

St. Francis School

INTERDENOMINATIONAL PRE-K THROUGH 8TH GRADE



May 2016

2016 Strategic Plan

A seven-year plan to guide the St. Francis community in sustaining the school's mission of excellence without exclusivity.

St. Francis School

Interdenominational Pre-K Through 8th Grade

MISSION

St. Francis School is an interdenominational school serving pre-kindergarten through 8th grade. St. Francis is committed to low student-teacher ratios and attention to the needs of every student; excellence in achievement without exclusivity in admissions; a student body that is integrated racially, ethnically, religiously, academically, and economically; and an atmosphere that is both supportive of Christian values and welcoming to children of all faiths.

BELIEFS

- Every child can be motivated to learn when his or her individual needs are met.
- Every child can achieve his or her potential when challenged and stimulated.
- Students deserve exemplary staff and facilities.
- Students deserve a safe and secure environment.
- Students benefit from active partnerships involving school, family, and community.
- Every child should be instilled with values such as citizenship, honesty, dependability, tolerance, and accountability.
- All students deserve to be treated with respect and should treat others with respect.
- Curriculum and instructional practices should incorporate a variety of learning activities to accommodate differences in learning styles.

GREETINGS FROM BARBARA A. PORTER HEAD OF SCHOOL

I remember so well the lofty goals that were embedded within the Strategic Plan of 2005. It's gratifying to know all that we have accomplished in the last 10 years. The one significant need that we had not achieved was the hiring of a school counselor. As you know, this has happened even while the new plan was evolving.

With the Strategic Plan of 2016, it's so exciting to look to the future and plan for all new objectives designed to further "excellence without exclusivity".

Barbara A. Porter

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St. Francis School – Board of Directors

- **Mary Marrero, President**
- **Linda van Bavel, Vice President**
- **Sharon Doerre, Secretary**
- **Barbara Porter, Ex-Officio**
- **Eric Bear**
- **Daina Berry**
- **Becky Bigler**
- **Chuck Garner**
- **Douglas Laycock, Treasurer**
- **Anshu Panicker**
- **Laura Peveto**
- **David Porter**
- **Scott Turner**

**GREETINGS FROM THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The Board of Directors is pleased to present this 2016-2023 Strategic Plan for St. Francis School. Like everything else at St. Francis, the Plan represents a community effort, the result of hundreds of volunteer hours from teachers, staff, parents, students, and Board members. We are truly grateful to everyone who shared their time, energy and passion to help develop a vision for the school's future, and look forward to implementing the Plan over the next seven years.

Mary Marrero, President

St. Francis School – Administration, Faculty and Staff

Administrative Staff

Name	Specialty
Amber Brown	Registrar
Tiffany Johnson	Development Director
Barbara Porter	Head of School
Stella Valdez	Executive Assistant

Elementary School Faculty

Name	Specialty
Karla Dunda	4th Grade
Joey Gonzalez	4th Grade
Merilen Graham	Pre-Kindergarten/After-Care Coordinator
Tonya Guillory	3rd Grade
Adriana VanderEnde	Kindergarten
Judy Line	Elementary and LMS Coordinator/5 th Grade
Whitney Michael	3rd Grade
Meagan Lee	1st Grade
Ann Parker	4th Grade
Erica Smith	2nd Grade
Laura Spurr	Kindergarten
Kim Watts	2nd Grade
Meagan Whiteley	Pre-Kindergarten
John Wright	1st Grade

Middle School Faculty

Lower Middle School

Name	Specialty
Judy Line	5th Grade Science/ Elementary Coordinator/Lower Middle School Coordinator
Sara Brumbelow	5th Grade Language Arts
Paige Shehan	5th Grade Language Arts/Social Studies
Tyler Brough	6th Grade World Cultures/Middle School Videography
Kelly Moore	5th Grade Language Arts/ 6th Grade Language Arts
Karen Sebastian	6th Grade Science
Efrain Reyna	5th & 6th Grade

Upper Middle School

Karen Mott	7th Grade Science
Jim Parker	7th Grade Coordinator/7th Grade Language Arts/Ultimate Frisbee Coach
Kay Allen	7th Grade History
Jessica Hayworth	7th and 8th Grade Math, Algebra, and Geometry
Don Hale	8th Grade Language Arts/Theater/Chapel
Deborah Overdorff	7th Grade Pre-Algebra/8th Grade Algebra
Donna Pierce	8th Grade Science/ Science Coordinator/ 8th Grade Coordinator
Brian Engel	Social Studies Coordinator/8th Grade History/7th & 8th Grade Games and Strategy
Larry Warner	7th & 8th Grade Latin

Specials

Name	Specialty
Dustin Armstrong	Athletic Director/Physical Education Coordinator
Brenda Bazaldua	4 th – 8 th Grade Spanish
Kirsten Brenna	Learning Specialist
Marilyn McCarthy	Learning Specialist
Amy Katkic	Learning Specialist/Computer Instruction
Ruthie Pace	Learning Specialist
Jeane Burks	Music
Emily Echols	Middle School Librarian
Cecilia Wibblesman	Spanish (1 st – 3 rd grade)
Jenny Jones	Learning Specialist
Wendy LaBarre	Technology Coordinator/2nd-8th Grade Computer Instruction
Tara Prien	Learning Specialist
Carol Rabel	Art
LaRessa Stell	Middle School Math Aid
Telisa Young	Athletics and Coaching

