A Strategic Roadmap for the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth
Dear CTY Community,

This document represents nearly nine months of listening—to our staff, to our families, to our friends, and to educators and advocates for academically advanced youth around the world.

The Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth strategic plan builds on the center’s more than 40-year history of serving students and their families and aims to guide the next five years of progress.

CTY 2026 started with multiple rounds of focus groups attended by hundreds of members of our community. The perspectives shared in these meetings were as diverse as the students and families CTY serves, but clear themes emerged. Topics such as diversity, access, and inclusion; service to schools and districts; alumni community-building; and a focus on research rose to top. Specific goals were developed—and redeveloped—in an iterative, consultative process that was driven by mission and values.

The resulting plan is in so many ways a product of where CTY finds itself today. Amid a global pandemic that meaningfully and forever changed the center’s operations and programming and serving community members affected by the ongoing social strife in America, CTY knew its goals and priorities needed to acknowledge and respond to these powerful pressures.

The planning we’ve engaged in over these many months has highlighted the best of our community. Now, CTY is excited to begin working toward these goals and on the initiatives that will help us achieve them. We look forward to updating you on our progress and, of course, to receiving your input along the way.

I look forward to setting off on this endeavor together, as one CTY community.

Sincerely,

Virginia Roach

*Executive Director*
Our Mission

The Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth identifies, develops, and supports the diverse community of academically advanced pre-college learners, in partnership with their families, teachers, and other educators worldwide.

Our Vision

CTY furthers research, guides educators and families, and inspires academically talented pre-college learners from diverse communities and backgrounds to pursue their intellectual passions and create the world of tomorrow.
Our Changing World

Serving academically advanced students and their families is the foundation of the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth. Our commitment to this work is unwavering.

Yet the world where we have served academically advanced students for more than 40 years has changed. The COVID-19 pandemic of the last two years has had a lasting impact on CTY and served as an accelerant for change. Moreover, there have been fundamental shifts in the paradigm of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and we must evolve to reflect this changing environment.

The field of gifted education has evolved. When CTY was founded, there was little recognition of the needs of academically advanced learners in the general education system. Much of our work concerned providing information to individual families so they could advocate for their academically advanced children in their local school or district. Today, the educational needs of students with advanced academic talent is generally recognized and understood in the U.S. Yet common tools for identification are seen as racially and culturally biased. Over time, through such programs as Baltimore Emerging Scholars, CTY responded to requests from the field by utilizing population testing and alternate screening tools. These tools helped to reduce racial bias in identifying students to increase equitable access to programming for academically advanced children. Further research in the field is needed to address testing bias and to ensure that academically advanced students are recognized, and their talents nurtured, regardless of their race or socioeconomic status.

Similarly, over the past 40 years, school and school district programs have developed. Initially, as students were identified as academically advanced, they were removed from the general classroom for all or part of the day for specialized programming. Teachers skilled in teaching academically advanced students taught only those students. As school programs developed and realization that academically talented students were being under-identified grew, more school districts addressed the needs of advanced elementary and middle school students in the context of the general classroom. Schools and districts have worked to provide teachers with new teaching methods to address the needs of advanced students in the classroom. Yet, there is still much work to be done.

CTY started with a very small group of students who were offered the opportunity to accelerate their learning in a small laboratory on the Johns Hopkins campus. Over the years, CTY grew to offer hundreds of courses to qualified students in a variety of disciplines through our 3-week, in-person summer courses and our online programming. Yet, our primary model, of an individual family approaching CTY for Talent Search and courses remained the same. Since many students who are academically advanced are not able to enroll in CTY supplemental courses, there is a need to increase student access by providing programming in a manner that is more integrated into students’ primary academic location, namely their schools.
Strategic Areas of Focus

**SUPPORT SCHOOLS:** We will share essential gifted education knowledge, best practices, and resources with students, educators, and families by partnering with schools and school districts.

**ENGAGE STUDENTS AND ALUMNI:** We will nurture the advanced academic talents of CTY-eligible students in 11th and 12th grades by expanding programming, college advisement, and the creation of discipline-specific affinity groups that link current CTY students to a strengthened alumni network.

**EXPAND RESEARCH:** We will grow and enhance our research efforts to contribute to greater understanding about best practices for identifying and serving the needs of academically advanced pre-college learner.

Our Commitment to Inclusion, Equity, and Antiracism

As an antiracist organization, CTY is committed to deliberately and systemically assessing our past and present and charting a future that advances the ideals of equity, access, and inclusion. This commitment impacts all that we do at CTY and is a foundational principle to our strategic plan.
Introduction

Since 1979, the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth has reached hundreds of thousands of academically advanced pre-college students and their families around the world through talent identification, in-person and online advanced academic programs, and other resources. The oldest and largest university-based talent search in the world, CTY has grown exponentially over the last four decades to meet the needs of students seeking advanced academic challenges outside of school.

However, the world has changed since our founding and we must evolve so that we can reflect these changes and move forward.

Our country and our community continue to experience the legacy of slavery and racial injustice. This has led to unequal employment, housing, and educational systems. Gifted education is the most segregated educational program in the country. Nationally, not only are Black and Latinx students and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds participating in school gifted programs at alarming low rates, they are also historically and persistently less likely to be identified and recommended for gifted programs than their white and Asian peers.

