



WASHINGTON LATIN  
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

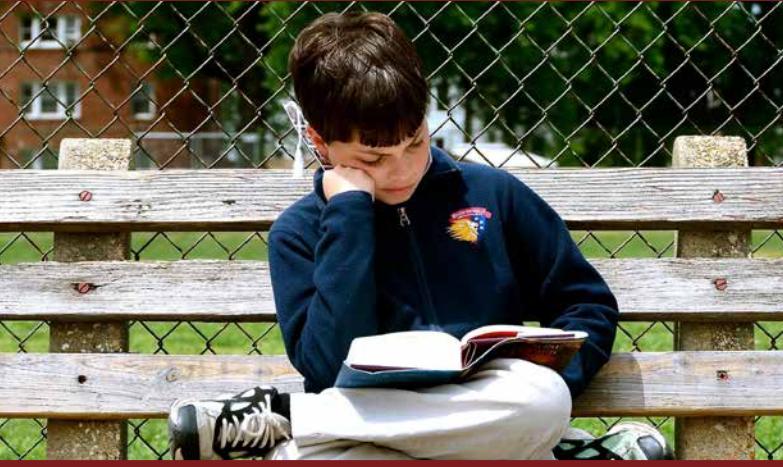
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# LOOKING TO OUR FUTURE

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STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2021





# MISSION

## A SCHOOL LIKE NO OTHER

**Our mission:** to provide a challenging, classical education that is accessible to students throughout the District of Columbia.

We seek to develop students who will become thoughtful citizens and leaders, contributing to the public good in their lifelong quest towards a fuller humanity. Ours is a school where words matter, ideas matter, and people matter.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Washington Latin was founded in 2006 with little more than a commitment to our mission and the essential characteristics that define our program: classical curriculum, faculty excellence, small class size, and a diverse student body. As a new school, we opened our doors in the 2006-07 school year with just 179 students in grades 5-7, occupying a church in Northwest D.C.

In each of the next five years, we added a grade until reaching our full complement of grades 5-12. As we built the school and hired faculty, we occupied six locations in our first seven years.

As we reflect on our first decade, we are proud of our progress. Our classical academic model is grounded in the wisdom of the ancients yet prepares students for the modern world. A talented group of faculty and administrators works together, committed to the mission to inform, provoke and inspire our students. A strong culture of civility and affection binds a diverse group of students from every Ward of the District of Columbia, reflecting the racial demographics of our nation's capital. Our 2<sup>nd</sup> Street campus serves our students and provides a permanent home for the school after years of working in cramped, temporary locations.



## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As proud as we are of these accomplishments, we do not rest on our laurels. Our focus now is on strengthening our model, ensuring that all key elements of Washington Latin are sustainable. In fact, we face challenges and opportunities, both immediate and longer term. These include:

- ◆ Ensuring the academic success of *all* our students, regardless of their background;
- ◆ Sustaining our diversity among our students to reflect the racial and socio-economic diversity of the District;
- ◆ Meeting families' increasing demand, including opening a new school;
- ◆ Building a faculty and leadership



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## A PLAN FOR OUR FUTURE BEGINS WITH OUR ORIGINS.

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pipeline that ensures stability and makes growth possible;

- ♦ Managing leadership transitions, both in the administration and on the Board of Governors; and
- ♦ Refining our financial model and finding additional revenue sources to fund our commitment to small class size.

In 2014, the school's Board of Governors and leadership embarked on a systematic strategic planning process. Our goal has been to identify current needs and future possibilities in order to map our work and establish a clear set of priorities and goals. In this process, we have reaffirmed our essential elements and identified specific goals for improvement in each area. This process has resulted in a plan to focus our work over the next five years, as we respond to current challenges and future opportunities. This document is a summary of that plan, outlining who we are and where we hope to go in the future.

We thank all those who have helped bring us through our first decade, and we welcome all who want to join us in our next decade.



