
St. Mary's Academy

ACIS Self-Study

Report 2021

**ST MARY'S
ACADEMY**

FAITH COMMUNITY JUSTICE RESPECT

Letter of Introduction

Dear ACIS Visiting Team,

On behalf of the St. Mary's Academy community, I am thrilled to welcome you to our school! We are grateful for your willingness to support us in our accreditation, and we are thankful to have the privilege of being in our 157th year supporting our students and families. We look forward to spending time with each member as we reflect upon our work in our effort to be the best school we can be. Our self-study process was thorough and inclusive of feedback from all facets of the school. We look forward to the conversations, and the opportunity to learn from your collective expertise.

As we prepare for your visit, I am mindful of the many changes that have taken place at SMA in the last two years. We have been hard at work implementing the initiatives outlined in our 2018-2023 Strategic Plan. In fact, the work accomplished allowed us to begin, last spring, an effort to update our Strategic Plan, which will set the stage for an even more thorough plan to take us through the next five years. Since the beginning of my tenure in July of 2017, the entire Administrative Team, with the exception of one member, has turned over. The 2020-2021 school year was the first year the new team was together. The pandemic challenged us in many ways (for e.g., we were not able to meet in the same room until this past summer), yet we accomplished much and are eager to continue to move the school forward in meaningful ways.

In addition to updating our Strategic Plan, we have worked with ISM on a strategic marketing and enrollment management plan that has helped us gain clarity on our marketing and messaging in alignment with our mission, vision, and values. We have reworked our advancement process which has resulted in growth in annual giving and parent participation to our annual fund. We are developing a ten-year financial model that incorporates a range of "levers" that allow us to more fully understand and adjust to changes in how we address our long-term budgets and the impact these changes have on endowment growth and spending, etc.

We have invested in supports in each division to better serve our students (increased learning specialist support, a designated middle school librarian, teaching assistants in grades K-3, a new auxiliary program director, recalibrated the role of our operations function, expanded positions to support STEAM education, and created roles within divisions in support of a shared leadership model).

We continue to focus on a range of program enhancements in each division (i.e. a new math and social studies curriculum in the Lower School, new schedule and elective offerings in the Middle School, including our new partnership with the Valor Compass Program in support of our students' social and emotional needs, increased course offerings in the High School including our DECA program, continued growth in our summer internship program for rising seniors, among other work). We are also creating a designated space in our Middle School to support our STEAM work, and in the summer of 2022, we will start and finish a \$3 million renovation to our High School science

labs. This project will allow our facilities to 'catch up' to an already robust STEAM curriculum and create a springboard to the evolution of a STEAM wing in the High School.

Of course, as we move forward and reflect upon our self-study process, we recognize that there is much that still needs to be done, and improved, and we are eager to have those discussions with you. The need to postpone the visit until this year has created both opportunities and challenges along the way. However, without question, the entire St. Mary's Academy community is excited to share our experiences with you and learn from you.

We hope you enjoy your time with us and know that we will do everything we can to make you feel welcome and provide the conditions for you to be productive. If you need anything at all, please do not hesitate to ask. We look forward to seeing you soon!

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Barrett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bill" and last name "Barrett" clearly distinguishable.

Bill Barrett
Academy President

Prepared by Bill Barrett, Academy President

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Purpose, Goals, Philosophy, and School History

St. Mary's Academy enjoys the distinction of being one of Denver's oldest private institutions, founded on August 1, 1864, by three Sisters of Loretto who came from Santa Fe, New Mexico. Their faith, courage, and resilience enabled a fledgling school to thrive and 157 years later remain faithful to the legacy and vision of Loretto as it emerges in our times.

Loretto's pioneering spirit found new expression when the sisters opened SMA on the edge of Denver City in a white frame house thought to be the first two-story dwelling. The school opened in challenging times. The sisters arrived in June of 1864 -- two months after a devastating flood-- and were in session for only a few months before soldiers in the Colorado Volunteers massacred Native Americans at Sand Creek. Despite the unsettling milieu, the school grew from a handful of boarders and day students into a program teaching girls advanced sciences, math, philosophy, languages, and arts. In 1875, a year before statehood, SMA awarded the first diploma in the Colorado Territory to Jessie Forshee, who joined the Sisters of Loretto after graduation. Known as a gifted teacher, she earned a master's degree from Catholic University and started a teacher education program for sisters.

Increasing enrollment and program needs necessitated new buildings on California Street and later new campuses on Pennsylvania Avenue and then to the current location on South University Boulevard. Purchased in 1951, the 10-acre Hickerson Family property and home became the school and sisters' residence. A year later the current SMA Lower School was built to accommodate all grades. Over time the campus grew to 24 acres with additional educational buildings and playing fields. SMA's campus includes seven buildings, with the Community Center, which was opened in 2014-2015 for the 150th anniversary, being the most recent building. The Lower School is south of campus adjoining the Pam Bent Turf Field and Biddle Fields. The High School (built in 1964) is to the north and the Middle School (opened in 2000) is to the west. The Bishop Evans Sports Center was added in 1985. The Hickerson House was renamed Sanders House, in honor of Sister Helen Sanders, a 1925 graduate of SMA and former president of the Loretto community. The Sanders House today houses the administrative offices.

From the beginning, SMA has drawn students from various neighborhoods and economic backgrounds. The school community is likewise diverse in religious affiliation, being both a Catholic school and an independent school in ACIS. SMA was founded as an all-girls school and continues that tradition in the high school. The Lower and Middle Schools have been coed in all grades since the mid-1970s.

In the 1970s, Sisters of Loretto leadership decided to sponsor rather than own their schools and thereby transferred fiscal responsibility to the board of trustees in the schools. The board of trustees is a self-perpetuating group consisting of Loretto Community members, parents, graduates, and friends of SMA.

In 2009, the board adopted the current Mission Statement, which was affirmed in 2018. The school is also guided by the Loretto School Values statement developed by

representatives of the Loretto Community and the Loretto school in 1997-1998 as a way of instilling Loretto tradition and mission even when no Loretto members are on staff.

Our mission statement and values remain fundamental to who we are, guide our decisions, and are reflected in the daily life of our community. We are proud of our historic roots and our Loretto heritage, and grateful for wise leadership, dedicated faculty and staff, and supportive families over the years.

Strengths

1. Our Loretto School Values anchor our community.
2. Our community supports the mission, vision, and values of the school.
3. Our Loretto origins support the school's commitment to inclusion, equity, justice, and service in a values-based environment while providing a rigorous curriculum.
4. Our all-girls' high school is a core strength for the school and is meaningfully differentiated among other high school options.
5. Our status as a PK-12 school (coed PK-8) offers a unique option in the independent school market.

Challenges

1. Clear messaging is needed to explain our independent, Catholic school and values-based positioning in addition to the coed PK-8 and all-girls' high school.
2. Ensuring the continuity of the curriculum/program offerings across all three divisions.
3. The enrollment of boys in Lower and Middle School needs to be improved as it impacts enrollment and retention.
4. Our sports program could be further developed to include more options, especially for boys, in our Middle School and Lower School.
5. Our space and facilities are currently limited which in the short term may impact expansion of programs and sports.

Plans and Priorities

1. Finalize the initiatives for 2022-2023 for our five year (2018-2023) Strategic Plan. This work is as a result of parent/faculty surveys as well as a follow up to the Strategic Marketing and Enrollment Management Plan recommendations we gleaned from our work with ISM in August of 2020.
2. Continue the work begun this year to map the curriculum to drive continuity across all three divisions.
3. Continue to support the committee work begun by our Strategic Marketing and Enrollment Committee to examine how best to communicate ways in which we support boys with the sports and extracurriculars in Lower and Middle School.
4. As part of the Strategic Plan update, continue the committee work to examine all facets of our athletic program across all three divisions.
5. Revisit our Campus Master Plan to examine how our facilities can be updated to support the current and future needs of our programs.

Prepared by Bill Barrett, Academy President; Karen Smith, Lower School Principal; Tiffany Drees, Middle School Principal; Iswari Natarajan, High School Principal; Jean Armstrong, Board Chair; Susan Linton-Smith, Board Member and Chair of the Strategic Marketing and Enrollment Committee.

School Community

School Climate

Overview

We believe that the school climate at St. Mary's Academy is generally very positive. Parents, students, faculty, and administrators regularly comment on the strength of our community, and the warm, supportive, nurturing environment we create. Our Loretto School Values of faith, community, justice, and respect are the anchors of our community, and the depth with which our community understands and lives these values daily plays a foundational role in our overall school climate. In addition, recent surveys support the above conclusions.

In 2018, NAIS presented research that outlined the 'jobs to be done' that parents hire independent schools for in support of their children's success. There were four 'jobs' outlined: 1. *Help me and my child overcome obstacles*; 2. *Help me fulfill my child's potential in a values-aligned community*; 3. *Help me develop a well-rounded person who will impact the world*; and 4. *Help me realize my plan for my talented child*. Although we may touch on all four jobs through a student's experience, we believe our primary focus is on fulfilling jobs #2 and #3.

Parent surveys were administered in 2014, 2016, and 2018. The five most important topics for parents remained consistent in all surveys: quality of teacher, character development, challenging curriculum, technology and skill development, and small class size. Parents ranked SMA highly in all five areas that they rated as most important.

A 2021 survey of recently enrolled parents showed that the three most important factors for parents enrolling their child at SMA were the academic program, quality of faculty, values-based education, kind/safe community, and rigorous academics.

In March of 2020 ISM administered a survey of current parents as part of a comprehensive enrollment management assessment. When asked what factors most influenced their decision to enroll at SMA, parents indicated: school atmosphere/culture of caring, quality of faculty, emphasis on character development and values, and quality of school leadership.

The responses were consistent and demonstrated that SMA is delivering on what parents consider to be most important when selecting a school: quality teachers, moral development, challenging curriculum, and technology that goes beyond its use as an instructional tool.

The results from our ISM student surveys (grades 5-12 only) also suggest that students are happy with the school, enthusiastic in their support of SMA, and that there is a strong correlation of predictability and support, which connects to overall satisfaction.

In addition, climate data from the ISM employee satisfaction survey (comparing February 2020 and April 2021) was a 10.6 out of 12. This placed the whole school, Lower School, and High School, in the “optimal” quadrant. In 2020 the Middle School was rated in the “toxic” quadrant, but by 2021, with a new Middle School principal, the Middle School moved into the “undifferentiated” quadrant, which is a big step forward. It is also interesting to note that in being accepted to the Valor Compass cohort 5, our new SEL initiative in the Middle School, the faculty had to complete a survey that spoke to the trust they have in their principal, the results were clear that they do trust the principal, a significant achievement as the principal’s first year on the job was during the pandemic, and it was also this individual’s first year as a principal. Overall, the data suggests that morale and satisfaction are high overall, but of course there is always more work to be done.

Our faculty and staff, time and again, state that they choose to work at SMA because of the sense of community and our Loretto School Values. The faculty feel that there are strong and meaningful relationships within each division, but that we could benefit from spending more time with each other across divisions. We have, and will continue to, look at ways to create this time both in support of personal relationships, and in ways that will allow us to strengthen cross divisional experiences for faculty and students alike.

Since July of 2017, when SMA hired a new Head of School, the entire administrative team, (with the exception of our Director of Loretto Projects/School Historian, Sr. Regina Drey – Sr. Regina has been with us for approximately 40 years) has turned over. The changes were primarily due to planned retirements or personal issues. As a result, the 2020-2021 school year marked the first year the “new” administrative team was together as a unit, and the pandemic prevented the team from meeting in the same room that entire year. We now have an opportunity to elevate and strengthen the team and look forward to doing so.

The three division principals have done a good job of working together strategically in support of a ‘one school with three divisions’ mindset. Prior to 2017, the feedback was that the divisions were siloed in many ways. As a result of the growth in this area, the school is able to work more strategically across the academy in support of the initiatives in progress. There are aspects of the work that can tend to still be division specific, and the Middle School faculty, in particular, comment that they have worked through a number of initiatives over the past five years and are looking forward to having greater stability and focus going forward.

We are proud of the work we have done to continue to build community via our intentional and systematic DEI efforts. Our efforts are being noticed by our faculty, staff, and parent community in many positive ways.

Strengths

1. The strength of our community, and our commitment to our Loretto School Values of faith, community, justice, and respect are deeply ingrained in the culture of the school.
2. Feedback from our parent community suggests that the experiences we create are consistent with what they feel are the most important reasons they enroll their children at SMA (i.e., we seem to be mostly delivering on our value proposition).
3. Our commitment to surveying our community the past few years has generated critical feedback as we work strategically to move the school forward.
4. There is a shared culture of care, trust and respect among our faculty and staff.
5. Our DEI efforts are creating an even more closely unified and respectful community.
6. The work underway by the principals to further improve and create greater cohesion across divisions, and experiences for students to work across divisions.

Challenges

1. To continue to deepen the working relationships among the administrative team to maximize the talents each member brings to the community in order to maximize our overall impact on our ability to move the school forward.
2. More cross divisional programming as a way to further unite the school and create the 'shared experiences' that more deeply reflect the story of the journey our students take.
3. Staffing up to support cross divisional programming, as resources allow.

Plans and Priorities

1. Work as an administrative team to connect individually to strengthen our relationships personally and professionally as we work to support one another and the School.
2. Determine how we can allocate resources needed to further support effective cross divisional programming.
3. Continue the systematic and intentional approach to our DEI efforts so that we can further enhance our ability to create a community where all students, faculty and parents feel a true sense of belonging.
4. Continue our commitment to solicit timely feedback from our parents, students, and faculty/staff, and integrate that feedback into our annual strategic priorities in the spirit of continual improvement.

Prepared by Bill Barrett, Academy President

Admissions/Student Demographics

Overview

The admissions process is mission-focused and child-centered. The Admissions Office introduces St. Mary's Academy as a school founded in and respecting the Loretto School Values.

We identify, recruit, and enroll mission-appropriate students that reflect diversity of race, faith, socio-economic background, gender, thought, and academic ability. The admissions process is non-discriminatory and is committed to keeping with the school's philosophy. The academy admits students of any race, creed, color, sex, national and ethnic origin, citizenship, religion, sexual orientation, to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities made available to students at the school. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, disability, national and ethnic origin, citizenship, religion, or sexual orientation in administration of educational or admissions policies, scholarship programs, athletic and other school-administered programs.

In the 2021-22 school year, we have enrolled 690 students with a representation of 64% female and 36% male among co-ed grades. The student body is 30% ethnically diverse; represents 68 zip codes; 24% receives tuition assistance totaling \$1.8 million and 42% identifies as Catholic. Other religions represented include Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and non-denominational.

The application process follows a traditional calendar with application, notification, and enrollment in accordance with the ACIS Admissions Policies & Procedures, ACIS Denver Admissions Agreement, and Catholic High School Admissions Agreement; we also allow a rolling process until space is no longer available.

Each divisional Admissions Committee carefully evaluates every applicant to ensure that St. Mary's Academy is the best fit for a child. Thorough review is given to an applicant's transcript, recommendation letter(s), parent comments, student visit observations, standardized assessments (ISEE for Middle School and HSPT or ISEE for High School), parent interview notes, student essay (grades 2-12) and supplemental items such as an accommodation, 504 plan, or IEP. Admissions Committees include an admissions representative, divisional principal, and faculty.

Our Enrollment Management Team works closely to integrate marketing, enrollment, financial aid, retention and orientation of new students. All faculty and staff play a role in the enrollment management process. In the 2021-22 school year, St. Mary's Academy had an overall retention of 86%, attrition of 14% and 181 newly enrolled students. Retention strategies include a focus on 5th graders rising to the Middle School and 8th grade girls rising to the High School, while we continue to engage students and parents across all grade levels to encourage re-enrollment.

Strengths

1. The Admissions Office is a data-driven and trend-seeking team of admissions professionals who place an emphasis on professional, personalized, and timely customer service in all admissions interactions.
2. St. Mary's Academy recruits and selects students in accordance with our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusivity. The subsequent application process is thorough and considers the needs and strengths of the whole child and family. No single item--like testing scores--influence an admission decision.

3. Faculty and staff are involved in the role of admissions, recruitment, and retention.

Challenges

1. Increasingly dense educational market of competitive public, charter, and independent school options.
2. Long term challenge to balance boy-girl ratio Pre-Kindergarten through 8th grade while also recruiting for an All-Girls High School.
3. Balancing the workload and continued desire to personalize the admissions experience for students and families.

Plans and Priorities

1. Continue to develop and foster strong relationships with schools and organizations from many different groups in targeted markets, while expanding our St. Mary's Academy footprint.
2. Grow enrollment to achieve optimum school size and gender balance, while also focusing on increasing retention to 90% or above in each division.
3. Gather additional AISAP and NAIS benchmarking information to ensure the Admissions office is properly staffed.

Prepared by Seely Meredith, Director of Admissions; Lindsey Lopez, Admissions Associate and Kristen Dieterich, Director of Lower and Middle School Admissions.

Alumni Relations

Overview

All Alumnae (High School) and Alumni (Middle School) activities are organized by the Advancement Team. With a 157-year history, we have over 4,000 alumnae on record, including 2,500 in the greater Denver community. However, as is the case often with all-women high schools, our alumnae giving participation rate is not as high as it could or should be. We maintain a strong, positive reputation among our alumnae base, but they don't always translate that love for their alma mater into philanthropic support. We allocate one half of one staff member's time towards all aspects of alumnae relations, including event planning, Alumnae Board liaison, records maintenance, printed and e-newsletters and fundraising.

Strengths

1. Implemented *Alumnae Connection*, a database software program to connect alumnae with classmates, gather contact information and promote alumnae engagement.
2. Strong traditions of events held throughout the year that gather alumnae and students (Volleyball Reunion, Senior Seminar, Alumnae Senior Luncheon, Reunion Weekend [students are tour guides], etc.).
3. Increased from one hard copy newsletter and 2 electronic ones per year to one hard copy and 4 electronic ones per year.
4. The Alumnae Board is becoming more of a self-guided entity, with less daily oversight by staff. Staff provides a framework, guidance and support when

needed. This is a work in progress, as this new structure was begun this past school year during COVID, so we are still rolling it out.

5. Since our current annual fund and alumnae coordinator took over in FY18, we have increased our alumnae giving to the Annual Fund by 118%, and participation increased from 5% to 6.4%.
6. In early spring of 2021, we conducted a very thorough “lost alumnae project” by sending out letters and emails of missing alumnae asking for information to update our database. Also, in May 2021, we mailed a personal solicitation letter from one alumna who received tuition assistance to all other alumnae for whom we had a mailing address but no gift yet. Both efforts allowed us the opportunity to continue to clean up and refine our database.

Challenges

1. We could be more purposeful in our solicitation efforts and should utilize wealth data within our database to customize solicitations with suggested ask amounts, as well as follow up some of our larger requests with personal phone calls.
2. Alumnae participation in fundraising and events, including by the graduating class, could be much stronger.
3. Despite the recognized increases in giving participation and dollars raised, we still have a way to go before we achieve an amount before we are near the national average of independent schools of between 10 and 15%. We need to develop a long range, achievable plan for increasing giving and participation in the Annual Fund and engagement and attendance at special events.

Plans and Priorities

1. As of spring 2021, the Alumnae Board instituted a committee system of four committees with one chair for each, and a requirement that each member join at least one committee. As of fall 2021, the Alumnae Board increased from 18 members to 21 members. We will continue to guide the board to work within this new structure, empowering committee chairs to have more decision-making responsibilities and providing opportunities for every member of the board to become more involved.
2. We will continue to engage the alumnae board and current students in our thank you efforts to each alumna who contributes to the school. We began two very personal outreach initiatives this year: handwritten thank you postcards by current students and thank you calls in the summer by Alumnae Board members to all alumnae donors in an effort to see those numbers increase.

