

# Decatur Heritage Christian Academy

## STRATEGIC PLAN

*Preparing Students for Lives of Impact*

EXCELLENCE  
IN



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

# Decatur Heritage Christian Academy

*Preparing Students for Lives of Impact*

**MISSION:** The mission of Decatur Heritage Christian Academy is to assist families by providing their children with an education that is excellent and which instills Biblical principles to guide their lives.

**VISION:** As Decatur Heritage Christian Academy fulfills its mission, it will stand as a lighthouse to those seeking a Christ-centered place of excellence in academics, activities and athletics – a place from which students can then launch into adult life equipped with the character and skills to navigate successfully.

**VALUES:** Decatur Heritage Christian Academy is Bible-centered, prayer-focused and intent on teaching the whole child in partnership with parents in an environment of excellence, producing wisdom, character, discipline and service.

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Dr. Alan Pue, Consultant



On behalf of the Decatur Heritage Board of Trustees and the Strategic Planning Team, I am pleased to present our essential vision and goals. This strategic plan is the result of a lengthy process that included many hours of prayer, discussion and work by the parents, students, staff, faculty, administration and trustees who comprised the Strategic Planning Team.

During this intense procedure, the Team was challenged to consider and wrestle with who we are as a school and what we seek to accomplish in the lives of our students. Our consultant challenged us to define our core values as an institution and determine the distinct qualities of a Decatur Heritage graduate. We then turned our attention to the strategic initiatives enumerated on the following pages - initiatives that we believe will produce those exemplary graduates while remaining firmly grounded in our core values.

At sixteen years old, Decatur Heritage is considered an infant on the educational landscape. However, God has blessed and positioned us for a significant future. Our challenge over the next few years will be to make a compelling case for parents to choose Decatur Heritage for their child's education. We must take the foundation that has been laid in our school's first sixteen years and build on it the premier school in our area. The evidence of this success will be visible in our graduates as they go forth to impact their world.

These are exciting times at Decatur Heritage. This plan is visionary and can be transformative in the life of the school. Please take time to read it and begin prayerfully considering how you can **be involved in moving Decatur Heritage forward.**

Thank you for your support.



Stratton Orr  
Chairman, Board of Trustees  
Fall 2011





## Pillars and Plans

Beginning operation in the fall of **1995**, Decatur Heritage Christian Academy embarked on a path to erect **strategic organizational pillars** on the foundation of its mission, vision and values. The school acquired its initial accreditation through the **Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)**, joined the **Alabama High School Athletic Association** and affiliated with the **Association of Christian Schools International**. Over the ensuing few years, the school continued to enhance and grow its program, thereby achieving its strong showing for the first reaccreditation with SACS in the 2005-2006 school year.

In **2006**, plans were begun to provide a new campus. A feasibility study was conducted, property was purchased and the school's **first comprehensive capital campaign** was begun in the fall of **2007**. By God's grace through the generous outpouring of donations from school families and friends, Decatur Heritage raised over **\$7 million**, enabling the construction of the present facility on its 36-acre campus.

Classes began on the new campus in the fall of **2009**. Enrollment growth was strong over the next two years, even in the midst of the "Great Recession." As the economy returned to normal and the school completed the collection of pledges from the capital campaign, the Board of Trustees decided the timing and school's situation were ripe for **comprehensive strategic planning**.

A team – comprised of board, administration, faculty, parents and students – was guided through the process by Dr. Alan Pue of The Barnabas Group. This task involved an initial weekend retreat, several follow-up day-long meetings throughout the spring, extensive committee work and much research and prayer. Given the diverse makeup of the team, along with the extensive data from the accreditation process and the valuable feedback from the annual parent surveys, the team believes that **this plan for the future** is both **realistic** and **yet highly challenging**. The following set of **goals** and corresponding **tasks** are those identified steps – academically, spiritually, athletically and financially – **to reach that future**. This plan, while subject to constant monitoring, review and revision, will serve to cast the vision for where Decatur Heritage Christian Academy goes and grows in the future.



## Goal 1 - Develop Classes to Further Meet Student Needs

Throughout the years, Decatur Heritage Christian Academy has provided a strong college preparatory education. Building on our established academic foundation, we will now offer our Upper School students the opportunity to participate in **nationally recognized programs** such as **dual enrollment** and **Advanced Placement** courses. Additionally, we are developing a more varied academic elective set for our Upper School and more enrichment classes for our Lower School, including **foreign languages, fine arts, forensics and robotics** programs. Our “**Center For Excellence**” after-school enrichment program will continue to add academic extracurricular options for all our students.

