

A past we preserve.
A future we pursue.

Case For Support
Spring 2019

Mission and Philosophy

Since its founding in 1958, Sequoyah School has offered an independent progressive education. The school began by enrolling students in grades K-6, added a junior high in 1978 and most recently opened a high school in 2016.

The school's educational program fosters a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach to problem-solving in an environment that nurtures both wide-ranging inquiry and self-reflection. Sequoyah's students develop an understanding of themselves within a diverse school community, becoming skilled, effective learners, stewards of constructive change, and advocates for social justice and peace. The school's alumni are often sought out for their leadership and academic accomplishments, including the independent pursuit of study and knowledge, and for their strong voices, as young writers, scholars, scientists, engineers, artists and activists. Sequoyah has always emphasized the integration of arts, humanities, field studies and science in its project-based curriculum, which now extends into high school.

Sequoyah has always been committed to providing an exceptional academic program grounded in the progressive tradition. This commitment depends upon sustaining a diverse student population and an inclusive culture; the recruitment, retention, and development of faculty and staff passionate about students' academic, social, and emotional growth; and the design and implementation of an innovative curriculum.

**A Sequoyah education challenges the mind, nurtures the heart
and celebrates human dignity.**

Reaffirmed by the board of trustees in 2015

Vision

With its mission in mind, Sequoyah seeks to consolidate expansion into high school while building upon the strengths of long-held values and a diverse school community.

The successful expansion of its K-8 program and enrollment made possible by the revitalization of the Pasadena Avenue campus and the implementation of indexed tuition, was followed only years later by the development of a high school on a separate site. These ambitious initiatives have significantly strengthened Sequoyah’s financial position and its leadership in progressive education. Among other things, growth over the past decade has infused the school with the experience and energy of new faculty and administrators, sustained a deep commitment to diversity and access, and assured the interchange of perspectives across broader age-range and academic subject areas. The school leadership now seeks to build upon this foundation by developing resources, partnerships, and infrastructure to support a cohesive community across multiple locations—actively resisting the common fate of satellite campuses and programs competing for ever-diminishing attention and funding.

In 2018 the school concluded a strategic plan which articulated the path ahead:

SUSTAINABILITY: SECURE THE FUTURE

1. **Sequoyah will be ready to purchase the K-8 Campus.** After almost sixty years of waiting, the school will be given the opportunity to buy the current K-8 campus in the near future. Preparations include long-range financial planning, campus planning, and launching a successful capital campaign to assure sufficient resources to support Sequoyah’s mission and founding values.
2. Sequoyah will continue to **develop its philanthropic capacity** to address strategic opportunities and challenges, including the purchase of the K-8 campus, through initiatives that will increase annual giving, major gifts, and capital funding.

3. **Campus planning** will be undertaken with a long-term view that ultimately affects Sequoyah's day-to-day operations and strategic investments. Our academic vision, and emphasis on sustainability and stewardship, will inform the design of a physical learning environment with lasting value.
4. Sequoyah's **board of trustees** will continue to focus trustees' role on strategic opportunities and challenges, including the development of a philanthropic culture.

TEACHING AND LEARNING: LEAD IN PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

1. Sequoyah will undertake a comprehensive assessment of student experience, curriculum, and faculty and staff development that will **guide high school growth and K-12 integration**.
2. Sequoyah will lead in progressive education offering opportunities for our teachers to **collaborate with colleagues across disciplines and professions, beyond their classrooms**.

VIBRANT COMMUNITY: STEWARD CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

1. Sequoyah will intentionally **draw upon the perspectives of an exceptionally diverse school community** to knit together and support student experience.
2. Sequoyah Sequoyah will honor its mission and founding values while pursuing opportunities for growth and innovation. To **manage growth and change**, school leadership will include a variety of perspectives to inform decision-making.

The Campuses

The school conducts its program at two locations only a few miles apart in Pasadena, California.

The **elementary and junior high program has been situated at 535 S. Pasadena Avenue** for all but one year of its history. The historic 2.3 acre campus was formerly owned by the Neighborhood Unitarian Universalist Church (Neighborhood Church) which leased its classroom buildings to Sequoyah. In 1968 the Church was forced to sell the property to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), as the state prepared plans to extend the 710 freeway directly through Pasadena. However, the state's extensive project to demolish miles of residential housing in several cities was contested in court for decades. Opponents were able to stall and finally halt planning for a surface freeway extension which would have destroyed the campus. Plans for an underground tunnel have been rejected by California's Department of Transportation as financially infeasible. The campus has been preserved and soon will be offered for sale along with other properties held by the state. As long-time lessee, and through its capital investment in the site, Sequoyah has secured the right of first refusal.