Prepared by Natalie Mesko, Director of Advancement; Katie Wheeler, Annual Fund and Alumnae Coordinator

Parent Community

Overview

St. Mary’s Academy, with its wide geographic base and large age range of students, has an equally diverse parent population. Academy Parents is the name of our PTA, or PTO. Every parent is considered a member of Academy Parents, and it is not a

fundraising entity. Any activities they host, or plan are covered by donations from parents or paid for with an annual \$40,000 budget from the Annual Fund. The mission of Academy Parents is to build community and enhance the educational and social experience of each SMA student and family. Academy Parents sponsors events and programs that assist parents and teachers in their efforts to develop lifelong learners while providing opportunities for social interaction. Academy Parent board members are recruited through word of mouth and advertisements in the Wildcat Weekly (SMA's weekly all academy e-newsletter). Also, many parents are pulled from their roles as Room Parents in the Lower School to have a more active role academy wide as their children age.

Strengths

1. We have a strong board of 18 parents, including the new position of President Elect, initiated this year to help in the transition of the new president each year.
2. We created an AP logo with the tagline of "Supported by the SMA Annual Fund." We use the logo on any signage, advertisement and on any giveaway items to teachers or students to help raise awareness and increase impact by the Academy Parents.
3. While some traditions are long-held and well-loved (donations of pies for faculty before Thanksgiving), the board is also open to new opportunities for growing community. For example, a small Christmas party began in the Lower School as a cookie exchange. The second year it grew exponentially through the work of a few key parents and donors, and now the event is being funded by Academy Parents and is expected to be bigger than ever for students and their families.
4. We have restructured recruitment and oversight of Room Parents (Lower School) and CAT Parents (Middle School) to fall under Academy Parents to assist in fair and equitable selection and more consistent communication across all parent volunteer entities.

Challenges

1. With three separate academic divisions, it can be difficult to plan events that would appeal to students from ages 4 to 18. We would love to do more across divisions with both students and parents working and playing together.
2. Many of our Lower School parents prefer to be involved as Room Parents and can be very active in this role. The challenge is sustaining a high level of involvement into Middle School and High School, though the roles and responsibilities do change. Having a new principal in the Middle School, on top of COVID, has meant that we are inventing a new way for parents to be involved as we move forward through the school year.
3. While we have many parents (over 500) who have checked off a form indicating their willingness to volunteer, it is still difficult to have them take larger leadership roles with events and programs. Given the number of events we plan each year and the need to focus on fundraising, we need to empower more parents to have larger volunteer roles with more responsibilities.

Plans and Priorities

1. As parents come forward to volunteer, inquire about getting more involved, or attend Academy Parent meetings, we are clear to share specific volunteer opportunities and work to find a way for those individuals to contribute to the school in a way that inspires them and fills our needs. By encouraging our Academy Parent board members to initiate these conversations with other parents on their own, we can have a more structured volunteer network.
2. We would like to engage the High School students in some of the larger school-wide events, either by offering “spirit points” through student council or service hours through Service Learning, to help build community among the divisions. We also want to determine the most appropriate way to communicate with High School students about all the events happening across campus.
3. Continue conversations with the Middle School principal, the Academy Parents Middle School representatives, and some of the more experienced teachers about how best to involve parent volunteers in Middle School student activities and CAT programming.

Prepared by Natalie Mesko, Director of Advancement; Lea Frank, Event Coordinator

Marketing & Communications

Overview

The Marketing and Communications department articulates the school’s mission, vision and image across all media to ensure a consistent, differentiated, positive brand and message of excellence. In collaboration with senior leadership, Board of Trustees, and consultants, it develops a practical and strategic marketing plan to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. Our work with ISM has provided us with excellent data and recommendations as we work to improve our marketplace stance.

The department plans and executes creative development and production of print, video, and digital marketing in support of enrollment, re-enrollment and retention marketing, and supports advancement and fundraising activities. It also oversees digital marketing messaging on our website and social media, and with ad managers at subscription search engines.

To achieve engagement and retention goals, the department plans, develops, and executes digital communications for the Academy in *Wildcat Weekly* Engage! and Vision editions, messages from the President, DEI updates, back-to-school emails, handbooks, health and safety communications, and the annual report. The department provides photographic coverage of academy events and activities and produces news articles and media releases to raise awareness of Academy programming.

Strengths

1. The SMA website was relaunched in June 2018 in partnership with Finalsité and utilizes the current independent school best practices. Our website serves as an information resource for prospective families and current families, employees,

- and alumnae. Since that time, many of the pages have been upgraded to better serve our prospective families, including a Virtual Admission Center.
2. In 2018 we standardized our summer communication to families by employing four comprehensive emails that include robust information for the upcoming school year. In the spring of 2021, the Parent Portal of the website was redesigned and expanded to include all the resources necessary for back-to-school and ongoing planning.
 3. To support our Admissions efforts during 2020 and 2021, when COVID-19 prevented on-campus tours, the Marketing & Communications department produced video testimonials of many stakeholders that are regularly employed across channels.
 4. Digital marketing received extensive attention in the 2020-21 school year, with expanded use of strategies by our Google Ad managers at Finalsight, including the traditional text ads, new remarketing ads, and small space ads, all of which resulted in a two-fold increase in clicks to our website and a 9% increase in conversions (to apply/inquire).
 5. Our digital presence also was amplified via social media through implementation of the Hootsuite social media management platform in the fall of 2020, resulting in 225 unique posts and 25,685 instances of user engagement (“likes” and comments’) by 4,225 followers. In fall of 2021, the appointment of a second position to the department further refined the effort, including dedicated SMA Wildcats athletics channels.
 6. The first All-Academy event, *SMAventure Day 2019*, was executed in September 2019. This afternoon brought together every SMA student and employee to build community. This was an initiative of our Strategic Plan.
 7. To serve the goal of telling more of the SMA story, the weekly *Wildcat Weekly* newsletter was boosted with monthly “Vision” editions which feature key themes, such as our Loretto School Values, Service Learning, Alumnae, and Leadership.
 8. The development of Portrait of Graduates (POG) across the divisions is providing strong messages for our enrollment marketing, communications, and signage. The department developed expansive Admissions brochures for the 2021-22 enrollment cycle that aligned our POG with school programs and testimonials to better tell our story and position our brand.

Challenges

1. The academy has two identity challenges: a) how to best define and articulate our Catholic identity, as a school that has always welcomed students of all faiths with 58% of our students non-Catholic, as well as our program being coed through grade 8 and an all-girls high school.
2. Outside of the newly produced on-camera testimonials, St. Mary’s Academy has very little b-roll video that can be resourced for marketing and communications projects. Masking in classrooms has inhibited our ability to pursue this broadly.
3. Progress was made in 2020-21, via the BOT Strategic Marketing and Enrollment Committee chaired by an experienced CEO/Brand Manager, to articulate the SMA brand for our application in our materials. We can go further in developing

profiles of SMA “customers” so that we can do more segmented marketing via digital strategies.

4. We need to better utilize our “power parents” in communicating our message to the greater community in a more formalized program as key influencers in our community.
5. The scope and responsibilities of this department are wide, and our efforts have been hampered by it being limited to one person. In June 2021 we added a digital marketing coordinator position to perform social media management and website maintenance.

Plans and Priorities

1. In alignment with our updated five-year Strategic Plan, we are doing committee work on defining and articulating our Catholic identity and will apply accordingly.
2. We need to continually upgrade and update our website to more closely match the websites of key competitors in the independent and private school market.
3. We will develop profiles of SMA “customers” for strategic digital marketing, including addressing our coed vs. all-girls programs.
4. We will work in a concerted and collaborative fashion to establish a formal ambassadors program with Advancement and Admissions.

Prepared by Lucy M. Ewing, Director of Marketing & Communication

Diversity/Inclusivity

Overview

St. Mary’s Academy is committed to growing and sustaining a culture of inclusivity where every member feels a true sense of belonging. With “Community” being one of our core Loretto School Values (and one of our key strengths), SMA has engaged in DEI work since its inception. Our faculty, staff, students, and parents comment often, both anecdotally and via formal feedback, that our community is warm, welcoming, and inclusive. We are a founding member of the Colorado Diversity Network.

Our DEI work is aligned with the key identifiers of diversity: socioeconomic status, ability (learning, physical, mental, emotional, health, status), age, sexual orientation, gender, race/ethnicity, religion, and family structure. Our work embraces different viewpoints and perspectives. Our goal is to do all we can to honor and embrace the differences among us, and create the conditions where the experience for everyone, ultimately, is consistent with our intentions and aligned with our mission, vision, and values.

St. Mary’s Academy families represent more than 60 zip codes in the Denver metro area. 42% of our families identify as Catholic. Our High School is all girls. In our Lower and Middle Schools students are approximately 64% female. Out of approximately 115 faculty and staff, 27% are male and 63% are female. Our Lower School faculty is 17% male and 83% female. Our Middle School faculty is 45% male and 55% female. Our High School faculty is 25% male and 75% female. Our Administrative Team is 30%

male and 70% female. Approximately 30% of our students identify as ethnically diverse. Approximately 18% of our faculty identify as ethnically diverse. Approximately 20% of our students require a range of specific learning supports; we have increased our staffing to support students who need additional support and/or enrichment. Approximately 24% of our families receive tuition assistance totaling just over \$2 million.

We are proud of the intentional, systematic, and strategic approach we now take with our DEI efforts. We have worked hard to reflect our efforts in all aspects of the school (i.e., policies and practices, curriculum, hiring, events, admissions, marketing, outreach, tuition assistance, and of course the staff, student and parent experience). We have more work to do, and we look forward to the opportunity to continue to move this very important work forward.

Strengths

1. Our Loretto School Values of faith, community, justice, and respect have been pillars of our DEI work for many years. Our values create the conditions for our strong, close knit, inclusive community.
2. Dr. Maria Salazar (DEI consultant and Professor at the University of Denver) has helped us be more systematic and intentional in our approach to DEI work. This has resulted in strategic movement forward in DEI across several key areas including: curriculum, school culture, policies, and student empowerment. We share our progress with our community regularly.
3. We have recently updated our handbook to reflect a consistency of policies, behavioral expectations, etc. across all three divisions.
4. We have begun to view our curriculum through a DEI lens and are in the process of mapping our K-12 curriculum using a common curriculum map aligned to our mission, values, key skills, and commitment to DEI.
5. We have established affinity groups within the Middle and High Schools.
6. We have instituted a shared leadership model whereby each division has support to lead the DEI efforts in partnership with our principals, President, and Dr. Salazar. The leadership team meets monthly with Dr. Salazar and each division meets weekly with Dr. Salazar as needs arise.
7. We engage in consistent professional development across the academy in support of our commitment to DEI. For example, faculty across divisions engage in ongoing professional development related to infusing our Loretto School Values in school and classroom environments, affinity groups, and community interactions.
8. Each division has a DEI coordinator that works collaboratively with teams of teachers and school leaders to advance DEI.

Challenges

1. Survey data and feedback suggests that some students and families do not feel as welcome as we would like (for e.g. black students, conservative perspectives, neurodiversity).
2. Our faculty could be more ethnically diverse, and more gender balanced.

3. Given the current political climate, our core value of justice, when we engage in social justice work, can be confused with the school taking a political stance on certain issues that can be perceived as division within the community.
4. Time. Coordinating the efforts of the many individuals who support the work on a part-time basis can limit our overall ability to accomplish our goals most effectively.
5. We have not yet created the clear ‘dashboard’ of metrics we want to achieve as we are still in the process of creating our overall school and parent DEI committees.

Plans and Priorities

1. The team will continue to meet regularly with Dr. Salazar in support of our goals.
2. We will improve our outreach and practice with respect to hiring.
3. The team needs to finalize a curriculum framework in support of viewing our curriculum through a DEI lens
4. We will work internally and with parents to clearly help them understand how our DEI work, including our core value of ‘justice’ plays out in the life of the school. For example, our parent DEI group.
5. We will continue to engage in regular DEI professional development that aligns to our Loretto School Values for our faculty, students, and parents.
6. The team will establish the school and parent DEI committees in support of our goals and engage the parents in building the dashboard indicators we want to focus on.
7. We will brand our initiatives in alignment with our Loretto School Values.

Prepared by Bill Barrett, Academy President; Karen Smith, Lower School Principal; Tiffany Drees, Middle School Principal; Iswari Natarajan, High School Principal; Missy Ochoa, Lower School DEI Coordinator; Victoria Fernandez, Middle School DEI Coordinator; Debbie Horning, High School DEI Coordinator; Dr. Maria Salazar, DEI Consultant and Professor at the University of Denver.

Personnel

Overview

St. Mary’s Academy's highly qualified and dedicated faculty members and leadership team work diligently to carry out our mission and create an environment that promotes the Loretto School Values of Faith, Community, Justice and Respect. Hiring and retaining outstanding faculty is deeply important to our community. For example, the *quality of faculty* scored a 4.81 of 5 when we most recently asked our parent community why they chose our school. We are an equal opportunity employer, have adequate administration to support the operation of the school and strive to ensure that all employees have the appropriate qualifications and experience to sustain the school. The school considers industry benchmarks, individual qualifications and experience when establishing fair, consistent salary levels for all employees. Our hiring process is consistent, interactive and involves multiple stakeholders to ensure new hires will be successful and add to the culture of the school.

The school is deeply invested in the success of all employees. We follow a structured recruitment and onboarding process, encourage opportunities for professional development, stipends for faculty assuming additional responsibilities and annual bonuses approved by the board of trustees. Roughly 75% of our faculty have advanced degrees in their specialty. Another testament to our success is the longevity of our educators; 63% of SMA faculty have been at the school for four or more years, 25% more than thirteen years.

Recruitment and Hiring

St. Mary's Academy enjoys a low turnover of faculty and staff. When a position becomes available, we have used different forms of advertising dependent on the role. All open positions are announced to our faculty and staff. In addition, we have found the most success by advertising faculty openings on our website, the ACIS and NAIS job board, and through word of mouth. In our most recent survey, 87% of employees indicated that they would recommend SMA to their friends as an employer (55% highly likely, 32% likely). Administrative positions are advertised in the same outlets as faculty and also on indeed.com, for hard to fill roles with specific skills sets the school has also found success by partnering with recruitment agencies and by using other recruitment websites.

For faculty, the interview process is handled by each division head. After collecting several applicants, the division head will begin the interview process. Finalists are required to complete an application for employment. The interview process includes meeting teachers in the same department, at a minimum, as well as meeting the principal and other divisional leaders. Additionally, candidates are asked to demonstrate their effectiveness by teaching one class session. The division head is responsible for conducting required reference checks for all applicants that are offered a role at the school. Finalist faculty candidates also meet with the academy president prior to having an offer extended. All offers that are made are conditional upon the successful completion of a criminal background check.

Administrative staff follow similar procedures as faculty; the interview process is handled by the relevant division head who collects applications and initiates the interview process. The process begins with phone screening interviews, shortlisted candidates are invited on to campus for additional interviews with the division head, a panel of other department members, faculty, and staff that the candidate will be working with and, finally, the academy president. Participants in the interview process provide feedback after meeting with the candidates. The division head will conduct background checks. Finalists complete an application for employment, all offers that are made are conditional upon the successful completion of a criminal background check.

The school is confident that, through this structured hiring process we are ensured that only those with the proper qualifications and experience are hired. All employees are issued offer letters at the time of employment and continuing on an annual basis. The offer letters have been reviewed by the school legal counsel, outline basic duties, timings, compensation, in addition to other important legal considerations. The offer letter is digitally signed by both the employee and the academy president. All employees are

provided with job descriptions and can provide feedback and updates on a periodic basis. The school complies with all HR regulations including FMLA and FLSA.

Faculty and Staff Orientation

The first in-service day in August is for all new hires. The academy president and other members of the school's senior administration provide introductions, an overview of the school's history, the school's Standard Response Protocol and other safety priorities, tours of the campus and the day-to-day aspects of working at the school. New hires are issued photo identification access cards, computers, and, when applicable, keys to specific areas of campus. Feedback from new faculty and staff demonstrates that the onboarding process is effective, that they understand the mission of the school (4.63 of 5) and that policies, procedure and job descriptions have been made clear upon joining (4.12 of 5).

Strengths

1. The recruitment, orientation and evaluation process produce employees that know and support the mission and have a strong sense of school culture.
2. Job searches are conducted nationally allowing for a strong mix of qualified candidates.
3. Very low turnover of faculty and staff support our positive culture and the retention of institutional knowledge.

Challenges

1. The current market for qualified faculty and staff is extremely competitive, the school must continue to perform market research and maintain competitive levels of compensation and benefits.
2. The composition of our faculty and staff does not reflect the gender and racial diversity of our student population.

Plans and Priorities

1. Continue to focus on increasing diversity in faculty and staff.
2. Continue to enhance faculty and staff compensation and benefits to remain competitive and attract top talent.

Prepared by Arthur Keown, CFO; Bill Barrett, Academy President

Evaluation and Professional Development

Overview

At St. Mary's Academy, our evaluation and professional development work is modeled on a 'growth mindset.' The opportunity to receive feedback on one's performance as well as the expectation that all staff are committed to improving their craft are foundational to this work.

In 2018 a committee, consisting of faculty from each division, principals, and Academy President was formed in an effort to create an evaluation framework for teachers that was consistent across divisions. The committee worked on the framework throughout the

2018-2019 academic year, and implementation began in the 2019-2020 year. The work consisted of creating an “Excellence In Teaching Statement”, a calendar that walked faculty through the major steps on the process (i.e. self-reflection and goal setting in April, an administrator meeting in April/May, Execution of the goals in May through January, and a goal review in February to coincide with employment agreements). The work also included a self-reflection and goal setting form, and a peer evaluation form.

When the pandemic hit in March of 2020, we stepped back from the formal evaluation process to allow teachers and principals to focus on all the work needed to move the school forward during the pandemic. As a result, there have been inconsistencies in using the framework, and we look forward to updating the process in the year ahead.

The process for evaluating personnel in the technology, business, advancement, admissions, and marketing offices are unique to those teams and as such vary.

Given the turnover in the administrative team, there has not been a formal process to evaluate administrators. The team is working through those conversations this year to create a model that is appropriate for that work and also built on a similar ‘growth mindset’ model.

In 2018 the administrative team moved away from a professional development committee model that included faculty representation, one principal, and the Director of Operations. The team felt that the conversations in that structure did not consider the overall strategic work of the school given that two principals, the Academy President, and other administrators were not fully engaged in the work of the committee.

In lieu of the above, the principals and Academy President, as part of their weekly meetings, discuss professional development opportunities of interest in each division. These opportunities are sometimes brought forward by faculty members or are part of divisional conversations or administrative teamwork in support of the school’s priorities. The team is careful to ensure that the professional development opportunities are connected to the strategic work across all three divisions to maximize the benefits to the school, avoid siloed work, and not be connected as often to a particular teacher’s interest. As a team, the principals and President approve professional development requests. Other administrative team members work with their staff to discuss professional development, and these conversations and goals are shared with the Academy President.

SMA continues to offer a Graduate Tuition Loan Program. Faculty members meeting certain requirements may apply for funding equal to half the cost of tuition for the purpose of obtaining an advanced degree. Funding is provided in the form of an interest free loan that is forgiven following 20 additional months of half-time or greater employment at SMA.

The school also receives Title II Federal Grant monies that are allotted annually for professional development.

Strengths

1. The school is committed to supporting faculty and staff via a supportive evaluation framework and significant funding for professional development.
2. The movement to ‘housing’ the professional development conversations with the principals and President allows the work to more fully and consistently support the strategic initiatives of the School. It also allows the principals to understand more clearly what is happening in each division.
3. Faculty and staff are aware of, and excited about, their ability to access professional development opportunities. These conversations are part of the evaluation framework, and as a result we have strong interest in using our professional development funds.
4. The board and community are fully supportive of our need to create professional growth opportunities for our faculty and staff and as such have provided additional funding outside of our operating budget when needed.
5. Graduate tuition assistance is available to qualified faculty members seeking advanced degrees.

Challenges

1. We need to establish greater consistency with respect to the use of our evaluative framework now that we are moving away from some of the restrictions of time that the pandemic presented.
2. The lack of an established evaluative framework for the administrative team impacts the structure needed for consistent feedback.
3. The lack of consistent evaluative frameworks in other administrative offices can create questions around fairness with respect to expectations of other team functions.
4. We do not have a structured system to ‘share back’ learning with other teachers.