St. Francis School Student Demographic Overview

- Enrollment – 350 to 400 students (400 benchmark for capacity)
- Enrollment per section:
 - Pre-K – Elementary - 47%
 - Lower Middle School – 27%
 - Upper Middle School – 26%
- Student Demographic
 - Reported Gender by Student
 - Male - 55%
 - Female - 45%
 - Reported Race by Student
 - Asian - 9%
 - African American - 12%
 - Hispanic - 10%
 - White - 69%
 - Age
 - 3 to 5 - 12%
 - 6 to 10 - 35%
 - 11 to 14 - 53%
 - Reported Religious Affiliation by Student
 - Students report affiliation with these religions: Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and families with no religious affiliation
 - Socio Economic
 - 20% of enrolled students receive scholarships
 - Academic Status
 - 62% of Students are testing at least one grade level ahead in core subjects
 - 28% of Students have a learning difference
 - Geographic Distribution
 - Students reside in 65 zip codes within Travis and adjacent counties

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STRATEGIC PLAN THE 2005 St. FRANCIS SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLAN AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE LAST DECADE

St. Francis implemented its prior strategic plan in 2005, and over the last ten years, the plan guided the school's development, producing a host of significant accomplishments. Among the most important, St. Francis earned accreditation by the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools in 2006, with re-accreditation in 2008 and 2014. The 2005 plan also prioritized policies related to hiring and retaining superb teachers. As a result, teacher retirement plans were introduced, compensation packages have been kept competitive, and teacher training and enrichment activities have been enhanced. An elementary school coordinator position was also created. The school successfully expanded the racial, ethnic, economic, learning, and religious diversity of its student body, while maintaining high levels of student achievement. Technology resources were enhanced significantly, including the acquisition of a new server, wireless technology, tablets for classroom use, and additional network printers. In addition, the school created a website that has been expanded and upgraded in recent years, and achieved widespread utilization of Edline, an online program for teacher-student-parent communication. Finally, the Board of Directors successfully modified the school's by-laws to 1) create an Executive Committee, 2) allow for ex-officio Board members, and 3) expand the term for the president and vice president to two years. In summary, the prior strategic plan was successful in guiding the school to continued excellence.

Over the last decade, St. Francis has also upgraded and expanded its facilities. The Melanie and Ben Barnes Gymnasium was remodeled and continues to provide St. Francis students' with high-quality space for P.E. classes, athletic activities, and music classes. The school also completed a major expansion of the Laycock Classroom Building, adding significant square footage to the second floor for additional classrooms and a computer lab. New restrooms were added, the kitchen was upgraded, and existing classrooms on the first floor were improved. The school also established the Madeline Anderson Middle School Library, and the parking lot was reconfigured to allow safer access and improved traffic flow. In sum, the previous ten years saw many major improvements to the school's facilities and function, while maintaining the size of the school's student body and minimizing tuition increases.

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STRATEGIC PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

In an effort to ensure the continued excellence of St. Francis School, the Board of Directors has approved this 2016-2023 Strategic Plan. The Plan, which was developed over the last year, was a collaborative effort among the Board, faculty, staff, students, parents, and alumni, and will serve as a guide for maintaining and enhancing the school's mission over the next seven years. This Executive Summary presents highlights from the complete plan document. We hope that readers will share our excitement about the opportunities for the school's future. We will continue to rely on the dedication of everyone in our school community to accomplish the goals and strategies outlined in the Plan.

Key Goals and Strategies

Extensive consideration of 14 areas of St. Francis School's operation led to broad, strong consensus about the importance of six goals for protecting and enhancing the school's ability to meet its mission. We highlight these six goals here, beginning with those that carry the most significant implications for the school's finances.

1. Ensuring the financial viability of the school is of paramount importance in securing its future, and **increasing the school's endowment income** is one of the best ways to meaningfully improve the school's budget over the term of the Strategic Plan. Indeed, building the school's endowment will be key for the realization of many of the other goals outlined in the Plan.
2. Because the St. Francis student body is both highly diverse and at capacity, **the addition of a school counselor position** is important to ensuring the continued success of the school's mission.
3. The school is now 30 years old, and planning for ongoing maintenance needs is vital. The **creation and funding of a facilities maintenance budget** will increase the stability of financial planning.
4. The great popularity and success of the school's athletics program requires **additions to the Physical Education and Athletics staff**.
5. Long-term planning for, and enhancement of, the "specials" programs at St. Francis (fine arts, athletics, libraries) will be facilitated by **the creation of separate departmental budgets for each program**.
6. The school has flourished as the result of the generous donations of resources, including time, expertise, and funds, by its families, and will benefit from **the establishment of a formal parent teacher organization**.

In addition to these major goals, the Strategic Plan outlines a host of other initiatives that we expect to accomplish in an incremental fashion over the next few years, in order to continue to protect and promote the school's exceptional quality. As always, the Board of Directors and Head of School welcome questions and input from our school community.

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STRATEGIC PLAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION, FACULTY, STAFF, AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OVERVIEW

ADMINISTRATION

The school's administrative staff consists of a Head of School, Development Director, Registrar, and Executive Assistant. The Registrar and Executive Assistant also serve as the front office staff, and the school benefits from having employees who have been with St. Francis for many years, and are able and willing to fill multiple roles. As Head of School, Barbara Porter has guided St. Francis since its founding in 1985. She is largely responsible for maintaining the culture of tolerance, diversity, and individualized attention that makes St. Francis unique. As Ms. Porter moves closer to retirement, the Board of Directors must be prepared to hire a successor who can carry on the school's mission.

FACULTY & STAFF

St. Francis employs 30 classroom teachers, including 14 in the Elementary School, seven in the Lower Middle School, and nine in the Upper Middle School. One of the LMS teachers also serves as both the Elementary and Lower Middle School Coordinator, a 7th grade teacher serves as the 7th Grade Coordinator, and an 8th grade teacher as the 8th Grade Coordinator. There are ten specialty teachers, including two full-time athletics staff (one of whom is the Athletics Director), a librarian, two Spanish teachers, a music teacher, an art teacher, two computer teachers, and a Middle School math aid. The Learning Center staff consists of five full- and part-time specialists. Finally, the school employs a full-time janitor, classroom aids on an as-needed basis, and part-time before-care and after-care staff. The school's CPA works on a contract basis.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors consists of 13 members, seven elected to three-year, staggered terms and six appointed by the elected members to one-year terms. Each family with a child or children attending St. Francis is entitled to vote for each of the elected members of the Board. Elections take place at the Annual Meeting, usually held in October. The Board holds regular meetings once a month, and works primarily through committees, both standing and ad hoc.

