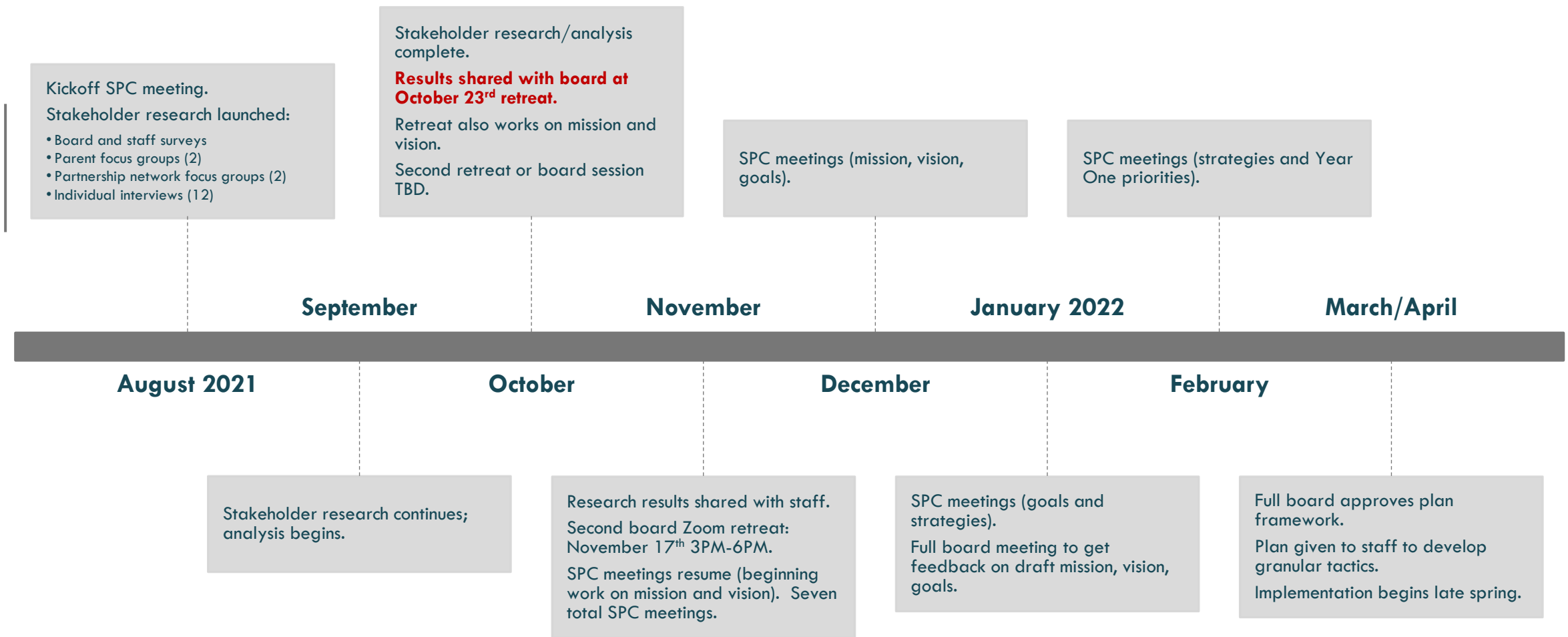




# Board of Directors Retreat: Part One

October 23, 2021 / 9AM to Noon / via Zoom





# PLANNING TIMELINE



# SURVEYS:

BOARD  
YEAR-ROUND STAFF  
SUMMER STAFF

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# NOTES ON THE BOARD SURVEY

Overall extremely positive, with willingness to ask challenging strategic questions and high confidence in staff leadership

Passion for scholars and their families and a commitment to supporting the emotional and social needs of scholars, in addition to reading skills

Clear articulation of FSP's environmental and contextual challenges

No clear consensus on a long-term vision for FSP; a wide variety of responses

Answers were generally well aligned with those of the year-round staff

A few quirky results in the board self-assessment rankings

Unlike both staff surveys, the board rarely mentioned SLIs or leadership development

# NOTES ON THE STAFF SURVEYS

Overall extremely positive, especially given the context of Covid uncertainty, staff turnover and emergence from the pandemic

Strong commitment to the mission and to scholars, and a pervasive desire to change the life trajectories of those they serve

Desire to strengthen a staff team that has changed significantly in the last two years through both expanded capacity and culture building

Agreement that FSP now has a unique opportunity to challenge and reconsider its operations and its definition of success

In describing FSP's core purpose, no year-round staff used the word "literacy," while the large majority of the board did. They instead used the words "reading" and "summer learning."