Plans and Priorities

1. We will create a committee to revisit the 2018 framework and upgrade/improve it as needed.
2. We will continue to work with the administrative team to establish an effective evaluation model.
3. We will create time for the administrative team departments, separate from the principals, to create an evaluative framework that is more consistent and reflective of the ideals established by the faculty committee.
4. We will continue to make professional growth and development a priority for the school and ensure that the funding is in place to support the work.
5. We will consider how best to ‘share back’ what is learned so that we can more effectively leverage an individual’s professional development experience with the overall needs of the school.

Prepared by Bill Barrett, Academy President; Karen Smith, Lower School Principal; Tiffany Drees, Middle School Principal; Iswari Natarajan, High School Principal

Program Overview

Lower School

Overview

Lower School is a co-educational program beginning with Pre-Kindergarten and continuing through fifth grade. The Lower School has an engaging and rigorous academic program that is authentic and purposeful. We strive to offer experiences that are interdisciplinary and focused on real-world problems. Our entire foundation is built upon the Loretto School Values of faith, community, justice, and respect. In addition to core classes in literacy, math, social studies, and science, students participate in Spanish and visual and performing arts. Students have opportunities to participate in extra-curricular programs including drama, sports, robotics, orchestra, band, and a variety of clubs that cover all genres.

Strengths

1. The Lower School has a comprehensive, cohesive curriculum in language arts, math, computer science, social studies, and science. This allows for vertical alignment free of academic gaps.
2. Our faculty is a strong mix of veteran teachers with advanced degrees and more recent graduates who bring with them current best practices and enthusiasm.
3. Our school-wide positive discipline program allows for clear expectations, recognizes students' strengths, and addresses their challenges. This allows for transparency and consistency among staff, students, and parents.
4. The Lower School recognizes the importance of a well-rounded education. We offer students opportunities to develop their interests and strengths in the performing and fine arts, technology athletics, language, and leadership.

Challenges

1. As an independent school, we pride ourselves on low student-teacher ratios. With class sizes up to twenty, full-time teaching assistants are needed in each grade to achieve this.
2. Our infrastructure is dated and many of our classroom spaces need to be brought up to current standards while taking into consideration how children best learn.
3. Our curriculum and website need to be updated in order to reflect how diversity, equity, and inclusion are incorporated into the Lower School.
4. We continue to have an imbalance in our boy/girl ratio and would like to become more proportionate.

Plans and Priorities

1. We will work towards hiring teaching assistants in the fourth and fifth grades.
2. We will develop a strategic plan to fund new furniture, flexible seating plans, and cosmetic updates.
3. Our newly designated DEI coordinator for the Lower School will assist marketing in developing our website to showcase how our curriculum and program reflect our DEI goals.
4. We will work with our marketing and admissions departments to actively promote our co-educational philosophy and program.

Prepared by Karen Smith, Lower School Principal

Middle School

Overview

The Middle School is a vibrant, warm community where students are encouraged to explore their personal passions and interests within a robust and engaging academic environment. Purpose-driven and project-based methods provide a foundation for learning that allows students to progress at developmentally appropriate rates while simultaneously teaching them *how* to think and engage with the world around them. Students are surrounded by teachers who love the middle school years, who are committed to meeting the needs of each student, and who are as inspired to work with students when they fall as when they find great success. Opportunities for social, emotional, and spiritual growth are woven through the day-to-day experience in organic and intentional ways. At the core of everything we do, in the classroom and outside of it, are the Loretto School Values of faith, community, justice, and respect.

Strengths

1. The addition of two more Learning Specialists means that we can more effectively meet the needs of our students; this also allows us to put more focus on meeting the needs of our gifted and talented population.
2. Our new three-year partnership with Valor Collegiate Schools and their Compass Program will ensure that we have a systematic approach to identifying and addressing the social-emotional needs of our students.
3. We have an experienced and dedicated faculty who are inspired by and committed to providing a holistic education for our students.
4. The recent development of affinity groups visibly demonstrates our commitment to DEI work and to supporting our commonly marginalized students; the addition of a part-time Middle School DEI Coordinator role also supports our DEI goals.

Challenges

1. The lack of an articulated scope and sequence in the Middle School means that programming is lost when a faculty member leaves the community; it also means that there's no guarantee that our programs either build on our Lower School programs or directly prepare our students for our High School programs.
2. There seem to be residual issues connected to some teachers feeling that only certain voices are heard. This, combined with a prior lack of teacher-leadership roles contributes to some teachers feeling less valued than others.
3. We have a unique model in the Middle School where grade 6 effectively doubles in size. Given the number of students we enroll with a range of needed learning support, transitioning these students into our program is a challenge for the sixth-grade team.
4. The admissions effort required to support the growth in grade six enrollment is a challenge for the grade six team as they look to develop relationships with new students and establish the continuity of the program.

5. Cross-divisional teachers and shared athletic spaces make it difficult to meet the athletic and co-curricular needs and wishes of our families and students.

Plans and Priorities

1. Weekly departmental time has already been added to this year's schedule. This time will be used to develop curriculum maps that will lead to a PreK-12 scope and sequence.
2. While a few new teacher-leadership roles were created for this year, those faculty need training in how to effectively lead. Other faculty need support with letting go of past negative experiences and trusting new leaders.
3. We will continue to work with the Administrative team and Admissions to find ways to articulate and create PreK-12 experiences and programs that result in a more cohesive community. We will work with the Middle School Admissions Director to determine how to best use our grade six teachers in ways that don't result in undue stress.
4. We will continue to work with the Athletic Directors and cross-divisional teachers in order to optimize schedules, programs, and classes in better and more efficient ways.

Prepared by Tiffany Drees, Middle School Principal

High School

Overview

The all-girls High School prepares confident, empathetic young women for leadership in a global society. Students are empowered through rigorous academics, agile problem-solving, cultural competency, and leadership as they participate in a broad and deep range of experiences. Our seminar-style classes encourage inquiry, debate, and cooperative learning. Walking through the halls of the high school, you will immediately notice a dramatically different atmosphere – one where girls take center stage. Our students are challenged by their peers to achieve more; they feel more comfortable being themselves and expressing their ideas, and they show greater gains on core academic and life skills.

Strengths

1. We provide a unique high school experience that fosters academic excellence and provides values-based education in a nurturing close-knit community. Our actions are aligned with our Loretto School Values of faith, community, justice, and respect.
2. Through an all-girls learning environment, our students are empowered to become strong women leaders with the confidence to find their voice and purpose.
3. We have developed a strong program with a competitive and individualized college counseling service that provides a robust liberal arts education.
4. Our high school faculty are experts in the field. Teachers form close relationships of care and compassion with the students.

Challenges

1. We need to clarify our stance with respect to our identity as it is a challenge given our unique setup of being co-ed PK-8 and the high school being all-girls. We need to work on clarifying our Catholic identity and our messaging around it.
2. Even though our student body is diverse, our faculty body lacks diversity.
3. There needs to be more of a vertical alignment with our middle school.
4. Our science labs are outdated and in need of an upgrade. We also need to continue working on providing real-life problem-solving experiences for our students.

Plans and Priorities

1. Our high school is a hidden gem that needs more visibility. Our strategic approach to recruiting, marketing, and clarifying our stance in the primary marketplace will help make it a destination school for all girls.
2. Our DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) work will focus on hiring and retaining faculty from diverse backgrounds.
3. We will focus on vertical alignment with the middle school through curriculum mapping.
4. The new science labs will provide a great opportunity to implement a strong STEAM program for girls. We will continue to build our high school internship program, mentorship program, and DECA program to prioritize real-life problem solving and leadership skills.

Prepared by Iswari Natarajan, High School Principal

Lower School English

Overview

The language arts curriculum incorporates a balanced and comprehensive approach toward reading, writing, listening, speaking, and research skills. We strive to instill the love of literature through authentic and purposeful experiences related to the required skills of our curriculum. We meet in our grade-level teams, cross-divisional teams, and with our instructional specialist to ensure students' needs are being met. Daily differentiated instruction is addressed in our classrooms, through our instructional specialist, and WINN (What I Need Now) time.

Strengths

1. We use continual formal/informal assessments as a way to monitor student progress.
2. We have had professional development in Orton Gillingham training with phonics development.
3. We have instructional specialists who work with students with diverse learning needs.
4. We review the curriculum within teams to enrich the fluidity of the program.
5. We offer WINN time at each grade level. We use this time to meet with specific and fluid groups of students reinforcing their skill needs.

Challenges

1. We need exposure to more literacy professional development and to observe other schools that use the ReadyGen program.
2. We need more continued release time to meet with peers in vertical team meetings to discuss the alignment of the curriculum.
3. We need to identify the foundational skills that must be taught at each grade level within the literacy time frame.
4. We lack sufficient resources that would allow push-in support.

Plans and Priorities

1. We will find other schools that have successfully implemented ReadyGen into their literacy curriculum and begin conversations with their teachers.
2. We will continue to meet across the grade levels and use late start mornings for vertical meetings between grade levels.
3. We will form vertical grade-level teams that meet on a regular basis (possibly during late start) to prioritize foundational skills creating a smooth transition as students progress from grade to grade.
4. We will prioritize hiring an additional full-time learning specialist in the Lower School.

Prepared by Darla Hamilton, fifth grade teacher; Liz Goforth, fourth grade teacher; Annie Barocas, second grade teachers; Theresa Lorenzo, first grade teacher; Amber McGown, kindergarten teacher

Middle School Language Arts

Overview

The St. Mary's Academy Middle School language arts program guides students to develop their thinking, confidence, and voice through composition and class-discussion. Through a variety of genres, themes, and perspectives, students are introduced to multiple viewpoints to better understand their own views, critiques, and conclusions. Students are encouraged to seek and create a connection between texts, their personal experiences, and actual world events. With an awareness of each student's learning profile, our curriculum is designed to help students progress in their reading, writing, active listening, and oratory skills.

Strengths

1. Students are exposed to and engage with a variety of literature that encompasses numerous perspectives and ideas.
2. The curriculum encourages the exploration and understanding of multiple perspectives.
3. Students challenge the text, themselves, and each other through student-driven discussions.
4. Writers are supported through an intentional process of brainstorming, drafting, conferencing, editing, revising, and publishing.
5. Student learning profiles and needs are taken into consideration to provide accommodations and support for each child.

Challenges

1. The decision-making process for programmatic changes is unclear at times.
2. There is no dedicated focus on the big picture.
3. Currently there is little genuine curricular integration of “soft skills” as they relate to our school’s mission.
4. There is question about the efficacy of the writing program given that there is not a consistent and data-driven approach across the grade levels.

Plans and Priorities

1. We will work with the new department chair to create a process for implementing program changes that guarantee alignment and accountability across the grade levels.
2. We have met to align our writing instruction and evaluation. However, we need additional time throughout the academic year to ensure follow-through and to consider adjustments.
3. We would like to scaffold a three-year growth plan to ensure our students are exposed to soft skills as they relate to our school’s mission and values.
4. We will work with the new department chair and administration to evaluate our writing program in order to determine the most effective methods and programs for our student population.

Prepared by Mark Garcia, sixth grade teacher; Victoria Fernandez, seventh grade teacher; and Chris Leavens, eighth grade teacher

High School English Department

Overview

St. Mary’s Academy English department provides an academically rigorous curriculum that develops writing skills and allows students to further their knowledge of and appreciation for the English language and literature in general. The 9th-grade curriculum exposes students to a broad array of genres and intensive organizational instruction in writing. 10th grade English centers on world literature, with cross-curriculum bridges to history and religion. Students in Grades 11 and 12 may choose from a range of classes spanning from African literature to Contemporary Literature—in this way, the English department mirrors the curriculum of many universities and caters to the interests of our students.

Strengths

1. The English Department teaches writing as a process, employing drafting, editing, revision, and writing labs to help our students develop their skills in creative, analytical, and informal modes of writing.
2. The English Department integrates diverse books, authors, and points of view into a broad range of classes that embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion.
3. The English Department ensures that we are available for personalized instruction outside of normal class hours and beyond the scheduled times for the writing lab.

4. The English Department is mindful of students' emotional-social well being and our role as a department in providing a voice for their thoughts and concerns through writing and discussion.

Challenges

1. The block schedule makes it difficult to assign and grade a sufficient amount of writing each semester.
2. It is difficult to find time to visit other classrooms and collaborate with our fellow teachers.
3. It is an ongoing struggle to teach and provide proper methods and sources for research.
4. We struggle to adjust to our students' wildly varying skill levels in the areas of grammar and diction.

Plans and Priorities

1. We plan to visit each other's classrooms more frequently, and we would like to investigate ways of retaining records of student work and faculty curriculum to enhance continuity of instruction and steadily improve student achievement.
2. We intend to continue advocacy for writing across the curriculum, including proper methods of research and citation (the introduction of research platforms such as Zotero will help).
3. We would like to expose the students to more professional writers by promoting writing-centered festivals and events at the school.
4. We have introduced and are working on effectively implementing Grammarly accounts for our students both as an aid and an instructional tool in order to improve their grammar and diction.

Prepared by Peter Sniegowski, English Department Co-Chair; Anne Evans, English Department Co-Chair; Laura Passin, High School Faculty; Casey Harnar, High School Faculty; Celia Bard, High School Faculty; Amber Summers, Director of Service Learning

Lower School Mathematics

Overview

St. Mary's Academy offers rigorous math instruction for all students. Our Pre-Kindergarten starts their mathematical learning with The Creative Curriculum and is enhanced by the Building Blocks program. K-5 students use the Envision 2020 Math program, which combines problem-based learning with visual learning to help students understand math concepts. Through the use of technology and manipulatives, students are provided with visual representations to see math concepts more clearly. Lessons are differentiated through daily activity centers and real-world math projects. Lower School math instruction allows students to feel confident in their mathematical and problem-solving abilities.

Strengths

1. Our program offers a multitude of resources for each lesson, including differentiation options, center activities, both guided and independent practices, and visual learning.
2. The problem-solving format looks at ways to solve problems using different strategies.
3. Envision 2020 allows for in-depth learning of each topic and leaves students with a strong understanding of fundamental math concepts.

Challenges

1. Since Envision 2020 is a new program, we need time to get together at cross-grade level to discuss what we are doing with the curriculum and teach others from our strengths.
2. Students who are struggling with the math concepts could benefit from a math intervention small group, similar to the literacy intervention groups we currently have.
3. We need additional training for new teachers on the curriculum.
4. Math facts are not practiced with enough consistency or emphasis.

Plans and Priorities

1. We will plan for a set time, ideally once every month or two, but at least every semester, to discuss progress in our classrooms with the Envision 2020 curriculum
2. We will look at our schedule for next year and allow time for small group math intervention.
3. We hope to have in-service training for new teachers hosted by Savvas or have certain teachers become “experts” on certain areas of the curriculum and host lessons for new teachers.
4. We need to research additional math fact programs that would be appropriate for primary and intermediate needs and have teachers consistently implement these programs.

Prepared by Daren Cleaver, fifth grade teacher; Jaidi Carter, third grade teacher; Shannon Aragon, fourth grade teacher; Bridget Romano, second grade teacher; Jane Hoogerwerf, second grade teacher; Michelle Irwin, Kindergarten teacher

Middle School Mathematics

Overview

Mathematics content is developed with focus, coherence, and rigor. The attention to rigor reflects the balances of conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, and applications, thereby allowing students to develop the ability to think and reason mathematically. A variety of resources, including textbooks, online programs, and project-based learning are blended to meet students where they are and move them forward. Leveled classes offer students the chance to move at their own, appropriate pace.

Strengths

1. Students with math-related learning differences benefit from the support that is provided by push-in support from learning specialists and supervised tutors.
2. While teachers are given the latitude to design and implement appropriate curriculum to meet the needs of individual students, a common text guarantees the integrity of the program.
3. Students are placed in leveled math groups, allowing them to develop a growth mindset, move at their own pace, gain mastery, develop automaticity, and be challenged.
4. The climate of mathematics classes is positive, relaxed and well-managed. Classes focus on problem-solving and explaining one's thinking.
5. Students appreciate that mathematics classes intersperse lectures, small group work, and other activities instead of just lecturing. Students like working in groups during class.

Challenges

1. The schedule for meeting with students fluctuates from week to week preventing the frequency of teacher-student interaction time. There is a question as to whether the team should see students more frequently versus longer periods of time.
2. It is challenging to meet the needs of such a wide spectrum of learners given that almost half of our students are new to the Middle School in grade six and therefore don't benefit from the consistent programming in Lower School.
3. While most grade-level teachers teach four to five of the same class, due to the leveling in math, we have two to three times the number of preps. Managing, preparing and planning for each one is more time consuming than other subject areas.
4. Many other middle schools in the area, both public and independent, offer geometry in grade eight. We have lost some very strong students because we do not offer a track to geometry.

Plans and Priorities

1. We will implement a system of consistent and predictable assessments that ensure students are placed appropriately.
2. We will continually evaluate curricular programs to ensure they meet the needs of our diverse student population.
3. We will plan release time for teachers to learn from each other, e.g., to see how some teachers are using technology.
4. We will evaluate the option of adding geometry to our program and work with the High School to determine if there might be an opportunity to collaborate in providing this programming.

Prepared by Janice Schmitt, sixth grade math teacher; Terri Otto, seventh grade math teacher; and Michael Pattison, eighth grade math teacher

High School Mathematics Department

Overview

The St. Mary's Academy math program sets students up for success with small, single-gender classes and a carefully considered recommendation process. Our core classes are offered at different paces to ensure that students are appropriately challenged and supported. Through skills acquisition, problem-solving, real-life applications, and the integration of technology, our curriculum is designed to develop mathematically fluent young women.

Strengths

1. Our recommendation process is thoughtful and thorough. During this process, we consider demonstrated mastery, participation, grades, maturity, interest level, confidence, and career goals.
2. "Math Lab" provides individual math tutoring for our students. This program is staffed by one math teacher and two senior NHS tutors and is offered three times a week.
3. Within our required math program "regular" and "advanced" classes allow us to appropriately tailor lessons, assignments, and expectations.
4. Girls in a single-sex environment are noticeably more assertive, willing to take risks and collaborate with their peers. Our students feel they are heard and that their questions are answered.
5. Our unique schedule allows our students to accelerate their math program by "doubling up" on math in any given year.

Challenges

1. Finding class time for standardized test prep, ensuring consistency for all students, and pinpointing topics that are "slipping through the cracks" are recurring challenges.
2. We still work to foster communication within the department—shared planning time would be ideal.
3. Physical proximity of our math classrooms would allow for better collaboration and support amongst both our math teachers and our students.

Plans and Priorities

1. We have enlisted Compass Test Prep to help students determine their testing strengths and weaknesses. The department hopes to utilize this data to better serve our students.
2. When the master schedule is created we hope that math classes can be taught in the same hallway. In addition, we hope to have a common planning period.

Prepared by Michelle Hayden, Math Department Chair; Rosemary Rehmer, High School Faculty; Erik Born, High School Faculty; Dr. Yun Chen, High School Faculty; Eric Sheldrake, High School Faculty; Iswari Natarajan, High School Principal

Lower School Social Studies

Overview

Lower School social studies help students understand their place in the community and the world around them. We prepare our students to identify, understand, and work to solve our diverse nation's challenges in an increasingly complex world. Students acquire and learn to use the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will prepare them to be competent and globally responsible citizens. In each grade, students investigate historical events, examine geographical features and resources, consider economic decision-making processes, and define civic roles and responsibilities.

Strengths

1. Using Colorado State Standards, we create project-based learning experiences that are appropriate to each grade level and have the freedom to choose lessons that meet our needs.
2. Teachers construct lessons that reinforce literacy skills such as reading comprehension, researching, and writing about topics, developing an opinion, cause and effect, sequence of events, and presentation skills.
3. Lessons are scaffolded to encourage collaboration and cooperation within small groups.
4. Students are provided with a variety of assessment options that allow for creativity and demonstration of their learning.

Challenges

1. Due to scheduling restrictions, most teachers only teach social studies for an hour every other day, so it is difficult to find the time to go in-depth into the content.
2. We need to align our curriculum with our Portrait of a Graduate and purpose learning initiatives.
3. There is a lack of continuity and inconsistent focus on the collection of student data.
4. Text-heavy assessments and print resources are more challenging for students with learning differences to access effectively.

