

Rilke Schule  
German School  
of Arts and  
Sciences

Strategic Plan  
(2017-2022)

**Mission: Produce engaged world citizens and lifelong learners in both English and German.**

**Vision: To be the premier K-8 German Immersion school in the nation and a top-rated Alaskan school.**

**Values:**

**R**espect/Respekt

**I**ntegrity/Integrität

**L**eadership/Leistung

**K**indness/Kameradschaft

**E**xcellence/Einsatz

#### **Our Priorities**



**We value our students and their productive learning environment.**

**We value our staff, which facilitates the productive learning environment.**

**We value our freedom to self-govern and innovate as an immersion and charter school.**

**We value our love of learning and the German culture.**

**We value our financial and program sustainability.**

## **Our Goals:**

- 1. Expand learning opportunities for our students.**
- 2. Develop and retain effective staff for student achievement.**
- 3. Empower the Rilke Schule community's ownership and involvement in its success.**
- 4. Promote global citizenship through learning about German-speaking culture.**
- 5. Advocate aggressively for our school.**

**History:** Rilke Schule School of Arts and Sciences (Rilke) was founded by a small community of parents and educators, and first opened in 2007 with 184 students. The school grew each year and rapidly expanded enrollment. After three moves, Rilke built a permanent campus in 2015 to accommodate a potential of 520 students. The school conducts approximately half of its instruction in German and the balance in English. Rilke has been recognized for its academic excellence by several bodies including the American Association for the Teachers of German. Through its internationally acclaimed performance, Rilke earned the Anchorage School District a Friend of German designation, the first in the nation.

**Overview:** This strategic plan links the Charter, Bylaws, mission, vision, values and priorities of the school. These guiding documents provide context and authority for the actions and policy positions in this document. The school goals are directly derived from the priorities of this school, the hallmark five factors that make Rilke a shining star in Alaska and across the country as a premier German immersion school.

As a charter school, equally concerned with student outcomes and Charter compliance, this plan rests on two ideas – Strategic Governance and Operational Excellence – to ensure success: Strategic Governance is the role of the Academic Policy Committee, hereon referred to as the Board of Directors (Directors). It is the operating link between the school and the Anchorage School Board which authorized and approved the Charter. The Directors' primary charge is charter compliance and overall strategic governance, which includes planning, for the school. The four core functions of the Board of Directors are 1) hire & evaluate the principal 2) approve and be responsible for the school budget 3) create and adhere to the policies of the school, the rules by which we live and 4) approve curriculum. Operational Excellence (academic leadership and school business management) is the realm and purview of the Principal. The Principal is the only staff member employed by the Directors and is the conduit to the ASD employees who teach and support the students of Rilke. The Principal and staff accomplish all nine strategic functions with Operational Excellence as the core activity.

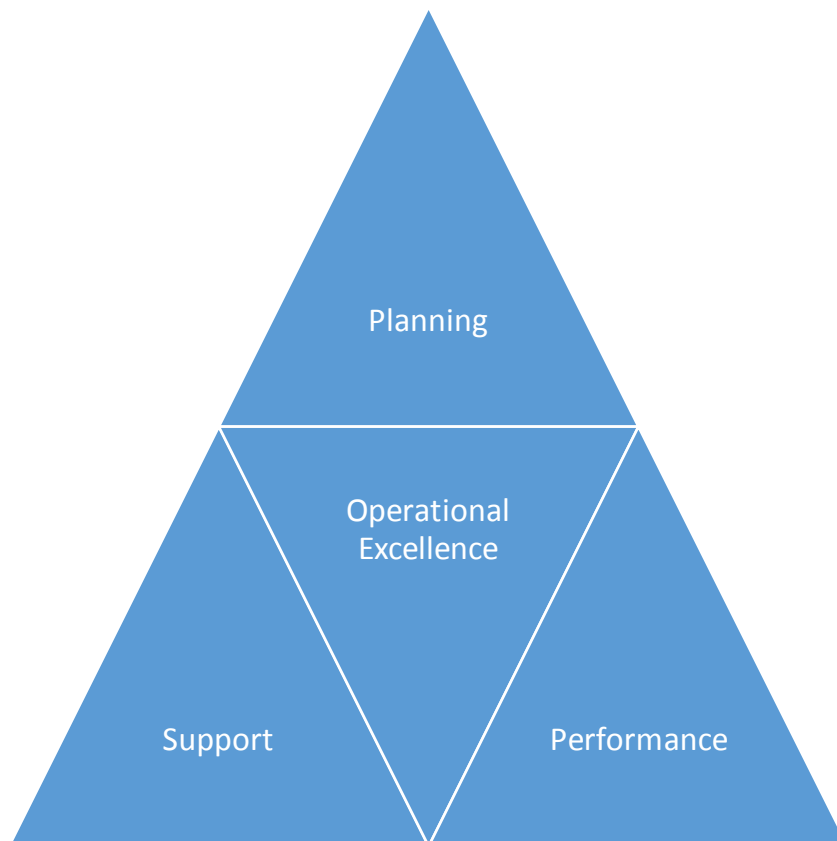
This strategic plan shall serve as the authoritative forward guidance for the Directors, Principal, and staff. All school activities shall have a clear link to the plan. This applies both to school hours and after-hours Rilke-sponsored activities. Other Rilke organizations and clubs may have complimentary strategic plans and procedures in the understanding that this is the official position of the school, its Directors, and Principal. All Rilke supporting organizations are

