

Journey School Community Achievements
August, 2011

Dear Journey School Friends and Family,

Sometimes it can be challenging for families or community members to stay current on school news and to know exactly what goes on behind the scenes. The school has enjoyed numerous successes in the past two years. We'd like to celebrate them with you. We've also learned many lessons from which we need to grow. Therefore, we've identified preliminary goals to be incorporated into the school's developing Strategic Plan. This draft plan will be presented to the school community on September 15th at Open House. As a charter school, accountability and transparency to the community are leading principles. We've written this summary, and are preparing the strategic plan, to clearly present where Journey School stands and where we're headed.

Onwards and Upwards,

Jon Kaplan
President, Journey School Council

Shaheer Faltas
Journey School Administrator

Background

All organizations have priorities that are important to their long-term success as well as day-to-day problems that require urgent solutions. All too often, the tendency is to focus on fixing urgent matters at the expense of the really important long-term goals. Especially successful schools manage urgency and importance simultaneously. They resolve urgent matters while maintaining diligent focus on long-term objectives.

In an attempt to focus on what matters most, two years ago Journey School committed to 7 priorities. These researched-based priorities, or **Big Rocks**, were chosen for their positive impact on student personal and academic success – as well as overall school effectiveness (Marzano, *What Works in Schools*, 2003). Like a compass, our big rocks have provided direction through both calm and stormy seas, pointing us toward successful outcomes.

7 Big Rocks

The Students

1. Establish a safe and inspiring learning environment
2. Set challenging goals, assess progress, and provide student support

The School

3. Adhere to mission, core values, and key beliefs
4. Grow and leverage school resources
5. Hire, retain, and support superb educators

The Community

6. Establish partnerships and effective communication
7. Ensure effective governance and enable wise decision-making

Major Accomplishments

Big Rocks also provide valuable benchmarks, which when reached, give us satisfaction of achievement, increased confidence, and greater motivation to put forth our best effort. With this understanding in mind, consider the following accomplishments which span the past two academic years:

Big Rock 1: Establish a safe and inspiring learning environment

- Held onto the Journey campus in the face of external pressure.
- Community rallied to transform the facilities crisis into opportunity.
- Laid the groundwork for a multi-year facilities agreement.
- Elevated a permanent campus solution as a top school priority.

- Developed a facilities plan which allowed for school expansion.
- Launched 4th Kindergarten in 2011-12.
- Kindergarten program will feed two first grades starting in 2012-13.
- Beautified the campus and classrooms.
- Expanded gardens and decreased our carbon footprint.
- Established an Eco-Literacy program to further cultivate stewardship, interdisciplinary learning, and development opportunities.
- Launched a New Media Literacy project at the middle school level to promote ethical decision-making, 21st century skills, and future funding.
- Improved student behavior and reduced disciplinary incidents as evidenced by staff observation and reduction in disciplinary referrals.

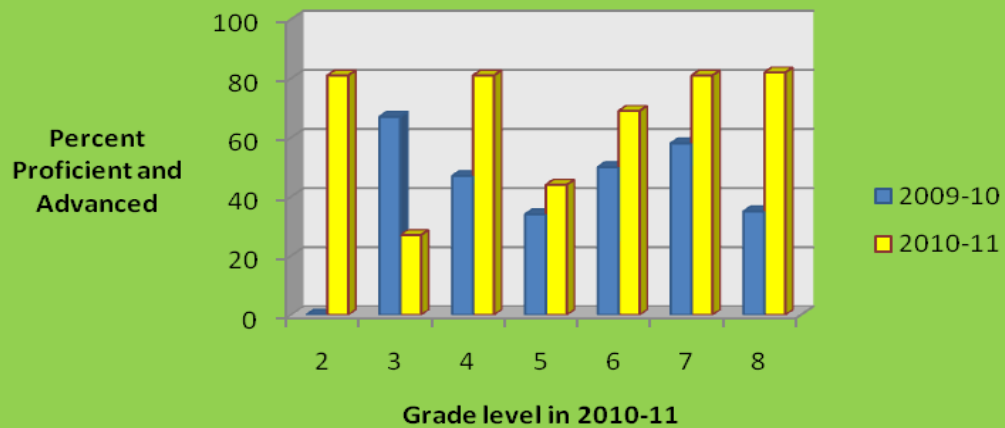
Big Rock #2: Achieve challenging learning goals, establish effective assessment practices, and offer superb student support

