



John Rex Charter School 2022 Strategic Plan Overview

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June 2022



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Executive Summary

John Rex Charter Schools is a unique charter school located in the heart of downtown Oklahoma City, offering quality education to an economically and racially diverse student population.

Launched in 2014 through the combined efforts and vision of community leaders, funders, the Oklahoma City Public School district (OKCPS), and invested families, John Rex Schools was designed to serve as a multifaceted solution to the surrounding community, with an emphasis on academic rigor and personalized project-based learning in the classrooms taught by high-quality teachers, and the opportunity to build positive, mutually beneficial relationships among the downtown community and utilize the ample resources available through these relationships to enhance the student experience beyond that of other traditional elementary schools. Originally envisioned as a means to invigorate the Oklahoma City downtown community by attracting families to a premier school, John Rex School and its student-centric culture have become a beacon of academic excellence in the immediate and adjacent neighborhoods, providing an alternative to the nearby traditional public schools. In the years since John Rex School first opened its doors, the enrollment numbers, growth momentum, and reputation of the charter skyrocketed, leading to an expansion of the school’s educational model into middle school in Fall 2018.

The John Rex Board of Directors has been tasked with maintaining and ever-expanding the vision and mission of the school. With several recent external and internal changes that have impacted the John Rex community, the board felt it necessary to re-examine the school's foundational philosophies, culture, and goals along with the current trajectory and policies in place to gauge the unique challenges and opportunities John Rex School faces presently.

Assessment Approach

To develop an updated strategic plan to guide the school’s administration in cultivating a mission that will capture the school’s original successes while simultaneously expanding its overall scope to meet the needs of its growing student population and community, the John Rex Board of Directors began working closely alongside Schnake Turnbo Frank (STF) to launch an in-depth stakeholder assessment in April 2022. These assessment measures consisted of the following:

- **Distribution of three separate logic-driven surveys to over 430 stakeholders.**
 - These surveys, available online from April 21, 2022, to May 31, 2022, were strategically designed to amplify the voices of the John Rex community.
 - A 92-question survey was sent to John Rex families, and STF received 362 completed responses.
 - A 60-question survey was sent to John Rex faculty and staff, and STF received 59 completed responses.
 - A 52-question survey was sent to John Rex board members, and STF received four completed responses.
- **Facilitation of 16 stakeholder focus groups.**
 - Focus groups were conducted throughout the month of May to further engage the John Rex community. Participants were asked to sign up for a focus group by stakeholder type which allowed for specific interview-style questioning as well as the opportunity to freely explore stakeholder experiences and perceptions.
 - 9 parent focus groups (Lower elementary, upper elementary, and middle school)
 - 4 faculty/staff focus groups
 - 3 school board focus groups
- **Facilitation of 11 individual interviews with key community partners and school administration.**
 - One-on-one interviews with stakeholders played an essential role in the research process and led to further examination of the John Rex ecosystem both within the classroom and among the broader downtown community, particularly the dynamics between the John Rex Head of School, John Rex administration, and John Rex community partners
 - John Rex community partners engaged included:
 - Inasmuch Foundation
 - OKC Metropolitan Downtown Library
 - YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City

Following the data gathering phase of the strategic assessment, 26 members of the school’s community (a collection of board members, administration, faculty representatives, and PTA leadership) were then asked to participate in **two half-day strategic planning sessions** in order to determine specific areas of focus. The strategic focus areas developed through these sessions will provide guidance as the strategic planning process advances toward implementation and serve as a roadmap for John Rex Schools for the next two to five years

Key Assessment Findings

The following five assessment findings were derived from the qualitative and quantitative data gathering process. **Culture, communication, faculty support, leadership engagement, and downtown resources** were all common themes identified by the John Rex community as integral to the school's experience and reputation.

1. The John Rex community that has been a part of the school since before the recent internal and external transitions that have impacted the school have identified a **shift in the cultural focus** of the school; even so, this new culture and direction of the school has not been clearly communicated to stakeholders.
2. The John Rex community desires **more engagement and visibility** from the current John Rex School Board and John Rex leadership.
3. The John Rex community also seeks **improved lines of communication** from John Rex administration (John Rex school leadership and the Board of Directors) on school board meetings, school policies, and direction, vision, and mission of John Rex.
4. John Rex faculty believes continued **regular training opportunities** for teachers would be beneficial in maintaining a consistent classroom experience.
5. Stakeholders expressed a desire to see **more classroom use of downtown resources** and more engagement with community partners from school leadership.

Strategic Focus Areas

During the two half-day planning sessions, stakeholders were presented with the key assessment findings and invited to brainstorm collectively to determine and agree on the following five areas of focus for immediate and long-term implementation:

- **Funding** - This focus area will include ensuring transparency on what the current John Rex budget is and how and where funds are being used. Another important facet will be acquiring additional financial resources through fundraising efforts, advocacy for state charter funding, and donor development.
- **Engagement** – This focus area will involve creating opportunities for family and community engagement through intentional activities and events. Through these engagement efforts, authentic faculty/family relationships will be a priority in order to set proper expectations for students and parents in terms of accountability.
- **Culture** – This focus area will concentrate on the internal environment of John Rex and include efforts to set the appropriate social and emotional learning foundation (counselors, resources, training) for students and faculty. In addition to SEL, this focus area will also include measures to attract and retain John Rex faculty and staff.
- **Mission** – This focus area will center on expanding the current mission and vision of John Rex to meet the needs of the current student population and its community and ensuring this new

mission is clearly portrayed in administrative decisions, classroom experiences, and community interactions.

- **Communication** – This focus area will involve developing actionable measures to deliver intentional, streamlined messaging to all stakeholders, provide opportunities for vertical communication, and convey clear expectations of John Rex faculty, leadership, and families.

Next Steps

Immediate next steps will focus on connecting the dots between big picture elements such as mission, vision, core values, and strategic focus areas and the more operational elements such as objectives, measures (KPIs), and initiatives (actions).