expected to work at the direction of the Principal and in full cooperation with the Directors to ensure unity of effort and successful implementation of this plan and the school's policies.

This plan shall be reviewed by the Directors and Principal annually, with a five-year thorough review and reauthorization cycle. Pen and ink changes for minor updates, where intent or outcome is not affected, are allowed. Other out-of-cycle changes follow Rilke Policy 010 - Policies for readings and process.

### **Strategic Target Areas**

Unlike a neighborhood community school which is operated by the Anchorage School District (ASD), Rilke's strategic plan operates with the Directors as the governing body. In this unique status, the Directors are the lowest echelon of elected office in Alaska as set forth in statute. The Directors share some operational functions with ASD to include but not limited to financial management functions, procurement, human resources (executed by the Principal), and public affairs in the school's website. Consequently, the strategic target areas of this plan are a blend of those of a neighborhood school, ASD and District at large. The Target Areas also are the three standing committees established in the Bylaws.

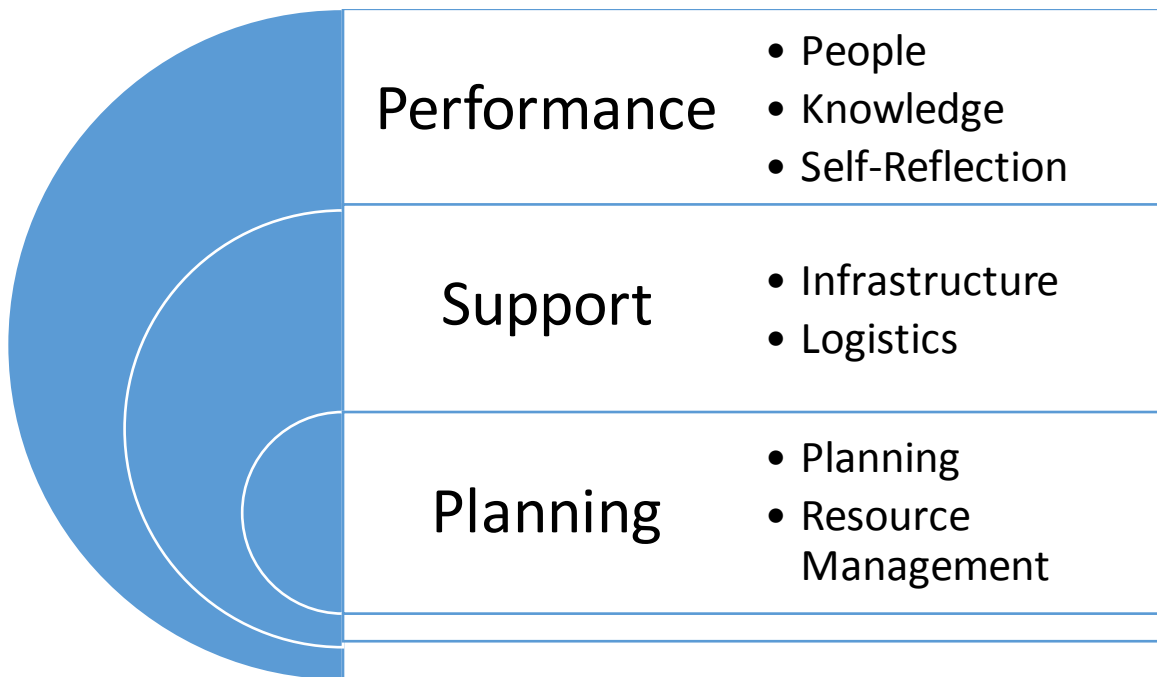


## Strategic Target Areas

Each Strategic Target Area (Performance, Support, and Planning) rests on the following core elements and have key performance indicators.

