

ANNUAL REPORT

GDS RANKED
8th BEST
PRIVATE SCHOOL
IN THE STATE



BC and AC

The spread of the coronavirus changed the whole world.
We'll cover **BEFORE** COVID-19 and **AFTER** COVID-19.



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BOARD OF TRUSTEES SNAPSHOT OF GDS



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Cover photo courtesy of Mike Greene



**LEARNING
STARTS WITH
CARING.
WE WANT
TO BE A
COMMUNITY
AND SCHOOL
OF CARING
PEOPLE.**

Richard E. Rankin



Gaston Day School is different this year. Because of COVID-19, there is no way to separate this year from last; and I intend to talk about both. The 2019-2020 school year really existed as two separate phases: **before COVID-19 and after COVID-19**. With the spread of the virus last spring, the whole world changed.

Over the 2020 Spring Break, Gaston Day moved at light speed to a new virtual learning platform. **Everyone adapted, adjusted, and rose to the challenge.** Perhaps the crowning achievement was our graduation ceremony in the parking lot of the Frances H. Henry Field that met all the CDC requirements for safety. Our seniors, who lost out on so much their last year, got a graduation that no one will ever forget and that they deserved!

There was no summer break. The administration and faculty had to develop and implement a plan for the new school year that addressed the safety needs of COVID-19. We spread out desks all over campus, took over non-traditional spaces and converted them into classrooms, bought cameras with automatic thermometers, installed a state of the art air-treatment system, created a new Wellness Coordinator position, and devised an ingenious schedule that breaks classes into cells that do not interact with each other. We came up with a plan that kept in-person, on-campus learning as safe as possible for everyone, and also gave anyone who wanted it the option to continue learning virtually.

It was a big, audacious project that de-

manded incredible planning and execution. **I believe we pulled it off.** So did the Southern Association of Independent Schools when they asked us to present our plan, to the rest of the South's independent schools because it was one of the best in the region.

So how is the new school year going? So far, so good. **We remain ready for anything.** We think any COVID-19 outbreaks will be contained to individual classes. If that holds true we can keep the school open for in-person learning all year. But we also are prepared to go virtual again if we have to. We know how to do that well, and we are proud of those students who have already chosen the virtual learning option.

Thank you for believing in us and supporting us in such challenging times.

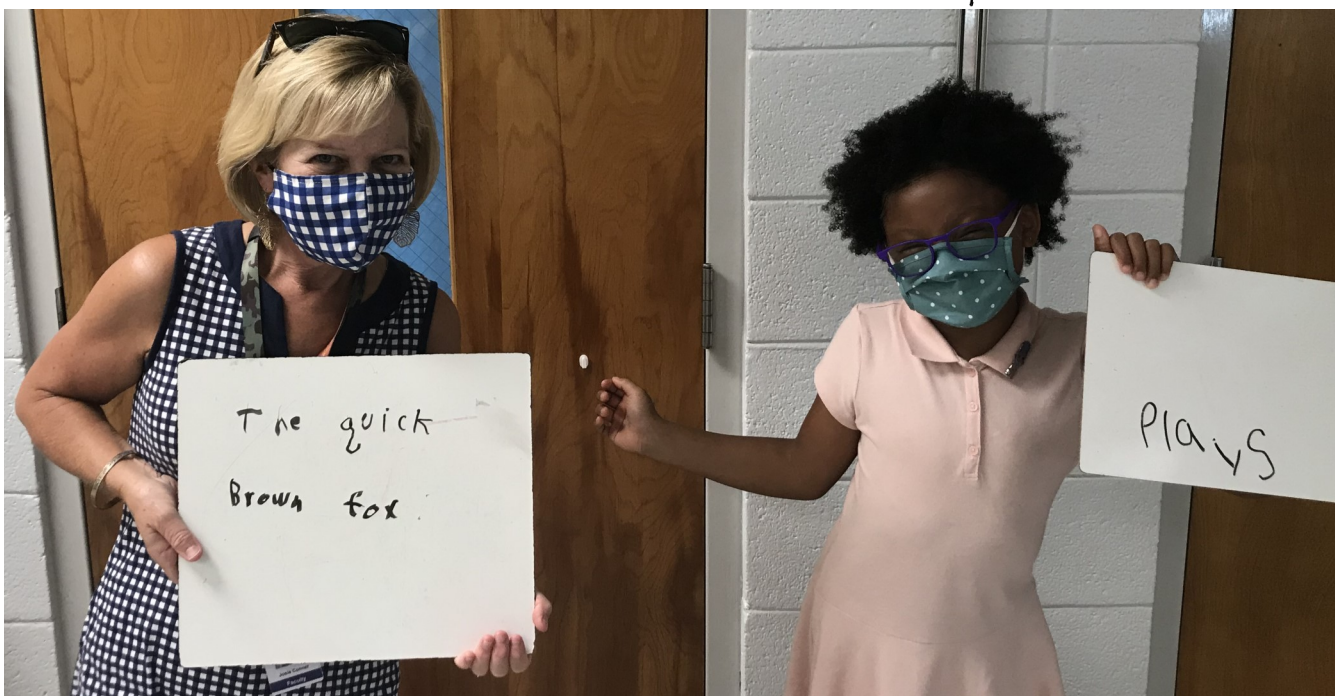
Gaston Day School spent over \$250,000 in safety improvements to open school this year. We also limited the number of new students we could accept to comply with the CDC guidelines on social distancing. When you move desks apart to prevent vi-