STRENGTHS

Administration. The Head of School provides exceptional leadership and plays a critical role in maintaining the culture and mission of the school. Staff members have been with the school for many years and perform multiple job functions, allowing St. Francis to operate with significantly fewer administrative costs than other private schools.

Faculty and Staff. St. Francis is fortunate to have a group of truly outstanding teachers and staff dedicated to serving students' individual needs, nurturing their academic, athletic, social, and emotional growth. Teacher quality is widely regarded by parents as one the most significant strengths of the school, and the turnover rate among faculty and staff is low.

Board of Directors. The Board functions effectively to oversee the school while allowing the Head of School to manage operations and the educational mission. The Board maintains a successful balance between continuity and change in its membership. Its stewardship of the school's finances has allowed the school to grow and develop, while simultaneously maintaining one of the lowest tuition rates in the local community. The Board has worked to maintain productive, high quality relationships with the neighborhood to ensure community support and appreciation for the school, and has carefully managed and expanded the facilities to meet the needs of our student body and their families.

KEY GOALS & STRATEGIES

- Hire a school counselor whose background (e.g., education, specialization, etc.) and school role will be determined by a Board-led committee.
- Establish a formal parent teacher organization aimed at supporting the school-wide community (teachers, staff, families, and students) in its broad educational efforts.
- Create separate job positions that include a reduced teaching load for elementary, LMS, and UMS coordinators.
- Increase the gender, racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the teaching staff.
- Review and revise (if necessary) procedures for hiring a new Head of School and lay the foundation for a smooth transition among administrative personnel upon retirement of the Head of School.
- Implement Strategic Plan.

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STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING

OVERVIEW

The term "development" refers to all facets of a continuing fundraising program (capital campaign giving, annual giving, special events, planned gifts, public relations, volunteerism, marketing, grants, etc.). St. Francis is committed to continuously improving and expanding our development program for the purpose of increasing non-tuition revenue to improve all facets of St. Francis School. Head of School Barbara Porter oversees and is involved in every aspect of Development at SFS, and Tiffany Johnson serves as the full-time Development Director. Parent volunteers assist in all facets of development work.

STRENGTHS

St. Francis has a strong history of success in raising funds to support all facets of the school. Between 2010 and 2015, the school developed a media presence (e.g., Facebook, Twitter), and held successful major (e.g., Howl, Gala) and targeted (e.g., library, school bus, crossing guards) fundraising events, annual campaigns, and a capital campaign. The school has an effective staff position dedicated to development and marketing, and a high percentage of SFS families participate in giving each year. A remarkable 99% of parents gave to the annual campaign in 2015. In sum, the school effectively markets its product: an exceptionally high quality educational experience.

KEY GOALS AND STRATEGIES

- Increase the Scholarship Endowment by developing an endowment campaign strategy and timeline, to begin immediately and conclude by 2022 (see also *Finances*).
- Increase donor base by utilizing Board members to generate new donors and acknowledge current donors, and by encouraging continued engagement and financial support from alumni students and their families.
- Develop a strong, recognizable brand by conducting a brand audit and establishing a marketing advisory committee.
- Establish a guest speaker series to educate parents and staff, build community, and market the strengths of SFS.
- Increase predictability of sponsorships for fundraising events by developing long-term relationships with local companies.
- Enhance the website and social media presence by establishing a workgroup to redesign of the website, utilizing videos and testimonials from alumni, and develop additional forms of social media presence (e.g., SFS blog).

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STRATEGIC PLAN FINANCE

OVERVIEW

St. Francis's operating budget has grown significantly over the last 10 years in order to offer increasingly competitive teacher salaries and benefits, expand and maintain facilities, diversify offerings, and improve educational quality. The Board of Directors establishes an annual budget for the school, and the school generally succeeds in delivering on-budget each year. Significant adjustments to the budgets over this 10-year span were attributable to capital improvements, construction projects, and fluctuating enrollment. The 2015-2016 operating budget is approximately \$4.5M.

Tuition & Fees

Annual enrollment has risen over the past 10 years. In recent years, however, enrollment oscillated with the economy, ranging from 350 to 400 students. As a result, tuition income fluctuated, even though expenses generally did not vary in proportion to attendance. In years when enrollment was high, the school's budget benefited from surplus funds. In lean years, the school drew on reserves. Tuition levels remain below the Austin private school average, in keeping with the school's mission. Currently, the school is pushing the upper boundary of 400 students and needs to plan strategically to meet its financial needs and weather future lean years.

Development Income

Fundraising efforts have become increasingly refined and successful. The school has thus benefited from a steady and significant rise in donations, with some funds earmarked for specific projects and others available for use at the school's discretion. For the 2015-15 school year, the school's Annual Fund raised \$180,000.

Balance Sheet

Prior to commencement of the 2015-16 academic year, the school held approximately \$900,000 in operating cash, approximately \$410,000 in invested operating reserves, and \$430,000 in scholarship endowment funds. The reserves and endowment have not grown in size over the last several years, and the school has withdrawn 4-4.5% from each on an annual basis, maintaining, but not growing, principal in each account.

Scholarship Funding

The school provides approximately \$350,000 in scholarships each year. Only a small portion of those scholarships (\$18,000 in 2014-15) comes from the endowment. The remaining 95% is funded directly out of the school's operating budget.