1. Operational Excellence\*
2. Effective Communication\*
3. People
4. Knowledge
5. Self-Reflection
6. Infrastructure
7. Logistics
8. Planning
9. Resource Management

\*These elements are not performed by standing committees



## **Operational Excellence (Principal)**

The operational excellence element connects the strategic vision of this document to the daily operational management and running of the school. While all the other elements are shared between the Directors and Principal, this one by virtue of being operational rests solely with the Principal and staff. For a detailed description and definition of how the Directors provide quality assurance on this element, please reference Charter Annex A and/or Rilke Policy 004 Principal Evaluation. The duties and performance standards set forth in the performance review evaluation define the aspirations of this document turned action by the Principal. The key performance indicators below are strictly academic and what a community, neighborhood principal would likely have as strategic academic goals. A charter school principal has a much broader set of responsibilities which are reflected in the other eight strategic elements.

### **Enduring Actions**

- Serve as liaison with Anchorage School District senior staff
- Deliver and maintain strategic elements, provides continuity for volunteer Directors
- Ensure students that are performing at grade-level show academic growth on district benchmarks (AIMSweb and MAP)
- Ensure students meet grade – level content/performance standards based on state/district benchmarks
- Maintain a 90% or higher attendance rate
- Implement school approved research based curricula aligned to content standards
- Orchestrate an ongoing, 5-year forward-looking systematic review process to determine if the curriculum addresses the learning needs of all students
- Ensure 80% of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students will pass the A1 exam in reading, writing, listening and speaking based on German standards
- Ensure 75% of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students will pass all components of the A2 exam based on German standards
- Ensure 50% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students will be eligible to participate in the B1 assessment.
- Ensure 75% of eligible 8th grade students will pass all components of the B1 exam based on German standards
- Set and attain specific percentages/targets in German Sprachmeister Program
- Recruit teachers through German school partnerships and ASD World Languages
- Utilize assessment results to increase student academic achievement throughout the school year
- Use a system to plan instructional practices and programs that are aligned with content standards
- Utilize research-based instructional practices, programs, materials
- Utilize effective classroom management strategies
- Embed professional development into daily routines and practices
- All Rilke teachers will meet the definition of highly qualified

- Use multiple sources of student assessment data as a primary factor in determining professional development
- Implement strategies to attract and retain highly qualified teachers
- Schedule Professional Learning Community (PLC) times to determine academic and behavior gaps through analyzing data
- Utilize teacher assistants during scheduled classroom ELA and math instruction to increase student achievement

#### Discrete Actions

- Create master schedule that meets the needs of the students
- Develop academic interventions that best meet the needs of students
- Provide relevant professional development opportunities to increase teacher effectiveness (3-year cycle to ensure all staff have opportunities) Develop a 5-year technology plan to increase student technology use
- Research and implement assessments to determine gaps in English and German

## **Effective Communication** (Principal and Communication Team)

Communication with the blended Directors/Principal team largely occurs as follows:

- Secretary acts as a Recording Secretary, acknowledging routine correspondence, keeping minutes, and providing board support
- Vice Chair serves as a Corresponding Secretary and leads the Communication Team, a group of Rilke parents with professional public affairs and communication expertise
- Principal provides oversight of the school-level tools and systems of communications

This team is meant to be highly flexible and forward-looking to keep all Rilke stakeholders informed. Daily communication with the school and parents is fully a Principal function. The Directors may provide a Board of Directors communication to the Rilke community.

