



# Courage to Climb *Higher*

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*A Strategic Plan in Service of Our Future*



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# Letter from the Board Chair and Head of School

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*In 1922, Francis Behn Riggs founded this school because he believed in the transformational power of education. Deeply impacted by World War I, Mr. Riggs felt that education was the path out of global hostilities and challenges. In this spirit, he created a school where young students would engage in intellectual and philosophical debate, develop the confidence to share their ideals and beliefs, learn to be good stewards of the land, and experience the joys of childhood.*

Over the past century, IMS has grown and developed in ways perhaps unimaginable to Mr. Riggs. What has persisted throughout the years is a belief in the power of education and a belief in the unlimited potential of our students. Indian Mountain School's founding motto of *Life Through Service* remains a clarion call to consider the

needs of others in our community and to teach the value of empathetic, altruistic leadership. In honor of our founding and as the current stewards of IMS, we are incredibly grateful and proud to present "Courage to Climb Higher," our new strategic plan. This plan acts as a framework for our mission, clearly defining our goals and



laying a foundation for the next century. This new plan builds on the legacy of our previous strategic plan, “Courage to Climb.” Over the past five years, we have affirmed and articulated our core values and used them to guide us in designing an increasingly engaging, transformational, and relevant learning environment for our students and teachers. At the heart of it all is our community.

The work that was identified in our previous plan has enabled us to achieve excellence in many aspects of school life. We have clarified and improved our programs and curriculum, invested in our people, achieved record-breaking

fundraising and enrollment milestones, enhanced our physical plant, and built new community spaces. We are proud of these accomplishments.

In the following pages, you will read our strategic plan that was conceived of by trustees, parents, administrators, faculty, consultants, and, most importantly, students. Achieving our vision will call upon our skills, resources, and focus, but the path up our mountain is clear and inspired by the courage IMS students demonstrate every day. We have further to climb, and at IMS, no one climbs alone.


Christopher Sanger, '86 P'18'20  
President of the Board of Trustees

Jody Reilly Soja, P'22'24  
Head of School



# Our Mission



A decorative graphic in the top right corner consisting of concentric, wavy lines in a light red color, resembling a topographic map or a stylized mountain range.

Indian Mountain School inspires in each member of the community the courage to climb, the passion to learn, the joy to create, and the spirit to contribute in kind and meaningful ways.

# Our Core Values

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## HONESTY

Engage with others truthfully

Uphold the highest standards of academic honor

Act with integrity and have a strong moral compass

## COMPASSION

Exhibit empathy and care for others

Focus on the needs of the community

Seek to understand others' challenges and offer support

## RESPECT

Act in kind and considerate ways toward everyone in the community, in the classroom, and on the playing field

Use language that demonstrates esteem for others

Appreciate the ways that we are alike and different from others in our community; value and protect the dignity of others in all interactions

# Vision Statement

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At IMS, individuals belong, thrive, and build a confident and healthy sense of self. We care deeply about our people, our land, and our world, and we transform that care into action. We teach our students that service is at the heart of leadership. We build a sense of empathy by teaching our students how to live and learn as members of a community. As we continue to refine our program in the next five years, our approach will rely upon thoughtfully designed learning experiences that engage students in real-world contexts: on our mountain top, at our pond's edge, on our fields, in our dorms, and beyond to our

communities. Our curriculum will blend student-centered, curiosity-driven learning with essential foundational skills. Positive, trusting relationships will allow our students to discover their full potential while preserving the joys of childhood and a sense of adventure. The paths taken at IMS are just like the paths up our mountain: different for everyone, rarely in a straight line, and ultimately rewarded with new perspectives, an expansive view, the spirit of possibility, and the tools necessary for the challenges and opportunities ahead.



“

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# Strategic Priorities

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- 1 Educational Excellence
- 2 The Mountain
- 3 Belonging
- 4 The Joy of Childhood
- 5 The Next 100 Years





*Strategic Priorities*

# Educational Excellence



We believe in the unlimited potential of all learners in our community, and that the most impactful learning happens when students are engaged with their peers, studying and addressing real-world issues.