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# CLASSICAL

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## **CLASSICAL CURRICULUM AND ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**

The classical model of education at Washington Latin brings together the timeless truths of Greece and Rome with the study of contemporary issues. Washington Latin focuses on three classical legacies: education for citizenship in a democracy, the Latin language, and public oratory. These are imparted through both ancient teaching methods such as Socratic seminars and contemporary approaches, such as the use of current technology and innovative learning practices. Our curriculum is designed to inform, provoke, challenge, and inspire our students so that ultimately they have a deeper knowledge both of themselves and of the

world they enter as adults. We aim towards an ideal in our program: developing students to be thoughtful people who will contribute to the public good and continue a life-long quest towards a fuller humanity. We further believe that education is a training of character, and character is the intersection of intellectual development and moral integrity.

Our goals for the academic program are focused on refining our classical curriculum and teaching model to ensure a clear framework for the curriculum and measurable results that show our students' progress. We also want to show that our program builds students' abilities needed for college success, demonstrated by college readiness tests, college entrance, persistence, and graduation rates.



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# ACADEMIC GOALS

- ◆ Develop Washington Latin-specific assessments, called the *Latin Academic Indices*, that measure the knowledge and skills our curriculum emphasizes.
  - ◆ Increase performance on annual proficiency assessments, both overall and in each sub-group, to narrow the achievement gap.
  - ◆ Increase our students' college readiness, as measured by national tests (SAT, ACT, and Advanced Placement).
  - ◆ Increase our graduates' college entrance, persistence, and graduation rates, with special emphasis on supporting students who are low-income or first generation college students in their families.
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# FACULTY

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## FACULTY AND LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE

We know that quality teaching is a crucial factor in every student's success at Latin. A trusting, gracious relationship between teacher and student is at the heart of every Washington Latin classroom. We aim for mutual trust and respect between students and their teachers, so that students will feel free to speak out in class, make a mistake, lead a group, and challenge assumptions. Our teachers are committed to every student's success, making the most of our small classes to ensure a personalized, collaborative, and thoughtful learning environment. These ideas go beyond "teacher effectiveness" towards a



commitment to modeling our core values of civility, intellectual curiosity, thoughtful and reasoned discussion of important ideas, and moral decision-making.

Our faculty is critical to achieving our mission. Like all other public schools, Latin is refining its system for identifying, recruiting and retaining top talent and ensuring their ongoing professional development. We aim to



improve our faculty retention rate to ensure an experienced, invested and quality faculty while also building a robust pipeline of leaders “grown” within Latin. Our fully integrated faculty and leadership development system therefore leverages a range of tools, including: monetary support (increased salaries, bonuses for excellence, and a competitive benefits package), opportunities for growth, and a positive work environment (including limits on class size and teaching load.)

Also crucial to our school’s current and future success is a strong leadership team, effective structure, and robust plan and pipeline for growing and sustaining the team.



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## FACULTY GOALS

- ◆ Increase retention to build a cadre of excellent teachers who stay at the school, become experts in the Latin model, and commit to our community; this is particularly important as we grow.
  - ◆ Increase faculty compensation to attract and retain teachers.
  - ◆ Refine our professional development and evaluation program with both more development opportunities and more systematic evaluation and feedback.
  - ◆ Identify a leadership structure for Washington Latin that is both financially sustainable and organizationally flexible to respond to changing needs, emerging challenges and opportunities.
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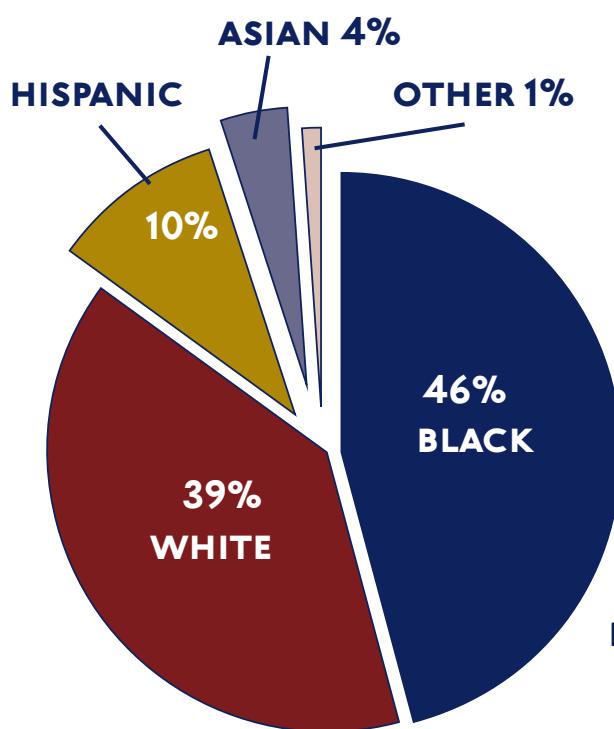
DIVERSITY