### In pursuit of this goal, we will:

- Pilot Advanced Placement classes and on-site dual enrollment classes
- Add and develop academic electives, enrichment classes and extracurricular options
- Monitor and maintain an effective, college preparatory K-12 scope and sequence as we introduce new options



## Goal 2 – Strengthen Faculty Growth and Development

Many important factors contribute to an excellent education. We firmly agree with noted Christian school leader Dr. Norman Harper, who said, “**The redeemed personality of the teacher is the single most important educational tool.**” The finest building, the latest technology and the most effective curriculum are all vital components in the educational process. However, when the door to the classroom closes, that teacher will be the person responsible for modeling the life of Christ and instilling a love of learning.

To continue to **ensure the highest caliber faculty** and to enable them to grow in ways that will make a direct, positive impact on our students, we are committed to providing the nurturing, training and oversight to that end. Spiritual development, expanded teaching techniques and skills, growth in subject area knowledge and heightened awareness of our ever-changing world are all part of the necessary development of an excellent faculty.

### **In pursuit of this goal, we will:**

- Provide more structure and content for new teachers over a longer period of time to aid in effective assimilation into our school culture and expectations
- Expand professional development opportunities to provide more depth and a greater variety of growth opportunities
- Provide additional oversight and mentoring over the educational process for both new and existing teachers



### Goal 3 – Strengthen School Culture

Since Decatur Heritage is committed to interacting with the community, both locally and globally, to bring glory to God, **we encourage our students to be service oriented.** As they participate in acts of serving, **character traits** such as kindness, mercy and selflessness will grow. In addition, **leadership** skills will develop. Decatur Heritage students will see the positive difference they can make in the world, whatever their age or ability.

**Numerous opportunities for service and leadership** are available currently through student organizations, clubs and classes. Ideas for enhancing our missions emphasis include the expanded use of **foreign languages** and **technology**. Connecting our students to fellow students and missionaries around the globe will enlighten and encourage all those involved.

School culture can be strengthened by a conscious effort to engage the students' hearts and minds through service, but we also structure the Decatur Heritage educational experience in such a way as to point our students to **view the world through the lens of Scripture.**

The world we live in is constantly changing. Academics and technology are continually upgrading while society's culture is increasingly downgrading. **Our graduates will be called upon to exhibit greater wisdom, discipline and moral courage in order to conduct a life of impact.**

**In pursuit of this goal, we will:**

- Expand service emphasis
- Expand missions emphasis
- Develop and celebrate the distinctive qualities of a Decatur Heritage education



## Goal 4 – Enhance Our Students’ Learning Opportunities with State of the Art Technology

At a Techonomy conference in 2010, it was estimated that society now creates as much information every two days as we did from the dawn of civilization up until 2003. In today’s global market, the mastery of technology for today’s students is equivalent to learning basic math and reading skills.

We currently offer **technology instruction throughout K-12**, utilizing two well-equipped **computer labs** (one Lower School and one Upper School), a **state of the art media center** and limited **technology in the classroom**. As part of this initiative, we will significantly advance the current technology course of study by expanding our technology infrastructure and the number of subject-matter specific applications in the classrooms. These advancements will allow our **students** to be well-versed in many forms of technology and knowledgeable in the best use of technological applications. We will expand technology training for our **teachers** so they will be well-prepared to utilize the ever expanding array of technological resources at their disposal.

A **Global Technology Classroom Initiative** will allow our students to interact with people from around the world, opening opportunities for mission-related education, foreign language study and a multi-national historical, geographical and cultural exchange of ideas. Finally, we will develop new – and strengthen current – partnerships with **local technology and biotechnology companies** to establish an enhanced academic opportunity for our students.