Summer staff responses largely mirrored year-round staff's, including positive comments on team culture and the desire for growth in sites and scholars

# FSP'S GREATEST STRENGTHS

## Key Themes

1. Passionate, dedicated staff (including strong CEO leadership)
2. A whole-child approach that honors social/emotional needs
3. Flexibility and adaptability
4. Strong community partnerships
5. Diversity and inclusiveness

## Notes and Variances

The board's survey ranked the staff first, as FSP's dominant strength, by a wide margin

Staff responses were similar but included more discussion of diversity and inclusion and the skilled use of partnerships

Summer staff named FSP's people (year-round staff, summer staff, SLIs, volunteers) as its greatest asset

# FSP'S GREATEST CHALLENGES

## Key Themes

1. Funding
2. Staff capacity
3. Contextual uncertainty (sites, CMS, etc.)
4. Communication across teams and locations
5. Differentiation from other summer programs in CLT
6. Training and consistency across sites

## Notes and Variances

The board focused more on funding, while staff focused more on capacity and human resources

The board specifically cited the relationship with CMS as part of its contextual uncertainty

A common theme across groups was the lack of control over key pieces of the program, such as sites or CMS recruiting support

Summer staff asked for a 'training and roles reboot' when the traditional program format returns

# HOW TO EXPLAIN FSP'S CORE PURPOSE: REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES

"Literacy and social capital"

"Promote equity and diversity by providing literacy and enrichment activities....for underserved communities."

"Encouraging a love of literacy, enhancing reading skills, providing enrichment activities, a safe environment, and preventing summer learning loss."

"Instills a love of reading through culturally relevant texts."

"A movement that provides summer literature-based programs in low-income areas to gain or maintain reading levels."

"Summer program that prevents summer learning loss and instills in each scholar a love of learning."

"Equipping them with the skillset to transform their environments through recognition of their unique value."



# HOW TO EXPLAIN FSP'S CORE PURPOSE: NOTES

Board responses focused heavily on the word “literacy,” while staff focused on “reading” and “preventing summer learning loss”

Board and summer staff responses talked more about empowerment and self-confidence than year-round staff did

Board answers also framed FSP's purpose as closing the mobility gap, broadening horizons, and building confidence and life skills

A few board members also asked whether or where ‘advocacy’ fit into FSP's core mission

Summer staff also talked more about incorporating social justice and civil rights education into the curriculum

This is an early example of the core question running through the research: Is FSP's core purpose building literacy skills, nurturing love of reading, or preventing summer learning loss? (Or other?)

# MOST AMBITIOUS DREAM, 10 YEARS OUT

## Key Themes

1. Serving dramatically more scholars through more sites
2. Demonstrable long-term impact on academic and social outcomes
3. Year-round activities supporting scholars
4. National recognition as a model for social and academic change
5. Strong alumni engagement in leadership development
6. Internships are sought after and highly competitive

## Notes and Variances

Across all three surveys, agreement that serving more scholars is the biggest dream

Many respondents framed that as serving “every child who wants and needs FSP”

People in all three groups suggested year-round after-school activities, and a handful mentioned starting a charter school

People in all groups mentioned having FS sites across the county, and a few sought expansion into surrounding counties

Several board members also mentioned a strong partnership with CMS

# PRIORITY AREAS OF FOCUS, NEXT 2-3 YEARS

## Key Themes

Resolving issues with site partnerships and CMS

Growing the number of sites and scholars served

Diversifying funding sources for greater stability

Building the staff team culture and capacity

Embracing equity and inclusion in all operations, programs and practices

Leveraging data to tell even more compelling stories of FSP's impact

## Notes and Variances

Multiple board comments emphasized the need to “rethink everything” before relaunching a traditional program in 2022

Representative quote: “Be willing to constantly challenge old assumptions about who we are and how we operate.”

