

# Saint Joseph Academy



*Ad Astra Per Aspera*  
Office of the President

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Members of Saint Joseph Community:

In order to better serve our student population and address the specific needs of our middle and upper divisions, I will be introducing a paradigm shift which will necessitate movement among our operating administration. This movement is designed specifically to play to the professional strengths of each administrator and to better use the skills of each individual, thus putting our best talent into positions that have a critical impact on our students.

At least 98 percent of the Saint Joseph Academy student body is composed of what are now called English Language Learners (ELLs). This term refers to students whose first language is not English and encompasses both students who are just beginning to learn English and those who have already developed considerable proficiency. The term underscores the fact that, in addition to being responsible for mastering a new language, ELLs must meet all the academic challenges that face their monolingual peers in schools across the country.

Learning to read and write is a complex task that continues to develop into the middle and high school years. A common misconception of reading is that students **learn to read** in their early elementary years and then **read to learn** in the upper grades. This misconception assumes that literacy development is complete when a student enters 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In actuality, during the middle and high school year, literacy tasks take on new forms and increased complexity. Specific issues include, but are not limited to:

1. Motivation, Engagement, Self-Efficacy
2. Alphabetic Principle
3. Fluency
4. Vocabulary
5. Comprehension, Prior Knowledge, Strategic Capability
6. Developmental Nature of Reading
7. Native Language Literacy
8. Second Language Learning
9. Culture & Community

There is no doubt that Saint Joseph Academy has the most effective teachers in the Rio Grande Valley. Our faculty doesn't just think about teaching **all** of their students, they think about teaching **each** of their students. The word "each" reminds us that our students differ from each other in many ways and that our teaching should be responsive to these differences.

Our students come with optimism, energy, and unique perspectives. As bilingual individuals who can function well across languages and cultures, the Academy's current ELLs will become valued members of tomorrow's global economy.

Our focus will be to offer maximum support to ensure our students' proficiency in Academic English across all content areas. The quality of our approach will yield students with better literacy skills, improved learning, and higher standardized test scores.

I want to assure you that our students' new learning will **HONOR**, not devalue, their home language, family, culture, and all critical sources of self-concept. We recognize and commend what a tremendous accomplishment it is to function well in multiple languages and literacies. I must also clarify that our attempts to strengthen the skills of our ELLs will in **no way** diminish the **RIGOR** of the Academy's **College Preparatory Curriculum** or diminish our commitment to challenging all our students whether their **first** or second language is English. As Marist Educators, our mission is to provide educational experiences that will meet the needs of each of our students within a framework of **academic rigor** and **individual attention**.

Once again, our entire focus is on our students and the entire faculty, staff, and administration are committed to this end. In service to this commitment, the Saint Joseph Academy Administration will function in the following manner:

After two years of service as Assistant Principal for Student Affairs, Mr. Stephen Alvarez has decided to retire for the third time. Mr. Alvarez has seen us through our security assessment, crisis management plan, and the stabilization of our discipline procedures. He will be missed, and we wish him Godspeed as he moves into his retirement years.

The job description for this position has been rewritten as Vice Principal for Student Services and will be filled by Mr. Benjamin Sandoval. Mr. Sandoval, who has faithfully served as a long time part-time Coach and a member of the Saint Joseph faculty for the past two years, has an extensive background in human resources and has developed the necessary skills to work with students and their parents during difficult disciplinary episodes.

The newly established role of Student Advocate will provide individual assistance to students and parents in matters pertaining to the quality of their education. This position will explore, implement, and help drive the curriculum to insure the best instructional delivery. Special attention will be offered to academically at-risk students because of language acquisition. Additionally, the Student Advocate will oversee the development, implementation, and in-service of the curriculum in all departments as it relates to the academically at-risk and ELL populations. Room 107 will be remodeled as the Advocate Center where Ms. Lindsay Irwin will assume this new position. Ms. Irwin brings a depth of talent as a teacher, guidance counselor and curriculum coordinator here at Saint Joseph for fifteen years. Her

extensive background includes not only private but public education exclusively in the Brownsville/Matamoros metro area.

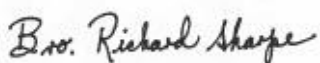
Because the most critical years for the acquisition of Academic English occurs in the middle division, there is a need for a person that has a greater understanding and more experience to address the needs of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders that may now be expected to **read to learn**. I have asked Mrs. Lucy Williams to move to the Middle Division, as Dean of the Middle Division, and restructure our efforts to support an ever-increasing population of ELLs. Mrs. Williams' background prior to her tenure at Saint Joseph Academy includes extensive experience as a guidance counselor and elementary school principal. She is particularly knowledgeable in developmental reading, vocabulary acquisition and the psycho-social needs of this age group.

In our desire to ease the financial burden on our parents we are always focused on ways to effectively manage cost and keep a Saint Joseph education affordable, the principal's position has become a pivotal management component to insure that the academic systems are all cost efficient. I have asked Mrs. Lori Trott to move to the high school as Principal and insure that we truly are getting the best results for all our educational expenditures. Before beginning her educational career, Mrs. Trott was an accountant and business manager. She will bring linkage between academics and economics.

The members of this newly constituted team will assume their roles on July 1, 2012 and will work immediately with Robert Shea of Shea Consulting Services to guarantee a smooth transition and clear role distinction.

The focus as now and always will be our students and making Jesus known and loved. I know we will have the St. Joe community support as we chart a new beginning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bro. Richard Sharpe".

Brother Richard Sharpe, FMS  
President