### In pursuit of this goal, we will:

- Expand the technology infrastructure and applications in all classrooms (K-12) throughout the school
- Strengthen technology professional development for our teachers
- Establish Global Technology Classrooms to facilitate learning experiences from around the world
- Establish working partnerships with technology companies in various industries in North Alabama in order to expose students to real-world career opportunities



## Goal 5 – Develop, Utilize and Support A Multi-Purpose Sports Complex

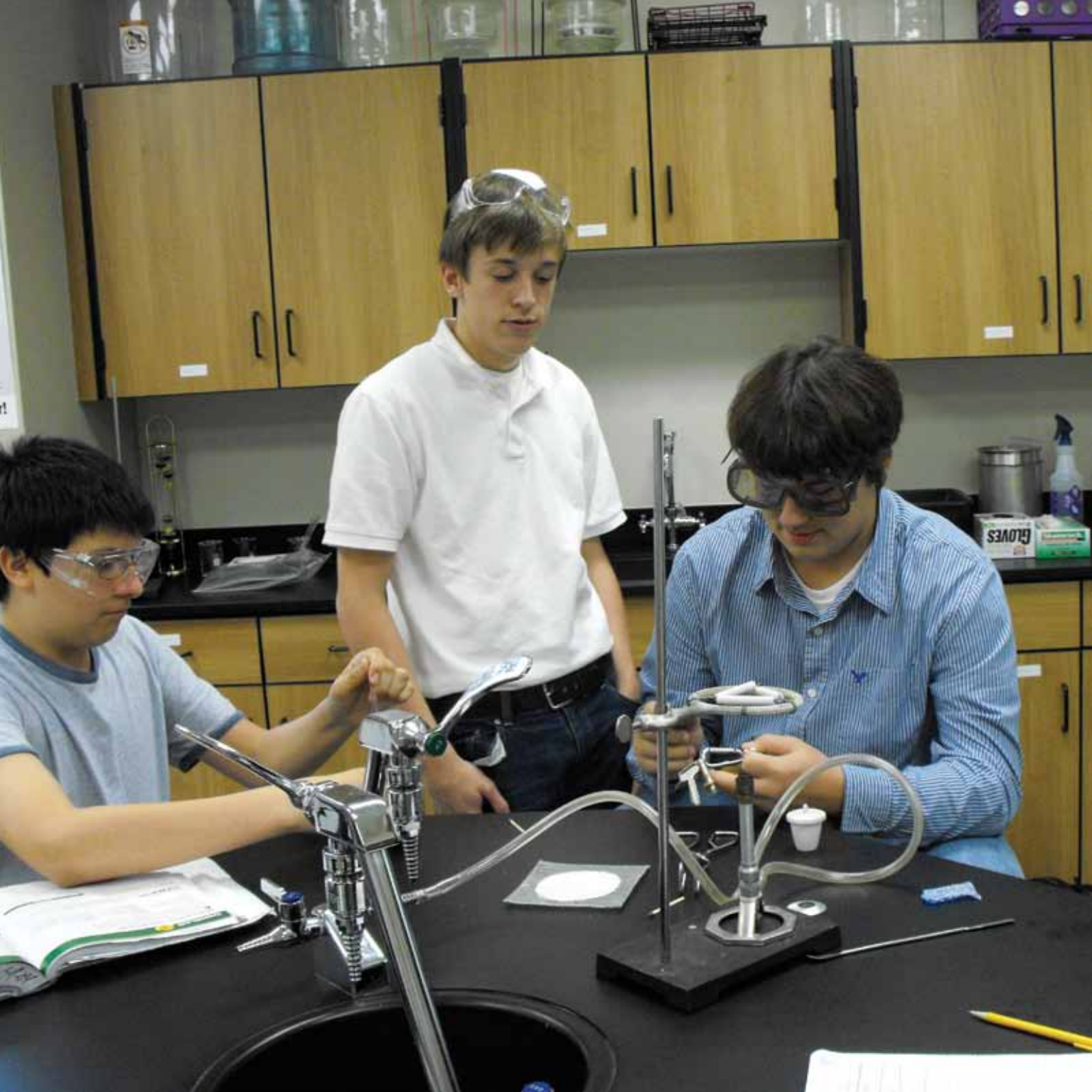
The acquisition and maintenance of a **healthy lifestyle**, especially at an early age, is vital to becoming and staying productive members of a community.

The foundation for good health is begun in our **Lower School physical education** program. Upon reaching the **Upper School, extracurricular, organized athletics** becomes an important part of the overall educational program. Above and beyond the purely physical, these programs afford the students the opportunities to **challenge** and **broaden** themselves mentally and socially, as well as helping them to become well-rounded individuals.

For athletes at Decatur Heritage, the mental aspects of competition are **skills** that are developed and utilized throughout life. **Character traits** such as commitment, discipline, sacrifice, perseverance, determination and integrity are the very nature of competitive sports. The social aspects of sports center on concepts such as **cooperation, teamwork** and **friendship**. Finally, the **role of coach as mentor** at Decatur Heritage is foundational to the proper, Biblical development of these character traits in our students.