Plans and Priorities

1. We will identify areas where cross-curricular opportunities exist and utilize literacy time to reinforce social studies concepts.
2. We will meet across grade levels to design lessons and projects that will align with purpose learning and Portrait of a Graduate outcomes.
3. Our team will schedule time for vertical planning to collaborate on different formative and summative assessments.
4. Teachers will work to vary assessment types so student data isn't solely reflective of their ability to complete written assessments. We will provide the necessary accommodations for students with learning differences.

Prepared by Daren Cleaver, fifth grade teacher; Jaidi Carter, third grade teacher; Shannon Aragon, fourth grade teacher; Bridget Romano, second grade teacher; Jane Hoogerwerf, second grade teacher; Michelle Irwin, Kindergarten teacher

Middle School Social Studies

Overview

Starting with a robust exploration of United States History in grades six and seven and culminating with World Issues in grade eight, the Middle School social studies program is designed to provide students with the knowledge and thinking-skills to critically analyze the world around them. Classes are designed around the Socratic Seminar Method, so students learn how to engage in “civil discourse” around both easy and challenging topics. All along the way, projects give students the opportunities to explore history and current events from multiple lenses and share those perspectives with their classmates. Their social studies’s experiences culminate in grade eight when they participate in the World Affairs Challenge in which they work to develop solutions to real world problems.

Strengths

1. Students are encouraged to look beyond the seemingly obvious “answers” and simplistic conclusions and to pursue the more complicated “truths”; at the same time, students are empowered to distinguish the difference between facts, opinions, and lies.
2. Critical thought and analysis are foundational to the class so that students can more readily uncover the nuances of history, including the litany of variant perspectives.
3. Students are provided with a wealth of opportunities to articulate ideas and perspectives in both written and oral format, as well as incorporate technology as a learning ally.
4. A global perspective is integrated into the social studies continuum so as to perpetuate the concept that the world and its inhabitants do not live in isolation and are interconnected.
5. The program builds connections between past, present and future events so that students understand we are both the product of what happened before and the genesis of that which is to come.

Challenges

1. It is challenging to address the needs of a variety of learning styles and an increasingly academically diverse student population.
2. We do not have sufficient opportunities for common, intentional planning between grade-level peers and also between departments.
3. It can be tough to balance innovative teaching styles while also encouraging student-driven learning within a quantifiable/data-driven society.

Plans and Priorities

1. We will work with the grade-level learning specialists to make certain our curriculum and day-to-day lessons are scaffolded to meet the wide variety of learning needs and styles in our classrooms.
2. We will work with our teams and the administration to optimize opportunities for collegial planning.
3. We will work to identify existing innovative protocols that address both student-driven learning as well as quantifiable/data-driven outcomes.

Prepared by Andy Rodgers, sixth grade social studies teacher; Terrye Easton, seventh grade social studies teacher; and Joe Riehl, eighth grade social studies teacher

High School Social Studies Department

Overview

We are preparing students to be citizens in a globalized world. The first two years of high school focuses on building global competency. Starting in ninth-grade, students take Global Citizenship in which they investigate the world and learn how they can take action. Tenth-grade students build on those foundations to recognize perspectives and communicate ideas in World Visions.

Students will then have the option to choose what type of US History to focus on and explore their individual passions through a variety of course offerings. By the end of the program, students will have the skills and knowledge to be agents of change in our world.

Strengths

1. Assessment varies throughout the courses and provides the opportunity for students with different learning styles to communicate in ways suitable to those styles.
2. There is a wide range of class offerings considering the size of the student body and faculty that covers most of the core social studies fields, including adding new courses in areas where we were lacking.
3. Students are exposed to a variety of global issues and are given the opportunity to explore how students themselves can influence change.
4. Students develop a voice for advocating for themselves and others while learning when to use different types of advocacy strategies.
5. The mission and vision of St. Mary's Academy are woven into the curriculum throughout the social studies classes in order to develop the skills that allow students to become agents of change.

Challenges

1. We strive to accommodate learning differences and to provide support for faculty to know how best to deal with these differences.
2. It is difficult to balance the inclusion of political thought while addressing controversial themes.
3. We find it difficult to get students to understand why we have the class requirements that we do.

Plans and Priorities

1. We would like to recognize and alleviate some of the common difficulties that students with learning disabilities struggle with during our courses.
2. The department would like to stress the importance of evaluating source accuracy in every social studies course.
3. We intend to provide our students with the opportunity to switch sides in discussions and recognize and reflect on the emotional consequences of adopting different points of view.
4. We will continue to explore and expand the curriculum to include Asian, Latin-American, Indigenous and African contributions to world history.
5. We will continue to develop new courses, like Economics and Microeconomics, to meet the desires of our students' needs.

Prepared by Latricia Davis, Social Studies Department Chair; Pamela Applegate, High School Faculty; Celia Bard, High School Faculty; Kristen Ferguson, High School Faculty; Amber Summers, High School Faculty

Lower School Science

Overview

St. Mary's Academy offers a hands-on approach to science for every student. All curriculum is based upon the Next Generation Science Standards. Students in grades 3-5 experience the adventure and fun of discovering science through inquiry-based activities, projects, and investigations. Our K-2 students participate in Mystery Science, an exciting and motivating program that includes discussion questions, videos, and hands-on activities.

Strengths

1. St. Mary's Academy has many resources on campus to enhance the science curriculum. A newly renovated Inspiration Lab is used for science, robotics, and creative lab work.
2. Four hydroponic garden towers offer the ability to grow and harvest herbs and vegetables year-round, offering many science topic connections.
3. St. Mary's Academy offers opportunities in the Lower School to collaborate with the Middle and High School divisions. Lower School students can visit a High School classroom, tour science installations on campus, and have Middle School mentors teach science lessons. These collaborations demonstrate a science community that is evident throughout the school.
4. We have a designated science teacher in grades three through five.
5. The science specialist offers weekly hands-on science activities in grades Pre-K through second, supplementing science lessons from the homeroom teacher.

Challenges

1. The science specialist and Pre-K through 2nd-grade teachers need to coordinate curriculum, field trips and outreach programs to enhance science opportunities for the students.
2. There needs to be more integration with math and literacy in science class.

3. The Lower School does not have an annual science fair for grades 3-5 to showcase the creativity, scientific understanding, and dedication of its students.
4. The Lower School science program does not initiate service-learning projects with science topics to bring relevancy and understanding of how science plays a pivotal point in our planet's future.

Plans and Priorities

1. The science specialist will gather information from Pre-K through 2nd-grade teachers and attend professional development programs to plan more integration, field trips, and guest speaker opportunities for those grades.
2. The science specialist will work with math and literacy teachers to integrate those subjects in science class.
3. The specialist will research science fairs and speak to local schools to gather information about their processes and investigate bringing this to the lower school.
4. The specialist will discuss with the homeroom teachers opportunities to combine science-related service-learning projects to support the Loretto School Values of faith, justice, respect, and community.

Prepared by Clark Addington, Lower School Science Specialist; Liz Goforth, fourth grade teacher; Annie Barocas, second grade teacher; Darla Hamilton, fifth grade teacher; and Amber McGown, kindergarten teacher

Middle School Science

Overview

The science department curriculum spans all three Middle School grade levels to inspire and authentically connect life-long learners to the world around them through the integration of physical, Earth, and life sciences. Essential and enduring understandings include observation and inference, data collection and analysis, prediction and asking questions, communicating results and drawing conclusions to understand the interdependence of science and our shared environment. Essential questions guide the direction of the program: Can life on Earth be sustained forever? How can scientific models assist with our understanding of process and change? What are the multicultural contributions to the advancement of science over time?

Real-world experiments and hands-on activities provide students with the opportunities to explore the scientist's role as authentically as possible.

Strengths

1. Common scientific understandings as follows: structural design is essential for function, human behavior influences the natural world, and adaptation is required for the evolution of species and of Earth as a planet to survive changing environments.
2. Common essential questions create through lines that ensure continuity across the program and accountability for high-level thinking.
3. The department is committed to providing experiential learning and differentiated instruction with shared resources such as lab equipment, campus space, and

faculty expertise across all grade levels. We also meet to meaningfully thread content, understandings, and overarching themes throughout our discipline.

4. The Loretto School Values of faith, community, justice, and respect are woven into the curriculum in natural and authentic ways (environmental justice, Earth's resources and sustainability, Earth stewardship, water rights, recycling, and reducing carbon footprints).

Challenges

1. It is challenging to find time and resources that will keep us current with educational trends across the country and further our professional development.
2. More dedicated and focused division time is necessary to further student academic success through curriculum development and interdisciplinary content.
3. Daily schedules seem to run counter to the intellectual and personal growth of both students and teachers.
4. There are limited opportunities to assign lab analyses, research, current science reading and assessment reviews, and we would like to make science more of a priority within the scope of all academics.

Plans and Priorities

1. We will work with the Administration to develop a professional development committee to equitably distribute available professional development resources.
2. We recommend that administration be open to accommodating teacher requests for more constructive curriculum time, discussions on the philosophy of middle school education, and reducing top-down directives that run counter to serving students well.
3. We will work with the Administration to examine the Middle School schedule to determine if other models might make more effective use of time and space.
4. Along with the rest of the faculty, we would like to reexamine the Middle School homework policy as it currently prioritizes math and Language Arts and limits the other subject areas from assigning meaningful extension activities.

Prepared by Steve Mayfield, sixth grade science teacher; Jeff Jewett, seventh grade science teacher; and Kathy Rosborough, eighth grade science teacher

High School Science Department

Overview

St. Mary's Academy's science education prepares students to be powerful agents of change by developing their scientific thinking, communication, and mindset. Our problem and inquiry-based curriculum empowers students to take on real-world issues using a creative, hands-on, and collaborative approach. The foundation of content knowledge and core scientific practices is used to promote curious, scientifically literate young women.

Strengths

1. The High School has a strong science faculty with diverse backgrounds including experience in research, consulting, and a range of educational and professional settings.
2. The faculty are guided by NGSS and ISTE standards, working to build a strong, innovative, inquiry and problem-based curriculum that develops problem solvers who operate with core scientific knowledge and practices.
3. The faculty are committed and working towards enhanced learning through inquiry-based lab work, project-based learning, and connection to current careers in science through field trips and speakers.
4. The Loretto values of social justice and sustainability help connect the science curriculum to real-world issues.

Challenges

1. Class sizes are higher than the averages in other departments but teaching loads (number of classes) are equivalent. Due to this constraint, science teachers have limited time for lab prep/upkeep. This imposes a limit on faculty creativity, flexibility and the potential to offer additional electives. Individualization for advanced students is similarly constrained.
2. The rooms/labs are out-of-date and small, do not allow for proper storage of materials, do not have contemporary safety equipment installed, and the space is not adequate for current class sizes and lab-based courses.
3. Finding and utilizing technology to enhance learning and coordinating practices throughout the department. Specifically developing our curriculum to train girls to take advantage of computer science tools.

Plans and Priorities

1. The major challenges for the science department are logistical, so the priority is to focus on advocating for improvements in the areas of facility, teaching load, labs and class sizes (for e.g., the three science labs will be fully renovated in the summer of 2022).
2. Efforts will be made to develop professionally, coordinate the progression of the science curriculum internally and stay up to date on pedagogy through connections with the wider teaching community.
3. The department will also push to find opportunities to learn outside the classroom, in coordination with other subjects or out in the world through field trips.
4. We intend to integrate computer science ideas, techniques, and specific education with the current curriculum.

Prepared by Kelly Shipley, Science Department Co-Chair; Christine Boss, Science Department Co-Chair; Marie Johnson, High School Faculty; Eric Sheldrake, High School Faculty, Erik Born, Director of Instructional Innovation

Lower and Middle School World Languages

Overview

The World Language (WL) Department is committed to a comprehensive and consistent approach to second language learning following the ACTFL standards. The value of studying and growing in an expressive capacity in more than one language includes enhanced executive functioning, an intimate encounter with the language's culture, and a fuller appreciation for the structure and power of language. In Lower School, students are exposed to the Spanish language and cultures of the Spanish speaking world starting in Pre-K through fifth grade. In Middle School, Spanish and French are offered by choice. Students in World Language classes are placed in one of three levels. Native speakers and students with previous experience in dual-language schools are taught at an advanced level.

Strengths

1. One of the primary strengths of the Lower and Middle School WL program is a cooperative and cohesive curriculum, offering a variety of levels of Spanish and French.
2. Our program includes building a strong cultural understanding, appreciation, and competency, using authentic materials, along with the experience of highly qualified and native-speaking WL teachers.
3. The incorporation of state-of-the-art technology as a learning tool is used in all levels of World Language.
4. Many levels of the program offer differentiation and accommodation to meet individual student needs.

Challenges

1. Our team needs more time to meet as a discipline team on a consistent basis to assess the scope, sequence, and cohesiveness of the curriculum.
2. Peer observation opportunities are limited due to differing schedules and there is limited availability of World Language substitute teachers.
3. Our faculty needs support in the form of available time to integrate new materials, technology, and culturally relevant student enrichment in the acquisition of World Language as a process rather than a destination.

Plans and Priorities

1. The team will create a more cohesive alignment between the levels for World Language by planning more time to meet as a discipline.
2. Our faculty in both divisions will engage in class observations across divisions to ensure consistency.
3. Our discipline will seek professional development opportunities, practice new technology integration, and share our experiences together to build a robust world language experience.

Prepared by Ines McCall, Lower School Spanish teacher; Celsa Rutan, Middle School Spanish teacher; Lori Muniz, Middle School Spanish teacher; Corinne Sasine, Middle School French teacher

High School World Languages Department

Overview

The primary objective of a world language classroom is to teach students to know how, when, and why to say what to whom. Through thematic and cultural-based lessons, students work on reading, writing, listening, and speaking in order to develop presentational, interpretive and interpersonal communication skills. Despite the relatively small size of high school, there are four languages offered, which are Spanish, French, Chinese and American Sign Language.

Strengths

1. Our diverse backgrounds enable us to model active learning in our subject matter while offering flexibility to the learning process in order to motivate the students to improve their personal development and communication skills.
2. We prepare students (particularly in upper levels) for higher-level critical thinking and the application of their skills in authentic, contextualized target language situations.
3. Our faculty members connect with students. We recognize and meet students where they are and, through positive relationships, challenge them to help them achieve their goals.
4. We provide opportunities for international travel to various countries so that students can further practice and develop the skills they acquired in the traditional classroom setting in real-world situations.

Challenges

1. The combination of a four-by-four block schedule and prioritization of required courses (some of which can take multiple blocks in a semester) creates very long gaps in world language classes, which is challenging in a skill-building sequential class.
2. Without a shared planning time built in the school day, it is challenging to find time for collaborating or sharing good teaching practices.
3. Differentiation in teaching and assessment is needed as we build our inclusive culture.
4. The logistics of the administration of the placement tests needs to be streamlined.

Plans and Priorities

1. We hope for a revised world language scheduling and potentially structured online resources so that our students can have a continuous language exposure without long gaps.
2. Starting in fall 2021, we will use a shared document with our schedules and planning periods, in hopes of a more streamlined process for teachers' coordination and observation.

3. We are committed to fostering a purposeful learning culture by guiding different learners to set tangible goals, connect with native speakers, and explore their interest in their target language.
4. We will prioritize streamlining of the placement testing process.
5. In addition to CCFLT, we would love to also explore other opportunities (world language and educational technology) for professional development and personal growth.

Prepared by Yun Chen, World Languages Department Chair; Amy VonCanon, High School Faculty; Ana Fonseca, High School Faculty; Katie Wood, High School Faculty; Diana Capaldi, High School Faculty; Kelly Gibbs, High School Faculty

Technology Overview

SMA values and invests in various forms of technology on campus because it's proven to enhance student learning and parent engagement. The IT Department makes every effort to provide the most effective educational technology available, in alignment with broader academy goals and objectives. SMA recognizes the mere *presence* of effective technology on campus is not enough to satisfy the high-level strategic academic goals of the institution. The Department therefore leads the effort to provide ongoing faculty professional development in technology integration, helping faculty leverage the available technology as part of their standard classroom experience.

On a practical level, the IT Department pursues technology tools and services according to the following criteria:

1. Affordable.
2. Accessible.
3. Reliable.

In other words, any SMA technology must be affordable, accessible, and reliable, strictly in that order. Affordability is measured both in the short term, for example in the form of a fixed cost, and also over the long haul as it impacts the larger financial sustainability of the Academy.

Affordable technology must also be accessible, from both a physical and virtual perspective. If a particular classroom projector produces an exceptionally brilliant display, but faculty and students cannot connect to it because it requires a specific and expensive adapter, that technology is not accessible and therefore is not a good fit for our environment.

Finally, technology tools and services must be extremely reliable, for very practical reasons. No one enjoys using inconsistent tools of any kind, and faculty will quickly abandon any technology that is not highly reliable, for good reason. Managing inquisitive and energetic students *without* the distraction of unreliable technology is challenging enough as it is. At all times (ideally), classroom technology should enhance student engagement and not detract from it.

Strengths

1. The SMA wired and wireless network contains modern technologies including proactive cyber security measures and training, modular SIS, and authentic buy-in for a PK-12 Learning Management System.
2. The SMA IT team is stable and contains diverse varied backgrounds. The team works very well together and embraces new ideas and challenges.
3. SMA IT has successfully deployed an innovative year-long instructional technology professional development approach.
4. The IT Department is adequately funded to provide modern equipment in faculty and student hands.

Challenges

1. To protect the Academy from a cyber-attack, both internal and external in nature.
2. Technical experience and expertise is concentrated at the top (CTO level), with notable knowledge and experience gaps among other department members.
3. Communicating essential elements and expectations with the entire community during ongoing and new technology initiatives.
4. Defining and evolving appropriate roles and responsibility for the increased scope of technology use on campus.

Plans and Priorities

1. Continue to integrate school databases.
2. Planned strategic wireless upgrade during the summer of 2022.
3. Develop and curate (on an ongoing basis) Information hub (e.g., intranet website) for technology news, expectations, and updates.
4. Continue to support teacher comfort and confidence with technology integration.

Prepared by Peter Estacio, Chief Technology Officer; Victoria Nunez, Director of Data; Kathy Shei, System Administrator; Troy Novak, IT Support Specialist

Library/Media Centers

Overview

St Mary's Academy Library and Media Centers provide information services, curriculum support, collaboration, and research assistance to our academic community. Our positions and facilities are integral to academic achievement, and essential to fostering a lifelong love of learning. All divisions are currently staffed by librarians who also teach other subjects.

Strengths

1. Connecting the community to resources and curating diverse and inclusive collections
2. Collaboration with faculty to enrich content, increase database usage and integrate technology
3. Creating a culture of readers, developing a lifelong love of reading, igniting curiosity, and developing empathy through programs and collections.

4. Work in Digital Citizenship and research, instruction on locating, evaluating, and using information ethically and effectively, provision of resources and support to understand technology's global impacts and empower all students to be safe online, acting as digital leaders today and in the future.
5. Design Thinking and Making: Facilitate Problem Based Learning and the Design Thinking Process to make prototypes that affect positive social change.

Challenges

1. Assessment and curation of digital databases and resources ideal for all divisions.
2. Communicating and advocating for our currently available resources and services.
3. Continuity of programs and processes between librarians, instructional tech, and IT.
4. Increase the integration of the Design Thinking Process and Making across all divisions.

Plans and Priorities

1. Collection Management: continual audit and investigation of print and digital collections to procure diverse, relevant, and useful materials for all divisions.
2. Through passive and active programming, share and promote print and digital databases and resources.
3. Reinstate a cross-divisional technology committee to increase transparency and plan continuity of objectives.
4. Implement Design Thinking Process scope and sequence and make it accessible to teachers through professional development and increased communication.

Prepared by Kristen Ferguson, High School Library; Geoff McVie, Middle School Library; Jen Colmenero, Middle School Librarian; and Missy McConnell, Lower School Library

Performing Arts

Overview

The Performing Arts Department provides St. Mary's Academy students, PK-12, developmentally appropriate, yet challenging experiences, based on the Colorado State Standards for Music and Theatre Education and our Loretto School Values of faith, community, justice, and respect. Opportunities include classes in Guitar, Choir, Musical Theatre, Drama, Band, Music Theory, and Orchestra. We provide extra-curricular opportunities that include All-State ensembles, community mentorships, the Thespian Convention and competitions, private after-school lessons, the After-School Theatre programs (Lower School and High School), and encouragement of portfolio development. Our diversified Performing Arts curriculum includes the use of the Orff Instrument Instruction, Kodaly Instruction, and AP Music Theory and Stanislavsky and Meisner Techniques, as well as Standard Dramatic Literature and Technical Theatre Skills Building.