KEY GOALS & STRATEGIES

- Continue to keep tuition below the Austin private school average.
- Grow reserves to support at least five consecutive lean years (i.e., when enrollment is less than 380 students) by dedicating a portion of budget surpluses, when available, to operating reserves and by re-investing investment income in surplus years.
- Grow the endowment to support 100% of annual scholarships by 2025, by increasing the endowment principal to a total of \$7.65 million (\$700,000 per year). This will free approximately \$300,000 in the operating budget each year, allowing for the accomplishment of other goals in the Strategic Plan.
- Develop a long-term facilities budget and a dedicated facilities and maintenance reserve sub-account. Apportion a starting amount (estimated at \$100,000) from existing operational reserves, and allocate additional funds annually to maintain the Laycock Building. The annual allocation amount will be re-evaluated on a regular basis, but should start at \$30,000 per year.

- Develop a dedicated technology reserve sub-account to meet the school's technology goals. The expense of replacing computers every three years will be normalized across budget years, and a pro-rata portion of funds will be set aside in non-replacement years.
- Periodically increase the school's matching contribution level to the faculty and staffs' retirement plan without requiring a tuition increase.

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STRATEGIC PLAN FACILITIES

OVERVIEW

St. Francis School facilities are comprised of the Laycock building, the Barnes gymnasium, the Learning Center, and the soccer fields. All facilities are owned by the school. The Laycock building was professionally inspected in late 2014. All facilities are in good shape and performing as expected, given their age and condition. Much like current enrollment, the St. Francis facilities have reached their functional capacity. There are no spaces going unutilized on campus.

STRENGTHS

Over the past ten years, the school successfully undertook several major facilities improvements. The school completed a major expansion of the Laycock Building, adding significant square footage to the second floor for additional classrooms and a computer lab. New restrooms were added, the kitchen was upgraded, and existing classrooms on the first floor were improved. The school also established the Madeline Anderson Middle School Library, and the parking lot was reconfigured to allow safer access and improved traffic flow.

The Barnes gymnasium also received a major update that will allow it to function well for years to come, and the Learning Center provides a quiet, welcoming place for study. The Laycock building is, however, aging, and many of its systems are nearing the end of their functional lifespans.

KEY GOALS & STRATEGIES

- Routinely fund maintenance reserves to address the deferred maintenance in the Laycock building, in order to extend its functional lifespan and reduce the long-term cost of ownership, and establish a master maintenance plan to more effectively anticipate expenses and manage the building over time.
- Continue to provide a safe and secure learning environment by expanding the remote monitoring and access to buildings, and implement a summer building management plan.
- Improve the exterior of the Laycock building (e.g., paint, signage, landscaping) to reflect the cheer and vibrancy found inside.
- Maximize and, when possible, standardize, storage opportunities throughout the Laycock building.

- Pursue energy efficient and environmentally friendly options for school improvements whenever feasible.

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STRATEGIC PLAN TECHNOLOGY

OVERVIEW

St. Francis has a cost-efficient system to refresh computers in the lab every three years. By rotating computers from the lab to classrooms, this program extends the use of the machines and allows teachers to acquire additional computers for their classrooms. The upper middle school teachers (7th and 8th grades) are using tablets in their classrooms as part of a pilot program. In addition, they are utilizing online educational technology programs with great success. Through these new devices and programs, students are able to collaborate on assignments and communicate with teachers more effectively. The school also has a user-friendly website containing a wealth of information about the school, faculty, and staff, as well as a calendar. Students and parents are welcome to use the site for online teaching resources and information regarding school events. Please visit <http://www.stfrancis-school.org>

STRENGTHS

St. Francis maintains a well-organized computer lab that has been integrated into the school's curriculum. The infrastructure and environment are structured such that upgrades can be easily implemented in stages, and the school remains open to trying new technologies and staying current with best practices. The school website, which houses promotional videos and general information, allows visibility and transparency for current and potential families, as well as resources for students. The gymnasium houses a high-tech digital Jumbotron equipped with a large screen and sound system. Security cameras effectively monitor the school entrances for safety. In addition, St. Francis offers afterschool curriculum such as Scratch Club to teach students computer coding, Engineering for Kids, and Robotics through the American Robotics Academy.

KEY GOALS & STRATEGIES

- Establish a committee that evaluates technology at St. Francis including a process to implement improvements such as a school-wide grading system and a paperless environment.
- Allocate funds for technology to the school operating budget.
- Create a technology pedagogy that is transformative and accessible to all students.
- Expand teacher training and explore local and national organizations that provide such services.
- Improve communication with increased bandwidth and online ordering for school programs such as hot lunch, pizza, etc.
- Install an additional wireless access point.

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STRATEGIC PLAN PRE-K - ELEMENTARY

OVERVIEW

The St. Francis School Pre-K to Elementary program provides an inclusive, diverse environment that encourages children to express themselves. It promotes small classroom size, social responsibility, achieving to each student's ability, and an engaging academic curriculum.

STRENGTHS

St. Francis's pre-K and elementary school are characterized by dedicated, caring, and skilled teachers who provide highly effective, individualized, and flexible instruction in core subjects (e.g., math, reading) and specials (e.g., music, PE, computers). Teachers aspire to open and effective communication with colleagues and parents, and are rated as highly effective by parents. Curricula are evidence-based and integrated across subjects and grades. The elementary school benefits from highly effective leadership.

KEY GOALS & STRATEGIES

- Involve proposed Parent Teacher Organization in supporting curriculum and instructional activities by, for example, identifying guest speakers, arranging field trips, and cultivating opportunities to collaborate with community organizations (e.g., local non-profits).
- Enhance social and emotional curriculum for entire student body under the direction of a school counselor (see also *School Administration, Faculty, Staff, and Board of Directors*).
- Expand the Pre-K curriculum to include specials (e.g., foreign language, music)
- Strengthen teacher resources to balance the needs of all students while maintaining an outstanding learning environment through expanded use of classroom aides and efficient use of the Learning Center staff.
- Increase communication among students, teachers, and parents through the use of technology.
- Increase play equipment (e.g., blocks, scooters) and equipment storage for Pre-K students.