ral spread, fewer students fit in a classroom. So enrollment is lower by design to keep us healthier. All of this is good for our students and hard on our budget.

If you are proud of what the school has accomplished, please help us by giving as generously as you are able to the Gaston Day School Fund. **We need your strong support more than ever to overcome the challenges we face.** Thank you for believing in Gaston Day School! We are all in this together! Spartan united! Spartan strong!

Richard E. Rowlin



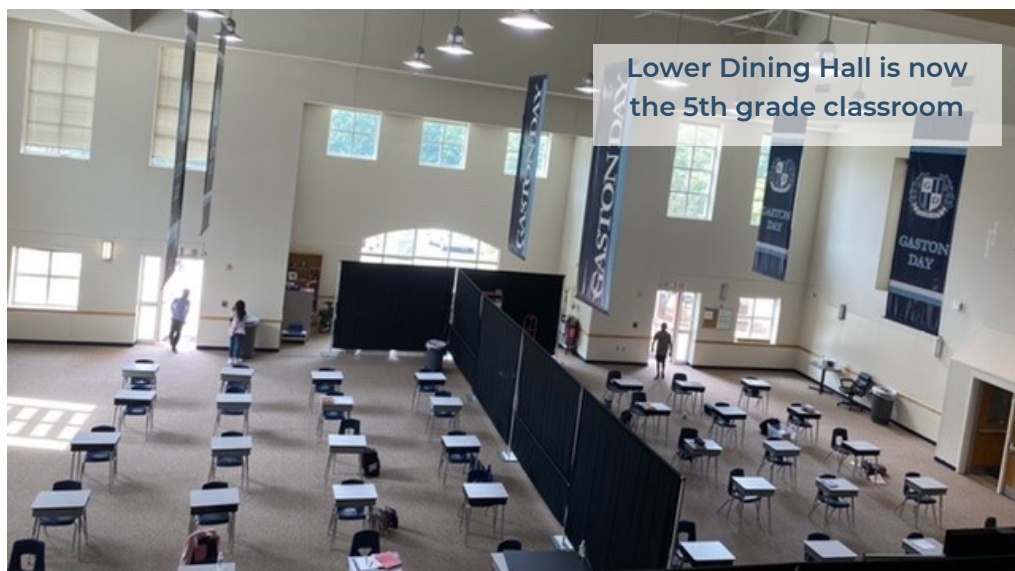
HOW COVID-19 CHANGED THE WORLD

Over the last several months, Gaston Day has worked hard to create an environment that will be safe. **While all of our improvements are important, there are three features that are worth highlighting.**

The first is that we have met the CDC guideline of having every student at least six feet apart in all classrooms. To do so we have had to convert space not traditionally used for teaching into new classrooms. The Upper Dining Hall, the George F. Henry Library, the PKW lobby, and the Henry Center Gym have all become teaching spaces. The result is every Gaston Day student can be on this campus at the same time and still be safely spaced.