Strengths

1. The Performing Arts Department retains highly skilled and compassionate educators who perform professionally in their areas of expertise.
2. Recognizing the strengths of all students, the Performing Arts Department excels in addressing individual learning styles and each pupil's unique background.
3. Small class sizes enable our Performing Arts instructors to focus on developing the whole child through collaboration, communication, creativity, and problem-solving.
4. The Performing Arts Department curriculum endeavors to incorporate the histories, texts, values, beliefs, and perspectives of people from different backgrounds.

Note: Added by new Lower School Music Teacher Jack McHugh

1. Music is offered in a dedicated and beautiful space where students are encouraged to sample the abundance of instruments and resources available to them. Students' natural curiosity and passions mixed with these resources yields a fun and vibrant environment built on exploration and discovery. Scheduling allows for all students to visit the classroom on multiple occasions weekly, building their fluency and familiarity with the musical language, resources, and facilities.
2. The music curriculum strives to supplement academic standards as an extension of the homeroom. Students develop math, literacy, and verbal skills seamlessly through musical performance and composition. Critical analysis, global cultural awareness and social/emotional development are fundamental components of the class and curriculum. Additionally, repertoire selections and performances often correlate to the scope and sequence of the homeroom and classwork.
3. Performance is built into the DNA of the Lower School. Faculty, students, and parents gather nearly each week to congregate as a community and reflect on various themes throughout the year. It is the department's goal to include multiple musical selections at each assembly in solo, group and communal music making.
4. St. Mary's Academy offers many opportunities for students to engage with music in both the general music classroom and beyond. Performing arts extension classes in guitar and music technology are included during the school day in 5th Grade, and students in upper grades are invited to participate in choir, orchestra, and band before or after school. Additional select ensembles and theatrical groups round out the performing arts offerings, and many students take advantage of the talented SMA performing arts faculty in private applied lessons.

Challenges

1. There is no dedicated department chair from within the teaching team. Currently the Academy President serves as the 'de facto' department chair. Having someone within the department would foster consistency within and provide

encouragement to the department in support of initiatives (for e.g. curriculum mapping).

2. Having more program options, both before and after school, would be helpful in building a stronger program. Staff schedules and students' ability to attend before or after school programming are limitations.
3. The team feels the program is not afforded the same level of status as other academic classes and athletics.
4. Space is limited in terms of providing the support of the current staff, and the flexibility, depth and program the team would like to deliver.

Note: Added by new Lower School Music Teacher, Jack McHugh

1. Cross-divisional communication across the performing arts department can be improved. Schedules and individual specialties often silo faculty, and curriculum is devised at the divisional level.
2. General music instruments are in mixed states of quality and quantity. Additional instruments can provide a 1:1 ratio for each class, and update aging inventory.
3. Performances are currently limited within the assembly schedule, semesterly concerts and biennial musicals. Emphasis should be placed on finding new forums for vocal, instrumental, and extra-musical performances.

Plans and Priorities

1. Develop a process to appoint a Department Chair in support of hiring, scheduling, professional development, facility use, curriculum design, and overall support and encouragement of the team.
2. Consider ways to support students' ability to attend before or after school programming via bus transportation, parent volunteers, etc.
3. As the School reviews its Campus Master Plan as part of the Strategic Planning process, consider additional space to support the needs of the program. In prior discussions, there was talk of building a Fine Arts building.

Note: Added by new Lower School Music Teacher Jack McHugh

1. Strengthen cross-divisional work to ensure that the Lower School curriculum continues into Middle and High Schools. Develop academy-wide scope and sequence informed by the Colorado and National music standards.
2. Budget and prioritize instruments for acquisition and repair over a multi-year period.
3. Create new and different opportunities within the school to showcase student talents, both musical and other performing arts.

Prepared by Roberta Hamilton-Griggs, Cross Divisional Fine Arts; Jennie Turnbull, Middle School Orchestra; Geoff McVie, Middle School Instructional Technology and

Music; Rick Nelson, Cross Divisional Music; Jack McHugh, Lower School Music Teacher; Bill Barrett, Academy President

Visual Arts Department K-12

Overview

The Visual Arts Department offers a variety of classes across disciplines spanning all three divisions, from Kindergarten through twelfth grade. In the Lower and Middle School settings, classes are survey-centered, offering students exposure to a wide range of media and aesthetic approaches. All skills are built upon each year through scope and sequence. Mediums include drawing, painting, collage, sculpture, printmaking, fibers, and use of technology, such as stop motion, green screen and architectural floor planner. At the High School, classes are specialized, with beginning and advanced coursework offered in ceramics, metalworks, works on paper (drawing/painting/printmaking), photography and digital media. We have built a strong curriculum that provides students with a developmentally appropriate, challenging, and cohesive arts experience throughout their years at SMA.

Strengths

1. Our Visual Arts Department faculty are all professional working artists as well as educators, providing our students with instruction informed by professional creative practice brought into the classroom and enriching the curriculum.
2. Building on this strength, students across all divisions also benefit from a Visiting Artist Program, in which regionally recognized artists connect with students in a lecture and/or workshop setting.
3. Students have the opportunity to exhibit their work across divisions and in the community: in the Community Center Gallery, the Coyle Gallery, within the President's Collection, and in local shops and galleries in the Denver-metro area. Students also participate in nationally recognized programs and competitions including the Scholastic Art and Writing Competition, The National Art Honors Society, The Empty Bowls Project, and Doodle for Google Competition.
4. The Visual Arts Department fosters inquiry-driven, critical thinking across divisions.
5. The investigation of social and environmental justice issues through the lens of fine arts, both in the study of contemporary artists and student exploration in their own work, is foundational to the curriculum.

Challenges

1. In the High School and Middle School, visiting prospective students often overwhelm classroom numbers.
2. Implementation of STEAM and PBL pedagogy in the High School curriculum has been slow in recent years due to outdated facilities and logistical challenges due to COVID-19.
3. Lack of dedicated space, equipment, and materials make it challenging to effectively teach the full Middle School 3-D Design curriculum.
4. The Middle School lack of pre-requisites negatively impacts scope and sequence best practices. Art courses and assignments have become more generalized and

repetitive due to the inability to group or teach by skill level. It is common for students to repeat the same coursework 4-6 times throughout their middle school experience. Foundational courses would be more effective for sixth graders with optional electives being reserved for older students as they develop the fundamental skills over time.

5. In the Lower School, the 30-minute art class time is not enough time to effectively teach, delve into intentional work time, and clean up. Students often express stress or frustration when having to transition.

Plans and Priorities

1. In the High School, we will work with the Admissions Office to limit the number of visiting students per class per day.
2. In the High School, there is a STEAM committee working with Administration and Advancement on a renovation of art and photography studios, maker space studios, and the robotics lab, to fully integrate these facilities.
3. We need to identify a permanent location for Middle School 3D Design that is not a shared space.
4. We will create course requirements for the Middle School that ensure all students experience a scope-and-sequence curriculum in the visual arts.
5. Upper elementary art classes will coordinate with upper-elementary Spanish to allow extended class time to one hour. The Visual Art Department will continue to work with the Lower School Administration to explore other scheduling innovations to allow younger students hour-long art classes as well.

Prepared by Andrew Beckham, Visual Arts Department Chair; Jamie Sniegowski, High School Art Teacher; Jason Jung, Middle School Art and Design Teacher; Kelly Mansfield, Lower School Art Teacher

Physical Education

Overview

Physical Education aims to develop physically literate individuals with the knowledge, skills, fitness, and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of physical activity within a safe environment. Students participate in cooperative and competitive games. Character education and team-building activities encourage all students to engage in problem-solving, risk-taking, and leadership opportunities. The Lower School program emphasizes motor and manipulative skill development and safety awareness. The Middle School program emphasizes teamwork, fair play and game strategies. The High School program emphasizes exploring new challenges and introduces students to multiple lifelong activities.

Strengths

1. Classes are designed with reference to the Colorado Academic Standards and National Standards in Physical Education and Dance.
2. Instructors use their expertise across the curriculum and professional development opportunities are shared with colleagues.
3. Physical Education department meetings take place regularly.

4. Facilities and equipment allow instructors to offer a wide variety of physical activities to all grade levels.

Challenges

1. Scheduling cross-divisional Physical Education classes and Middle School sports for each division to prevent overcrowded facilities and suitable space is necessary.
2. There is a need to create flexible and unique lesson plans to work around class numbers, environment, class length, and various levels of skill development.
3. It remains important to encourage students to exhibit responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others in physical activity settings.
4. We need to be connected with each division regularly.

Plans and Priorities

1. Scheduling Middle School sports at a different time than Middle School physical education classes would help alleviate overcrowding of indoor facilities.
2. We will review Colorado State Academic Standards, curriculum mapping, and lesson plans.
3. PE teachers will continue to communicate with homeroom teachers to reinforce grade-appropriate discipline strategies and cross-curricular learning.
4. PE teacher schedules should coincide with Specials teacher schedules so that PE teachers are available to attend Specials meetings.

Prepared by Jason Green, Physical Education teacher; Lou Tocco, Physical Education teacher; and Kelli Logan, High School Athletics Director

Pre-Kindergarten Program

Overview

The philosophy of St. Mary's Academy Pre-K is to value each individual child's needs in a holistically safe environment that strives to academically challenge, develop social and emotional skills, and foster a love of learning. We are deeply rooted in the spirituality of the Loretto School Values of faith, community, justice, and respect. It is our mission to build a classroom community with a climate of belonging for families that value cultural differences, parent-teacher collaboration, and the ingenuity of every child.

Strengths

1. SMA provides a nurturing environment where students are individually supported to be inventive, creative, and open-minded thinkers. Teachers incorporate social-emotional learning, model empathy, and invite collaboration in the classroom. We follow the Loretto School Values of faith, community, justice, and respect to develop well-rounded citizens.
2. We provide a rich learning environment that differentiates for all students' needs through small groups, opportunities for play, and exploration through interest areas. Our value-based education and program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, and reasoning.

3. We use the research-based Creative Curriculum to holistically engage students through project-based learning, field trips, and experiential opportunities.
4. Family communication is nurtured through various mediums, such as newsletters, events, family visits, emails, and Kaymbu, in order to build community, relay information, and provide care and support for each child.

Challenges

1. We do not have accessible technology in our classrooms for printing materials.
2. The absence of an onsite language pathologist provides a challenge with support and accommodations for children with speech development.
3. We must work to retain faculty for longer periods of time as we have experienced substantial turnover the last few years.

Plans and Priorities

1. With the help of accessible technology in our classrooms, which would include a printer, we could maximize our time with the children and maintain ratios.
2. SMA will examine the possibility of including an on-campus speech pathologist.
3. We will seek to hire experienced ECE teachers with a commitment to the grade level.

By St. Mary's Academy Pre-Kindergarten Team: Johnnie Romano, Cam Monroe Pagel, Julie Farrell, Mady Fricke, and Michael Kenny

Lower School Religion

Overview

The Theology curriculum is based on our Loretto School Values of faith, community, justice, and respect. We are a Catholic school; however, we have a diverse community of all faiths. Students are taught Catholic traditions by participating in masses, prayer services and daily prayer.

Strengths

1. Our Lower School buddy system allows younger students to pair with older ones. In these configurations, students attend Mass and participate in activities that are based on the four Loretto School Values and other Catholic traditions.
2. Students participate in monthly service projects which are guided by our Loretto School Values.
3. Fifth graders participate in the Catholic mass for fifth-grade students each spring. This is sponsored by the Archdiocese and students prepare and learn about the structure of a Catholic Mass.
4. Students are taught religious lessons each week that are based upon our values and major Catholic traditions.

Challenges

1. We do not have a cohesive curriculum or scope and sequence that is used by all grades.
2. There is minimal professional development for teachers on religious instruction.

3. The Lower School does not have a set time for religious instruction each week.
4. It is difficult to balance our Catholic traditions with our students of different faith backgrounds.

Plans and Priorities

1. We will investigate and create a scope and sequence for K-5th grades.
2. We will identify opportunities for teachers to understand curriculum and expectations.
3. We will add a set time to religious instruction to be led by our campus minister.
4. We will look to incorporate the traditions and customs of different faith backgrounds into our curriculum.

Prepared by Amber McGown, Kindergarten teacher; Liz Goforth, fourth grade teacher; Heather Gordon, High School Theology and Campus Minister

Middle School Religion and Values

Overview

In religious studies, the rich history and biblical traditions of Catholicism serve as a curricular grounding within which students are encouraged to develop and reflect on their personal faith journeys. Prayer, reflection, and the study of traditions from a variety of religious faiths animate the courses. Students are encouraged to seek an understanding of their part in the greater whole. The curriculum is anchored in our Loretto School Values of Faith, Community, Justice, and Respect.

Strengths

1. We provide a compassionate approach to include others and their belief systems and foster an appreciation and understanding of interfaith perspectives.
2. We promote social justice, human dignity, and stewardship that stems from the Catholic tradition of our Loretto School Values.
3. We introduce global perspectives through an intersection of faith, culture, and identity.
4. We bring purposeful interfaith dialogue and project-based action that encourages student leadership and advocacy for the rights of all.

Challenges

1. There is limited time to meet and work together to collaborate in order to create a cohesive curriculum within the Middle School; it is difficult to find dedicated and qualified teachers given the current Middle School curriculum model.
2. Right now, there is no cohesive K-8 curriculum across divisions.
3. There is a lack of current materials that reflect the unique demographic of our Middle School students.
4. We continue to struggle with how to reconcile our Catholic sacramentality with our interfaith community.
5. Given that almost half our grade six class is new, transitioning those students into the curriculum is difficult.

Plans and Priorities

1. We will work with the Campus Minister, our Loretto Sister, Administration, and previous religion teachers to create a scope and sequence for the Middle School.
2. We will engage with other Loretto Schools, other Catholic schools, and other independent schools to determine what they are doing and ensure that our program is relevant and current.
3. We will continue to research current materials in order to build a program that meets our unique faith community's needs.
4. We will continue to engage in conversations with our Administration and Board members to articulate what our Catholic heritage means to us today.
5. As we develop our scope and sequence, we will simultaneously identify the foundational knowledge that we believe all students need to have in order to engage with the spiritual experience within the Middle School.

Prepared by Christina Garcia, Middle School teacher and Director of Loretto Projects; Andy Rodgers, Middle School teacher; and Tiffany Drees, Middle School Principal

High School Theological Studies Department

Overview

As an independent school in the Catholic tradition, the curriculum reflects a broad range of topics for students to study within a framework that includes essential elements of Catholic teaching set out by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Strengths

1. We encourage openness to inclusive connections between religions.
2. We have an approved curriculum by the archdiocese that flows from Theological Studies 1 to Theological Studies 4 building upon the foundations of Catholic teaching.
3. We work to continually develop the student's religious literacy in all of our classes, especially in world religions as an interdisciplinary course.
4. We provide students opportunities to explore and express their spirituality both in the classroom and campus wide.

Challenges

1. The Religion department currently lacks choices for students to select additional courses outside of the four mandated theological studies classes because of graduation requirements.
2. We serve a large number of students who come from various religious and non-religious schools. As a result, students come with various religious starting points.
3. We face the challenge of explaining why religious literacy and spiritual life are relevant.

Plans and Priorities

1. We would like to continue to develop and strengthen student's religious literacy starting with the Judeo-Christian tradition so they are better prepared for interfaith dialogue.

2. We will continue to expand our interdisciplinary work.
3. We will contribute to the school-wide effort of promoting global citizenship and continue to demonstrate how religious literacy allows us to have a deeper dialogue.

Prepared by Debbie Horning, Theological Studies Department Chair; Heather Gordon, Campus Minister; Michael Lantagne, High School Faculty

High School and Middle School Athletics

Overview

High School Overview: SMA Athletics has a strong history of providing educational athletics founded on the Loretto School Values of faith, community, justice, and respect. Student-athletes develop leadership skills while experiencing personal growth in a competitive athletic learning environment. Priority is placed on fostering a culture of acceptance, self-advocacy, and healthy competition. The program is integral and connected to the holistic experience of each student, building a sense of community and pride. SMA athletic participation challenges students to be empowered, successful young women and active participants in the overall life of the school.

Middle School Overview: Interscholastic athletics are an extension of the classroom and an integral part of the educational process. Athletics provide not only an avenue for the development of athletic skills but for the development of the total person. The goal is to promote values and teach life skills such as integrity, leadership, perseverance, and teamwork. Inherent in this experience are the Loretto school values of Faith, Community, Justice, and Respect.

Strengths

1. We foster campus wide connections by speaking with current and prospective students and families.
2. We promote Wildcat PRIDE by organizing various special events and provide awards/gifts to student-athletes.
3. Create a unified space for coaches, families, and student athletes to communicate and connect.
4. Maximize student experience with resources and facilities we have available.

Challenges

1. Hiring coaches with a high level of expertise and offering competitive salaries who are available during our practice and game times (for e.g. the Middle School practices during the school day).
2. Quality and quantity of athletic facilities (weight room, training room, turf, grass, off-campus).
3. Department downsizing from 3 full time employees to 2 - how to manage responsibilities and priorities without the quality diminishing.
4. We are not consistently included in conversations that directly impact our department (Software Management Systems, Building Security, Scheduling Meetings, etc.)

5. MIDDLE SCHOOL SPECIFIC - From a sports perspective, not having boys in high school sports makes it challenging to retain athletes from our Lower School to Middle School.

Plans and Priorities

1. We will utilize search engines and athletic community organizations to hire high level coaches. We will incentivize coaches that make it to the postseason.
2. We will continue to update/add equipment in each sports program and purchase new uniforms with the budget we are given. We will optimize the space we have in order to offer a quality experience.
3. We will communicate our needs and collaborate/delegate tasks as needed.
4. When included in discussions that impact the community (specifically athletics) we will be thorough, collaborative, and participatory in the conversation.
5. MIDDLE SCHOOL SPECIFIC - We will create a boys feeder program in the Lower School and bring in high school boys from the greater community, including SMA graduates.

Prepared by Sara Knetemann, Middle School Athletic Director; Dr. Kelli Logan, Athletic Director

Lower School Service-Learning Program

Overview

The Lower School's Service-Learning Program is designed to help students understand their ability to make a difference in peoples' lives. It serves to reinforce our commitment to recognizing real-world problems, discovering ways they can make a difference, and be a part of the solutions. Students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 5 participate in collection drives, assemblies, and work with individual non-profit organizations. Each class adopts an organization each month and spearheads the outreach to families in our community to provide necessary items, time, or money. Some examples of organizations we have worked with include Filters of Hope, Clothes for Kids, and Judis' House. Service-learning in the lower school is not a stand-alone program, but an integral part of teaching young people to be stewards of the global community and people that can enact change.

Strengths

1. Each grade has an opportunity to adopt an organization, integrate it into their daily curriculum, and present it to the community.
2. Our non-profit organizations change from year to year depending on the need in the community at the time.
3. Through presentations, assemblies, and off-campus activities, students are able to practice their problem-solving strategies, presentation skills and see how their actions impact others in real-time.
4. Our service-learning program embodies our Loretto values and aligns with our Portrait of a Graduate statement.

Challenges

1. We often lack the time in our schedule to get students off campus to participate in service-learning projects.
2. It is difficult to find organizations that are appropriate for younger students to visit.
3. We do not bring in many speakers or organizations into our building which would allow more students to hear different voices and perspectives.

Priorities

1. We need to incorporate a service-learning project trip into our schedules at the beginning of the year just as we schedule our regular field trips and experiences.
2. We must remain committed to finding opportunities and organizations that younger children can safely visit and volunteer.
3. We need to investigate and perhaps allot funding towards bringing in guest speakers and representatives from outside organizations.