### Enduring Actions.

- Provide communication to parents via staff or Principal as needed
- Provide social media updates to the Rilke community on events and other activities of the school
- Provide quarterly feedback with School Business Partners
- Maintain hardcopy records of pertinent Directors' documents at the school office
- Maintain standardized posting location for school events and public notices

### Discrete Actions

- Update the Rilke marketing brochure
- Create Rilke press package for school tours and visitors
- Maintain a Rilke Communication Plan/Strategy
- Use resources of ASD Communications Department
- Create multimedia communication
- Use ASD communication staff to increase effective communication
- Communicate effectively with parents about learning expectations, student progress and reinforcing learning at home.
- Implement effective strategies to increase parent engagement
- Instructional leader(s) will build productive, respectful relationships with parents and community members regarding school programs and school improvement efforts



## **People (Performance – Human Relations)**

Rilke's strongest asset is its people. The first two of the school's priorities are students and staff. Rilke's People Strategic Element primarily intends to build a successful and harmonious community of learning. High student outcomes and high retention of quality staff are desired outcomes from this element. Rilke is in somewhat of a niche market as a German immersion program. Losing students in this language-acquisition-based program translates into permanent losses in enrollment and funding, as new-to-Rilke students must test into their grade level for German. Similar, maintaining a pipeline of interested German teaching talent is difficult in Alaska due to the small population and licensing challenges for international teachers. Also unique to a charter, parent volunteer hours are critical to the success of the school. Effective volunteerism and management are functions shared among the Principal, Staff, Directors, and PTO. This whole team, the Rilke Community, is integral to Rilke's vibrancy and culture.

### **Enduring Actions**

- Ensure a total student enrollment at a level to maintain a healthy budget
- Maintain approximately 150-student enrollment in Kindergarten and First Grade, possibly alternating years between three and four sections of Kindergarten
- Ensure a balanced staff in terms of experience and projected departures
- Accomplish on-time expectations and evaluations of staff
- Apply parent and staff feedback in annual reviews to establish accountability
- Engage in annual student and staff recruiting campaigns
- Establish a standing roster of interested qualified staff seeking to join the Rilke team
- Recognize student performance in Quarterly Awards Ceremonies
- Establish a staff professional development cycle for staff
- Promote and support established guest teacher/internship program for native German-speaking interns from Germany, Austria and Switzerland
- Promote meaningful and productive volunteer opportunities for parents
- Utilize the support staff (TAs) to help promote student success

### **Discrete Actions**

- Establish a Vice Principal position befitting a school of over 500 students

## **Knowledge** (Performance – Ethics and Inquiries)

Community economic trends and intelligence are critical to Rilke's operation. This information helps forecast community interest, support, and student enrollment. General intelligence for the school across all sectors of the economy are needed to seek school business partners, cooperative agreements, and other sustaining arrangements. Maintaining a strong, working knowledge and network with (ASD) senior staff is equally essential knowledge for Rilke's success. Knowledge is community capital.

### Enduring Actions

- Maintain Anchorage School Board relationships (Directors)
- Expand relationship with German Speaking Countries (including German Honorary Consulate Mission to the United States)
- Conduct annual Board of Visitors functions and strategically add members to that board
- Maintain strong working relationships with ASD senior staff in Rilke-impacting or benefiting positions such as Facility Maintenance, Human Resources, Public Affairs, World Languages, Finance and Procurement

### Discrete Actions

- Develop and fund standing membership with key educational trade groups that advance Rilke's mission (immersion, foreign language, German, Art, Science, etc.)
- Encourage staff members to participate on district teams for curriculum alignment
- Review, update and maintain business partnerships

### **Self-Reflection** (Performance – Evaluations and Analysis)

A strong understanding of past performance can provide insights on future conditions. This element calls Rilke to a culture of continual improvement and constantly striving to be the best form of itself it can be.

#### Enduring Actions

- Author annual State of the School Reports for parents/guardians
- Complete end-of-year reporting with ASD
- Maintain awareness of all state and local reporting requirements
- Measure German language testing year-to-year
- Be a top rated Alaskan school
- Accomplish exit surveys with departing families
- Conduct departure surveys with staff leaving Rilke
- Solicit feedback from Rilke Board of Visitors for improvements

#### Discrete Actions

- Analyze ASD climate and connectedness survey data to develop processes and procedures to improve school setting.
- Analyze 3-year trend data from test scores to focus resources.

## **Infrastructure (Support-Infrastructure)**

Nearly 25% of Rilke's budget goes to facility costs. The Directors worked diligently with the Rilke Schule Inc. (Rilke's non-profit entity) and the Building Task Force to construct a build-to-suit leased facility of 39,500 square feet in 2015. This facility is under a twenty-year lease with an option to buy at year ten. It is the decision of the Directors not to attempt to purchase this facility for several reasons:

- The needs of the school may be significantly different in ten-twenty years due to technology and other factors.
- The space needs of the current facility are already at capacity.
- Buying a twenty-year old building would mean many components would be that old and at an age for likely replacement, which would drive up facility costs.
- Rilke is not in the business of owning property; it is in the business of educating children.
- Repairs and maintenance would become the burden of the school without qualified building management capacity or increased budget.
- Lease payments currently are lower per month than likely mortgage payments.
- While the Directors currently signed the lease, it cannot own property. Some other entity would have to own a building if Rilke buys its current facility.