## DIVERSE AND INTEGRATED COMMUNITY

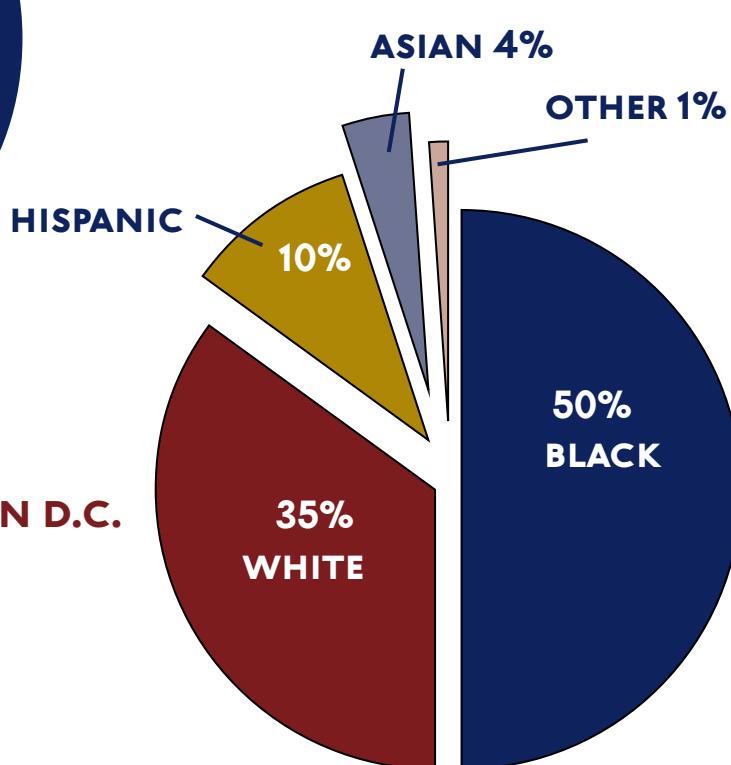
Unlike the majority of public schools, both in D.C. and nationally, Washington Latin is an integrated school. Our 2015-16 racial demographics mirror those of the city, as shown below.

We are an example of a school successfully serving a diverse group of students with an academically demanding program and a strong culture. Building our close-knit

community is essential to the Washington Latin program. Our mission aims to be accessible to all students, both in terms of enrolling in the school and accessing the full benefits of our program. We are committed to ensuring that the Washington Latin experience is accessible to any Washington, D.C. student and are working to remove any barriers that might deter a family from applying to the school or fully participating in the school's programs. We further consider a truly integrated school community to be the only way to accomplish our classical education model. It is central to our model that our students develop the ability to discuss ideas and make intellectual



WASHINGTON D.C.





and moral decisions within a diverse community.

We are committed to sustaining the racial and socio-economic diversity in our student body and increasing the diversity of our faculty and staff to better reflect that of our students. While we have had broad geographic distribution across the city in terms of student enrollment, we have seen a decline in the percentage of low-income students each year. We are committed to reversing this trend to ensure we remain diverse.



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## **DIVERSITY GOALS**



- ◆ Increase student socio-economic diversity to better reflect that of the District.
  - ◆ Sustain student racial diversity and continue to mirror racial demographics of D.C.
  - ◆ Increase the diversity of the faculty and staff in both race and gender.
  - ◆ Maintain an accomplished, skilled, and engaged set of community volunteers as the Board of Governors, who bring a range of expertise and reflect the diversity of the community.
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A dynamic photograph of a soccer player in mid-kick. He is wearing a black jersey with white stripes on the shoulders and the letters 'LCY' on the chest. He is also wearing black shorts, black socks, and white soccer cleats. The ball is white with blue and red patterns. In the background, another player in a dark jersey and a referee in an orange shirt are visible on a green grassy field.