A few board members mentioned a need to resolve FSP's relationship with CDF, but this was not a strong theme

# EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FSP BOARD OF DIRECTORS: SELF ASSESSMENT

Responsibility	Average ranking (out of 5)
Communication between board members and the CEO	4.68
New board member recruiting and onboarding	4.53
Championing diversity, equity and inclusion	4.50
Financial oversight	4.42
Succession planning for board leadership	4.21
Nurturing a collaborative, cooperative board culture	4.17
Annual evaluation of the CEO	4.11
Establishing and clarifying the mission and vision	3.84
Understanding the context and critical issues facing our scholars	3.58
Resource development / fundraising	3.56
Strategic planning	3.56
Advocating for FSP within each board member's network	3.47
Communication among board members	3.16

# BOARD: DO YOU FEEL FSP'S PRIMARY REASON FOR EXISTING IS TO.....

Response	Percentage
Improve literacy	6%
Serve the needs of the whole child, including social and emotional needs	6%
Increase equity and opportunity	0%
A blend of both literacy and serving the whole child	29%
A blend of both literacy and equity and opportunity	12%
A blend of literacy, serving the whole child, and equity and opportunity	47%

# STAFF CULTURE: DESCRIPTORS

## Staff Culture Currently

- Family / friendly / caring / warm
- Motivated / dedicated / passionate
- Flexible / adaptable / curious
- Sometimes disconnected / siloed

## Staff Culture a Year From Now

### Current traits plus:

- Bold / innovative
- Stable / strong / unified
- Fun / joyous
- Expert / knowledgeable
- Justice-driven

# MOST CHALLENGING QUESTIONS FSP SHOULD ASK ITSELF

“What is our most important function and outcome of FSP?”

“Are we willing to get out of our comfort zone to improve our program/organization?”

“What is the character of our organization?”

“Are we working to preserve the true meaning of Freedom School? Are we turning into any other summer camp?”

“Are we an equity or literacy focused organization (or both)?”

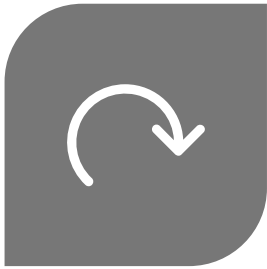
“How do we grow revenue opportunities?”

“How can we make sure we are successfully connecting with our families all year long?”

“Is our program unique or duplicative of others within the literacy space?”

“Are we who we want to be?”

# LEARNINGS FROM THE PANDEMIC, TO CARRY FORWARD



HOW FLEXIBLE, ADAPTABLE  
AND CREATIVE THE STAFF IS



WHERE FSP LACKS CONTROL  
AND IS VULNERABLE AROUND  
CRITICAL PROGRAM  
ELEMENTS



THAT THIS IS THE MOMENT  
TO 'CHALLENGE EVERYTHING'



THAT THIS IS THE MOMENT  
TO BE BOLD AND 'THINK BIG'





ADDITIONAL STAFF  
CAPACITY



INCREASED  
COMPENSATION AND  
BENEFITS



IMPROVED TECHNOLOGY



STRONGER AFTERNOON  
ACTIVITIES/CURRICULUM  
(SUMMER STAFF)



RETURNING TO THE SAME  
SITE YEAR AFTER YEAR  
(SUMMER STAFF)

RESOURCES THAT WOULD MAKE THE STAFF'S JOB EASIER

# MOST SPECIAL ABOUT FSP, THAT THIS PLANNING PROCESS SHOULD PRESERVE

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The passion and commitment of the staff

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FSP's commitment to serving and nurturing the whole child

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The heritage and historical perspective of Freedom Schools

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The team culture and the Freedom School way

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Commitment to racial equity and justice

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Harambee

# PARENT FOCUS GROUPS

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# STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSES



Universal praise and gratitude for the program and for its impact on their children



FS inspired their children to love reading and be more confident, adventurous readers



The energy, passion, care and 'dynamic of positivity' at FS was treasured and seen as unique to FS



All parents described their students as excited to go to FS every morning and sad to leave in the afternoon



Parents valued the compassionate, empathetic environment and the camaraderie among the scholars



Most heard about FS from their child's school, with a few being referred by other FS parents

# REASONS FOR SELECTING FS

**Affordability** was a primary factor in every parent's decision

The desire to stem summer learning loss was a factor for several parents

Parents noted that FS addresses both academic and social/emotion/justice issues, as opposed to more "summer school"-like programs

Only one parent said that their student struggled or had difficulties with reading

The length of the program and the length of the days also were positive factors in decision making