- Strengthened schoolwide criteria-based assessment systems, including trimester progress reports and the effective use of standards-based rubrics in Main Lesson and Practice Periods.
- Improved support systems for student personal and academic growth, including high-quality after school learning experiences.
- Increased emphasis on the value of parent conferences.
- Hired Educational Director to ensure excellence and continuous improvement.
- Restructuring Special Education Department to boost student achievement.
- Re-building classroom libraries to provide rich array of reading material.
- Expanded professional development library and instructional materials.
- Hired Creative Arts Coordinator/Specialty Teacher Liaison.
- Targeted Specialties Program as major area for stabilization in 2011-12.
- Maintained competitive student-teacher ratios (26:1 in most grades, 22:1 in K).
- Raised 2011 STAR test scores across most grades in 2011 as shown below:

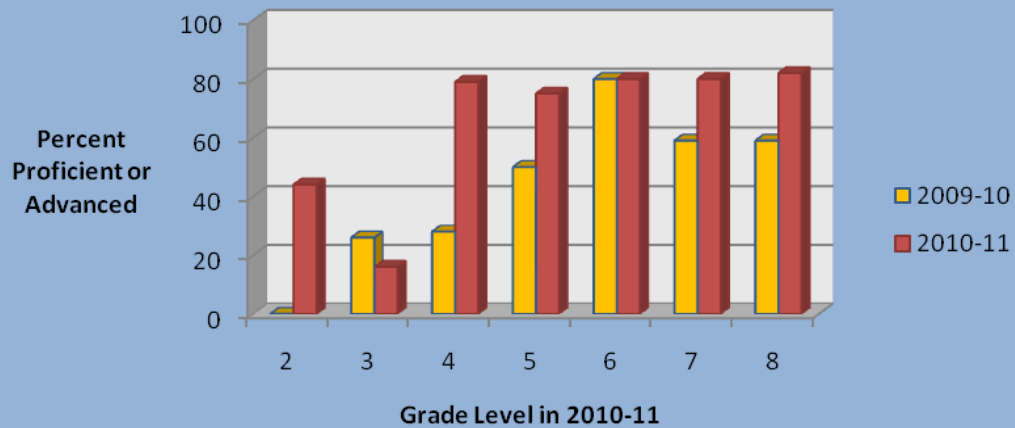
STAR/CST Student Achievement Summary

The following student achievement data compares the performance of **each class in 2011 with its own performance in 2010**. This method is called “Value-Added” assessment because it measures the impact of the program on mostly the same cohort of students with the same instructor from one year to the next. This type of assessment approach is especially important at Journey where we currently have one class at each grade level. A detailed analysis of STAR results will be published in September, as this document only presents initial data:

Journey School Math CST Comparison



Journey School ELA CST Comparison



Middle School Program

8th Grade: 82% of the students scored proficient or above in English Language Arts in 2011 versus 59% in 2010. 82% of students scored proficient or above in Mathematics in 2011 versus 35% in 2010. Two additional tests were issued to measure the students' readiness for high school, the CST Social Studies and Science exams. 88% of students scored proficient or above in Social Studies and 87% scored proficient or above in Science.

7th Grade: 80% of students scored proficient or above in English Language Arts in 2011 versus 59% in 2010. 81% of students scored proficient or above in Mathematics in 2011 versus 58% in 2010. In addition, students earned an average score of 3.5 out of a 4.0 grading rubric on the 7th grade CST writing test.

6th Grade: The percentage of students that scored proficient or above in English Language Arts in 2011 remained constant at 80% compared to 2010. In Mathematics, 80% of students scored proficient or above in 2011 versus 69% in 2010.

Elementary Program

5th Grade: 75% of students scored proficient or above in English Language Arts in 2011 versus 50% in 2010. In Mathematics, 44% of students scored proficient or above in 2011 versus 34% in 2010. In addition, 55% of the students scored proficient or above on their first CST Science Test.

4th Grade: 79% of students scored proficient or above in English Language Arts in 2011 versus 28% in 2010. In Mathematics, 81% of students scored proficient or above in 2011 versus 47% in 2010. On the 4th grade CST writing test, students received an average score of 2.75 out of a 4.0 rubric.

3rd Grade: 16% of students scored proficient or above in English Language Arts in 2011 versus 26% in 2010. In Mathematics, 27% of students scored proficient or above in 2011 versus 67% in 2010.