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## WE WILL

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- △ Cultivate a student-centered, curiosity-driven, relational learning experience for all students that culminates in strong secondary school preparedness and placement
- △ Create a forward-thinking, relevant course of study with an emphasis on collaborative problem-solving and foundational skill-building
- △ Use the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as a framework for an education rooted in service-learning and leadership, woven through all grade levels
- △ Make culturally responsive teaching and learning practices a mainstay of the academic experience
- △ Strengthen academic support systems and structures, including the Ascend Program, to appropriately challenge and guide all students



*Strategic Priorities*

# The Mountain





We believe our expansive natural setting provides essential opportunities for learning about our environment, cultivating leadership and action, and encouraging outdoor play and personal growth.

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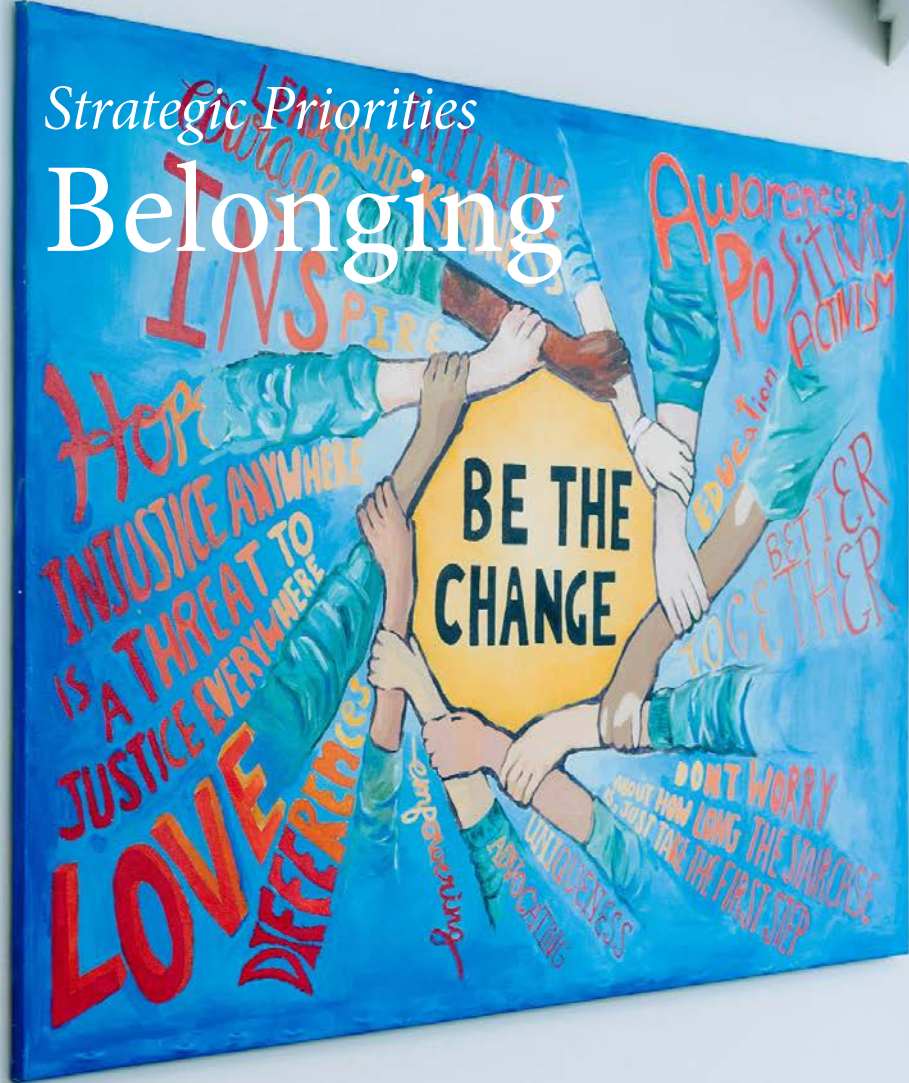
## WE WILL