Located in the center of Pasadena, within walking distance of major cultural institutions and the Arroyo Seco park, the Pasadena Avenue site is conveniently accessible by major freeways. The design of the campus, with classroom buildings oriented around expansive outdoor play areas and patios, serves the needs of the K-8 program well. Although the school's investment in the maintenance of buildings and grounds increased in the past decade, and new buildings were added in 2013, capital investment has not kept pace with the need to replace aging infrastructure or to house all necessary programmatic and administrative functions.

Sequoyah's **high school is located on the campus of the Neighborhood Church, 301 N. Orange Grove Boulevard**, adjacent to the historic Gamble House. The school leases classrooms within the Church's buildings. As on its former campus on Pasadena Avenue where Sequoyah's K-8 program is located, the Neighborhood Church constructed classroom buildings with flexible interiors that open

onto gardens and patios. For the most part, Sequoyah high school's needs continue to be supported within the small gracious campus adjacent to the Arroyo Seco.

In the next few years, the K-8 Pasadena Avenue campus will become available for sale, as will other properties nearby. Sequoyah's high school enrollment will fill out the maximum building capacity on the Neighborhood Church campus on Orange Grove Ave.

With ownership will come added responsibility for the stewardship of historic buildings and grounds, and the ongoing need to house its evolving K-12 program.

The Challenge

Sequoyah's leadership is asking stakeholders to contribute to a capital campaign to raise the funds needed for the purchase and stewardship of its longtime home at 535 S. Pasadena Ave, as well as towards the purchase of other desirable properties and development of new facilities envisioned in its K-12 master plan.

Contributions to the capital campaign will enable Sequoyah to achieve long-range goals articulated in its 2016 strategic plan—the one-time opportunity to buy the K-8 campus while securing the school's founding commitments. The Pasadena Avenue campus will be the keystone property supporting our K-12 plans. This fundraising effort is distinct from annual giving which supports immediate annual operating budget needs that tuition alone cannot meet.

Permanent Home – By purchasing the K-8 campus, without relying upon extensive debt financing, Sequoyah will secure a significant asset and establish its permanent home. The school will be able to continue enrolling a socioeconomically diverse population of students, sustain competitive wages and benefits for its exceptional teachers, and provide an enriched program which addresses social, emotional, and academic growth for each student. It also will be well-positioned to take advantage of future opportunities. Ownership of this site can leverage future growth.

Campus Investment – In addition to deferred maintenance, the school’s leadership has already identified several high-priority campus improvements, and teachers and students will participate in design development.

- **Neighborhood House:** A new building will be constructed between the play structure and wing of middle school classrooms. The building will house additional classrooms and office space.
- **The Play Structure:** Adjacent to the large field, a new play structure will be built in partnership with the original structure’s fabricator that will honor and pay tribute to the original beloved structure. The project’s intent is to conserve its thoughtful design for the next generation of students.
- **Daycare House Renovation:** The Daycare house, a historic residence built in 1910, inadequately accommodates a multitude of competing uses and needs extensive repairs. The building will be redesigned and thoroughly refurbished. The renovation will include new equipment and storage to serve the school community’s kitchen and the relocation of administration offices to more effectively address the day-to-day needs of students and their families.
- **Upper basketball court and play area:** The basketball court and handball court will be refinished. The project includes play-friendly landscaping, fan seating, protective fencing ,and underground drainage.
- **Campus Infrastructure:** Includes upgrades to electrical, mechanical and IT systems for greater reliability, safety and efficiency

Neighborhood House Concept



Play Structure Concepts





Fund for the Future – Gifts to this fund will determine Sequoyah’s future boundaries and its ability to locate new facilities (gym, arts center, administrative offices, multi-use classrooms, parking) to serve the shared needs of elementary, junior high and high school students and their families.

Following the rejection of the 710 Freeway extension, the City of Pasadena and California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) began planning in earnest for the sale and reintegration of property owned by Caltrans in what is known as the 4.5-mile 710 corridor, as well as the realignment of streets and intersections. Included in this area is the site of Sequoyah’s K-8 campus and adjacent land – the undeveloped hill sloping down from northwest border of the campus into the several-acre swale known as the “ditch,” the St. John Street and Del Mar Avenue freeway off ramps, and nearby vacant properties along Palmetto Avenue.