# FINANCES



## SMALL CLASSES AND PERSONAL APPROACH

There are two primary reasons for our commitment to small classes and a relatively small school overall. First, smaller classes make the classical approach to teaching possible. Our lofty curricular goals require educational intimacy; we cannot allow our students to be anonymous. Small classes and seminar-style discussions make connections with each student possible. We depend on close relationships to create a culture of respect, learning, and openness.

Second, small classes and a small school make it possible to achieve a strong sense of community among our diverse student body. We work to gather the school community as a whole regularly in assemblies that focus





on our values, praise student achievement, and recognize each other's growth and hard work. These gatherings are important to strengthening our culture. The emphasis on trust is essential: just as we trust our teachers to work within our curricular framework without the level of prescription found at many other charter schools, we likewise guide our students to behave morally and civilly through relationship-based discipline systems. Mutual trust and respect are central to our culture, reflected in our approach in the classroom and beyond, and only possible with our commitment to maintaining a small school and class sizes. We consider the ability to develop a close-knit community necessary to address student needs on a personal level.

In order to maintain our teaching approach and to build our close-knit community, we commit to sustaining our model in both our current school and any future schools that are established.



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## **FINANCIAL GOALS**



- Refine the existing financial model to ensure the sustainability of the current school with this small class-size model.
  - Examine the long-term relationship of the school's expenses (particularly faculty/staff salaries) and expected revenues (both per pupil allotments and fundraising) to consider our long-term future needs and plans.
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# GROWTH

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## **EXPANDING OUR IMPACT**

### GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

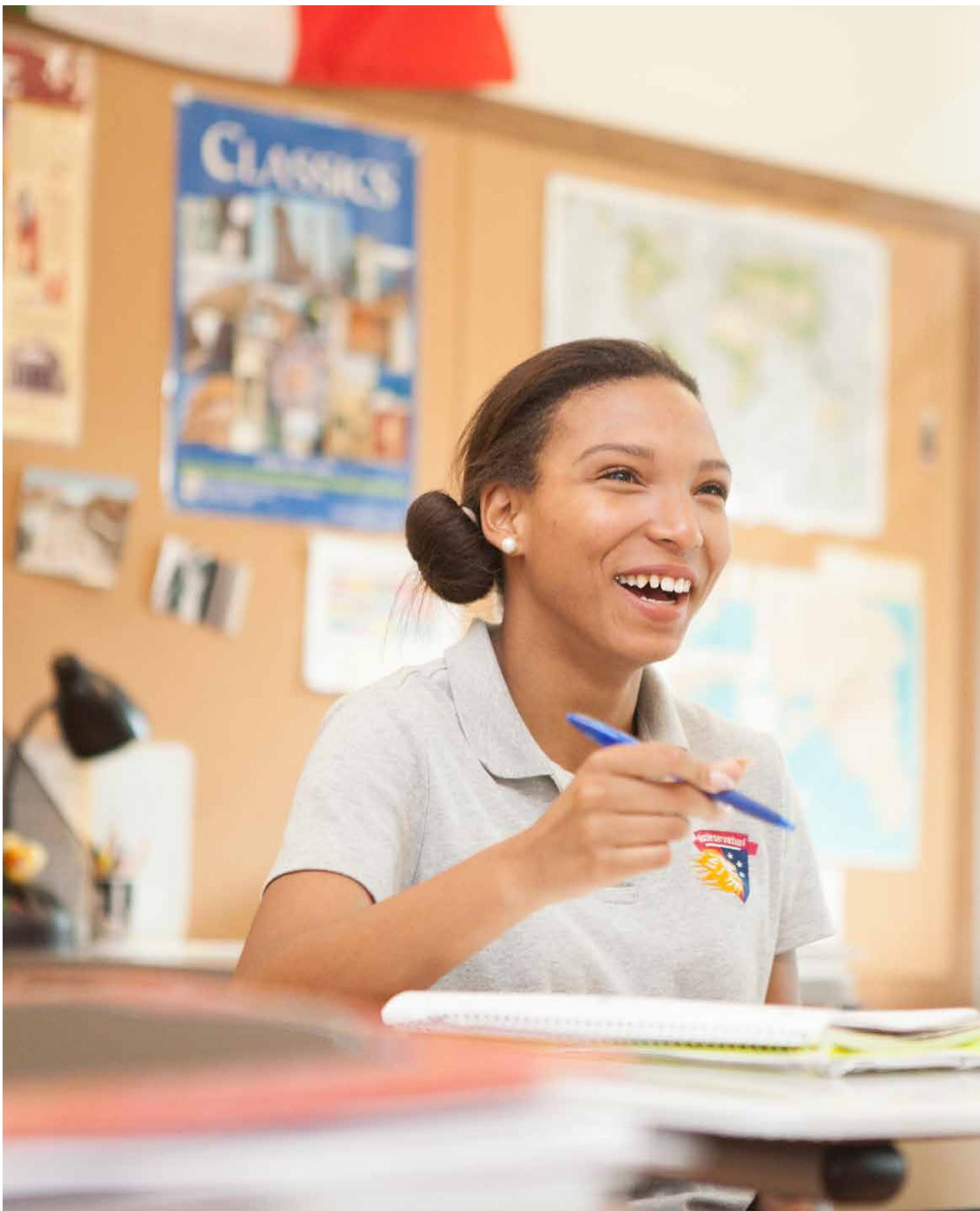
The demand for quality school options in Washington, D.C. continues to grow. Charter schools remain central to the discussion about how to better serve all students in the District as the sector continues to gain enrollment and offer quality alternatives to traditional public schools. In 2015-16, 44% of all D.C. public school students were enrolled in charters. The city's charter school sector was rated number one in 2014 in a survey by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools of charter sector quality city-by-city across the US.