### **In pursuit of this goal, we will:**

- Design and construct a multi-purpose sports complex to include: football stadium, baseball field, softball field, tennis courts, track, practice/soccer field and field house
- Research the establishment of several new traditional and non-traditional team and individual sports to round out the athletic offerings
- Expand and enhance Decatur Heritage camp offerings and usage of facilities
- Expand and enhance the Decatur Heritage Athletic Booster Club into a highly functioning organization to support the athletic programs through fundraising and volunteerism



## Goal 6 – Continue Build-Out of Campus Master Plan

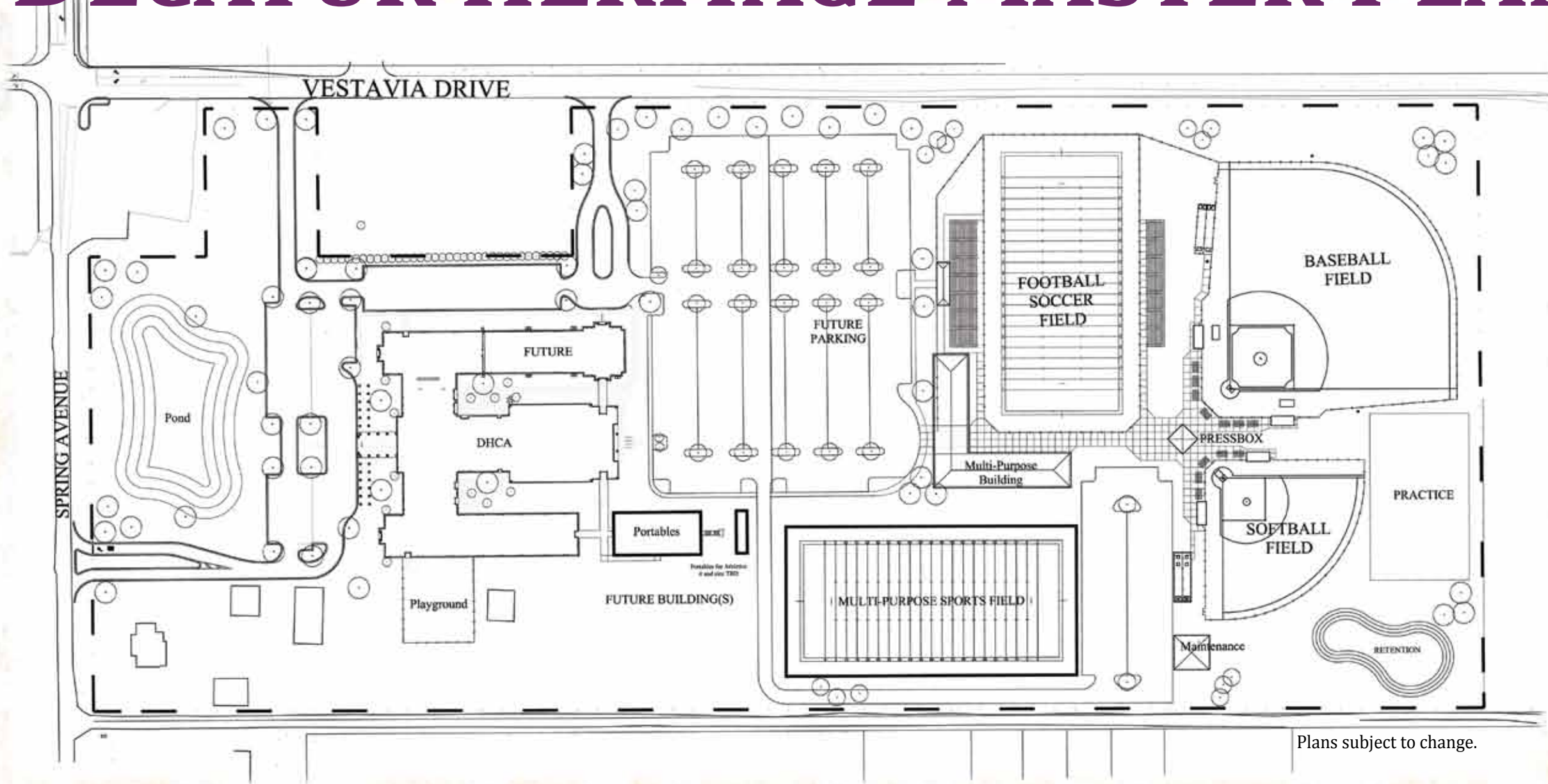
In the fall of 2009, Decatur Heritage Christian Academy moved onto its **new 36-acre campus**. Over the next two school years, **enrollment increased over 20 percent**. The school has also expanded course and extracurricular offerings, and, as part of this strategic plan, will continue that expansion of offerings and activities. Community interest in the school is high and continued enrollment growth is anticipated.

