



Pen Parentis
parenting done, write.

2018 Strategic Plan

Issued June 12, 2018

Executive Summary

In February, 2016, Pen Parentis engaged Gray Matters (a pro bono advisory services provider) to assist them in generating a comprehensive Strategic Plan.

A Strategic Planning Team consisting of the Founder President, Board member Chair and the Gray Matters Consultant was established to take ownership of the Plan.

Following a SWOT (organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis with key stakeholders, a workshop was conducted on April 20, 2016 to review the Vision, Mission and Values statements and generate ideas for Projects to address the Programmatic, Organizational and Financial Goals.

Goals were implemented in 2016. This is a progress report with amendments based on two years of following the plan.

Introduction

The Plan lays out the organization's direction for the next three years and the work to be done to accomplish this vision.

The Board participated in the internal research (SWOT interviews), Strategic Planning Team and the Plan Workshop as well as periodic updates.

The Goals supporting Projects will be evaluated at regular intervals (at least to coincide with Board meetings) by indicating:

- On Time (on budget, on schedule)
- Controllable (will be brought back on schedule)
- Rework (in trouble, needing redefining or added resources)

Foundation Statements

Vision, Mission and Values statements address the key questions that orient the Plan: Where are we going? What do we do? Who are we?

Vision

Pen Parentis envisions an arts community that embraces and values the hard work and dedication required to balance a creative career with raising a family, thereby enabling writers who are parents to thrive in their creative careers with the full support of the arts industry at large.

Mission

Pen Parentis provides critical resources to writers to help them stay on creative track after they start a family. We build and support communities of authors who are also parents to encourage the production of quality written work. We extend our reach through partnering with organizations that will supplement areas where Pen Parentis is weaker or that support creative writing in their own missions.

Headquartered in New York City, our reach is global through our networking website which features unique parenting-and-writing resources and a growing list of cities that host Salons.

Values

COMMUNITY – writer-parents networking to form and join communities to workshop or safely discuss the issues that affect them.

PROFESSIONALISM –producing new creative works and literary events of the highest standard.

BALANCE – supporting quality of life for every creative writer who is a parent.

INCLUSION – serving diverse writers of all levels and genres while embracing all manners of family.

Strategic Plan Vision

The Plan Vision consists of the following initiatives:

PROGRAMS:

All programs should extend the reach of Pen Parentis and should create a radical presence for the topic of parenthood where that term is typically absent in order to help the literary world embrace a more flexible system to advocate for writer-parents and their unique needs as creative artists.

Mentorship program.

VISION: Institute a Cycle of Support. Award-winning writers (who are also parents) who are experts in various fields/genres will offer their professional guidance, advice, and encouragement in private sessions. The mentees who thrive from this guidance may in turn serve as mentors once they have become established writers in their own right.

- 1) Write up operations manual for files
(Milda will do by 7/15/18)
- 2) Documents of agreement are being created to track progress
- 3) Creating a welcome packet for Mentees (explaining operations)
- 4) We will use PayPal to collect payment up front.
- 5) Exit interviews – surveys (build data)
- 6) Keep track of successes of Mentees – follow up to see if they published.

Membership program

VISION: Create a vast and inclusive network of writer/parents who can band

together across the nation as basic Pen Parentis Members, meeting online and in person to exchange ideas and offer writing/parenting support and advice. Pen Parentis members who show support by making a significant financial pledge will be featured on our website and as an elite group of Pen Parentis Authors who also have the opportunity to support our projects with volunteer hours and help make decisions and launch and run local programming in their area.

- 1) current membership is not organized, hard to tell who is a Basic member. Fix this.
- 2) Need welcome message of some kind – perhaps a ‘badge’ for their blog/website once they sign up!
- 3) ALL members get resources –
 - a. Searchable database of residencies that offer special services to parents who write (with deadline calendar) – achieved 2020 on writerparentannex.com with funding from Sustainable Arts Foundation
 - b. Fellowships and grants for parent writers –
 - c. Places to publish parenting pieces –
 - d. Books published by members – achieved 2019 on Bookshop.com
 - e. #readatPenParentis – tracking
 - f. other parent-writer communities
 - g. advertising page (various resources pay us to list here, very curated)
- 4) Keep track of not just who they are but of how much they have given
*keeping this separate from people who are just donors
- 5) For Title Members –
 - a. Discounts on application fees for PP mentorship & fellowship
 - b. Notice at salons (Ribbons? VIP list?)
 - c. Opportunities for Title Members – becoming mentors, reading at salons, members-only part of site
 - d. PODCASTS are back! Costs \$35 per episode to frame and get “notes” written. We put them on YouTube (free) and make the episode private and put link in Title Member area. Archive is

amazing.