Ready buyers are already interested in the redevelopment of the 710-properties and the turnover of properties within the adjoining central city district. It is important that Sequoyah also is able to draw upon sufficient resources to secure and advance its interests within this shifting landscape and to safeguard the continued growth of the school.

Leadership and Strategic Planning

The school's leadership has been anticipating the sale of Caltrans property for decades. The board of trustees includes members with expertise in risk management, land use planning, law, banking, education, venture capital, strategic planning, fundraising and entrepreneurship. In 2015, Sequoyah's board of trustees convened a site task force charged with assessing the school's facilities needs and advising the board of trustees on properties coming to market. Working closely with other board committees such as the development and finance committee, and influential community partners such as the City of Pasadena and state and federal agencies, and organizations focused on sustainable restoration of housing within the 710 corridor, the site task force brings valuable expertise in finance, real estate development, urban planning and design.

In 2016, the board of trustees, in consultation with parents, teachers, students, alumni, and others, drafted and affirmed a strategic plan that commits the school to the purchase of K-8 campus, the continued growth of the high school, and the conservation of its socioeconomic diversity. The board of trustees recognizes that the acquisition and redevelopment of any property requires years of preparation to assure sufficient funds are raised, appropriate entitlements are secured, and renovations suitable for school operation, staff and student occupancy, are completed before doors are opened for classes. The board of trustees has begun campus master planning, engaged community partners and investors, and developed a capital campaign to advance Sequoyah's strategic aims.

Why focus investment in the K-8 campus?

Sequoyah's campuses, leased from separate owners, were designed for educational purposes by award winning architects. Both sites are located nearby Pasadena's cultural institutions, colleges, museums, extensive parks and recreational opportunities, and each campus is easily accessible by freeway and local transit. However, it is the Pasadena Avenue campus that will soon be available and its purchase will anchor Sequoyah's plans for stability and growth. This site has supported and inspired teaching and learning since the founding of the school in 1958.

Children and their teachers happily use almost every inch of the K-8 campus. The buildings and outdoor spaces are designed to be flexible, offering ample room for boisterous collaboration and quiet self-reflection. Classrooms buzz with activity, doors slide open revealing play yards, children of all ages run full-tilt across the length of the field, important conversations take place on patios, in lofts, on the basketball court, and under a remarkable variety of trees. This is a place where each child can learn and grow, which is why the 2.3-acre campus, set within an urban environment, is so valuable and worthy of ownership and investment.

When designing buildings for the 2018 K-8 campus expansion, architects Alice Fung and Michael Blatt characterized their project, extending the work of the campus's original architects Smith and Williams, in the following way:

We worked with Sequoyah School's philosophy of place-based learning which sees the students' local environment: schoolyard, neighborhood, community as a primary learning tool. So we tried to provide an environment that is rich with spatial choices, that is connected to nature, that supports creative engagement and stimulates learning...

We think that allowing for the creative engagement of the environment empowers the user and fosters learning.

Since 2013, the school leadership has been working with architects to anticipate capital needs, and to design additional improvements while prudently setting aside funds for depreciation and deferred maintenance. As the school's enrollment grew in stages, more and more classrooms were used and eventually a daycare program and administrative offices moved into the former church parsonage, and the library to the center of campus in the what had been the children's chapel. In 2013 Sequoyah replaced temporary trailers with three new buildings to house art, science and multipurpose space. At that point, the school incorporated technology and upgraded plumbing and electrical systems, including adding a new electrical vault and solar facility.

The ways in which the school community uses the Pasadena Avenue campus will inevitably change, as they have over its 60-year history. However, the philosophy informing sustainable campus development will remain constant.

Why invest in Sequoyah?

Young children are inheriting a rapidly changing environment and an increasingly volatile interconnected society. Their generation must develop the flexibility and resourcefulness to persist through conflict and failure toward nonviolent collaboration and shared success. Sequoyah's graduates know how. For over sixty years, Sequoyah has prepared its students to lead purposeful and productive lives equipped with the skills and knowledge to advance within their chosen fields, reimagine professions, work across perceived boundaries and build strong healthy communities.

A gift to Sequoyah now is an investment in stewardship, collaboration, communication, inquiry, creativity, application of knowledge and finally ownership.

How will my contribution make a difference?

The sum of all gifts will make the difference in what Sequoyah can do to determine its future. This campaign is the collective effort, of a multi-generational community, united, transformed and touched by its experience of a Sequoyah education. Gifts to this campaign demonstrate confidence in the school's mission and vision, and each person giving can generate further generosity.