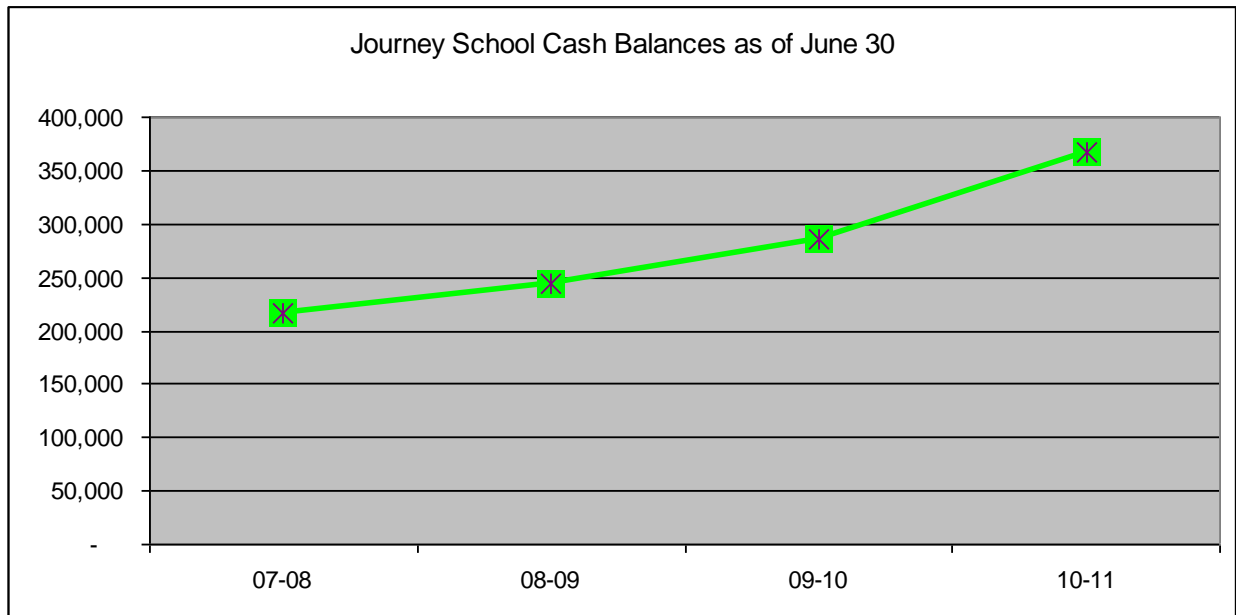
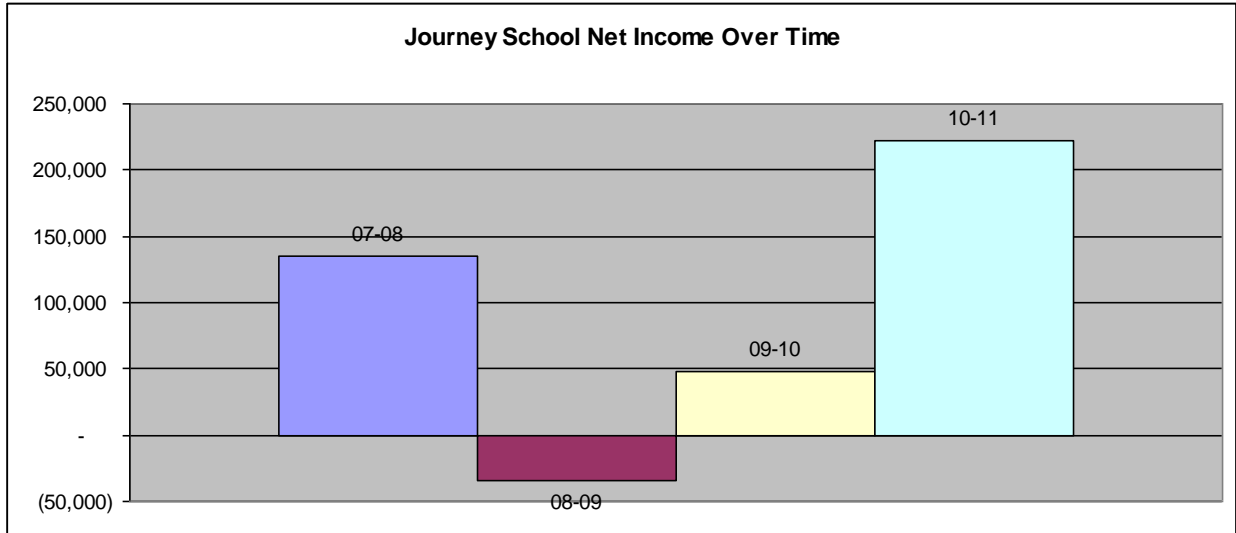
2nd Grade: 44% of students scored proficient or above in English Language Arts in 2011. In Mathematics, 81% of students scored proficient or above in 2011.
Note: STAR testing first begins at the 2nd grade level. 2nd grade student do not have 2010 scores.