- 6) We should do some kind of completely informal member meetup. One of us who is a writer/parent should be there to facilitate but just meetup at a coffee shop or a rooftop bar—make it regular and just do it. One morning per month, one evening per month—two hours max. Have everyone sign in. (Parent-to-Parent)

Franchising Salons to other Cities.

VISION: Pen Parentis Literary Salons must continue to attract media attention until they become familiar, frequent, and highly-regarded events in all the major metropolitan areas of the US, with occasional international salons. Authors who are parents should be eager to participate in these high-profile literary events. We must raise visibility so that the name of Pen Parentis is equivalent to a series that all book lovers (not just writers or parents) want to attend. Programming must remain high-quality and conversations must be interesting to a general audience (not just parents).

- 1) to spread to other cities, we must have a written guide for how Salons are run.
- 2) There should be a way for people to apply to run a salon in another city. Written commitment.
- 3) There is opportunity here for income: franchising fees. We would have to provide guidance for how to run the salon. Make decisions on what we provide them. Signage, swag? Do we host the salons?
- 4) Must write agreement for the person/people running the salon. How many they will run, where, etc. Quality of Salons must stay high in all cities.
- 5) Photos and written report after offsite salons.

2019 – Tabling this until we have website, data collection, and other tech stuff in hand. This requires a lot of organization, possibly its own project manager.

Pen Parentis Research Project:

VISION: The freely accessible interviews with diverse writers who are parents posted on our website should be updated regularly (bi-weekly would be a good target) and data mined from this series of interviews should be compiled into a data-driven book on best practices of writers who are also parents. In the future, the book can be sold on our website and at our salons, and updated every three to five years. Our data, if compiled properly, can then become useful to writing colonies and grant makers who wish to become more parent-friendly in their practices.

Mary Harpin used this data to write the data-driven chapter in *BOOK & BABY* the 10th anniversary guide to writing if you have kids published by Brooklyn Writers Press in 2021, author M. M. De Voe

Pen Parentis Middle School Parent “Writing Spa”:

Vision: at a critical time when their children no longer need quite as much hands-on attention, middle school parents find themselves at a loss when schools ask them to let their children be more independent. These drop-in writing workshops help writers who are parents get back on creative track (or start a writing career from scratch) by providing gentle but professional writing instruction through a series of in-class writing prompts and exercises that can be continued at home, should the parent wish to. The class is structured to lead parents to find their “zen moment” where they are able to block out the world and immerse themselves fully in the creation of a scene, a character, etc.

- 1) Spearheaded by MS297, the pilot was a success, next year the middle

school will write a grant to pay the teacher.

- 2) Possible entre to East Side Middle School after next year.
- 3) Would be great to spread to other schools after that
- 4) Funding from schools themselves for teachers from our Title Membership, 20% admin fee to PP. Also applied for funding from Discretionary Grant District 2 city council.
- 5) Random House donated 30 books (Bird By Bird) and offer nonprofit sales discount if we need more.

2019: this became the CYCLE OF SUPPORT, a series of writer–parent meetups that are available to Title Members, in 2019 there were 6 online weekly meetups with 10–24 members each. Members usually stay an average of 2 years.

ORGANIZATIONAL:

VISION: To have all office operations documented and enumerated (including salon operations and annual and projected budgets), be up to date on all legal forms, and to have grant due dates and other annual filing requirements available in calendar format.

