



Our Lady of Mercy **SCHOOL**

STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2020



Dear Our Lady Mercy families and friends,

For the past 57 years, Our Lady of Mercy School, guided by our Catholic faith, has been educating students for the rigors of high school and life. We are proud of our reputation as an innovative leader of excellence in Catholic education. Our graduates, as evidenced by our many national and local accolades over the years, are prepared to be the future of our Catholic Church and to lead fulfilling, successful lives.

To ensure our continued vitality and strength, Mercy embarked on a strategic planning process in 2015 that involved stakeholders from throughout the community. Working in partnership with Catholic School Management, we performed a massive data collection and interviewed administration, parents, current and past faculty, students, parish members, parish and school staff, alumni, and high school admission officers to identify our opportunities and challenges. The result is a five-year plan that will guide our efforts to continue Mercy's inclusive, rigorous, and personalized Catholic education in 21st century society.

In conjunction with this plan, Our Lady of Mercy School has established a new School Advisory Council (SAC) comprised of parents, parish members, and community leaders. These members will operate in committees, tasked with achieving the goals and priorities in the plan. Committee chairs will report on progress toward these goals at monthly SAC meetings, and progress reports will be shared quarterly with the greater Mercy community.

Internally, the school administrative team has already developed and implemented several action steps for the academic goals. These new initiatives include a real-world math application class for all students; a Makerspace lab which is a dynamic space for designing and building electronic hardware, programming, and manufacturing projects; expanded music for grades 5-8; an instrumental band director to enhance Mercy's instrumental music program; middle school physical education by gender and a leadership seminar. Additionally, we have increased our scholarship program and have hired a part-time Director of Marketing to oversee our marketing, development, and enrollment efforts.

Moving forward, our theme this year will be Verso L'alto, which in Italian means "toward the top." This phrase is associated with Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, a passionate, young mountain climber who led an inspirational life of faith, service and joyfulness. Blessed Frassati will be our patron and guide as we strive to take Mercy to great heights!

We extend our gratitude to all of those who participated in this strategic planning process. Your effort and insight created this important plan, which will guide Mercy's future and its continued success. Thank you for your dedication to our mission and vision of Catholic education.

With assurances of prayers for you and your families, we are
Yours in Christ,

Rev. William Byrne
Pastor

Mrs. Deborah Thomas
Principal



Our Lady of Mercy School Mission

Our Lady of Mercy School, guided by the heritage of our Catholic faith, provides each student the opportunity to reach full potential of mind, body and spirit. Through daily exposure to individualized instructional environments, technology and innovative teaching methods, Mercy students learn to think, question, collaborate, and lead in 21st century society.

Be inspired. Be challenged. Be you.

Education in our times "is guided by a changing generation, and ... therefore, every educator – and the Church as a whole is an educating mother – is required to change, in the sense of knowing how to communicate with the young."

- Pope Francis



Strategic Planning Goal Statements and Objectives

Community of Support

Pastor Father Bill Byrne and Father Chris Seith teach middle school religion weekly.

Father Don Worch hosts a weekly lunch for 8th graders.

More than 170 parish and school stakeholders participated in the strategic planning process.

An active Mercy Parent Teacher Organization organizes 30 committees in support of social and academic events each year.

Mission and Catholic Identity

GOAL #1

Our Lady of Mercy School, guided by its mission and Catholic identity, and committed to faith formation and service, will be the Catholic elementary school of choice among parish families.

Preliminary Objectives:

- A. To promote the value of a Catholic, faith-based education to families of Our Lady of Mercy Parish and beyond
- B. To increase school family participation in Sunday Mass and parish life
- C. To develop and implement a Parent Ambassador program

GOAL #2

Our Lady of Mercy School will distinguish itself in the community by providing service to the parish, neighborhood, and the greater Potomac area.

Preliminary Objectives:

- A. To adopt a Community Service Learning Program whereby students have the time to reflect on and write about the service experience
- B. To integrate service projects with the core curriculum



Governance and Leadership

GOAL #3

Our Lady of Mercy School will develop a strong and effective School Advisory Council to offer professional expertise and consultation with regard to fulfilling the school's mission and achievement of its strategic plan.

Preliminary Objectives:

- A. To adopt normative School Advisory Council Bylaws
- B. To select members and conduct in-service training to the School Advisory Council on all aspects of its performance
- C. To develop and populate School Advisory Committees including Mission Enhancement, Planning and Policy, Building and Grounds, Council Members, and Catholic Identity

21st Century Education

1:1 Chromebooks for the entire middle school; Nooks in grades Pre-K through 2nd; a Kindle for every 8th grader.

A 3-D printer in the computer lab; a broadcasting studio with a green screen; and projectors with white boards in every classroom.

Makerspace collaborative workspace for making, learning, exploring and sharing using high tech to no tech tools; providing Mercy students with critical 21st century STEM skills.



Academic Excellence

Two-time National Blue Ribbon School award winner; consistent qualifier in non-eligible years including the fall and spring of 2015-16 school year.