Washington Latin is keenly aware of how our excellent results and unique mission put us in high demand. Our classical, liberal arts model and diverse student body are elements



of our school that continue to attract families from around D.C. who seek a quality public education for their children.

Washington Latin has deliberated over the prospect of expansion, with particular consideration of retaining the essential characteristics of our model. We believe we have



an obligation to serve more students as demand for Latin grows, and Latin is working to open another school in the city of Washington within five years. This discussion is ongoing as we consider how best to balance the community need with our commitment to the essential characteristics of Washington Latin.

## GUIDING OUR GROWTH

We have agreed to the following basic guidelines for expansion, including:

- ◆ We are committed to our academic model and essential characteristics, and our expansion will remain faithful to those characteristics.
- ◆ We will aim for moderated growth to ensure the financial and operational stability of our current campus and to allow for the time to build the new school's leadership, faculty and culture.
- ◆ We expect to begin expansion by opening a middle school with two to three grades, growing "organically" into the full complement of grades. We anticipate there will be demand from the families of these middle school students to be able to continue with Latin as they mature into the high school grades.
- ◆ While we are not expecting to launch a new school at the elementary level, we are open to exploring ways to partner with other schools or organizations to help students make the academic leap from elementary to middle school and enter Washington Latin adequately prepared for our rigorous curriculum.

- ◆ We consider our racial and socio-economic diversity an essential characteristic and, therefore, we will carefully select a site that attracts families from across the District and from all racial groups and all socio-economic levels.
- ◆ A successful launch of a new campus is highly dependent on a faculty and school leaders that are truly prepared to operate a new school in the spirit and deed of the established institution. In addition to seeking new faculty members and leaders, we will work to cultivate leaders from our faculty to ensure their thorough understanding of and deep commitment to Latin's essential characteristics.
- ◆ As we continue to explore options, the Board and school leadership will refine these guidelines in order to be ready to act when specific opportunities arise.







## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

### **BOARD OF GOVERNORS 2015-16**

Chinesom Ejiasa, President

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Amina Wilkins

### **WASHINGTON LATIN PCS LEADERSHIP 2015-16**

Martha Cutts, Head of School

Diana Smith, Principal

Ryan Benjamin, Assistant Principal

Bob Eleby-El, Assistant Principal

Kate Cromwell, Director of Development

Crystal Eleby-El, Director of Student Recruitment & Alumni Liaison

Martita Fleming – Director of Operations

Geovanna Izurieta – Director of Finance

Lacy Peale - Director of Academics

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*Photographs by Neil Berment, Kate Cromwell, Emily Hall, and Ann-Marie VanTassell*



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A Classical Education for the Modern World