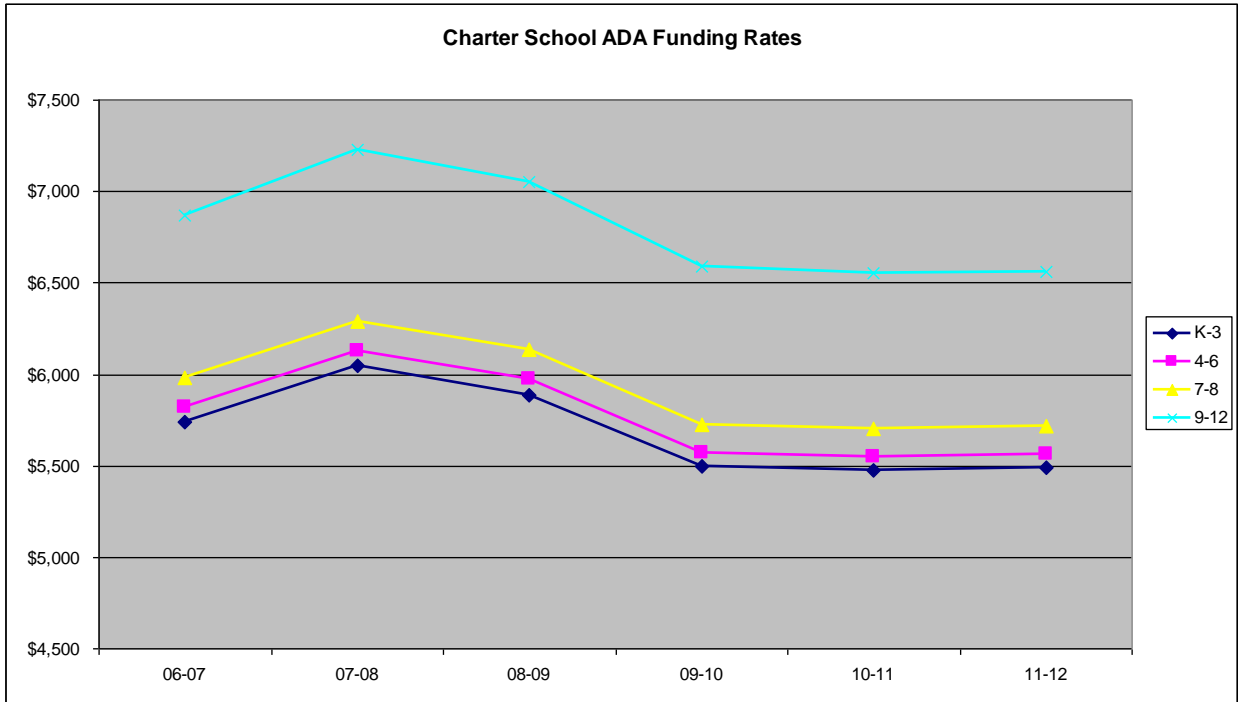
Big Rock #3: Adhere to mission, core values, and key beliefs

- Renewed charter for additional 5 years with unanimous approval of the CUSD school board.
- Published a research based, cutting-edge charter document.
- Developed a Waldorf Certification/Master's Program to prepare teachers to address rigorous academic standards and Waldorf methodologies.
 - Secured funding to support teachers' enrollment in the program.
- Expanded Specialty budget by 25%.
- Implementing professional development plans to support research-based instructional practices and Waldorf educational methodologies.