- 1) Get office space donated. Beespace didn't work out. All Good Works is in the works. Might contact Trinity Church. (2020: All Good Works gave 5 days of donated office space per month)
- 2) add staff for grant writing/admin (got summer intern)
- 3) add 3 board members for financial (15 total optimally)
 - a. board should have finance/audit committee, fundraising committee, marketing committee
 - b. replace MM as Board President. She stays on board as member

while she is ED, not leadership. (2020, done)

- c. Hire bookkeeper to replace Emily as bookkeeper. She stays on as Board Treasurer. (Emily stepped down in 2019, new bookkeeper is Julia VanStory.)

FINANCIAL:

VISION: To create a sustainable model for Pen Parentis to pay a full-time employee and to be able to also pay Member authors (\$150) for appearing at Salons, for mentoring, and for judging the Fellowship.

- 1) add 3–6 more financial board members (give-and-get achieved at \$100/month)
- 2) get corporate sponsors for Salons Program (\$750 one program/Poetry night, \$2500 one season of programs, \$5000 one year of PP, May to September) (unlimited one program, four of season sponsors and one of full-year sponsorships)
- 3) GRANTS: we applied for State (NYSCA) and Local Government (DCA and City Council discretionary) funding this year and it was incredibly difficult because of lack of access to our data. Basically for every question, we had the answer but had to research it all from scratch.
 - a. Jerome Foundation funds mentorship programs. Apply.
 - b. Possibility to find grants to fund archive of podcasts
 - c. Won Amazon Literary Partnership again \$2K instead of \$2,500 –
 - d. Won Bright Ideas grant for this space from LMHQ & ConEd.
- 4) Board should train to fundraise – read PDF document, attend workshops through Foundation Center and/or Center for Nonprofits.

Goals and Projects

Programmatic, Organizational and Financial Goals broadly define the objectives of the Plan and the Projects define the specific actions required. The Workshop Goal Ideation Notes are included in the Appendix to assist in Project Planning and future Plans development.

Programmatic

Goal #1

CYCLE OF SUPPORT Program

Project #1

Recruit 10 mentors (all must be parents and have won awards for writing and published something after having kids)

Project #2

Define, Plan and Implement Pen Parentis Cycle of Support

- Make Mentorship Agreement

- Make Mentee agreement

- Make Mentee Welcome Packet

- Make brief post-event survey for both mentor and mentee

Goal #2

Membership Program

Project #1

Track Members better

- Create useful database of Members at each level including Basic (the Facebook members!) (begun!)

- Cross reference who is active on Behind Closed Doors (posts often) and donors

Project #2

Activate membership

Organize regular meetups on Twitter with hashtags

Follow members (make twitter list of them and Read at PP as separate “lists”)

Do one meetup per year in person exclusively for membership (&donor?) base

Ask leading questions on Facebook at least weekly if not daily – build a routine.

Interview title members for website

Organizational

Goal#1

Organize Policies and Procedures

Project #1

Create and Document Policies and Procedures includes Planning and Packaging Events

Milda ongoing end 8/18

Goal#2

Develop Collaboration Opportunities

Project #1

Survey and Prioritize Potential Partners

Christina begin 8/18 end 9/18

Project #2

Create a Collaboration Incentives and Roles Document

Milda begin 7/18 end 8/18

Goal #3

Data sorting

- **3 Lists of authors who read at PenParentis**
 - 1 alphabetical with short bios (awards & highlights)
 - 1 by frequency they have appeared at our Salons
 - 1 with just all their names/themes sorted by year
- **Attendance at events, numbers & demographics**
- **List of Donors with frequency/amount, sortable**
 - **Members vs. salons attendees vs. fans**

Financial

Goal#1

Grow Revenues to sustainable 25K by 2019

Project #1

Stabilize Board:

- Make list with addresses/phone & join date & whether give/get achieved (annual number), attendance at events and meetings
- Recruit 3 to 6 new board members (not more than 12 on the board for now)
- Board training
- Build committees

Project #2

Recruit Corporate Salons Sponsors

- Document is in progress – need deck for in-person presentations
- Should say #of attendees, #of authors, what kind of people attend our events (who will see their ads)
- Local restaurants & bars?

Goal #2

Minimize organizational financial and regulatory risk

Project #1

Create a team and/or method that evaluates and advises on how to minimize risk (annual basis)