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STRATEGIC PLAN LOWER MIDDLE SCHOOL (LMS)

OVERVIEW

St. Francis LMS (5th and 6th grades) meets the needs of its diverse students by implementing differentiated and challenging academic programs in which discovery, creativity, and collaboration are fundamental, while developing enthusiastic, life-long learners.

STRENGTHS

The St. Francis LMS has adopted and implemented strong academic standards and a curriculum that is evidence-based and coordinated within and across grade levels. The LMS has been successful at promoting and providing a safe, non-threatening learning environment that respects diversity and demonstrates positive, intrinsic, and inclusive values. The LMS has been successful in attracting and retaining a dedicated, talented set of teachers and operates with a low student-teacher ratio that maximizes student learning. Teachers and staff recognize student achievement by promoting and honoring individual academic excellence, effort, and improvement on a continual basis, as well as recognizing and supporting multi-intelligences and abilities. They are also committed to ensuring effective, functional communication between parents and teachers.

KEY GOALS & STRATEGIES

- Hire a school counselor to enhance teacher and student support system by assisting students with academic and personal development (see also *School Administration, Faculty, Staff and Board of Directors*).
- Establish a Parent Teacher Organization to provide support for LMS teachers, parents, and students in all educational endeavors (see also *School Administration, Faculty, Staff, And Board of Directors*).

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STRATEGIC PLAN UPPER MIDDLE SCHOOL (UMS)

OVERVIEW

St. Francis Upper Middle School provides a challenging educational environment in which individuals' unique characteristics are recognized and valued. Students experience a diverse and supportive community that nurtures their intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth. By maintaining a low student-

teacher ratio, teachers are able to create high academic and personal expectations for all students according to their strengths. A positive classroom experience, paired with community service activities encouraged by the school, helps produce self-confidence and leadership capabilities in our students. St. Francis students are thereby prepared to enter any high school with the tools necessary for overall success.

STRENGTHS

The UMS promotes a stable learning environment with experienced, well-trained, supportive and enthusiastic teachers. The curriculum is delivered in a variety of methods including lectures, group projects, and papers. The emphasis remains on content and mastery, with no state-mandated testing requirements. The UMS maintains a socially supportive environment for youth with diverse experiences, abilities, cultures, races and families. There is an integrated sports program, access to fine arts, a variety of electives, and the Madeline Anderson Middle School Library. The students are able to participate in educationally focused overnight field trips. A survey of the upper middle school students revealed high levels of satisfaction with the teachers, class size, curriculum, overnight field trips, elective choices, and the overall school climate.

KEY GOALS & STRATEGIES

- Hire a School Counselor (see also *School Administration, Faculty, Staff, and Board of Directors*).
- Improve the integration of new students and families into the UMS, with special attention to those who enroll at midyear, by establishing procedures for 1) teacher(s) to initiate a meeting with new families, and 2) identifying a host family and student mentor for each new student, ensuring that we have connected in a meaningful way with new parents and students.
- Explore the feasibility of a UMS coordinator, including developing a job description and compensation (see also *School Administration, Faculty, Staff, and Board of Directors*).
- Explore and implement additional means of integrating student voices into the UMS (e.g., establishing a Student Council, expanding student role in Town Hall meetings).
- Improve parent and student exposure to area high schools (public and private) via website, open houses, and guest presentations, in order to promote a better understanding of local high school options, admission requirements, cultures, and strengths.
- Improve the elective selection for UMS, including a life skills class for UMS that promotes respect, healthy peer interactions, problem-solving, how to address issues of peer pressure, and how to work in groups.
- Establish community service as a routine part of the UMS experience, with clear expectations for student requirements and long-term community partners
- Establish a Parent Teacher Organization to support educational programming in the UMS (see also *School Administration, Faculty, Staff, and Board of Directors*).
- Establish a music program for the UMS (see also *Fine Arts*).
- Expand UMS students' participation in academic competitions by publicizing available competitions, incorporating participation into the curriculum, and providing academic incentives for participation.

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STRATEGIC PLAN CENTRAL TEXAS AUTISM CENTER PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

Central Texas Autism Center, Inc. (CTAC) and St. Francis have established an educational program that offers developmental opportunities by integrating high-functioning CTAC students into a traditional educational setting. CTAC selects a maximum of six students (CTAC-SFS students) at a time who are developmentally suited to participate in the program, and maintains a ratio of one therapist/assistant/attendant per two students participating in the program. St. Francis provides targeted opportunities for CTAC-SFS students to interact with other St. Francis students and participate in activities offered at the school. CTAC-SFS students attend appropriately selected educational classes, interact in individualized or small group setting with other, typically-developing St. Francis students, and engage in other school activities such as recess, lunches, and classroom parties. CTAC uses these services on a daily basis, and also engages in individualized development activities in the CTAC classroom. Simultaneously, typically-developing St. Francis students in the elementary school grades are given opportunities to participate in small group and individualized activities with their CTAC-SFS peers. CTAC-SFS students and their parents are integrated into the St. Francis community. CTAC pays St. Francis a year-round, per-student community membership fee that increases each year by the same percentage as St. Francis's regular tuition. St. Francis provides the CTAC classroom for CTAC's individualized instruction of students during the academic year and summer (i.e., a 12-month program), along with janitorial services.

STRENGTHS

The partnership between CTAC and St. Francis is highly unique within the City of Austin, offering programming both for St. Francis and CTAC students that is unavailable in other public and private schools. The inclusion of high-functioning autistic students in typical school settings and with typically-developing students, and the reverse inclusion of typically-developing students into CTAC programming and spaces, are seen as the "gold standard" for educational programming.