Student/faculty ratio of 10:1. Every Mercy student receives small group instruction for both math and language arts. This environment enables teachers to provide personalized support and enrichment, to delve deeper into the curriculum, and to make real-world connections, all of which promote student engagement, interest and growth.

74% of Mercy's faculty hold advanced degrees.

15 extra curricular programs are offered to students.

Academic Excellence

GOAL #4

Our Lady of Mercy School will provide a rigorous academic program that engages and challenges students at all levels, recognizing and responding to individual needs.

Preliminary Objectives:

- A. To conduct an evaluation of all aspects of the middle school curriculum
- B. To assess financial and staff resources dedicated to the Inclusion Program and develop a plan to sustain it for the future
- C. To clarify and articulate the opportunities available to challenge high achieving students

GOAL #5

Our Lady of Mercy School will offer opportunities for students to enrich their learning experience through offerings of fine arts, sports, clubs, and activities.

Preliminary Objectives:

- A. To assess the breadth and variety of current extracurricular and co-curricular offerings for students
- B. To encourage students to develop clubs and activities that respond to their individual interests
- C. To increase the effectiveness of and promote the After School Program





Student Success

100% of Mercy graduates in 2015 and 2016 earned admission to their first choice high school.

\$135,000 in scholarships were awarded to the 2016 graduating class.

Admissions personnel from local Catholic secondary schools universally describe Mercy graduates as being well-prepared, self-confident and likely to make a mark in their chosen area of study.

The 2016 Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart valedictorian was a Mercy graduate.

Mercy graduates attend the most prestigious colleges in the country: Boston College, Carnegie Mellon, Duke, Georgetown, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, New York University, University of Virginia, Yale, and more.

Operational Vitality

Goal #6

Our Lady of Mercy School will adopt a marketing posture and communication strategy designed to increase and broaden outreach to internal and external audiences using all effective means of communication.

Preliminary Objectives:

- A. To hire a part-time marketing professional to develop and manage Mercy's marketing efforts
- B. To expand membership of and provide direction to the Marketing Committee in order to increase its effectiveness
- C. To inventory best practices in the area of parent communications, responding to needs identified by parents



Goal #7

Our Lady of Mercy School will attain optimal enrollment by developing and implementing a comprehensive enrollment management plan that addresses recruitment and retention.

Preliminary Objectives:

- A. To improve retention of students by creating an academy-like setting in the middle school through the use of electives, individualized courses, leadership opportunities, online learning, faith formation opportunities, a community service learning program and off-campus trips/activities
- B. To expand recruitment initiatives to parents with children approaching kindergarten age
- C. To initiate a Baptismal Recognition Program, led by school parents and involving current students
- D. To improve recruitment and retention of a gender-balanced enrollment

Inclusion

A pioneer in inclusive education, Mercy is recognized throughout the region for its ability to support and educate children with learning, developmental and intellectual disabilities. Over the years, dozens of schools have visited Mercy to benchmark its highly successful inclusion program.

The ultimate goal of Mercy's enrollment management process is that each parent has confidence in school leadership, is satisfied with the overall educational experience, and has a meaningful connection to the school community.

Operational Vitality

A unique feature of Our Lady of Mercy's academic model is the Educational Excellence Program which is designed to provide an optimum school experience for all children based on their various educational strengths and needs.

GOAL #8

Working in partnership with the Parish Finance Council, Our Lady of Mercy School will develop, implement, and annually review a long-range financial plan that provides for a balanced operating budget, affordable tuition, and funds strategic initiatives.

Preliminary Objectives:

- A. To work with the Parish Finance Council to develop a long-range financial plan
- B. To assess expense and revenue trends for the past five years and use these trends to make reasonable operating and capital expense projections for the next three years
- C. To ensure that three-year projections are funded at realistic levels through existing and newly identified revenue sources



GOAL #9

Our Lady of Mercy School will create and implement a development plan designed to generate additional revenues by growing programs of annual, major, and planned giving.

Preliminary Objectives:

- A. To determine appropriate short-term and long-term levels of staffing and clarify roles and responsibilities for fundraising and development programs
- B. To establish a Development Committee with responsibility to design a comprehensive advancement plan that addresses fundraising, programs of annual giving, and endowment growth
- C. To create a “case for support” in order to increase the effectiveness of the annual fund appeal

“Mercy has proven to not only prepare students for the classroom, but also for life beyond Kentsdale Drive.”

K. O’Conor (alum)



This strategic plan for Our Lady of Mercy School is a living document that will continuously be evaluated. We value and appreciate the support and involvement of our entire Mercy community. It is our hope that community members, parents, faculty and staff, and students will all play a part in helping us reach our goals.

We thank the following individuals who served on the Strategic Planning Committee.

Rev. William Byrne, Pastor

Rev. Christopher Seith, Parochial Vicar

Deborah Thomas, Principal

Nuni Fairbanks, Parent

Ralph Fairbanks, Parent

David LaRoche, Parishioner

Kitty Shadman, Faculty/Technology Coordinator

Patrick Sharp, Faculty

Edward Quinn, Parent

Mary Ward, Parent

Bruce Ward, Parent