is determined to be appropriate for their circumstances. We are one of only a small handful of progressive independent schools in NYC that promote equality of access to progressive education through a sliding scale tuition model, and though it does make school operations a challenge, it is integral to who we are. Greene Hill School is located in a beautiful and spacious building at 39 Adelphi Street.

APPENDIX 3: EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Progressive education is a movement dedicated to educating the whole child, with an emphasis on social justice. At Greene Hill we are guided by these meaningful principles every day. In the 1900s, during the Progressive Era of reform, socially-minded activists and educational theorists like Jane Addams and John Dewey aligned their theories of progressivism with those of earlier philosophers such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Their beliefs about child development, such as the importance of active engagement and educating the whole person, have influenced the core principles of progressive education to this day.

For over 60 years, John Dewey (1859 – 1952) shaped progressive educational theory and practice. The Laboratory School in Chicago, founded with his wife, became a place for his research and observations and led to the writing of numerous articles and books. Dewey codified the way we think of progressive education today in books like “The School and Society” and “Democracy in Education”.
SUMMARY TENETS OF DEWEY’S PHILOSOPHY

- Education is a process of living, not a preparation for living.
- Curriculum should be based on children’s interests with some structure provided by adults.
- The most meaningful experiences for children are ones rooted in their current stage of development and the scientific method.
- School should prepare children to be fully participatory members of a democratic society.
- School should be equally concerned with the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical needs of the child.
- Constructivism is at the heart of Greene Hill School’s approach to teaching. It is the theory that all people construct their own knowledge, developing meaning and understanding through experience and reflection.

Based on the research of developmental psychologists and educational theorists like Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Eleanor Duckworth, constructivist theory provides a strong framework through which we at Greene Hill understand how children learn and what our role is in supporting their learning. We see learning as an active, life-long process, through which people continuously build upon what they already know to refine ideas and create a more complex worldview. The constructivist classroom provides ample opportunities for posing questions, formulating and testing ideas through hands-on experience, and examining theories through rich discussion.
CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY IN ACTION AT GHS:

- At the onset of an immigration study, children interview relatives, family friends, and community members about their experiences coming to America. Through discussion and readings, they identify common themes in the immigration experience, and wonder together about the stories that stand outside those themes.

- Children examine well-written picture books to see how authors use commas, making generalizations and developing rules for their usage that they can immediately apply to their own writing.

- Children use graph paper or base-ten blocks to make physical models of double-digit multiplication, figuring out how that representation relates to the standard U.S. algorithm for multiplication, and to other methods as well.

- A class learning about bread experiments to find the right ratio between flour and water, and tries baking a loaf without yeast to see what will happen. They decide what their next step will be to better understand the process.

- At Greene Hill School, our approach to assessment is consistent with our overall philosophy of teaching and learning. We consider the whole child, and we value the deep and ongoing relationship between teacher and student. Instead of using standardized testing, we consider assessment part of the authentic work that teachers and students do together every day.

- Through careful observation and dialogue, analysis of children’s work, and deep familiarity with nationally considered standards and benchmarks, teachers are closely attuned to their students’ development. They use that knowledge to drive their teaching decisions, and to ensure that children are acquiring appropriate skills and understandings.

- In addition, our Learning Specialist and teachers find that regularly applied formal benchmark assessment tools for reading and math skills lend consistency and clarity to our understanding of students’ academic development. Every year, parents participate in three parent-teacher conferences and receive two detailed narrative reports to provide clear communication about a child’s academic progress.