Prepared by Karen Smith, Lower School Principal

Middle School Service-Learning

Overview

Service-learning is a vital part of the Middle School curriculum and provides opportunities for students to put their learning and understanding of our Loretto School Values into action. The majority of service-learning opportunities in the Middle School occur with the Advisory Program. Advisory groups are referred to as CATs or Community Action Teams. The structure of the advisory group is designed so that members of each CAT work together to determine their own service-learning projects that support our Loretto School Values. At times, a grade level will work together to support a common service-learning project. Students play an active role in seeking out, organizing, and communicating the details of the project to the rest of the division. Frequently the projects serve as an extension to a unit being taught within a required course. Additionally, there are dedicated days within the school year for grade levels to use to plan service-learning activities.

Strengths

1. The Middle School has strong, long-standing relationships with a variety of not-for-profit organizations within the community that welcome our students' time and energy.
2. Faculty are committed to providing robust service-learning opportunities and view them as necessary elements of a full-child education.
3. The Loretto School Values provide both the inspiration and accountability for the continued development of these opportunities.

Challenges

1. On average, there are 15-18 different CAT (advisory) groups each year. It is challenging for each advisory to organize their own projects given the details and the schedule.
2. Many organizations' volunteer policies have changed due to COVID, and our unvaccinated students are no longer able to participate in all programs.
3. There is no standard reflection process built into the service-learning program so students may or may not have the opportunity to glean important insight and wisdom from their experience.

Plans and Priorities

1. Consider replicating the High School's service-learning model in which one faculty member oversees the details and helps facilitate relationships with community organizations.
2. Continue to seek out new service-learning opportunities and work with SMA families who might have access to or knowledge of organizations that are better suited to our Middle School population.
3. Work with grade-level team leads and students to develop a reflection process that provides opportunities for students to internalize their learning and build on acquired skills and knowledge.

Prepared by: Tiffany Drees, Middle School Principal

High School Service-Learning Program

Overview

The Service Program at St. Mary's Academy is grounded in our Loretto tradition and puts the Loretto School Values of faith, community, justice, and respect into action. Service provides students an opportunity to begin fulfilling the commitment to love, to learn from those they serve, and to discover their ability to make a difference.

Service is a vital component of St. Mary's Academy, so even simple collection drives become lessons in compassionate living. The breadth of service at St. Mary's Academy helps shape appreciation of how each individual contributes to the balance of our global society. The scope of service opportunities and requirements increases as students progress through the grades.

High School students are to complete 100 service hours for SMA's graduation requirement. Experiences and lessons learned during community service are integrated throughout the school day in curriculum, discussions, and activities, as well as High School service days, and fundraisers. Multiple clubs integrate community service, providing the bridge necessary to move away from the "requirement" mentality to a mindset focused on building a community of agents of change.

Strengths

1. Each grade has a tailored curriculum focused on reflection and processing the social issues their service addresses.
2. Service placements are student driven. The variety of potential service placements and partnerships allows students to find an organization that best fits their interests and talents. We average 120 different service sites every year. Students are provided an approved site list and can also propose a new organization to the Director of Service Learning.
3. Most students exceed the required hours, often becoming board members and junior leaders at their respective service organizations.
4. Service is not just a graduation requirement, but instead is very much a part of who we are. It is such a strength that it manifests itself through all school service days, service trips, fundraisers, collection drives, and various clubs.
5. We have a dedicated employee who is the Director of Service Learning. This assures someone is always focusing on the service program, and how to best integrate it to achieve its maximum potential.

Challenges

1. Students are exceptionally busy, so it can be difficult to find room in their daily schedules when they can complete their service hours.
2. Scheduling Junior Service-Learning Seminars during the school day, second semester is challenging at times.
3. We sometimes have a few students who just want to get the hours finished and are not interested in the larger purpose behind service.

Plans and Priorities

1. We will continue to advocate and recommend students complete their hours during the summer break.
2. Junior Seminars could be integrated into the students' schedules, just like any other class. An alternative could be to train Junior advisors to run seminars, eliminating the scheduling concerns altogether.
3. We will strive to educate students and their parents on the importance of service. This starts at the beginning with admissions communicating it as an integral component of our school and continues throughout the school year.

Prepared by Amber Summers, Director of Service Learning; Iswari Natarajan, High School Principal

Middle School Advisory Program

Overview

The Middle School Advisory Program is developed around small, grade-level groups called CATs. The term CAT stands for Community Action Team and represents the large role that service-learning plays in this program. Each CAT consists of 10-14 students and is led by a Middle School faculty member. Given the lack of gender balance in the Middle School, some CATs are co-ed while others are all-girls. These groups meet four to five times per week for a half-hour at a time to either participate in advisory-like

activities or office hours support. This year (and in previous years) specific programming is largely left up to the grade-level team and is based on the needs of the students. For example, grade six CATs focus a lot on what it means to be a middle school student, how to navigate shifting social circles, what it means to advocate for oneself, and more. In comparison, grade eight CATs spend time preparing for the transition into high school, navigating greater independence, etc. These groups function as small families and provide a space for support, growth, and a lot of fun. Each CAT also chooses its own service-learning projects, which gives the students great opportunities to take on leadership roles as they establish relationships with community organizations and plan projects. CATs also work together to offer internal fund-raising and collection/donation projects. This year, the Middle School partnered with Valor Collegiate Schools in Nashville, TN to bring their Compass Program to our community. This program will run during and alongside our CAT program and guarantee that students have intentional and systematic ways to build and practice their social and emotional skills.

Strengths

1. Students and their parents and caregivers benefit from having a single advocate and resource (CAT advisor) each year.
2. The CAT groups provide a sense of safety and belonging.
3. Teachers are very engaged with their CAT groups and eager to plan service-learning opportunities.
4. The new structure of the Compass program will provide content and structure for intentional social-emotional skill-building.

Challenges

1. The CAT program has gone through a variety of revisions and as such, there is no standard onboarding process to train new CAT advisors.
2. Given that each grade level has historically set its own goals and priorities, there is no scope and sequence that ensures consistency or continuity.
3. It is a lot of work for each CAT advisor to research and plan multiple service-learning experiences over the course of the year. As a result of the pandemic, students have not had typical social experiences when they would have learned how to navigate social dynamics for almost two years; students are coming into the Middle School struggling to connect with each other in new and unpredictable ways.
4. The current political climate has made it even more challenging to address and teach typical social-emotional topics that involve identity.

Plans and Priorities

1. Continue to invest in and focus on the Compass Program. As a three-year, all-division program, it will fill in many of the existing holes and provide both curriculum and methods for all faculty to follow.
2. Work with current grade-level team leads, our school counselor, and administration to identify topics and skills that should be addressed each year, at each grade level.

3. Consider implementing a similar service-learning model as the high school in which one person oversees and facilitates relationships with community organizations and plans for service-learning “days.”
4. Continue to provide faculty training and practice related to civil discourse and other classroom methodology that fosters critical thinking and Socratic seminar skills.

Prepared by Tiffany Drees, Middle School Principal

High School Advisory Program

Overview

Beginning in 2018-2019, our school began to implement a more focused curriculum for our advisory program. Each grade level has specific components to meet the needs of that age group as well as programming in four key areas: Wellness, College/Career Counseling, Service Learning, and our Loretto history and tradition. For Wellness, our Guidance Counselor and Wellness Coordinator develops programming to improve our students' Mental Fitness. In our College/Career Counseling programming, we develop programming to meet students where they are at, providing 9th-graders learning style study skills, journaling, and self-inventories to full time support of our seniors with all elements of the college application process and pointed guidance in between. In our Service-Learning programming, our Director of Service Learning helps students to understand the importance of service for the community and for oneself and provides opportunities for students to explore the ideas through different projects. Finally, as a Loretto school we educate our students on our Loretto School Values of faith, community, justice, and respect.

Strengths

1. The intentional programming helps each grade level enhance their knowledge, skills and sense of self.
2. It is a well-organized program so all advisors know what they will be doing during advisory to ensure that the programming is being implemented.
3. Our advisory groups are small with an average of 8-14 students depending on grade level to really allow an advisor to get to know their advisees and provide them support throughout all aspects of school life.

Challenges

1. Developing consistent expectations for advisors to ensure the programming is being implemented in the same fashion no matter the advisory group poses a challenge.
2. Balancing the time we have in advisory for the advisory groups to get to know each other and bond and to implement key curriculum needs to enhance our school environment is sometimes difficult.

Plans and Priorities

1. We are working on providing more direction to each grade level's lead advisor so the grade level specific programming is more consistent across the board.

2. We are prioritizing finding a balance between the number of curriculum days and student bonding time on the school calendar.
3. We hope to integrate our newly developed Sources of Strength programming more intentionally into our advisory curriculum.

Prepared by Pamela Applegate, Assistant Principal; Rosemary Rehmer, 9th Grade Lead Advisor; Christine Boss, 10th Grade Lead Advisor; Latricia Davis, 11th Grade Lead Advisor; Anne Evans, 12th Grade Lead Advisor

College Counseling

Overview

Beginning in 2018-2019 when our current senior class was the incoming 9th-grade class, we prioritized developing a robust four-year college counseling program that starts in 9th-grade. We work with students in the 9th-grade as they begin learning about colleges and universities across the country, along with exploring their interests and skill inventories. This work continues throughout grades 10 and 11, becoming more intentional towards developing college lists that match with individual student needs and wants. Our team includes five college counselors, along with our assistant principal. The 13 to 1 counselor/student ratio is unmatched and provides students with tremendous opportunities for one-on-one time with their specific counselor along with anyone on the team. We have added more grade-specific college nights throughout the year, and we continue to focus on our communication with students and parents.

Strengths

1. Skills and interest exploration is purpose driven to help students match who they are with where they would like to attend college and what they would like to study.
2. The teamwork and cumulative knowledge of our college counselors provides our students with a great deal of support throughout the four-year process, and it also allows us to meet students where they are rather than creating blanket milestones and deadlines that might not be appropriate for all students in a specific grade level.
3. The size of our team and small student to counselor ratio allows us to know our students and to develop relationships with parents that create a partnership in the college counseling process.
4. We are able to schedule college representative visits on campus and virtually throughout the day, which allows approximately 120 to 140 college visits throughout the fall.
5. To ensure that our program is equitable and inclusive, we provide bilingual presentations and communication for our college nights, and we also schedule Spanish-only college information sessions.

Challenges

1. We need to continue to improve our knowledge of schools by major and by location.

2. We need to be able to provide more support with financial aid and outside scholarships applications.
3. We need to work on providing information to parents and students early on in the process regarding what they can count on from our program throughout the four years. This is especially important for parents who are going through the process for the first time.
4. We need to develop a more robust college counseling section on our school website.

Plans and Priorities

1. We will work as a team to establish a list of common majors and then share responsibility for becoming caretakers/experts for each major. We will also assign regions of the country to a specific counselor to oversee.
2. We will create and assign the role of financial aid and scholarship supervisor for the college counseling team.
3. In our 9th grade fall meetings, we will be more intentional in our messaging so that parents are more informed about what our program provides for them throughout the four years. We will also work to provide special events that are geared towards first-time parents to answer questions and ease concerns that outside assistance might be necessary.
4. We will work with our Director of Marketing to create a College Counseling page/section on the school website with all of our information and then they will work together to provide updates throughout the year.

Prepared by Phil Gentry, Director of College Counseling; Pamela Applegate, Assistant Principal; Michele Hayden, College Counselor; Amy VonCanon, College Counselor; Celia Bard, College Counselor; Anne Evans, College Counselor

Learning Services

Overview

St. Mary's Academy welcomes students with neurodiverse learning profiles. Our Lower School, Middle School, and all-girls High School provide learning services within a structure that is appropriate for the age and stage of student development. The Learning Services program supports students with diagnosed specific learning disabilities such as reading and math disorders, and a range of other learning differences and special needs, including giftedness, English Language Learning, and AD/HD. Our Loretto School Values of faith, community, justice, and respect guide the Learning Services program, helping to create a positive and accessible experience for all our students.

Strengths

1. Learning Services staff ensure a holistic understanding of students with neurodiverse learning profiles through a divisionally based team approach.
2. Our school and division size and close-knit community allow depth and breadth in our relationships and understanding of students and their families.
3. Learning Services staff foster close and positive relationships with families.

4. We articulate student needs, goals and support plans with families, and work with regular classroom teachers as they implement the plans.
5. Working on behalf of the children we serve, learning services staff maintain a dynamic web of communication among students and their parents, the principal, professional evaluators, contracted learning specialists, school counselors, and the faculty.
6. Learning Services staff create formal accommodation plans for students with a diagnosed learning disability and review the plans with educators.
7. Close collaboration between learning services staff and classroom teachers results in improvements to curricula and teaching methodology, benefitting all students.
8. Close coordination between Admissions, principals, and divisional learning services staff allows for the early identification of applicants with unique learning needs.

Challenges

1. Current staff levels in the Lower School constrain our ability to do in-house professional development for classroom teachers, “push-in” to core classes to provide student/faculty support, expand services to under-served populations, and enhance existing intervention and support programs.
2. SMA’s model for remediating reading and math disabilities relies heavily upon direct parent funding of contracted specialists working on-campus during the school day which results in significant equity issues.
3. The learning needs of various student populations are underserved, due to the combined impact of comparatively low learning services staff levels and difficulty accessing students within the current divisional schedules. Underserved populations include English Language Learners, Gifted/Talented students, students with math disabilities and/or significant math weaknesses, students with primary Executive Function weaknesses, and students who do not have a learning disability but exhibit significant academic struggle.

Plans and Priorities

1. We need to continually evaluate the need for support in all divisions. One additional learning specialist FTE was approved for the 2021-2022 academic year. There currently are two specialists in the lower school and two specialists in the middle school, and a learning specialist in the high school. Additional specialists may be needed in the future.
2. We plan to form a working group of learning services, admissions, and business office staff to consider financial aid allocations and divisional budgets in the context of the learning services equity concern.
3. Our team will reconsider student daily schedules within a framework of providing each student with dedicated time for their area of greatest need.
4. We will reconsider course offerings and faculty allocations within the context of the differentiated needs of students.

Prepared by BJ McDonald, Lower School Learning Specialist; Becky Hon, Lower School Learning Specialist; Laura Waldron, Assistant Middle School Principal; and Katie Stewart, High School Learning Specialist

Counseling Program

Overview

Our two school counselors provide comprehensive social, emotional, developmental, and psychological support to students PK-12th grade. Students are provided the support and guidance needed to help them work through personal, social, emotional, and developmental issues that impact their overall well-being and school success. Students can receive support individually, in small groups, and through classroom guidance and curriculum. The counseling team also refers students and families with on-going mental health challenges to providers in the community.

High School

Strengths

1. The High School has an established and collaborative network between the Principal, Assistant Principal, teachers, and counselor.
2. The counselor is accessible and available. There is an open-door policy for connecting with the counselor for students, parents, and faculty. Students are not required to "set an appointment" or limited to a scheduled block of time to connect with the counselor.
3. The trust and respect between the counselor, faculty, and high school principal are critical components of our practices that allow us to serve our students and families to the best of our ability, especially those who may be struggling.
4. We realize that mental fitness must be a priority, or it will fall to the wayside mostly because of the scarcity of time on a given day. We have worked hard to develop and implement an advisory program that intentionally builds in time for a variety of mental fitness type activities.
5. We are committed to the continued growth of our *Sources of Strength* program that we implemented in the fall of 2019. The program trains peer leaders and caring adults to impact their community through the power of connection with messages of hope, help, and strength.

Challenges

1. As the one counselor in the high school, the counselor wears a variety of hats. Balancing the different responsibilities and finding the time and resources to support our 270 students is a challenge.
2. The increased demands on schools, in general, for students and families' mental health support can be challenging to navigate and prioritize.

Plans and Priorities

1. The continued collaboration and consultation with LS/MS counselor is a priority. The mental wellness and social-emotional needs of students and families in the different divisions vary but having another mental health professional to collaborate and consult with strengthens our support academy wide.

2. Providing increased "personal touchpoints" with students and parents will allow for a sense of collaboration and connectedness with our support services.
3. Improve the visibility and access to our various support resources for families on the school website.

Lower and Middle School

Strengths

1. In the Lower School, the counselor, principal, and faculty have developed protocols for quickly and effectively supporting students' behavioral health needs.
2. The school counselor provides regular Second Step lessons to all students in the Lower School, to support the development of emotion regulation, situational awareness, and academic achievement. These lesson times allow the counselor to assess individual and group social-emotional needs, and to collaborate with teachers to address unique, age-specific peer situations as they arise.
3. In the Middle School, the counselor is a member of the team implementing the Sources of Strength program, which aims to prevent suicide by increasing help seeking behaviors and promoting connections between peers and caring adults.
4. The school counselor supports Middle School faculty who provide social-emotional lessons during the Community Action Team (CAT) advisory program and consults regularly with teachers who have concerns about how to meet the in-class behavioral health needs of individual students and small groups.

Challenges

1. The Lower and Middle School counselor's time is divided between the two divisions, which at times causes the counselor to be unavailable. Preparing and teaching Second Step lessons in the Lower School uses much of the counselor's time, leaving less time for individual or small group support.
2. The departure of a faculty member curtailed the Boys' Mentoring Program, which had been a critical resource to male students in the Lower School, and which provided an opportunity for Middle School boys to serve our community.
3. The social-emotional lessons used in the CAT Middle School advisory program are in need of development to more accurately reflect the complex emotional lives of young adolescents.
4. Recent community health, social, and political events have increased the stress and anxiety experienced by students, families, and faculty. The Counseling Support Services team will need to provide additional resources for parents, including materials on our website, and trauma-informed training for faculty.

Plans and Priorities

1. Greater communication between counselor, principals, and faculty has identified ways to use creative scheduling, referral to outside counselors, and strengths within each division (connection to faculty members, older students, etc.) to support students experiencing increased stress and anxiety.
2. Members of the Middle School faculty have committed to restart the Boys' Mentoring Program once it is safe to bring younger and older students together again, and the counselor will co-facilitate instruction for the mentors.

3. Our new Middle School principal has convened a committee to brainstorm and update the CAT social-emotional lessons, and we will work with World Leadership School to build on and strengthen our existing program.
4. The two counselors have worked together, and with the Academy President and division principals, to identify areas of greatest need, strategies to communicate with parents, and outside resources to support the emotional well-being of students.

Prepared by Carol LaRocque, Lower and Middle School Counselor; Julie May, High School Counselor

Governance and Administration

Board of Trustees and Academy President (Head of School)

Overview

The St. Mary's Academy Board of Trustees is currently made up of 21 members and includes parents, alumnae, past parents/friends of the school and two Sisters of Loretto and one Loretto co-member. One of the Sisters of Loretto is designated by the President of Loretto. The board is responsible for the long term financial and strategic viability of the school. The head of school is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school, including being in compliance with federal and state mandated regulations.

Board members are elected for a three-year term and can serve for three terms. The head of school is a non-voting ex officio member. The board currently meets eight times throughout the school year, including a full day retreat in January which includes the administrative team. The retreat gives the board and administration the opportunity to work together on current and future topics important for the school and to build strong relationships between the administration and the board.

The board operates with a committee structure and each board member serves on one or more committees. Each member can express an interest in which committees they would like to serve on, and the Board Chair appoints the committee chairs. The current committees are: Advancement, Buildings and Grounds, Finance/Endowment, Strategic Marketing and Enrollment and Trustees/Governance. These committees meet throughout the year and much of the work is accomplished by committee. Each committee is supported by a member of the Administrative team who works closely with the committee to gather the necessary information for the committee and board to make decisions. The committees report on their work at each board meeting and bring matters to the board that require discussion and approval by the full board. In addition, the officers of the board, who are elected each year by the full board, serve as the Executive Committee.

New board members are selected by the Trustees Committee in coordination with the Academy President and Board Chair and in accordance with the bylaws as to the makeup of the board. Potential board members are identified by members of the committee as well as by parents, staff, alumnae and current board members. The committee is

responsible for reviewing each potential candidate for character, alignment with the academy's mission, connection to the school, areas of expertise needed on the board and desire and time to serve. The committee chair or a member of the committee meets with the potential candidate, followed by a meeting with the Academy President and Board Chair. If all parties are satisfied with the candidate's qualifications and interest, the Trustees committee will submit the candidate's resume and letter of interest and make a recommendation to the full board for discussion and a vote for approval. New trustees are provided with materials and information as part of the on-boarding process and the full board is periodically provided with a review of their role as trustees as well as the role of the administrative team. Trustee self-evaluations are completed periodically.