If you wonder why so many other schools are going to a hybrid model in which part of their student body is on campus while the rest is learning from home virtually, the reason is those schools have been unable to find enough space to have all of their students on campus at the same time. **We have done it.** As a result, parents do not have to figure out what to do with their children learning virtually from home part of the time. If all goes as planned, and Gaston Day does not have to switch to a virtual platform because public health officials recommend such a move, **we can all fit on this campus safely.**

The second crucial feature of our plan--and one that may be unique to Gaston Day School--is that we have separated all of our



grades into cells or cohorts that do not mix with each other during the school day. This has required extraordinary planning and scheduling, but the benefits are enormous. Each grade at Gaston Day (except the 11th and 12th grades which are combined into a single unit) is self-contained and does not interact with the rest of the school during and between classes. This limits the possibility of COVID-19 spread and--**and this is really important--** isolates any COVID-19 cases to a single area without contaminating the rest of the school. So if we do have COVID-19 infections at Gaston Day, we should be able to contain spread, isolate cases, disinfect the affected areas, and return to normal as soon as possible. COVID-19 infections in one grade should not spread easily to other grades.

Even meals will occur by grade as food service delivers boxed-lunches outside of each classroom. **In a certain sense, Gaston Day has created fourteen separate schools (or grades) that are meeting on our campus simultaneously, but not interacting.** Even where exceptions have to be made to strict separation, as is the case with bus transportation and after-school care, the school has taken great precautions to limit the possibility of spread.

The third safety practice is that everyone at Gaston Day, except for our youngest Spar-



The gym is now the 7th grade classroom

ments to create a safe environment.

So we go into the new school year well prepared. And, we know from last year, that we are able to move swiftly and effectively to a virtual learning platform if we have to. Public health officials will guide those decisions. **We have done our best to be ready for anything.**

tans and their teachers during class, will be wearing masks all day to prevent spread. Lower school teachers will be wearing face shields when teaching so that our younger students can see their faces and understand better. Everyone else will be wearing their masks, and so will Lower School teachers when outside of their classroom settings.

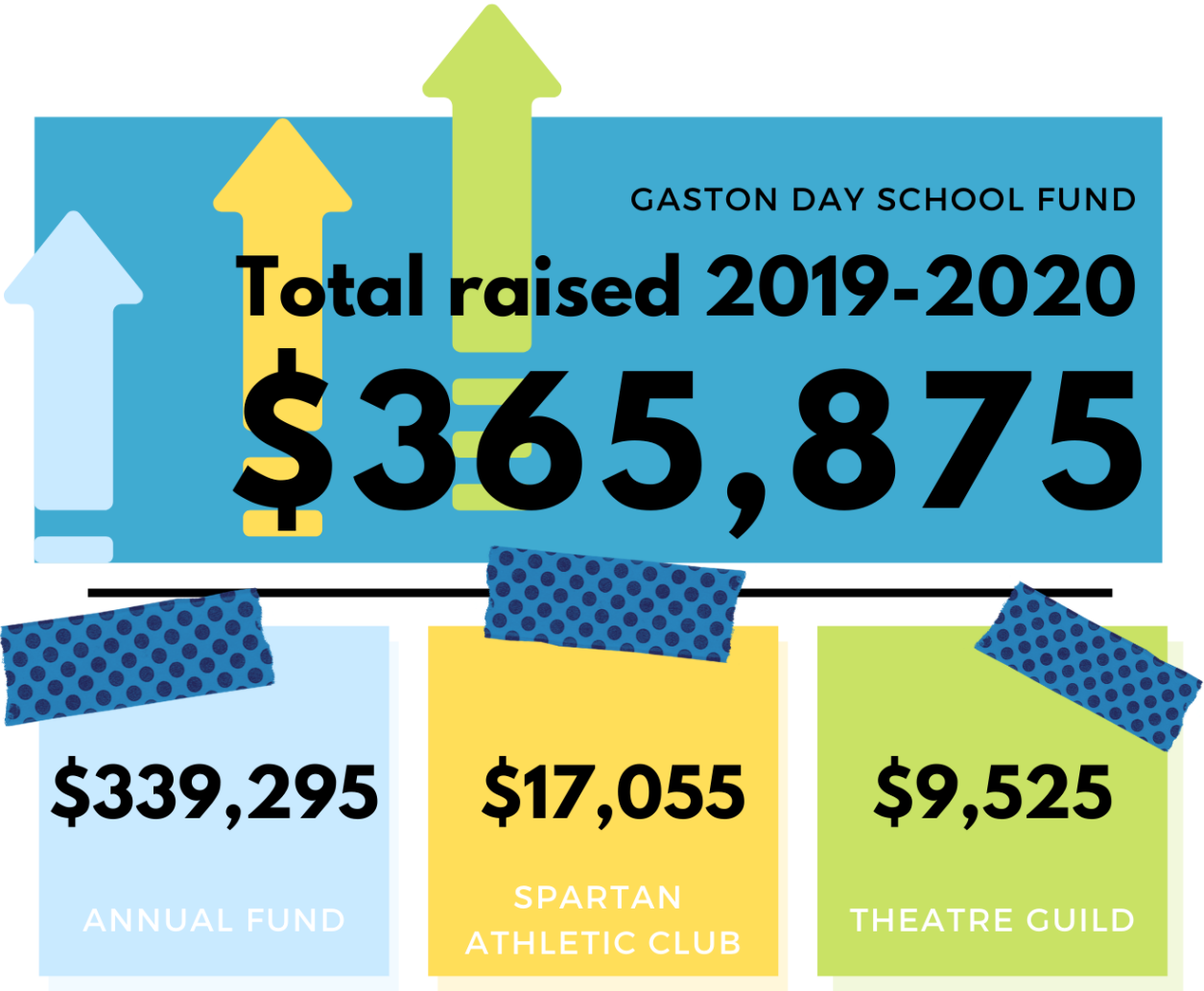
And there are other important precautions. We have **created several larger classrooms** on the Circle to accommodate our biggest classes safely. We have **purchased thermometer scanners** that take temperatures of everyone as they enter the buildings. We have **installed signage** that keeps everyone six feet apart in the halls and other common areas. We have **placed hand sanitizing dispensers** throughout the campus. We have **created the new position of Wellness Coordinator** (Melissa Fayssoux) to monitor temperature taking and handle anyone who becomes ill. We have **enlarged our cleaning staff and developed a strict and frequent cleaning regimen.** In all, Gaston Day School has invested almost \$250,000 in safety and health improve-