KEY GOALS & STRATEGIES

- Proactively review issues and challenges, if any, and take steps to address such challenges in a timely manner.
- Identify additional opportunities for CTAC and typically-developing St. Francis students to interact with each other in activities offered at the school
- Identify additional opportunities for the integration of CTAC-SFS students and families into the St. Francis community

St. Francis School

Interdenominational Pre-K Through 8th Grade

STRATEGIC PLAN LEARNING CENTER

OVERVIEW

The Learning Center is a key part of meeting the SFS mission of “excellence without exclusivity” and supporting achievement according to ability. It attracts families with children who require extra help, from students with dyslexia or other learning disabilities to students who just need a little help with study or organizational skills. Many of these students turn out to be gifted once their learning needs are addressed, and enrolling students attracted by the Learning Center often leads to the enrollment of siblings who do not need its services. The Learning Center staff consists of four full-time Academic Language Therapists (ALT) and learning specialists, as well as two part-time teachers, also trained as learning specialists. These staff members support children in every grade at St. Francis. During the 2014-15 school year, 71 students, or roughly 18% of the student body, received support from the Learning Center. In a typical week, the Learning Center staff conducts 85 sessions for academic language therapy or dyslexia and 101 sessions on content mastery and study skills. The Learning Center staff uses a variety of measures to regularly assess the progress of their students.

STRENGTHS

The Learning Center is a unique and highly valued resource at St. Francis. Staff members have a wide range of expertise, allowing the center to provide training and resources to meet students’ needs in dyslexia remediation, content mastery, study and organizational skills, and other supports for learning. Importantly, there is no stigma for students using the services, which are delivered in a supportive and relaxed learning environment. The staff communicates and coordinates with teachers to support classroom learning and testing for Learning Center students, as well as the student body as a whole (e.g., the Learning Center staff provides small group support for Stanford testing and middle school mid-term and final exam testing). The staff is also a rich source of information and resource for parents.

KEY GOALS & STRATEGIES

- Explore the creation and funding of a Learning Plan Advisor position whose duties would include:
 - Being a single point of contact for parents to simplify and improve communication.
 - Reviewing the evaluations for students whose parents request learning support and/or accommodations.
 - Developing an *individualized student learning plan* that would clearly outline the student's learning challenges and the recommended and/or required classroom accommodations based on that student's needs, to include Section 504 accommodations and individualized educational plans (IEPs) under federal legislation.

- Setting up Learning Plan meetings with parents and teachers at the beginning of the school year.
- Overseeing the implementation of accommodations and maintaining contact with teachers and parents regarding the student's progress under the Learning Plan.
- Collecting data to measure student progress.
- Supporting students' transition to public or private schools and ensuring that appropriate documentation is provided to assure continuity in accommodations
- Enhance communication with, outreach to, and educational programming (e.g., speakers, films) for parents.
- Establishing staggered schedules for upper and lower middle school electives to allow more efficient scheduling, resulting in the Learning Center's ability to serve more students.

St. Francis School

Interdenominational Pre-K Through 8th Grade

STRATEGIC PLAN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

OVERVIEW

Competency in more than one language is undoubtedly an asset in our increasingly global, multilingual world. Furthermore, research suggests that second language acquisition is associated with improved cognitive and academic outcomes. At the same time, the commitment of instructional time and resources required to produce proficiency in a second language is considerable, and must be prioritized within a broad set of educational goals. Just 15% of U.S. public elementary schools offer any foreign language instruction (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). That figure is down from 24% the decade earlier, a drop attributable to budget cuts and an increased focus on math and reading. Although approximately 90% of all public high schools offer foreign language instruction, the percentages of colleges that require foreign language proficiency has dropped over the last decades to approximately 50%. Foreign language teachers in elementary grades should have native or near native proficiency in the target language, be certified as elementary teachers, and have a background in child language acquisition and foreign language teaching methods. St. Francis employs one full-time foreign language instructor, Brenda Bazaldua, and two part-time foreign language instructors, Cecelia Wibbelsman, and Lary Warner. Ms. Wibblesman teaches pre-K through 3rd grade Spanish, Ms. Bazaldua teaches 4th through 8th grade Spanish, and Mr. Warner teaches 7th and 8th grade Latin.

STRENGTHS

Foreign language instruction begins in pre-kindergarten at St. Francis. In the pre-K, elementary, and lower middle school, a single language, Spanish, is offered. Children in pre-K through fourth grades receive Spanish instruction each week. Lower middle school students can elect to enroll in Spanish, and upper middle school students can opt to enroll in Spanish or Latin.

KEY GOALS & STRATEGIES

- Expand the current language offerings to include American Sign Language.

St. Francis School

Interdenominational Pre-K Through 8th Grade

STRATEGIC PLAN ATHLETICS

OVERVIEW

Physical activity is widely regarded as a critical component of youth education, in part because there are well-documented short- and long-term physical, emotional, and cognitive benefits associated with it. The obesity epidemic in the U.S. makes it especially important for schools to provide children with the foundation for a life-long participation in physical activity. Children who are physically active typically remain active across their lifespans, and perform better academically than their peers. St. Francis's program has two separate components, Physical Education (P.E.) and Athletics. Both are headed by the school's Athletics Director, Dustin Armstrong, and share the same facilities.