# SUGGESTIONS AND AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

Expanding the number of programs (book clubs, workshops, test prep, community projects, etc.) that FS offers during the school year

Insuring that their child is with the same staff and SLIs for all six weeks

Trying to have the same staff and SLIs at the same sites year after year

More presentations about FS at schools, libraries and houses of worship

An incentive program for referrals from both parents and students

# NOTES

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Parents talked about FS as program that advances a passion for reading and love of books

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They did not talk about it as a program that teaches technical literacy skills

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Within this small sample size, they described it as a summer reading program, or summer learning program, or summer enrichment program with a reading focus





# PARTNER FOCUS GROUPS

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# STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSES



High praise for the commitment level of the staff and overall communication to the partners



FS does an excellent job of providing volunteers with ways to engage in the program (in non-covid years)



Testimonials for how students blossom, progress, and embrace the reading and social/emotional benefits of FS



Discussion of the value of traditions and consistent chants, songs, etc. from year to year



Overall strong gratitude and appreciation for the program from the partners

# CHALLENGES OR CHANGES TO THE PARTNERSHIP

From several partners, concerns about costs, given that FS is one of their top two largest outreach/mission investments

Some noted budget concerns for their churches in the coming year

Some felt strongly that the investment would be difficult to justify next year without returning to pre-covid levels of volunteer engagement

“It’s essential for us to come up with ways for people to volunteer with the scholars this upcoming summer.”

Requests to create at least one annual convening of all the partners to talk through program, data and staffing needs

Requests for FS to send representatives to make presentations about FS at partner churches

# SUGGESTIONS AND AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

Insure that interns are demographically representative of the scholars

Reduce perceived inconsistency among sites (operating differently and with different human resources)

Solidify and protect FS's core identity as a program that focuses on social justice and civil rights in its curriculum

Immerse new staff in pre-covid procedures and practices (partners were aware of staff turnover and new staff who had never experienced FS before)

Provide sites with more Spanish language interpreters

Expand year-round engagement with scholars (and recruiting for new scholars)

Educate staff and SLIs on how to be a trauma-informed program

Strengthen afternoon activities, which should be 'more engaging,' 'more consistent across sites' and 'more high level'

# NOTES

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The partners, too, had questions about whether FS was a program to teach technical literacy skills, or a program to instill a love of reading

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They emphasized the importance of social/emotional development, and how that differentiates FS from other summer school programs

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The focus on social justice and civil rights was seen as a differentiator from other summer enrichment programs

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Partners also spoke about the need to not just return to the 'old' program but to tackle covid damage head-on

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They suggested adapting the curriculum to build social-emotional skills that may have been lost during covid

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# INTERVIEWS

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“There’s a magic to Freedom Schools, and that sets it apart from other programs. It has its own personality, its own great energy and positivity.....It makes me hopeful for the future.”

# INDIVIDUAL STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Interviewee	Organization/role
Brian Collier	Foundation For The Carolinas
Munro Richardson	Read Charlotte
Andy Mermans	Merancas Foundation
Carmen Blackmon	Above and Beyond Students
Brandi Brown	HYPE Freedom School (Houston)
Rosanna Saladin-Subero	CMS Director of Community Partnerships
Phyllis Harper	Donor
Nancy Downing	Donor
Judy Seldin-Cohen	Donor (Shalom Park site)
LeDayne Polaski	MeckMin
Bill Lorenz	Donor & former board member
Johanna Anderson	Belk Foundation (not a donor)

## FSP'S STRENGTHS AND ASSETS

Outstanding program quality and reputation

Excellent community engagement and use of volunteers

Empowerment, affirmations and positivity are strengths and differentiators

Strong, well-cultivated relationships with parents, children, SLIs and partners

Skill at inspiring love and enthusiasm for reading and learning

A whole-child approach that addresses social, emotional and cultural needs

Wide, loyal and supportive donor base, built over many years

Praise for FSP's new leadership and its adaptability and creativity during covid



Unanimous wish for FSP to serve more students at more sites; perceived need is enormous

Near-unanimous wish for FSP to serve students with additional year-round programming

More collaboration with community partners who serve the students FSP wants to reach

Hopes that FSP will adapt its program to address the trauma and learning loss of the pandemic

Desire for FSP to enjoy more certainty and predictability with its sites and with CMS

Hopes that FSP will take an even greater leadership role within the reading/enrichment/summer program community

## DREAMS AND GOALS FOR FSP'S FUTURE

# NOTES ON 'LITERACY,' 'READING' AND 'LEARNING'

Interviewees who were neither literacy experts nor immersed in funding literacy programs spoke of FSP as a literacy program.