Board/Head Relationship/Decisions

The board and the president work closely together to make significant decisions. These decisions often are the result of the work of our standing committees, which are brought to the full board for consideration. Agendas are set to allow adequate time for presentation of materials for thorough discussions prior to making final decisions. The committees and their supporting Administrative team members work together to develop the information needed to make informed decisions. The board has been willing to have additional meetings as well to address certain topics when needed.

Specific examples of decisions made by the board in the past year include, but are not limited to; setting tuition, approving the strategic plan, approve the operating budget and endowment draw, commit to the design process for the high school science labs renovation for the summer of 2022, extend the board chair's term for one additional year.

The Academy President and Board Chair meet regularly, and the Board Chair serves to support the President and act as a sounding board when needed. The Chair is available at all times as needed by the President. Together, the President and the Board Chair set the topics and agendas for the Board meetings and the retreat. The Board Chair and Academy President also attend committee meetings as schedules permit.

Head of School Performance Review

During the spring the president and board chair meet to discuss the progress made on the president's goals and priorities for that year, and the president shares that progress with the full board. As part of this process the board chair conducts a performance review of the president with input from the full board. The president and board chair then work together in the late spring and summer to develop goals for the following year. These goals and priorities are discussed with the full board at the August meeting, and progress on the goals is woven into the president's administrative report throughout the year. The president also shares his goals for the year with the full faculty and staff in August and updates the full faculty and staff on the progress of those goals in the spring.

Strengths

1. Highly engaged board committed to the mission and vision of the school.
2. Effective use of committees to support the work of the board.

3. Strong relationship between board and administration with open dialogue encouraged.

Challenges

1. Finding adequate time for board development and education.
2. Increasing board diversity and recruiting young alumnae.

Plans and Priorities

1. Complete update to 2018-2023 Strategic Plan, including Campus Master Plan and financial plan.
2. Enhance both new trustee orientation and ongoing board education and professional development.
3. Continue to engage the committees in support of the required strategic work.

Prepared by Jean Armstrong, Board Chair; Bill Barrett, Academy President

Long Range Strategic Planning Process

Overview

During the 2017-2018 academic year the school developed an updated Strategic Plan. The committee was led by a representative group of trustees, teachers and administrators. Ongoing reviews and feedback were received during the process from constituents outside the core group and included trustees, parents, employees, students, and alumnae. The committee examined SMA and national parent satisfaction surveys, reviewed current and future trends in education, researched local demographics and the Denver metro area competitive marketplace, among other endeavors. This work resulted in the completion of the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan.

Given the progress made on the plan, the resulting impact of the pandemic, and major SMA initiatives (for e.g., DEI work and the engagement with Independent School Management - ISM), the Strategic Marketing and Enrollment Committee (made up of trustees and administrators) embarked on an update to the current Strategic Plan, beginning in the first half of 2021. The team completed a thorough situation assessment, including competitive review, that resulted in the creation of six strategic platforms. The resulting conclusions, implications and strategic direction allow us to now develop tactics/initiatives for implementation over the next year or so.

The Strategic Plan is intended as an evergreen document that should be reviewed annually and updated as deemed appropriate. The school's intention, as we head into the spring of 2022, is to engage in a broader process with our community in support of developing the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan.

Strengths

1. The school has an experienced and engaged board and administrative team committed to the future success of SMA.

2. The 2018-2023 Strategic Plan was detailed, thorough and inclusive with respect to the process. It has and is serving us well.
3. The Strategic Marketing and Enrollment Committee has been working diligently for the past nine months moving the strategic planning process forward as we prepare to develop the 2023-2028 plan.

Challenges

1. It can be a challenge to find time for the Strategic Marketing and Enrollment Committee, and the others involved in developing the current update, to meet.
2. Given all of the information we've gathered to date in support of the update, we now have to decide how best to develop the next iteration of the Strategic Plan (2023-2028). For example, in what ways can we improve on our inclusive process? Should we contract with an educational consultant to support our efforts? What form will the next Strategic Plan take (i.e. a traditional five year plan or something different?)
3. There are a number of initiatives that require funding such that prioritizing the long-term vision of the School's program, and the facilities needed to support it are necessary.

Plans and Priorities

1. Continue the work on updating the current Strategic Plan and provide the resources necessary to complete the process.
2. Work with the board and administration to decide the ultimate format that will serve us best as we develop the next Strategic Plan.
3. Work with the board and administration to prioritize the funding needs in support of the Strategic Plan.

Prepared by Bill Barrett, Academy President; Jean Armstrong, Board Chair; Susan Lintonsmith, Chair, Strategic Marketing and Enrollment Committee

Administrative Structure

Overview

St. Mary's Academy has a dedicated and experienced administrative team. The entire team, with the exception of the director of loretto projects, has turned over in the past five years. The 2020-2021 school year was the first year the 'new' team was in place, although because of the pandemic we were not able to meet physically in the same space. This year then marks the first time we can more normally connect with each other in support of the school. The administrative team (see organizational chart) includes the following departments, and is overseen by the academy president:

Lower, Middle, and High School Principals; Director of Advancement; Chief Financial Officer; Director of Marketing and Communications; Chief Technology Officer; Director of Admissions; Director of Loretto Projects/School Historian.

The team meets every two weeks, and other times as needed. In person follow up conversations and regular emails also take place between team members daily. The team

meets for two days in August for a retreat, meets with the board for a one-day retreat in January, and meets again at the close of the school year for another retreat.

Depending on the decision(s) needed to be made, the team will meet as a full group to review priorities and make decisions. The team's goal is to support one another and push one another to do what is in the best interests of the school. At times, if the decision requires a subset of the team, those individuals will meet. Depending on the decision, the administrative team will work together to collaboratively decide, although at times the academy president will receive feedback from team members and 'lead from the front' when deciding if the group cannot reach consensus.

The team also engages faculty and staff as part of the larger process depending on the strategic initiative as faculty and staff input is very valuable and consistent with our school's culture.

Decisions are communicated in a variety of ways. Meetings with the full faculty and staff, communications via email with parents, administrative updates with the board of trustees, etc. are all part of how we might share the decisions the team makes.

Strengths

1. Team members have a high level of expertise, respect one another, and are well aligned with the School's mission, vision and values.
2. Team members are understanding of the need to have difficult conversations in support of the School, and to keep the details of those conversations 'in house' and thus support the team whether one agrees or disagrees with a particular decision.
3. The relative 'newness' of team members allows for a range of new ideas as we look to move the school forward.

Challenges

1. The team continues to need time to more fully get to know one another's leadership style, etc.
2. The team structure is 'flat' and at times can create confusion in terms of how decisions might be made where issues overlap between departments.
3. The flat organizational structure requires the Academy President to spend time overseeing a lot of work; the time to work through the number of conversations necessary to make decisions and implement them at times can be slower as a result.
4. Finding time to meet as much as we would sometimes like, or need is a challenge given everyone's priorities.

Plans and Priorities

1. The team needs to create more time to gel and more fully understand how each department functions given the change in personnel and the range of new ideas being implemented. We are mindful of honoring the institutional memory that

- has come before, and yet we feel a sense of urgency to continue to move the school forward given the competitive educational environment in the Denver area.
2. Review the current structure to assess whether a different hierarchy could provide additional support and enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the work being accomplished.
 3. Continue to work closely with the Board of Trustees in updating and implementing the Strategic Plan and other strategic initiatives.

Prepared by Bill Barrett, Academy President; Arthur Keown, CFO

Finance Overview

The board of trustees provides fiscal oversight for St. Mary's Academy through the Finance and Endowment Committee. The school's administration implements the policies set by the board and is responsible for the daily activities within the internal control structure. Additionally, the academy works with outside experts in institutional insurance, employment issues, benefits administration, retirement compliance and financial and legal compliance to ensure that policies and procedures are appropriate and conform to the current guidelines and regulations.

St. Mary's Academy has *Treasury Policies and Procedures* established by the board, which provide a framework for overall financial operations. A key tool in the process is the annual budget. The president and chief financial officer prepare the budget based upon the school's operation and resources needed to support a program of academic excellence. The budget process is collaborative and addresses the needs of various programs/groups within the school. Beginning in November with the development of the tuition setting budget and continuing throughout the year, the operating budget considers operating revenue, financial aid, employee headcount, compensation and benefits, institutional and operational expenses, annual inflation, planned capital expenses and programmatic needs. The Finance Committee is updated frequently and recommends approval of the budget to the board of trustees, which has the final responsibility for adoption. The budget is monitored monthly by the administration.

The Finance Committee, which is composed of board members, the academy president, advancement director, CFO, and outside professionals, reviews statistics and certain financial results quarterly (*monthly when necessary*). The academy has an annual opinion-level audit by an independent CPA firm and receives a management letter as a result of the firm's evaluation of internal controls, including segregation of duties. The results of the annual audit and management letter are presented to the Finance Committee annually by the firm; all recommendations and/or weaknesses identified in the letter are addressed by the academy. The academy has and continues to receive an unqualified opinion on the financial statements.

In addition to spending priorities, which can change annually, the academy has a long-term commitment to providing a strong financial aid program for families. The budget

allocation for financial aid has grown to be approximately 15% of gross tuition through the efforts of the board and administration.

The Endowment Committee, which is composed of the same members of the Finance Committee, is responsible for the oversight of the academy's endowment. Endowed funds are managed by a professional wealth management firm. The committee operates with established endowment (investment) and spending policies which are reviewed and, when necessary, updated annually. The committee meets at least four times during the year and reviews the performance of the funds as well as compliance with the established investment policies. Endowment spending recommendations are included as a part of the annual budgeting process and are presented to the board for approval annually.

St. Mary's Academy is fiscally strong and has the ability to meet future needs. Our endowment has grown over 220% from \$5.275mm to \$16.858mm over the past 10 years (2011-2021). The school's overall financial position has strengthened significantly over the same period as well, overall net assets have increased 123% from \$18.2mm to \$40.6mm. 74% of annual expenditures support our programs indicating that the school has a healthy balance between ensuring that funding is available to support our faculty delivering their curriculum balanced by the need to invest in and maintain our infrastructure and provide administrative support and to carry out our mission.

The Academy's Strategic Financial Plan is supported by the Finance and Endowment Committees and has established the following priorities:

1. To ensure that hard income (program revenue net of financial aid) is sufficient to cover the on-going operating expenses necessary for the academy to function at a level of excellence consistent with its mission.
2. Correspondingly, to ensure that operating expenses (including recurring capital maintenance) are constrained to a reasonable degree so as to fit within the hard income level of the academy while achieving the mission
3. To use soft-income from donations and fundraising events to:
 1. Support enrichment activities (to a modest degree)
 2. Achieve other key financial objectives (see below)
4. To maintain the level of financial aid availability necessary to keep the academy accessible to our community and to support enrollment objectives.
5. To pay-off the school's long-term debt without making sacrifices.
6. To grow the endowment, the income from which can be used in an unrestricted manner.
7. To use major gifts and periodic capital campaigns to support larger-scale facility expansions and programmatic enhancements.

These priorities, along with the related objectives and strategies, will help ensure that the long-term financial status of the academy will continue to promote stability and support our mission.

Strengths

1. The school maintains strong financial status to support ongoing programs and has an appropriate balance between programmatic and administrative expenditures.
2. We have a strong, documented framework of internal controls and procedures to safeguard assets.
3. The school maintains positive cash flow from school operations.
4. We have a long-term strategic financial plan to ensure future operations and support strategic decision making.

Challenges

1. Continue to maintain healthy financial status while maintaining an affordable tuition package.
2. The current CFO joined the school less than one year prior to the worldwide pandemic, as a result, the school's operations and required resources have shifted and the traditional annual budgeting processes have been disrupted.
3. Historically enrollment has been relatively flat and operating revenue consists primarily of tuition and fees causing the school to rely on tuition rate increases to grow revenue.

Plans and Priorities

1. Continue to strengthen the endowment to create a more sustainable future.
2. Provide the support to pursue options to expand the campus footprint through financing.
3. Explore opportunities to develop additional and on-going operating revenue streams.
4. Continue to make the annual budgeting process more interactive with stakeholders to increase their understanding and support of our initiatives.

Prepared by Arthur Keown, CFO; Bill Barrett, Academy President; Jean Armstrong, Board Chair; Brian Brieske, Treasurer, Finance Committee Chair

Development

Overview

The advancement team is responsible for all forms of fundraising and community building at St. Mary's Academy. Fundraising includes Annual Fund, Endowment and Planned Giving (Loretto Legacy Society) in addition to two annual fundraising events, the Golf Tournament, and the Gala. The advancement team plans all aspects of community building/stewardship events such as Chalk the Walk, Orientation, New Parent Welcome Dinners/Breakfast, Fall Festival, Bingo Night, Grandparents' Day and President's Partnership Reception/Non Events, New Parent Welcome Cocktail Party (spring party for parents of newly enrolled students), and delivery of welcome bags for new parents. The advancement team also supports all activities "sponsored" by Academy Parents, our parent volunteer organization.

The Annual Fund, including a Five Weeks of Giving campaign, is the cornerstone of fundraising for SMA. The Annual Fund goal and allocation of funds is compiled by the

advancement team and department heads, reviewed by the Advancement Committee and approved by the board of trustees. Capital Campaigns are decided upon and approved by the board of trustees. Fundraising, community building and donor/volunteer cultivation and stewardship are priorities as the SMA advancement team works to “advance” St. Mary’s Academy in every way possible.

Strengths

1. Developed a method of collecting and validating parent employment data on an annual basis, which assists the Advancement Office in determining our best prospects for cultivation, solicitation and stewardship. Current parent giving to the Annual Fund increased by 17% over total dollars raised the previous year, from 57% to 65%.
2. The Annual Fund/Five Weeks of Giving Campaign has been successful in helping us reach our Annual Fund goal by the end of the calendar year, which allows our team to focus on other efforts, particularly the Gala, in the spring. However, the goal setting under the previous director of advancement was more conservative (ie. AF goal in FY21 was \$400,000, but for FY22 is \$500,000 and will continue to increase). Therefore, this means that some Annual Fund fundraising will continue into the spring, particularly for parent participation rates.
3. The annual Gala continues to be a successful fundraising event for tuition assistance and program resources. In 2020, we broke the school record by raising more than \$400,000 and raised over \$350,000 in spring 2021 during our second virtual gala. The golf tournament in September 2021 was the most successful in the school’s history, raising over \$86,000 and selling out.
4. Community Events: Chalk the Walk, Grandparents’ Day, Fall Festival and Bingo Night are fun and well attended community building opportunities.

Challenges

1. We could be more purposeful in our solicitation efforts and should utilize wealth data within our database to customize solicitations with suggested ask amounts. This last year was the first time we mailed personalized request letters with specified ask amounts to all current parents, alumnae and grandparents who have given to the Annual Fund in the last 3 years.
2. Parent Volunteers: engage more parent volunteers to solicit auction items and assist with all aspects of planning and execution of special events, especially the Golf Tournament and Gala. In FY21, nearly 90 parents assisted with events and Annual Fund (majority remotely). For FY22, of the 686 parents who completed the demographic information update in SchoolDocs, 525 (or 77%) indicated their willingness to volunteer for at least one activity. The return to a mostly post-COVID environment on campus means that many parents are ready to get involved with their child’s school.
3. BOT involvement in fundraising, specifically giving stretch gifts, increasing gifts over time, soliciting peers and other constituents for support needs to be increased.

4. As priorities of the school change and develop, it is important that the director of advancement continues to be at the table for discussions that involve fundraising priorities.
5. Following on the heels of a significant capital campaign for the Community Center (\$8 million raised on a \$10 million goal), a major gift effort for the renovation of the high school science wings needs to be launched and completed within the next 12 to 18 months.

Plans and Priorities

1. Continue to personalize a focused Annual Fund solicitation process for current parents, including one on one meetings for larger requests and have staff/volunteers/BOT make phone calls earlier in the process, focusing on those donors more likely to give. Continue to work in close coordination with the admissions team to gather information on new families.
2. Increase Annual Fund participation by current parents at least five percent each year until 95 to 100 percent is reached.
3. Coordinate efforts with the Advancement Committee and the BOT to identify, cultivate, solicit and steward top 50 new Major Donors (\$25K and up) for the HS science wing renovation project. Conduct BOT development training, including cultivation and solicitation.
4. Participate with admin team, Advancement Committee, Buildings and Grounds Committee and BOT in development of a new Master Plan for campus improvements, including funding for athletics and additional physical space.

Prepared by Natalie Mesko, Director of Advancement; Rebecca Clark, Advancement Database Coordinator; Lea Frank, Advancement Events Coordinator; Katie Wheeler, Annual Fund & Alumnae Coordinator

School Plant and Facilities

Overview

The school's plant and facilities are adequate to meet our student's learning needs, support our programs, and are age-appropriate, safe, functional, and well maintained. Our 24.5-acre campus was purchased in three transactions from 1953 to 1963 includes 7 buildings ranging in age:

Building	Area (SqFt)	Year Built
Sanders House (Administration)	13,600	1935
Lower School	30,000	1952
Middle School	32,000	2000
High School	69,000	1964
Bishop Evans Sports Center	16,770	1985
Community Center	22,772	2015
Caretaker's Home	1,000	1937

The remainder of the campus includes developed outdoor space for athletic fields, lawns, and future expansion. Athletic fields consist of one softball field, one Nike grind artificial turf field, and one regular turf field.

The school provides ample funding for continued maintenance of all facilities through our provision for plant repairs and special maintenance and the operating budget. In 2019 the school conducted a Campus Facilities Assessment (FCA), recommendations from the FCA have been incorporated into the school's long-term capital expenditure plan and are re-evaluated by the Buildings and Grounds Committee annually. The school has both a campus and grounds master plan and is now starting the process to revise and make updates.

Management of the facilities is provided by the campus operations manager and the head, facilities and maintenance under the direction of the chief financial officer. The Buildings and Grounds Committee of the board of trustees is charged with evaluating and monitoring plans for the addition, expansion, renovation, and maintenance of campus facilities and meets periodically throughout the year. In our most recent survey, employees have indicated a high degree of satisfaction with campus/grounds (4.55 of 5) and the school's commitment to supporting maintenance and repairs in support of their job functions (4.32 of 5).

The Facilities and Maintenance Department is staffed year-round with two maintenance technicians supporting the head, facilities, and maintenance. The school has contracted third-party vendors to provide year-round cleaning (both during and after the school day) and grounds services. In addition, the School outsources critical maintenance support functions such as HVAC, fire suppression, asbestos (asbestos management plans have been developed), and fire alarms/security systems. During the summer months, SMA undergoes extensive preventative maintenance and upkeep projects ranging from detailed cleaning of all building interiors, safety inspections of playground equipment, painting and system inspections by qualified professionals. Faculty and staff have the ability to immediately report and facilities issues using our online work-order ticket system.

SMA complies with city, state, and federal regulations, this is confirmed through regular inspections. All campus facilities are insured, working with a broker, campus-wide insurance is reviewed annually by the Finance Committee to ensure adequate coverage.

Transportation

The school maintains a fleet of 7 activity busses to support daily operations and our athletics program. Employees that operate activity busses are required annually to provide the school with a copy of their driver's license, to pass a written driving test, to review bus operating procedures, sign a safety review form, and to pass an MVR background check prior to being allowed to drive. In addition, employees becoming authorized to drive a bus for the first time must pass a driving test. All driver information is tracked in a file. All busses are inspected before and after trips, are fully insured and registered with the state of Colorado.

The school does not provide daily transportation to/from campus for students. SMA has partnered with Schoolpool, a free program to help parents get their students to/from school. Schoolpool is a service of Way to Go, a federally funded program of the Denver

Regional Council of Governments. This is an OPT-IN program, and all families are encouraged to register, the service connects families with carpool needs or those that want a backup option for when necessary.