Physical Education

The P.E. program serves students in Pre-K through 8th grade. The National Association for Sports and Physical Education's (NASPE) guidelines for physical education recommend that schools provide 150 minutes per week of physical education instruction to elementary school students and 225 minutes per week to middle school students. Instruction at St. Francis includes: for Pre-K, once a week for 40 minutes (40 minutes/wk); for Kindergarten through 4th grades, 40 minutes twice a week (80 minutes/wk); and for 5th through 8th grades, 40 minutes three times a week (120 minutes/wk). Although St. Francis falls short of NASPE guidelines, P.E. instruction is close to national norms. For children in grades K through 4, instruction time is slightly below the national average for public schools. For children in grades 5 through 8, instruction time approximately equals the national average. P.E. class sizes average 30 students. The largest classes include approximately 90 students (7th & 8th grades). Two full-time faculty members serve as P.E. instructors and coaches: Telisa Young and Dustin Armstrong, with each spending 15.33 hours per week teaching P.E. Currently, academic teachers serve as P.E. instructors for lower and upper Middle School students who are not participating in organized sports, while P.E. teachers provide instruction for lower and upper Middle School students who are participating in organized sports.

Athletics

The Athletics program includes a very high proportion of the eligible St. Francis students. Students become eligible to participate in 5th grade, two years earlier than in Austin public schools, and comparable to most private schools. Approximately 65% of upper and lower middle school students participate in Athletics (165 total athletes in 2014-2015). The Athletics program includes nine sports (flag football, volleyball, cross country, basketball, track, soccer, golf, tennis, and ultimate frisbee). Each sport includes 5th-6th and 7th-8th grade teams, and each year, the Athletics Director creates enough teams to accommodate all students who would like to compete, resulting in a very high number of teams. In 2014-

2015, there were ten basketball teams, six volleyball teams, four track teams, four flag football teams, four cross country teams, two ultimate frisbee teams, one golf team, and one tennis team). The program includes very successful teams and highly skilled athletes (including alums who have become collegiate athletes), as well as teams with modest success and novice athletes.

Staff. The 2014-2015 Athletics program included 15 coaches, consisting of two full-time employees and 13 hired or volunteer part-time coaches. There were six basketball, three ultimate frisbee, two volleyball, two flag football, one track, and one cross country coach. Soccer, tennis, and golf currently do not have coaches.

Finances. Each student athlete is charged a fee per sport. In 2014-2015, these fees were \$160 for flag football, volleyball, basketball, soccer, track, and ultimate. The fee was \$50 for tennis and golf, and \$20 for cross country. These fees are higher than those charged by similar private schools in Austin. In 2014-2015, approximately three students received financial aid to cover all or part of their fees.

STRENGTHS

The Athletics and Physical Education Program has become one of the highest quality, most successful, and most inclusive programs at St. Francis. The recent parent survey indicated high levels of approval. Dustin Armstrong was appointed the school's first Athletic Director (AD) in 2000. Under Armstrong's direction, the level of participation in Athletics, as well as the school's reputation for Athletics, have grown exponentially. The P.E. and Athletics programs have access to excellent facilities and equipment, largely made possible by donations from St. Francis families. The indoor facilities include a 10,000 SF climate controlled, multi-purpose gym with laminate floor, overhanging garage doors allowing for outdoor access on the northeast side, a Jumbotron with advertising potential, boys' and girls' locker rooms with cubbies, public use restrooms, a concession stand in the foyer with microwave, refrigerator, sink, and cabinet/shelf storage, and an Athletics' staff office. The outdoor facilities include a full-size soccer field, a crushed granite track, a long-jump pit, a concession and storage building, portable restrooms, and a playground for the younger children. The Athletics program also hosts three popular sports camps during the summer: basketball, flag football, and volleyball. Of these camps, basketball (founded in 2002) is the largest, growing in size and reputation each year. The SFS Basketball Camp now runs for four weeks every summer, enrolling 50 campers per week.

KEY GOALS & STRATEGIES

- Increase Athletics and Physical Education staff to improve staff-to-student ratio in P.E. classes and increase Athletic Director's time for administrative planning, documentation, and management, including the establishment of a formal, ongoing coaching internship program for local college and high school students.
- Charge the Athletics Director with increasing the organizational and management structures in place within Athletics and Physical Education. The large and growing number of full-time and volunteer staff (15 coaches in 2014-2015) requires better definition of roles, responsibilities, and evaluation of staff. There is a need for additional administrative staff and better communication regarding the state of the Athletics program.

- Plan and budget for professional development activities (e.g., meetings of the Texas High School Athletic Directors Association and Texas Association Health Physical Education Recreation and Dance). Special training is required in other areas as well (e.g., scoreboard operation, first aid, bus drivers' licensing).
- Develop a plan for directed, sustained fundraising for Athletics and increase the transparency of spending of donated funds. The Athletics program has demonstrated an ability to generate donations of cash (e.g., the Armstrong Athletic Scholarship) and goods (e.g., the Jumbotron). Past giving has often been donor -- rather than school -- directed, and spending rules and plans for donations sometimes lack clarity. The school should develop 1) a formal athletic booster club, and 2) guidelines and schedules for fundraising, and specific uses for the Armstrong Athletic Scholarship fund (e.g., attracting underprivileged youth to SFS who have strong balance of academics & athletics).
- Plan and schedule regular updates of equipment and uniforms (e.g., uniforms updated every three years, a cycle that will allow for replacement uniforms for one sport per year).
- Improve gym facilities by moving the new storage cabinets to a new location within the gym and then moving the concession area into the gym in corner vacated by the cabinets. The space vacated by the concession stand could then be converted into an office or storage. Hot water and better water pressure would also be assets.
- Improve athletic field facilities. Replace the existing granite trail with a two-lane running track that provides a smoother surface. Install running hot and cold water in the field concession stand and secure additional storage space for Athletic Department use. Adding restrooms on the field would also be an asset.

St. Francis School

Interdenominational Pre-K Through 8th Grade

STRATEGIC PLAN FINE ARTS

OVERVIEW

Fine Arts at St. Francis include visual arts, theater arts, and music programs. St. Francis School also has a robust poetry program that is fully integrated into the upper and lower middle school curriculum. These fine arts strands are all stand-alone programs or electives that allow for significant student development and recognition.