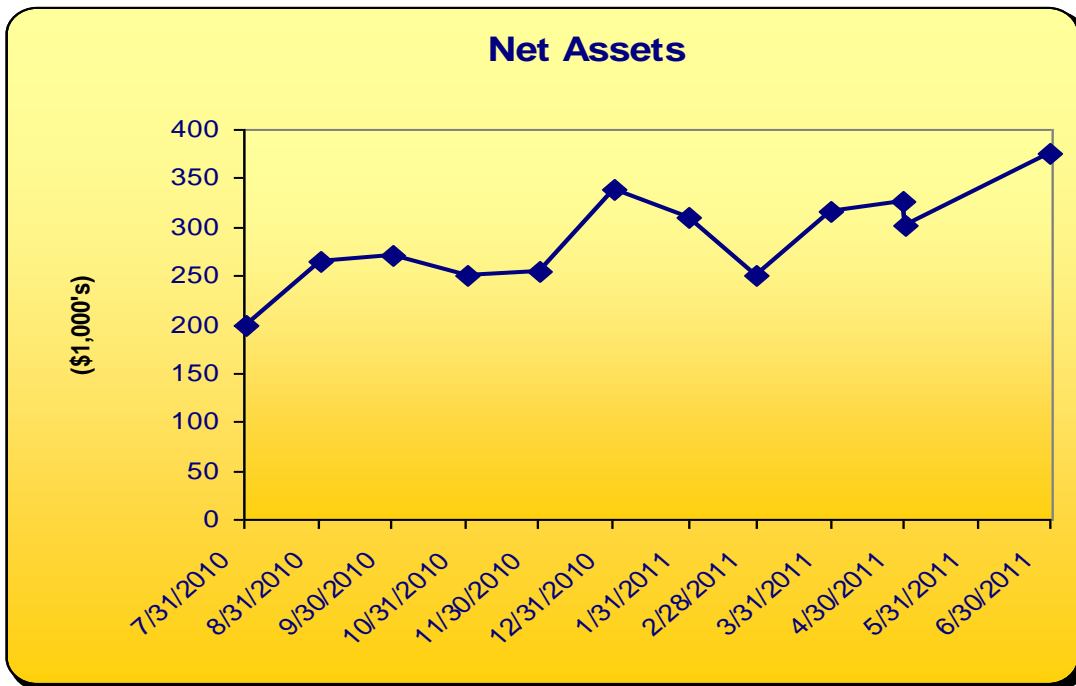
Big Rock #4: Grow and Leverage School Resources

- Significantly grew Journey School net income and expanded financial reserves over past two school years. We accomplished this in spite of a steep decline in state revenue.