Food Services

The school has two separate lunch programs, one serving the Lower and Middle School and the other serving the High School. The School has a kitchen on campus, but it is not capable of providing the appropriate service. As such, we rely on third-party vendors for service. Grateful Plate is contracted to serve hot lunch to Lower School and Middle School students in the Community Center meals are purchased directly from the vendor and paid for by the families. They provide nutritional lunch offerings while incorporating local ingredients, sustainable packaging, and organic ingredients when possible.

SMArket is High School's hot lunch program, which is administered by 2 faculty members, the program consists of readily available frozen items along with outside vendors providing lunch on a rotating basis. Students use a debit system for purchasing food and also have the option to leave campus for lunch.

Safety and Security

St. Mary's Academy takes the safety of its students and the community very seriously. Our families feel that the school provides a safe and secure environment, when asked their opinion on school safety and security in our 2020 family survey the school scored a 4.4 out of 5. Faculty and staff have a similar opinion on safety and security scoring a 4.47 of 5. All external doors are locked, the campus grounds are monitored by CCTV, and employees are instructed to approach anyone on campus not displaying proper identification.

All campus visitors are required to show a photo identification and register in our visitor management system, this information is cross-referenced with sex offender databases, those clear to enter campus are provided with visual identification indicating they are authorized to be on campus. Currently, the school uses the "Standard Response Protocol," developed with the assistance of several local police and fire departments for use in the event of an emergency (see Risk Management for more details). There are systems in place in the event of an emergency on campus, and regular drills are conducted to make all those on campus aware of the procedures. Additionally, a school resource officer from Cherry Hills Village Police Department is on campus daily during the school year.

Generally, we will communicate with the SMA community via text message, email, and phone during an emergency or during emergency drills. Students and parents are expected to update their contact information annually to facilitate this process.

Lower and Middle School Safety and Security

- Lower School students are to be in line-of-sight supervision of a faculty member during the school day and during school functions/programs.

- Musical or theatre performance participants or students staying for a rehearsal or game must be under the direct supervision of their teachers.
- Students attending athletic contests at the end of the academic day must be at the games in the gym or by the playing field. They must remain in the gym or at the playing field until they meet their parents/guardians to leave campus.
- Student spectators waiting for the start of a game must be supervised. They may not walk among the buildings or in the buildings during these times without adult supervision.
- With prior arrangement, a student may remain in the building after the end of the academic day to work on a project or meet with a teacher as long as the teacher is directly supervising the student.

High School Safety and Security

The entrance and exit to the High School building are through the east, south, and west doors. All doors remain locked throughout the day. All parents/guardians and visitors to the High School are asked to enter through the east doors and sign in at the desk in the High School office that is to the left of the entry doors. Science labs are equipped with all necessary safety equipment including eyewash stations, goggles, gloves, fume hoods, etc.

Security/Identification Badges

All faculty, staff, middle and high school students will be issued RFID badges that must be worn throughout the day. The badges also allow access to certain buildings throughout the day. Students who lose badges will be charged a replacement fee for the badge. Students who do not wear the badge daily could be subject to disciplinary action.

Strengths

1. Moved to an online work order and event management system, streamlining requests and enhancing the feedback loop.
2. The school's access control system ensures that an individual may enter any buildings without prior authorization.
3. The school maintains an adequate budget for preventative maintenance, repair, and replacement of plant assets.
4. The campus is located in an excellent neighborhood in Cherry Hills Village and has a strong relationship with the local community.

Challenges

1. Loss of institutional knowledge with the retirement of the former head, facilities, and maintenance of 30+ years.
2. The school campus has little room for further expansion as all adjacent properties are developed.
3. The school lacks appropriate kitchen facilities to develop its own food services program.

4. The age of many buildings on campus is 60+ years which requires constant maintenance and upkeep.
5. The school currently has appropriate parking spaces available but if we are to expand further, we will have a need to add more.

Plans and Priorities

1. Continue to leverage technology to improve efficiencies.
2. Explore opportunities to purchase adjacent properties that can be incorporated into the campus to increase our footprint.
3. Continue to develop sustainability initiatives.
4. Continue to improve campus safety through the installation of more CCTV cameras and RFID access points.

Prepared by Art Keown, CFO; Nathan Byrne, Head of Facilities and Maintenance; Darren Lange, Student Billing and Campus Operations

Extended Care Program, Pre-K to Fifth Grade

Overview

St. Mary's Academy Extended Day Program (EDP) aims to provide a safe, fun, and engaging place after school for students in Pre-K to Fifth Grade to explore, create, play, and receive academic enrichment and support. The program includes playtime outside, a healthy snack, and a chance to forge community. EDP is licensed by the State of Colorado with a capacity of 30-50 students. Our Pre-K aftercare program is in the Community Center and our Kindergarten-Fifth Grade EDP program is in the Lower School. We offer a three-day option at \$1,650.00 and a five day option at \$2,530.00 for the academic year, with reduced rates for faculty children.

Strengths

1. EDP provides academic and homework support for students to enrich and expand learning.
2. EDP encourages students to explore topics, crafts, and creations driven by their own interests, interwoven with weekly themes and treasured traditions.
3. EDP builds community between mixed-age students and our team members, and helps students navigate social and emotional opportunities for growth.
4. EDP ensures the program is meeting and exceeding state requirements for licensing and safety, including professional development training and staff support.

Challenges

1. The program needs to recruit, retain, and develop quality staff to support the demand for enrollment
2. The program should communicate, share, and integrate resources between Pre-K and EDP

3. EDP should evaluate the former Middle School program, After School Activities (ASA), which changed to a homework club, to assess if there is a way to improve programming for Middle School students.
4. EDP should integrate connections across divisions.

Plans and Priorities

1. EDP will hire and train an additional program lead to support the Pre-K After Care Program and allow us to bring more students in from our wait list.
2. The current director will work with Pre-K and EDP staff to integrate programs effectively
3. EDP will survey teachers and students currently in Middle School Homework Club to explore if the program should be relaunched to best serve our Middle School Community. EDP will meet with administration and school leadership to determine the long term direction and vision of Aftercare Programming in our Community.
4. EDP will survey teachers, students, and leadership in the High School to explore ways we can connect cross-divisionally.

Prepared by Nandi Fambro, Auxiliary Programs Manager and Missy Ochoa, Assistant Director

Summer Programs

Overview

St. Mary's Academy, for many years, operated a small summer program which was attended mostly by Lower and Middle School students. When the new academy president was hired in July of 2017, the School began to take a closer look at the strength of the program, and ultimately its viability.

The program was run by a full-time teacher, and as such the time needed to build and promote the program was limited. In the summers of 2018 and 2019 the program continued to operate in the 'red' in spite of an attempt to relaunch the program via new offerings consistent with expertise we received from Independent School Management (ISM) as part of a training workshop the director attended.

As a result of where the program was, the realization from the director that the current format was not sustainable, and the pandemic, SMA did not offer the program in the summer of 2020 and 2021. We did offer a volleyball, field hockey, and speed and agility training program, but these offerings were attended primarily by High School students.

The school made a decision to hire a full-time auxiliary programs manager to support our after school and summer programs. It became clear that investing in a full-time position was the most appropriate way to relaunch our summer program. Unfortunately, the first individual we hired left for personal reasons after one month in the position.

The school embarked on a search for a new auxiliary programs manager and that position was filled on September 20, 2021. Currently, the director has been overseeing our after-

school program in the Lower School, getting to know our families, gathering information on what our renewed summer program could look like, etc. The school also again partnered with ISM in support of our attending an intensive workshop related to auxiliary programs, and we are in weekly conversation with an ISM consultant in support of the same.

Our goal is to launch our new summer program on a limited basis for the summer of 2022 and grow the program in the coming months and years consistent with our mission, vision, and values.

Strengths

1. We have a supportive parent community who we believe are interested in taking advantage of a summer program run by SMA.
2. Our new auxiliary program manager is experienced and has the time and resources to effectively rebuild our program.
3. Our partnership with ISM provides us with consistent support based on current data, trends, and best practices in auxiliary programs in independent schools.
4. Our facilities are in good shape and we are currently not encumbered with existing summer rental agreements.

Challenges

1. Given that our auxiliary programs manager started in mid-September, we are pressed for time to gather the feedback to most effectively assess offerings in time for a January launch with our community (the typical time summer camps are advertising their programs).
2. We are building the program and the budget from the ground up so there is a good deal of time needed to work through the financial resources necessary to support the program.
3. Our facilities are limited relative to other competitive programs, so finding the appropriate balance in terms of what we can offer that will attract current and outside families is of critical importance.

Plans and Priorities

1. We will continue to support our program manager with the time and support necessary to engage our community as a means to create, share, and market the offerings with our internal and external community.
2. We will work closely with our CFO, ISM and Academy President to create a budget that is flexible and immediate in support of the initial launch of the program.
3. We will develop a plan that allows us to offer a competitive program on campus, include some offerings off campus, and do so without compromising the summer work that needs to take place in preparation for the new school year.

Prepared by Bill Barrett, Academy President; Arthur Keown, CFO

Risk Management

Overview

St. Mary's Academy's approach to risk management is rooted in reducing exposure to any threat to our campus community. School leadership, supported by faculty, staff, and the board of trustees has spent considerable time identifying and assessing what threats can potentially impact our students, employees, campus, and data. When identified, we work to determine what policies and procedures are currently in place and can be implemented to mitigate or prevent these things from happening. The school also has partnered with a local insurance broker, experienced with ACIS schools to ensure that we carry appropriate general insurance and additional policies designed to cover threats specific to our industry.

Academy Crisis Plan

The school partnered with the Colorado Department of Homeland Security and engaged a security consulting firm in 2018 to perform a risk assessment and help the school develop a comprehensive Emergency Response and Crisis Management Plan. As a result, we have a school-wide crisis plan for unexpected situations that disrupt the normal flow of events and call for extraordinary measures. A crisis could be, among other situations, a fire, tornado, blizzard, injury, the threat of injury, or death. For that reason, the school is prepared with procedures and drills that are reviewed and practiced throughout the year. Should immediate evacuation from the school be required, students will be evacuated to the LDS Church on 999 E. Tufts Avenue.

Security: Standard Response Protocol (SRP)

St. Mary's Academy has a complete and updated crisis plan and an accompanying emergency plan, which has been written to assist employees in managing unexpected events of a grave and untoward nature. St. Mary's Academy employs the Standard Response Protocol.

The SRP is based on these five actions: Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuate, and Shelter. In the event of an emergency, the action, and appropriate direction will be called on the PA.

- **Hold** – “Hold in your room or area, clear the halls”
- **Secure** - “Secure the Perimeter”
- **Lockdown** - “Locks, Lights, Out of Sight”
- **Evacuate** - “To the Announced Location”
- **Shelter** - “Using Announced Type and Method”

Copies of the Safety Procedures and Emergency Response packet are available in their entirety in each administrative office in addition to being outlined in the Employee Handbook and contained in the Red Safety Folder which is every classroom. Employees are requested to read the Safety Procedures and Emergency Response packet annually. The academy president is the spokesperson for the crisis plan and the academy president, or the administration, addresses key points of the plan each year with all employees.

Background Checks

Individuals to be employed by the school, and any volunteers who have regular contact with students, must undergo a criminal history background check, to confirm that no criminal history record information exists on file in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Identification Division, or the Colorado Bureau of Investigation which would disqualify that individual from being employed or utilized in such capacity or position. Clear background checks are a prerequisite for employment at the school and are conducted every three years for current employees.

The school conducts criminal background checks through a consumer reporting agency. Criminal background checks will only be conducted as authorized by applicable federal and state law. All information related to an individual's background check is kept strictly confidential.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

All faculty and staff are required to successfully complete mandatory reporter training on an annual basis. This includes how to make a report with the Arapahoe County Department of Human Services and the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) when, in their professional capacity, they have reasonable cause to believe that a student is suffering from abuse or neglect. The responsibility to report rests both on the school and all professionals responsible for the care of students who are associated with the school. The following procedure is established to ensure that reports are made in a timely and effective manner, and that information about students and their families is treated in a way that is respectful of their privacy.

Procedure

When an employee learns of a situation of possible neglect or abuse, the employee should consult immediately with a school counselor or the principal, if either is available, about the situation so that appropriate action can be taken to protect the student, and timely reports can be made to ADHS and CDHS. A school counselor or the principal will review the information immediately and may consult, if appropriate, with the student's family. Legal counsel and/or a consultant specializing in the care and protection of children also may be involved in these reviews. The academy president is also made aware of the situation. Appropriate efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of the student and his or her family. If the abuse or neglect is suspected to come from the student's family, an approach to protecting the student will be defined.

If a school counselor is available and determines that a report should be made to ADHS and CDHS, he or she will make the first report by telephone call. If a school counselor is not available, they should be promptly advised of any report made by an employee directly. According to Colorado's mandatory reporting law, all school employees are required to report child abuse if they "have reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect." Once again, the responsibility to report rests both on the individual professional and the school.

Boundary Violations

Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship beyond the professional staff-student relationship is a violation of our employee policy. If a student feels that a school employee has violated professional boundaries in any way, they are strongly encouraged to speak directly with the school counselor, principal, or academy president.

Insurance

The school has partnered with a local insurance broker very familiar with independent schools to ensure that appropriate levels of coverage are maintained and are evaluated throughout the year. Our broker reports to the Finance Committee annually providing industry and SMA-specific analysis and updates, the committee provides feedback and recommendations to ensure the school is fulfilling its obligations to protect our community and ensure our continuity. The school maintains various types of coverage including property, D&O, fiduciary and crime, multiple levels of excess coverage, workers compensation, cyber, pollution, international travel, and security risk. Values are reassessed on an annual basis according to our needs and current risk assessments.

Strengths

1. Mandatory reporter training is required for all employees and occurs annually.
2. MinistrySafe online Sexual Abuse Awareness Training is required for all employees and occurs annually.
3. Risk management is enthusiastically supported by the board of trustees and academy president and prioritizes risk management efforts.
4. Risk management is incorporated into the daily operations at the school.
5. Documented plans are readily available to all employees.

Challenges

1. School insurance rates are growing at an increasingly fast rate, far outpacing tuition increases.
2. Recent turnover in campus operations and facilities and maintenance has resulted in a decrease in institutional knowledge.
3. The pandemic was largely unforeseen and unplanned for which has required significant time, attention, and resources.

Plans and Priorities

1. Continue to identify risk based on past experiences and our current understanding of what is to come.
2. Perform another risk assessment supported by outside professionals in the next 3 years.
3. Review the school's actions and efforts in confronting the pandemic, document the processes, policies, and procedures that we used to support continuing operations.

Prepared by Arthur Keown, CFO; Darren Lange, Student Billing and Campus Operations

COVID Addendum

The pandemic has without question had an impact on our school in ways that were and are challenging, but it also created opportunities for reflection and growth. The following addendum addresses these issues:

1. In the Lower and Middle School, as a result of our commitment to six-foot distancing, we had to place eleven families in a wait pool, and we had an additional thirty-four inquiries we could not support. As such our enrollment was not what it could have been. Given that these families were Lower and Middle School applicants, the impact of their not attending will take us several years to recover from. We did not have the same spacing limitations in our High School.
2. In terms of our budget, we managed well. We have been conservative with our spending so we were able to manage. We spent approximately \$410,000 on a range of mitigation strategies (i.e. investment in Swivl technology in all rooms to support remote learning, needlepoint bipolar ionization system to improve ventilation, updates to all of our HVAC systems, creation of a designated “Health Hub”, spraying equipment to sanitize classrooms, increased cleaning support from our vendor, sanitizer dispensers throughout the school, etc.). We did save money on overnight trips and the resulting transportation costs. In addition, we were able to secure a \$1.7 million PPP loan to help cover payroll costs.
3. With regards to staffing, we needed to significantly increase the number of hours we paid our consulting nurse, as she often worked evenings and weekends supporting us as we worked through exposures, cases, quarantines, isolations, etc. In addition, we refurbished a room in the administration building (our Health Hub) to provide space for students who are ill. In support of this work, we hired a part-time health aide who was with us all year. Her role was to work consultation with our nurse in support of outreach to parents, updates to faculty and staff, etc.

We also contracted, through our cleaning supplier, a full-time ‘day porter’ who moved from building to building all day cleaning high traffic areas.

4. The pandemic required us to put our before and after school programs on hold, and we had to delay the ‘reboot’ of our summer program for another year. We have recently hired a new auxiliary program manager to help us think about how best to reintroduce after school and summer programs, and we look forward to recapturing and growing that experience for our students and families and securing the revenue stream. In the High School, the flexibility we gained via a remote learning option for students was meaningful in many ways. For example, many of the students' families suffered as a result of the pandemic. As such, some students needed to work to help support their families. In support of this, they chose to stay home to minimize their chances of being quarantined which would require them to stay home from work. This flexibility helped us really tune into the challenges many of our families were facing. As a result, we do offer a remote option for High School students depending on the situation.

In addition, the flexibility with which we were able to offer parents in terms of zoom conferences, virtual town halls and other meetings, etc. helped us realize how this flexibility created greater access for our families and therefore helped us build community in different yet meaningful ways.

5. Overall our school remains healthy and stable. Financially we are and remain strong, and thankfully we were able to do what we needed to do to support the school. Longer term we are assessing whether or not we should invest in a full-time nurse. The outreach and support we provided has set a standard of care that we are careful not to ‘roll back’ in terms of the service we offer. Also, our administrative assistants, who are already very busy, appreciated the additional health support. From a stability standpoint, the need to say ‘no’ to some families as a result of spacing required us to focus on building relational capital and engaging in greater customer service as a means to demonstrate our value proposition and improve retention. In a competitive marketplace, we need to be mindful to continue with this mindset.

6. With respect to decision-making, we learned how important it is to have a plan, a well- defined decision making and communications structure, consider what issues might arise in advance (as much as possible), ensure that we have the appropriate people in the room, and create clarity internally and externally with regards to the issue at hand and how and why we are addressing it the way we are. Families were very appreciative of the cohesive, clear, consistent manner in which we worked through the many problems we faced, and our ability to make decisions in a focused, consistent, thorough manner while remaining aligned with our mission, vision and values has and will continue to serve us well.

7. Going forward, we will continue to think about how we can offer a bit more flexible environment for our High School students where appropriate, and to consider how we can continue to improve on outreach and community building through a range of in-person and virtual events so as to maximize our parents’ ability to engage with the school. We are also considering implementing a robust concurrent enrollment partnership with colleges and universities as our students have become familiar with synchronous and asynchronous learning. The opportunities offered that allow students to earn college credits inexpensively are expanding, and we are excited to think about how our students can take greater advantage of this environment as they prepare to maximize their college experience while potentially saving thousands of dollars in tuition expense.

Prepared by Bill Barrett, Academy President; Arthur Keown, Chief Financial Officer

Conclusion

We are thankful to have had the opportunity to engage in the self-study process. Making time to come together to celebrate what we do, and do well, and reflect on areas of growth and improvement has allowed us to both build community and hold ourselves

accountable as we strive to be the best school we can be. It has been a valuable experience to say the least.

We are inspired by the dedication of our faculty, staff, administration, and board as we work together to provide a unique and outstanding educational experience consistent with our mission, vision, and Loretto School Values. One of the most validating aspects of this work relates to the consistency with which our Loretto School Values of faith, community, justice, and respect are meaningfully present in the life of the school. Our values continue to be a wonderful foundation upon which to grow in the coming years.

We are excited to continue to do the work necessary to move the school forward. The opportunity to capitalize on the strategic planning work underway will without question serve us well as we look to follow through on the strategic themes that have unfolded because of this process. We are examining many facets of our school and program, and we have a board, administrative team and faculty committed to the work. Perhaps one of the most relevant and validating aspects of this work, when aligned with the strategic work we have been doing, is that there are no real surprises. Our community is developing a sense of clarity on who we really are and where we need to go. This growing understanding excites us as we embark on the next several years. The strength of our school is our community, and without question that continues to be the case.

We understand that there is much work to be done, and we look forward to amplifying what we do well and leaning into the discomfort where needed as we strive to improve. SMA is a school with a rich history, and we are filled with gratitude for the many ways our school has created the conditions where our graduates have made an impact on our communities and the larger world. We are excited for the future and appreciate the opportunity to participate in this process.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to do this work and thank you in advance for sharing your expertise with us in December in what we know will be a rewarding experience!