STRENGTHS

Overall. The Fine Arts are a flourishing part of the St. Francis experience. As one 8th grader put it, "For a school that doesn't promote Fine Arts or think of itself as 'arty,' St. Francis certainly produces a lot of arty kids!" Forty percent of the 2015 graduates attended a high school with a significant arts focus (Griffin School, McCallum Fine Arts Academy, and McCallum High School). Ten percent of the class attended the competitive entry Fine Arts Academy at McCallum High School, and SFS graduates currently are enrolled

in every strand of the Fine Arts Academy (music, visual arts, theater, technical theater, and cinema arts). The school also has many graduates excelling in the visual arts, theater, vocal music, and band programs at many other area high schools.

Music. The music program enjoys a dedicated classroom space. Pre-K students have a one 30-minute music lesson per week; Kindergarten students have one 40-minute lesson per week; and students in the 1st through 4th grade have twice weekly music classes of 40 minutes each. Instruction effectively develops musicianship and fosters a love of music. The curriculum includes a wide variety of music (e.g., folk songs from diverse cultures, classical music) and introduces students to a wide variety of instruments, music history, and music listening and reading skills. Students are exposed to professional musicians (e.g., via school performances) and participate in semiannual music programs and end-of-year graduation programs. Private piano lessons are available after school as an extracurricular activity

Theater. The theater program has a flexible, wide-ranging curriculum that builds on student interest and talents. The program offers a widely popular, twice-a-week 45-minute elective class for 5th and 6th grades, and a separate class for 7th and 8th grades. In addition, students stage semiannual theater performances in a dedicated area. Curriculum includes theater games, improvisational techniques, and movement-based skills, and the program effectively builds on and expands concepts introduced in language arts, history, music, and art classes. Theater productions are collaborative efforts that involve staff and students from music and art. The school has successfully placed numerous graduates in the competitive-entry theater and technical-theater programs at McCallum Fine Arts Academy, and graduates have participated in a wide variety of school- and community-based theater productions.

Visual Arts. The visual arts program includes regular classroom instruction (one 60-minute class per week for Kindergarten through 4th grade, and a twice weekly, 45-minute art elective for 5th through 8th grades). In addition, St. Francis offers an after-school art program that provides opportunities for enrichment, and for students to deepen skills and to complete larger scale projects. The visual arts program provides high quality materials and supplies that allow students of all ages to work in a variety of mediums, including ceramics (e.g., two pottery kilns, two pottery wheels, large variety of pottery molds), textiles (e.g., sewing machine, large variety of textiles and fabrics), and drawing and painting (e.g., flat files, drying racks, professional quality pastels, charcoal, pencils, tempura, and India ink). Art textbooks provide historical context and examples for students. Opportunities include the creation of sets for theater and items for the gala auction, and students routinely apply successfully to competitive visual arts programs and participate in local art shows.

KEY GOALS & STRATEGIES

- Establish annual budgets across the Fine Arts program (see also *Finances*) and introduce staggered schedules for upper and lower middle school electives to allow better scheduling and create time to serve additional students.
- Enhance the music curriculum by 1) increasing the school's collection of instruments and music technologies, 2) purchasing additional risers, 3) increasing students' exposure to music performances, both at school and on field trips (Austin Symphony Orchestra, Austin Opera, Austin

Jazz Workshop, Austin Chamber Center, etc.), and 4) increasing students' opportunities to perform.

- Establish a middle school choir or ensemble elective for upper and lower middle school, to include regular music programs.
- Mount large-scale, biennial theater productions that incorporate art and music students' work, and continue to produce small productions semiannually.
- Enhance lighting and sound system to support theater performances and develop technical theater skills, and maintain the stage in the cafetorium year-round.
- Improve the visual arts facilities and resources (e.g., improve the flooring in the art room, add a document camera and projector for the art room, and repair the kiln shed).
- Develop and identify additional opportunities to showcase student art (e.g., art cases in the lobby, regular art shows) and to allow students to participate in local and regional art competitions.
- Explore the possibility of creating more focused fine arts electives for middle school (e.g., ceramics, printmaking).

St. Francis School

Interdenominational Pre-K Through 8th Grade

STRATEGIC PLAN LIBRARIES

OVERVIEW

St. Francis School's library program encompasses two physical libraries: the elementary school library (ESL), which serves Pre K through 4th grade students, and the Madeline Anderson Middle School Library (MSL), which serves 5th through 8th grade students. The school employs one full-time librarian. She is dedicated to growing a flourishing library community which supports students, teachers, and families through collaborative teaching, self-selection reading, semiannual Book Fair fundraising, and diversified space usage. A paid library intern manages library book circulation, elementary book processing, and special assignments.

STRENGTHS

The library program has several outstanding features. St. Francis students enjoy ample, quiet, inviting, and age-appropriate library spaces in which to work, read, and browse. These spaces additionally host meetings and after-school activities (e.g., study halls, staff meetings, book clubs, morning care, special events, and parent meetings). Free lending encourages a lifelong love of literature and circulation is rising. Notably, book clubs have flourished in the lower and upper middle schools (numbering 17 and 10, respectively), and the library program is well supported by the parent body, with Book Fair profits increasing over the last several years.

KEY GOALS & STRATEGIES

- Create a dedicated annual budget that can be use to replace books, technology, and furniture when needed (see also *Finances*).
- Stimulate growth of the library by modernizing and expanding the use of technology (i.e., tablets, e-readers, software).
- Increase community (e.g., parents, local non-profits, local authors) involvement in all facets of programming by enlisting support from the new Parent Teacher Organization (see also *School Administration, Faculty, Staff, and Board of Directors*), and increasing the visibility and utility of the SFS library web page and social media.