Literacy experts and funders deeply involved in funding literacy framed FSP as a summer learning program with a focus on reading, not a literacy program.

Several interviewees felt that FSP's messaging around 'literacy' may be misaligned with the amount of literacy instruction it provides.

This presents a critical question about whether FSP wants to become a rigorous summer literacy program or clarify its role as an empowering program that inspires a love of reading.

All interviewees agreed that what FSP does, it does extraordinarily well.

# NOTES ON LATE-PANDEMIC CONTEXT

Multiple stakeholders discussed the significant learning loss students have endured in the pandemic

Several mentioned the recent and abysmal CMS reading test scores

Awareness that CMS is not spearheading a major campaign to repair covid learning damage

Belief that nonprofits should not ignore students' need to catch up to grade level reading

Encouragement for FSP to address that need for repair and not just repeat its traditional program

Belief that FSP could be a leader or key partner in a systemic solution for covid damage repair

## OTHER NOTES ON CONTEXT

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CDF and FS names and brands are seen as net neutrals (ambivalence)

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Concern that CMS will repeat its Camp CMS activities from last summer

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Several interviewees asked whether FSP should be in closer partnership with Read Charlotte

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Several also asked whether there was a version of coordinated intake (from homeless services) for summer programming

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Widespread awareness of FSP's lack of control over sites and CMS behavior

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Multiple people cited FSP and Y Readers as the 'big two' summer learning programs and praised that they've become more collaborative in the last two years

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## SELECTED QUOTES

“Start with what kids need, then imagine what you could deliver with the right resources. Get a plan and the clearest, sharpest, biggest vision, then name what you need and go get it.”

“This is not the time to be incremental. Those kids will never recover if we’re all incremental. It’s time to go big.”

“FSP could be one of the only groups with the big vision --- they could claim that space.”

“This can’t be a ‘tinkering around the edges’ kind of strategic plan. It needs to be a ‘meeting the moment’ kind of strategic plan.”

“How is everyone’s hair not on fire for these kids?”

# KEY STRATEGIC QUESTIONS POSED BY THE RESEARCH

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# STRATEGIC QUESTIONS

Will FSP be a summer learning program with a focus on reading or an intensive literacy intervention that raises students' proficiency?

Once FSP makes that decision, how will its messaging and programming adapt?

In 2022, will FSP run its traditional programming or adapt to help repair covid learning loss?

Does FSP want to be a community leader in addressing the repair of pandemic learning loss?

Will FSP remain primarily a summer learning program or expand its connections to students, schools and partners year-round?

How much is FSP able or willing to 'crack the mold' of the CDF Freedom School model?



# DISCUSSION

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# ZOOM BREAK

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# MISSION

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# WHAT IS A MISSION STATEMENT?



**Answers the question: What is it that an organization exists to *do*?**



What is the overall purpose of the organization? What's your 'why?'



Built upon a verb: "Our mission is to \_\_\_\_." That verb needs to be *strong*.



Missions are not the place for lists of *how* you fulfill your mission.



Missions are simply a declaration of what you exist to do.



One sentence; the more concise, the better.

# SAMPLE MISSIONS



To create lasting solutions to poverty, hunger and social injustice. (*Oxfam*)



To inspire conservation of the oceans. (*Monterey Bay Aquarium*)



To ignite students' potential by expanding their confidence, connections and horizons. (*Wayfinders*)



To unite our community to end homelessness, one life at a time. (*Roof Above*)



# CURRENT FSP MISSION STATEMENT

Freedom School Partners promotes the long-term success of children by preventing summer learning loss through igniting a passion for reading and inspiring a love of learning.



# ZOOM BREAK

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# VISION

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# WHAT IS A VISION STATEMENT?



Describe the ideal state that you envision, twenty years from now.



Describe it as if it is already real.



Describe the community or world you want to *create*.



Visions should be slightly unattainable and highly ambitious.



“We envision a world/community/etc. where \_\_\_\_\_.”



One sentence; the more concise, the better.