There are many more academically talented students who would benefit from CTY’s talent identification and gifted education expertise who we are not serving. We can no longer stand by and bemoan the lack of students of color testing and enrolling in our programs. It is our responsibility to promote inclusion, equity, and anti-racism as a core organizational strategy that impacts every aspect of what we do, in service of our students and their families, our policies and procedures, and how our staff engages with our families and with each other every day.
Introduction continued

Meanwhile, our understanding that formal education takes place in person and outside the home for the majority of students has been forever altered by recent events. When the COVID-19 pandemic pushed learning online for schools in spring 2020 and many schools found themselves unable to provide accelerated learning to gifted students, parents came to CTY seeking challenging online programs for their children. Knowledge is expanding rapidly and the world has become much more connected. As a result, we can no longer think of our programs only as isolated out-of-school learning opportunities that families source for their academically talented children. This is no longer about providing individual courses to students. Instead, we need to focus on providing education that extends over their pre-college years and prepares and transitions them into college and early adulthood.

Moreover, it is our responsibility as a leader in gifted education to bring our expertise to the schools and school districts who seek to meet the needs of gifted students and require our knowledge, best practices, and resources to do so. We must go to where bright students and their educators are to meet their needs, not wait for them to come to us.

CTY was founded as a research project focused on how advanced students learn best. Our dedication to contributing to research about gifted education remains stronger than ever. Our focus for research will be on student assessments, including developing a new spatial reasoning and creativity assessment that reduces test bias and effectively identifies low income students and students of color who are currently under identified as gifted by existing above-grade-level tests. In addition, we need to hone our knowledge of the best ways to educate the full array of students with advanced talent across subject areas, interests, and learning styles.
Strategic goals for 2021-2026

**GOAL: SUPPORT SCHOOLS.**

Partner with schools and districts to share essential gifted education knowledge, best practices, and resources with students, educators, and families through advocacy, professional development, and access to courses and identification tools.

As part of a fundamental strategic shift, CTY is creating a unit that will focus on strategic partnerships and articulation agreements with schools and districts to offer professional development and “wholesale” programming. This unit will also operate under the direction of the Senior Director of Marketing, Recruitment and Enrollment Management and will be fundamental to growing revenue and reach, as well as sharing CTY’s expertise in the area of talent identification and gifted and talented education.

**GOAL: ENGAGE STUDENTS AND YOUNG ALUMNI.**

We will nurture the advanced academic talents of CTY students in 11th and 12th grades through advising, support, and opportunities to connect throughout high school and college.

Support. Counseling. Community. Mentoring. We will expand and coordinate the provision of these services that are currently offered to students through various programs. CTY will build on our offerings of single out-of-school learning opportunities to providing an education that extends over students’ pre-college years and into their early adulthood. By strengthening opportunities for our students and young alumni to engage and connect, we can support and grow their ability to contribute to future generations of CTYers.
Strategic goals for 2021-2026 continued

**GOAL: EXPAND RESEARCH.**

We will grow and enhance our research efforts to contribute to greater understanding about best practices for identifying and serving the needs of academically advanced pre-college learners.

Advanced learners are in every school, community, and demographic category, but traditional approaches to identification fail to identify students who have not had ample educational opportunity or those who come from different cultural backgrounds. Knowledge-generating research will help support all students and their families. We seek not only to find and implement effective solutions, but also to understand why they are effective, for whom, and under what conditions.

**GOAL: OUR COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION, EQUITY, AND ANTIRACISM**

CTY is dedicated to serving academically advanced pre-college students and their families. We focus on meeting the needs of the brightest learners; however, we have historically been unable to serve all academically advanced students equitably. Like many programs for advanced young learners, CTY programs have little racial or cultural diversity. Specifically, we have a longstanding lack of Black, African American, and Latinx students.

The above-grade-level aptitude and achievement tests used for college admissions and by CTY, such as the SAT, are widely understood to have a severe socioeconomic and cultural bias.

We know that advanced learners exist in all racial and student populations. As an organization rooted in Baltimore, a predominantly Black and African American city, we need to reflect the community we serve. As an organization dedicated to identifying and developing pre-college students with advanced academic talent worldwide, we must redouble our efforts in this area in order to truly serve the full population of advanced learners.
Conclusion

The goals articulated in this five-year strategic plan—commitment to antiracism, support for schools, engagement of students and alumni, and expansion of our research efforts—are lofty objectives grounded in specific, supporting activities. Our focus areas reflect the context and environment in which the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth and, indeed, the educational community is working. Yet, our current state is not fixed, and with that in mind, we will adjust our approach along the way as we document and report on metrics relevant to our goals so that we can be accountable for our efforts to serve our constituents, namely students and families.

To those familiar with CTY, this plan should represent a paradigmatic shift in the way the organization interacts with families and serves its community. Our focus will be on broadening our impact by moving purposefully from an approach focused on providing individual courses to one that supports students’ broader educational needs through identification and a rich curriculum.

We will do this work through the lens of inclusion, equity, and antiracism. CTY is committed to deliberately and systemically assessing its past and present and charting a future that advances these ideals. This resolution will guide all that we do.

At the core of this plan, of course, is CTY and its mission to identify, develop, and support the diverse community of academically advanced pre-college learners. This is what we’ve done for 40 years and what we will continue to do. And this roadmap will help us to serve better the students of today so that they can become the leaders and innovators of tomorrow.