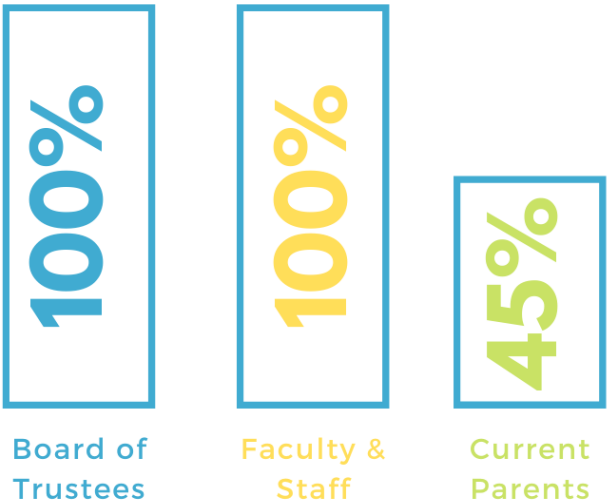
PKW Lobby is now common area for 11th & 12th grades



ANNUAL FUND STATS AND FIGURES



Participation Rate



GRANDPARENT GIFTS

61

ALUMNI GIFTS

32

GOALS | 2020 2021

AIM *High*

PARENT
PARTICIPATION

100%



TOTAL
GRANDPARENT
GIFTS

90



TOTAL
ALUMNI
GIFTS

50



If you are a returning donor, THANK YOU. We greatly appreciate your past support and would like you to consider going “All In & 10” by increasing last year’s gift by ten percent for the 2020-21 school year. We need your support.

WAYS YOU CAN GIVE

ENDOWMENT GIFTS

Gifts to the Endowment Fund secure the wellbeing and longevity of Gaston Day School in the future. When the school uses revenue from the Endowment, the principal is kept intact while a portion of the interest income is utilized.

MATCHING GIFTS

These gifts provide a “buy one, get one free” opportunity for the school. Matching gifts are offered by over 500 American corporations who match or sometimes even triple their employees’ philanthropic gifts. Check with your employer to learn whether your company participates in this giving opportunity.

PLANNED GIVING

A Planned Gift to the school is made through a trust, annuity, insurance policy, or, as is most commonly done, through a bequest.

Andy is a 1988 graduate of Gaston Day School and is currently in his 23rd year as a Computer Science professor at Mercer University in Macon, GA.

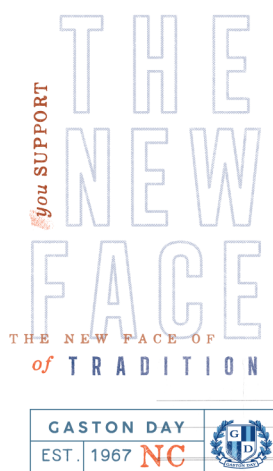


ANDY DIGH AND WHY I GIVE

I give annually to help Gaston Day have the flexibility to meet unexpected challenges and take advantage of new opportunities for students.