# SAMPLE VISIONS

A world where everyone has a decent place to live.  
*(Habitat for Humanity)*

An airport experience transformed by compassion  
and human connection.  
*(Charlotte Douglas International Airport Chaplaincy)*

A thriving, inclusive industry strengthened by  
standards, safety, and shared knowledge.  
*(Entertainment Services Technology Association)*

A vibrant cultural community that is globally  
impactful, locally connected and fearlessly creative.  
*(Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts)*



NEXT STEPS



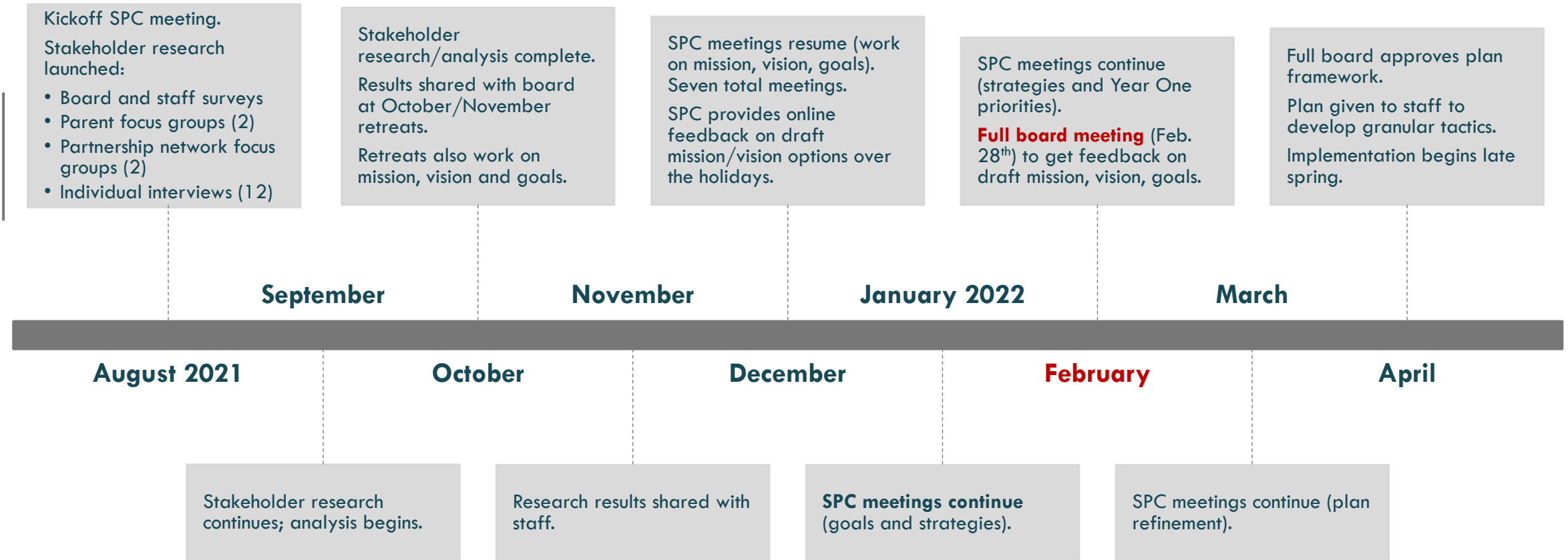
# Board of Directors Feedback Session

February 28, 2022 / 4:30PM-6:00PM / Zoom





## PROCESS REMINDER



## STRATEGIC PLANNING TIMELINE



# DRAFT MISSION

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# MISSION STATEMENT

## Current Mission Statement

Freedom School Partners promotes the long-term success of children by preventing summer learning loss through igniting a passion for reading and inspiring a love of learning.

## Draft New Mission Statement

To inspire our scholars to love learning, believe in themselves and their potential, and build the futures they deserve.





# DRAFT VISION



# VISION STATEMENT

## Current Vision Statement

*FSP does not currently have a vision statement.*

## Draft New Vision Statement

A community fiercely committed to embracing, educating, and elevating all children as our own.

# DISCUSSION

Which words or phrases in the draft mission and vision appeal to you?

Does anything need clarification or additional explanation?

Is anything missing?