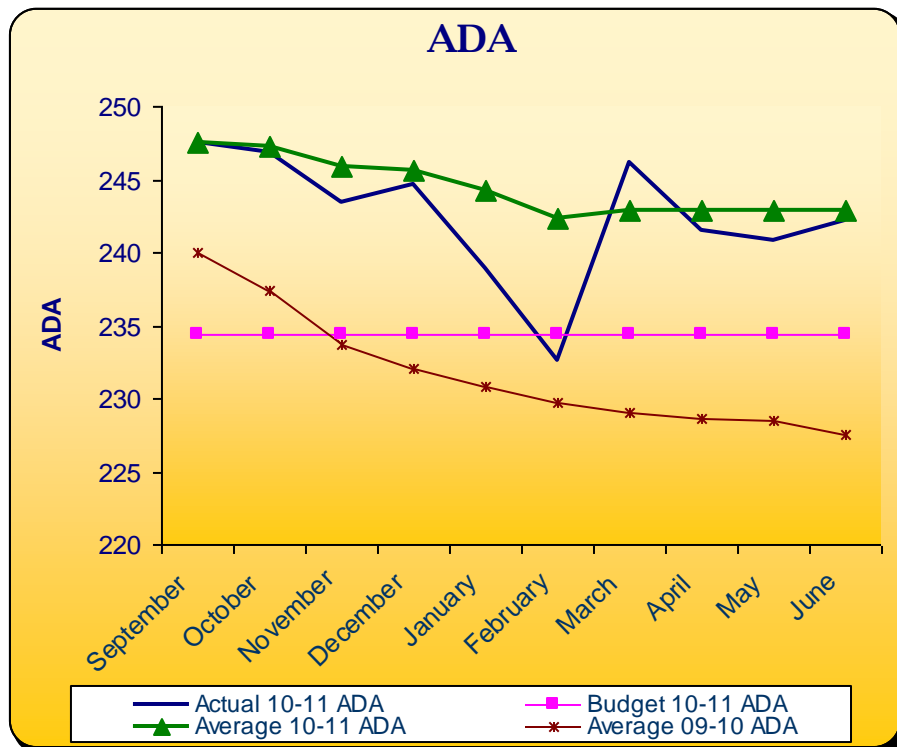


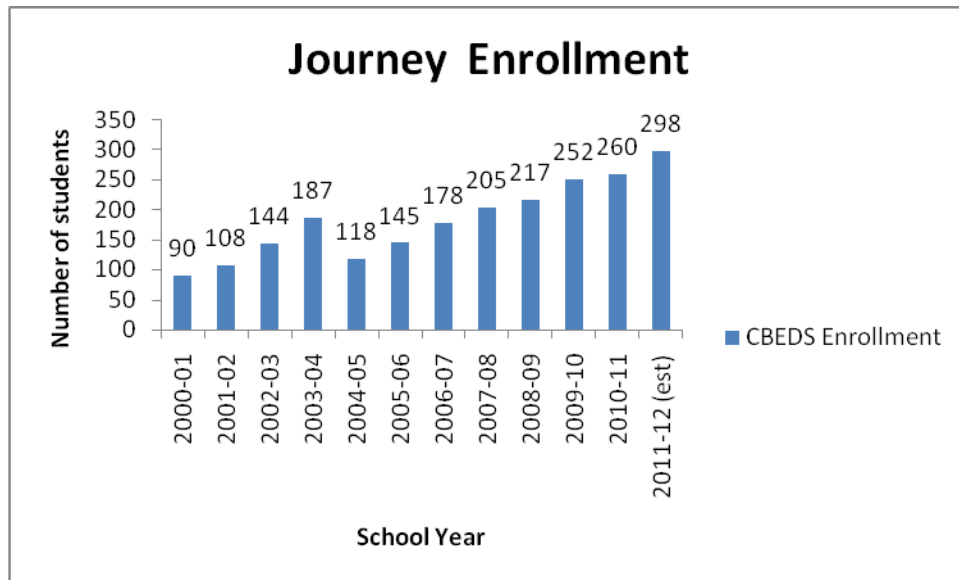
- Better protect the school from future economic hardship through fiscal stability so it can better pursue its strategic goals.



- Contracted with a reputable and effective business management firm, ExEd, and developed a partnership with a dedicated account manager.
- Increased capacity and transparency in the school's financial realm resulting in increased levels of trust within the school community.

- Established a new charitable pledge program, called Close-the-Gap.
 - Donations were received in 2010-11 for 186 students, representing 72% of all families and bringing in over \$125,000.
- Increased demand for and satisfaction with Journey School’s educational program as evidenced by:
 - Class capacity has been reached across the grades.
 - Substantial wait lists have been established throughout the school.
 - Attrition rates have fallen by approximately 50%.
 - Long-standing school aspirations for expansion are now being implemented.
- Exceeded enrollment and attendance goals for 2009-10 by 2.5% and in 2010-11 by 3.5%. This is important as Journey School receives most of its income from state revenues which are based on Average Daily Attendance of our students.





- Exceeded 70% volunteerism rate for Journey school families in 2009
 - Most families volunteered more than 50 hours in 2009.
 - This translated into about 7000 annual hours of volunteerism.
 - Despite a slightly lower rate of participation in 2010, we look forward to a significant boost in 2011.

Big Rock #5: Hire, Retain, and Support Superb Educators

- Established research-based hiring criteria and process.
- Adhered to these best practices and assembled a highly-qualified team.
- Developed a Waldorf training program specifically for public school teachers.
 - The end result will be a well-trained Waldorf staff that is uniquely qualified to teach in the public sector and is rooted in Orange County.
- Adjusted Main Class Teacher compensation by 10-16% (effective August, 2011)
 - This helps to ensure livable and competitive wages for our dedicated teachers.
- Retained 82% of Main Class Teachers between 2010-11 and 2011-12.
- Achieved continuity at the administrative level and expanded leadership capacity.
- Completed updated Employee Handbook to communicate clearly defined expectations and protocols.
- Increasing access to reliable teacher-mentors, both internally and externally.

Big Rock #6: Partnerships and Communication

- Established regular newsletter rhythm with improved content.
- Revised School Handbook and made it more accessible.

- Established key alliances with numerous community partners.
- Transforming website into more effective communication tool.

Big Rock #7: Ensure healthy governance

- Assembled highly committed and capable Board of Directors (Journey School Council).
- Established common purpose and direction.
- Developed principles and agreements by which the school may be governed.
- Improved relations across school constituency groups.
- Increasing transparency and accountability levels.
- Developing Strategic Plan.

Conclusion

With the support of the entire community, Journey School has been able to achieve many successes and reach many of its goals over the past two years. We look to the upcoming year with excitement as we build on our accomplishments and find ways to grow even more. At the Open House on September 15, there will be a joint presentation by the Journey School Council and Administration to review the Strategic Plan and highlight the school's future goals and direction. We look forward to seeing you there!