For these reasons, the Directors have opted to lease to meet the school's facilities needs with the long-term hope that at some future date, ASD makes adequate and acceptable location space available to Rilke.

There are two goals of the infrastructure element:

1. Operate the current facility as best as possible to maintain a professional image and reduce bill back charges for maintenance and repair.
2. Maximize time on 64<sup>th</sup> Avenue until 2035, or longer, for the best possible learning environment.

### Enduring Actions

- Conduct quarterly volunteer nights for cleaning and maintenance during the school year

### Discrete Actions

- Execute the Rilke Outdoor Master Plan
- Create 2035 facility plan
- Develop preventative maintenance plan

## **Logistics (Support – Supply/Support and Safety/Security)**

Logistics provides the supplies and services necessary to operate with the limited budget Rilke receives per statute. Purchases are required to be processed by ASD's purchasing staff. While the Directors have decided not to purchase the current facility (see Infrastructure for rationale), there remains significant facility service and supply needs for which Rilke is responsible. Likewise, logistics includes the safety and security of the people and property.

### **Supply/Support**

#### Enduring Actions

- Align with ASD conflict of interest review for contractors
- Establish rigorous quality assurance procedures for product and service contractors
- Time-phase student supply requirements as to not overwhelm storage capacity
- Utilize Principal-established process for purchasing or donation requests
- Annually review and edit school supply list and procedure

#### Discrete Actions

- Develop procedures for purchasing and donations

### **Safety/Security**

#### Enduring Actions

- Conduct periodic emergency drills for staff and students
- Periodically review School Emergency Plan
- Annually review dismissal procedures

#### Discrete Actions

- Construct southern property line fence
- Install security system (and cameras as needed)

## **Planning** (Strategic Planning – Planning and Development)

Strategic planning weaves together the Charter with the Bylaws and Policies to the strategic targets and priorities of this school. The strategic plan gives Rilke a clear and focused forward-looking perspective. Capital and community development are essential sustaining efforts for Rilke as a charter school and the limited budget it receives per statute.

### **Planning**

#### Enduring Actions

- Set school-year calendar with Directors, Principal, and non-profits by the end of the previous school year
- Preserve fundraising effectiveness by Principal leadership in Rilke Branding Policy 002

#### Discrete Actions

- Publish Strategic Plan on the school website and distribute electronically to Rilke community
- Dedicate a space in the building to celebrate Rilke awards and business partnerships

## **Development**

#### Enduring Actions

- Solicit school business partnership with Forbes German Top 40
- Seek continued support from the Federal Republic of Germany
- Secure Art and Science-focused Anchorage business partners
- Continue with our exchanges through the German American Partnership Program (GAPP)
- Maintain a group of teachers & parents to facilitate the ongoing exchanges between Rilke & our partner schools

#### Discrete Actions

- Develop formal recognition procedure for donors and business partners.
- Make initial contact with business partnerships and maintain a positive working relationship including a celebration procedure to acknowledge business partnerships

## **Resource Management** (Strategic Planning – Budget/Finance)

Unlike the majority of ASD schools, the Rilke Base Student Allocation pays for all lease, facilities, operations and services. Therefore, keen financial management is absolutely essential for Rilke. Charter school business management is such a driving concern that the Directors have placed it on an equal weighting with academic and administrative outcomes for the Principal. Just as Operational Excellence is the main element for the Principal, Resource Management is the paramount element for the Directors. Management of public and donated money is a sacred trust and responsibility.

### Enduring Actions

- Fully execute all financial management policies on a recurring and timely basis
- Fund only program requirements
- Require annual financial reporting for all Rilke organizations and make the findings public
- Include financial expenditures in Principal's report to the Directors

### Discrete Actions

- Utilize inventories to monitor/plan for purchases of curricula that align with content standards
- Conduct annual teacher needs assessment and prioritize needs
- Fully comply with Rilke Policy 008-Budgeting
- Utilize student projections to assist in budget management