# DRAFT GOAL PILLARS |

# Mission and Vision



Plan Organization

# DRAFT GOAL PILLARS

*Guiding principle across all pillars and strategies:  
Embedding diversity, equity, inclusion and access in  
all of our interactions, operations and programs.*

Significantly and equitably increase the  
number of scholars served each year

Lead the community toward educational  
equity through education, advocacy and  
partnerships

Expand organizational capacity and  
strengthen long-term sustainability

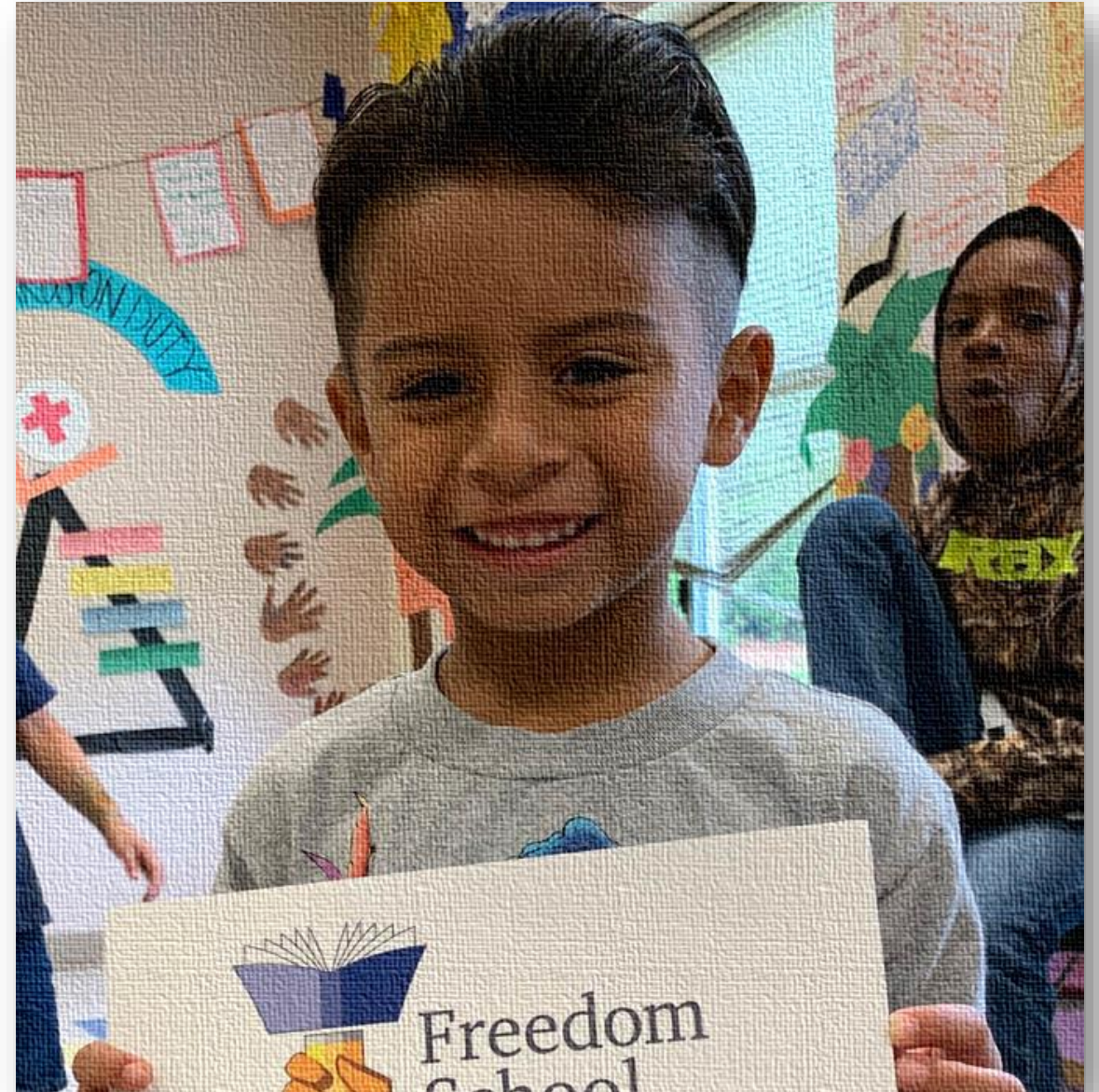


# DISCUSSION

What do you like about the draft goal pillars?

Does anything need clarification or additional explanation?

What do you want the SPC to consider or know as it develops strategies for each goal pillar?





NEXT STEPS |