In conjunction with our architects, the school has an existing **master plan** for the development of the campus. This design gives general guidance for construction, taking into account existing buildings, green space, topography and infrastructure. Within the plan, there is **flexibility to grow** and construct space conducive to addressing the aspirational goals of the educational and extracurricular programs of the school and the changing needs of our students.

### In pursuit of this goal, we will:

- Research “best practices” and subsequently construct areas to meet expanding need for general-use classrooms, laboratory settings, extracurricular use and office areas

# DECATUR HERITAGE MASTER PLAN



Plans subject to change.



## Goal 7 – Research Feasibility and Conduct Capital Campaign

The growth and enhancements delineated in this strategic plan **will require resources** – people, equipment, bricks and mortar. From a planning standpoint, we will develop detailed budgets, timelines and logical priorities for the full or phased implementation of each of the tactics supporting each of the goals. While it will appear that growth will be occurring in many different directions at once, it will all be part of this **comprehensive plan** firmly **grounded on our core values**.

Many of the identified initiatives will require an investment above and beyond the capacity of the operating budget, which is supported through tuition and annual giving. A capital campaign **funded through the generous charitable giving** of our family, friends and community can provide that needed investment.

### In pursuit of this goal, we will:

Research, conduct a feasibility study on, and enter into a capital campaign for –

- Construction funding
- Debt retirement
- Educational program enhancement
- Endowment growth



## Goal 8 – Establish Advancement Office

The task of education, at its simplest, involves the interaction of teacher and student. That process takes place within the context of a classroom with many students representing many families, in a building with many teachers, in a city with many schools. A Decatur Heritage education is made possible and **strengthened by that web of people in our constituency** – current families and staff, grandparents, friends, alumni and community members.

**Support takes many forms**, from encouragement to promotion to finances. That support is based on an informed faith in the mission of the school and a confidence in the ability of the school to perform its calling well. The flow of information and cultivation of relationships with those in our “web” must be intentional and consistent. Decatur Heritage Christian Academy has reached a point in its development where a function of the administrative team must be dedicated to the advancement of the school’s mission through the **focus of effort** on those relationships.

### **In pursuit of this goal, we will:**

Add an advancement officer to the administrative team in order to –

- Spearhead the promotion and marketing of the school
- Enhance communication to our current constituency and the community at large
- Mature and grow the annual fund giving program
- Assist in the capital campaign process
- Initiate a planned giving program
- Assist in the establishment and growth of an alumni association



## Partnering for Impact

This plan is the culmination of months of research, prayer, discussion, discernment and deliberation. The broad range of interests represented on the strategic planning team ensured that this plan embodied the perspectives of our constituency while being firmly grounded on our mission, vision and values. For those involved, the process itself was a blessing, generating excitement and great expectations as the team looked to the future.

In order to secure that future and bring these goals to fruition, that same spirit of excitement, expectation and teamwork will be needed as the elements of the plan are enacted. Decatur Heritage Christian Academy covets your prayers, your feedback, your involvement and support.

As the various tactics are implemented, there will be ample opportunity for you to **partner** with the school. **Thank you** for your continuing support of Decatur Heritage Christian Academy as we seek daily to fulfill the school's mission. Please feel free to contact our headmaster, Scott Mayo, with any questions you may have regarding this plan. **Join us and be involved in moving Decatur Heritage forward!**

✿ Character Impacts Service and Service Impacts Character ✿

# DHCA Core Values

Bible-centered  
Prayer-focused  
Whole Child Development  
Exceptional Academics  
Parent Partnership  
Safe Environment  
Community Involvement  
Continuous Improvement

## Because of our core values, a DHCA Graduate is CAPABLE

C – Character: morally sound and wise  
A – Academics: well-educated  
P – Physically Disciplined: self-disciplined and diligent  
A – Attentive to Other's Needs: service oriented  
B – Biblically Equipped: spiritually equipped  
L – Life-long Learner: motivated to achieve  
E – Effective Communicator: equipped to convey

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**DECATUR HERITAGE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY**  
**Founded 1995 • New Campus 2009**

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