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- △ Cultivate an appreciation of and care for the natural world, including our own campus and the local region
- △ Develop a Pre-K through Grade 9 curriculum for our Outdoor Adventure and Education (OAE) Program
- △ Measure our individual and collective impact on our campus and the environment by taking responsibility for our actions and the land
- △ Continue to reduce our environmental footprint and improve sustainability in all areas of the school
- △ Upgrade our outdoor facilities to provide greater access to our mountain and land

Strategic Priorities

# Belonging



We believe in Francis Behn Riggs' founding vision of a school that is accessible to all students and where everyone feels a sense of ownership and belonging.

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## WE WILL

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- △ Prioritize the safety of and sense of belonging for all community members
- △ Implement data-driven suggestions provided at the conclusion of our diversity, equity, and inclusion audit
- △ Recruit and retain a more diverse faculty and staff
- △ Increase access to all aspects of the IMS education and the full breadth of our program for all of our students
- △ Increase opportunities for community members to share their stories and global perspectives in order to develop our cultural competence and empathy

*Strategic Priorities*

# The Joy of Childhood





We believe that when school is a joyful place, and where students are challenged, engaged, and encouraged to play and develop meaningful relationships, children's potential becomes limitless.

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## WE WILL

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- △ Cultivate a playful community where every person is excited to arrive each day
- △ Increase cross-campus work to maximize opportunities for learning and relationship building, including peer mentoring and leadership opportunities
- △ Integrate our Outdoor Adventure and Education program philosophy of “challenge by choice” into all areas of school life
- △ Provide a balanced, robust program in academics, arts, athletics, and service
- △ Focus on supporting students' mental, emotional, and physical health and wellness

*Strategic Priorities*

# The Next 100 Years



We believe that it is our responsibility to focus on the long-term sustainability of our beloved school, to ensure that it is thriving and available for future generations of IMS students and community members.

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## WE WILL

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- △ Operationalize Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Sustainability Programming and Initiatives into all facets of school life and governance
- △ Evaluate the name of the school by learning more about its impact, while fostering respect and appreciation for the land and the people who came before us
- △ Recruit, train, and retain talent and invest in our people
- △ Ensure a strong financial future
- △ Continue to focus on building and enhancing our community spaces

# Portrait of an IMS Student

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## I AM A LEARNER

**I AM CURIOUS:** I want to know more about the world and my classmates; I ask questions and listen actively in pursuit of academic growth.

**I AM COLLABORATIVE:** I learn from my peers and enjoy working together as a team to explore new ideas and solve complex problems.

**I AM CULTURALLY COMPETENT:** I understand my perspective is shaped by my identity and life experiences and I seek to understand the experiences of others. I have the skills to work and live cooperatively with people whose lives are different from my own.

## I AM A COMMUNICATOR

**I AM A LISTENER:** I am engaged, empathetic, and open to multiple points of view. I listen actively and watch for nonverbal communication.

**I AM A PRESENTER:** I am able to share my ideas and my work in a variety of settings and mediums.

**I AM AN ADVOCATE:** I offer support to others, and I am comfortable asking for help.





# Portrait of an IMS Student

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## I AM A SOLUTIONARY

**I AM AN INNOVATOR:** I am not content to merely identify problems; I forge ahead in search of solutions.

**I AM AN ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARD:** I value and respect nature and I am committed to solving environmental crises.

**I AM A LEADER:** I examine community challenges and strive to work collaboratively to design solutions that are healthy, viable, and equitable for all.

## I AM COURAGEOUS

**I AM ADVENTUROUS:** I seek new challenges and activities, and trust those around me for support.

**I AM RESILIENT:** I can become a scholar, athlete, or artist, and consider challenges as occasions for personal growth.

**I AM IMPERFECT:** I can admit my mistakes and I understand that failure is a learning opportunity and persist through difficulties with determination and humor.