As an educator myself, I know well how important classroom and lab upgrades can be and hope my gift can also play a small role in contributing to these improvements. Most importantly, I like to donate every year because I would not be where I am today without Gaston Day.

I cherish all my special memories growing up as a Spartan. The teachers I had during my thirteen years as a student at GDS had a profound impact on me and made me a better writer, speaker, thinker, and human being. They were tremendous mentors who instilled in me a desire to never stop learning that continues to this day.



Pledge

I PLEDGE \$_____ PER YEAR FOR 3 YEARS

FIRST PAYMENT DATE: ____ / ____

Gift

☐ MY CHECK IS ENCLOSED (PAYABLE TO GASTON DAY SCHOOL)

☐ CHARGE CARD: \$_____ AS ☐ ONE TIME GIFT ☐ ANNUAL ☐ MONTHLY

FOR [] YEARS NAME ON CARD _____ CARD NUMBER _____

CARDHOLDER BILLING ADDRESS _____

☐ REQUEST INFORMATION ABOUT MATCHING GIFTS

☐ REQUEST INFORMATION ABOUT ESTATE GIFTS

One thing that will never change at Gaston Day School is the tradition of excellence we've earned over fifty years. Without you, we couldn't make life at Gaston Day School the special experience it is for so many families. Thanks to your contributions, we can continue to deliver a top private school education while enjoying one of the most accessible, inclusive, vibrant, and supportive cultures you can find.

Contact Information

NAME _____

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CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____ EMAIL _____

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AFFILIATION: ☐ PARENT ☐ ALUM ☐ FACULTY ☐ STAFF ☐ FRIEND

(cut along this line and use return envelope)



DUKE AND DOT KIMBRELL PROFILE

Mr. and Mrs. W. Duke Kimbrell-- Duke and Dot to their friends--

were founders, guardians, and champions of Gaston Day School. From the birth of the vision that became Gaston County's first independent day school and until the very end of their lives, Mr. and Mrs. Kimbrell were the couple most responsible for the school's success and survival. Their dedication to Gaston Day continued through two generations as their children and grandchildren graduated from here.

In the early 2000s, at a time when the school's financial situation was desperate, Mr. Kimbrell made an extraordinary gift to completely retire the school's debt. **His must surely be one of the largest gifts ever made all at once to a North Carolina independent school,** and it initiated a period of growth and academic excellence that has continued to the present. At the same time, he also made a huge planned gift to fund the **W. Duke Kimbrell Scholars program here, which has had a lasting impact on the**



lives of all its recipients and brought so many outstanding students to the school. It is just a plain fact that Gaston Day School would not have survived without Mr. Kimbrell's gifts in the early 2000s. He took great pride and satisfaction in what the school has accomplished since then.

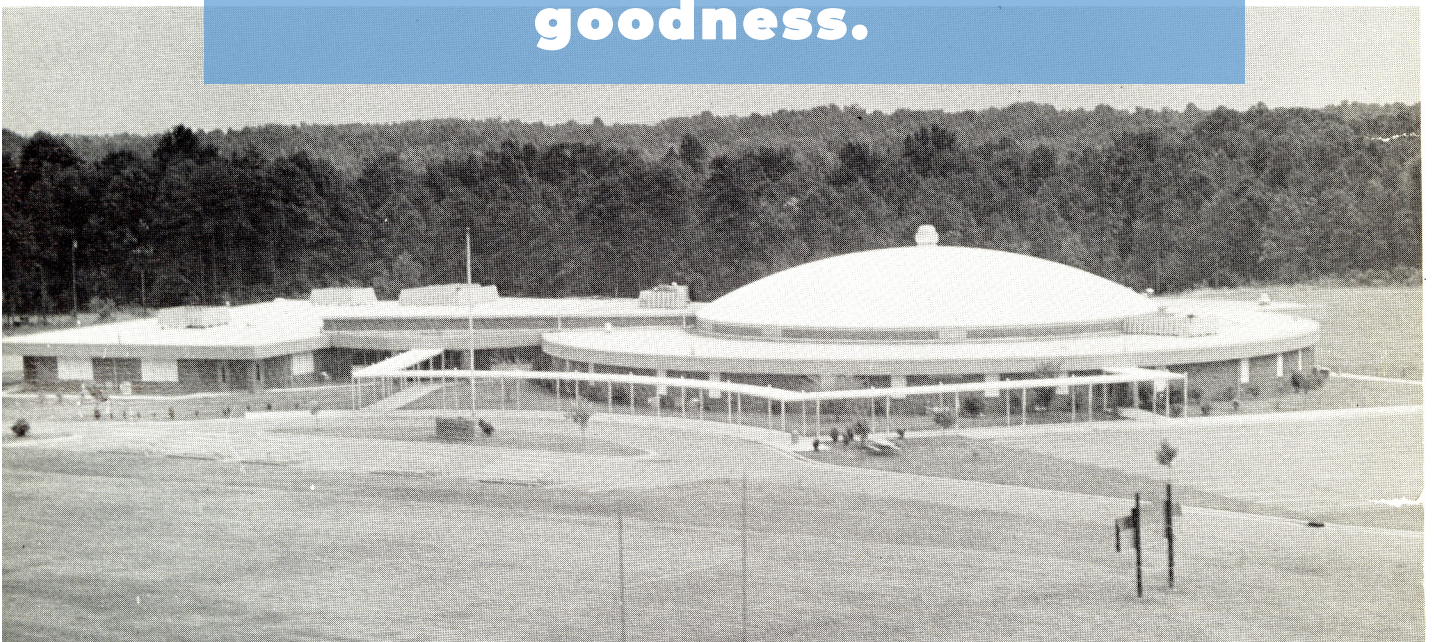
Mrs. Kimbrell was an active volunteer leader and always a full partner in her husband's guardianship of Gaston Day. **She remained a champion of the school throughout her life.** Most recently in 2018, her tremendous love for Gaston Day's children was expressed through the family's gift to build the Dorothy R. Kimbrell Lower School Playground. The Kimbrells also instilled an intense devotion to Gaston Day in their children Pamela Kimbrell

Warlick and Shepard Kimbrell Halsch, son-in-law Anderson Davis Warlick, and grandchildren Collins Warlick Byers and Davis Warlick, all Gaston Day graduates.

Gaston Day School is profoundly grateful for the lives of Mr. and Mrs. W. Duke Kimbrell. It is no exaggeration to say that the school itself is a monument to their stewardship, generosity, and goodness.

Gaston Day School Founding Family Heritage Profile

**It is no exaggeration to say
that the school itself is a
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goodness.**



FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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The collective goal of our Board of Trustees is to **ensure that Gaston Day School has the tools to accomplish our shared mission**—educating our students and preparing them for academic success and responsible, productive lives.

This annual report provides a snapshot of key metrics that reflect the work of students, faculty, staff, and administrators from the past academic year. While supporting the school in any time of challenge is a priority of the board, **our main focus is to set and manage the strategic vision of our school community**. This proved to be a monumental task as COVID-19 not only tested the operational model of our school, but also the strategic vision.

Gaston Day's Board of Trustees approved a new **strategic plan** two years ago. This plan was shared in a report at the time of publication and can be found on Gaston Day's website. Four key areas that best support Student Achievement and Student Life are below.

- **Culture and Community**
- **Financial Strength and Stability**
- **Attracting and Retaining Talent**
- **Academic Investments and Innovation**

Each of these areas is critical to the success of Gaston Day, but we would like to highlight two areas that are especially relevant today: Culture and Community and Financial Strength and Stability.

First, we must recommit ourselves to create a welcoming and inclusive community.



Our students learn best when surrounded by peers who reflect the community in which we live. The school has made the following commitments to creating a more diverse culture and community: aligning the diversity of students, faculty, staff, and board with the broader communities we serve; hiring more teachers of color; ensuring our teaching materials reflect a diverse group of scholars; and celebrating and recognizing the diverse cultural traditions of our families.

Second, our financial model is tested every year and especially this past year.

This academic year will be the first time in over fifteen years that Gaston Day was unable to present a balanced budget; we are expecting to run a deficit. We are pleased with the plan our administrative team has presented, especially after considering the additional investments opening under COVID-19 required. Expanding our donor base will be critical to the long-term success of our financial model. Also, finding and maintaining partnerships and pro-



grams that can offset increasing costs are important.

We share a common goal: to support our students and their teachers. I am asking you to stay involved and help Gaston Day continue to empower our students to make a difference in the communities they serve.



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Gifts given under the Gaston Day School Annual Fund support the school's operating budget for the current academic year. It is the money that makes up the difference between what tuition revenue produces and the cost of operating the school. Your gift will impact everything even the simplest needs such as classroom supplies.

Every gift makes a difference.
