

# ONE SHARED VISION

Academic and Programming  
Semi-Annual Report  
Winter 2017



ST. FRANCIS  
DE SALES  
SCHOOL



FOUNDATION IN FAITH  
EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION





# EXCELLENCE IS OUR GOAL

*"Our program strives to nurture within our students a loving heart, a faith-filled soul, and an inquisitive mind."*

Mr. Rob Costante  
Principal

## THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

### *A Note From Our Principal*

Each day, a dedicated group of educators nurture the mind, the heart and the soul of the young people who will shape the type of world that will serve our human family. And as I reflect on the awesome responsibility that has been bestowed upon our faculty and staff, we are truly humbled by the unique opportunity we hold to foster the next group of scholarly and ethical leaders. And as I look back at the past five months of the 2016-2017 school, I am inspired by the learning environment that is cultivated within the walls of our 'charming little schoolhouse'.

As I reflect on the 2016-17 school year, I am inspired by the positive spirit which has grown within our community. And as direct evidence to this spirit, during the first half of this school year we have experienced the re-enrollment of six former students along with the addition of three new students. With such positive energy in our community, I am confident that the strength of our educational product and the affordable value of our academic program will continue to reveal that our school is second to none. And as I look at the success of our alumni in high school, college and beyond, I know well the type young person that graduates from our school and the impact they have upon our broader community serves as direct testimony to the immeasurable benefits of the St. Francis de Sales experience.

## S.T.R.E.A.M.S. SCHOOL

In today's society, we have seen an emergent and growing need to develop a STEM Science-Technology-Engineering-Math skill set within young people. We have used the National Catholic Educational Association's model of S.T.R.E.A.M. and have adapted it to our own strategic planning process. The St. Francis de Sales version represents us as a **SCIENCE-TECHNOLOGY-RELIGION-ENGINEERING-ARTS-MATH-SPANISH** (S.T.R.E.A.M.S.) school. As a S.T.R.E.A.M.S. school, we pride ourselves in being a learning community that integrates the virtues of our faith into an environment where problem solving, independent research and group collaboration are identifiable facets of our educational program. Moreover, our goal of providing our students a broad curriculum that develops a 21st century world skill-set has guided our staff development this year. Accordingly, our professional efforts have focused on evaluating the pre-existing S.T.E.M. activities that have been historical features within our curriculum and how we might use these foundational activities to adopt an even greater inquiry based approach to our curriculum. And as a growth minded organization that fosters a culture of innovation within our classes, I look forward to St. Francis de Sales serving the Eastern Shore as a S.T.R.E.A.M.S. School of Excellence.



Knowing that there is no greater responsibility we hold than that of providing a safe and secure learning environment for your children, the past five months have offered our community the opportunity to actively engage in our

Emergency Response Plan. To this point, the first half of the school year has seen us prepare how we would take action during a fire threat, a severe weather threat, a bomb threat, an active intruder threat, a shelter-in-place lockdown threat, as well as the reunification process of our students with his/her family. And as a staff, we have continued to develop our plan and have received ongoing training on how to respond during such emergencies. More to this point, we are grateful to the Salisbury Police Department, the Salisbury Fire Department and the Wicomico County Department of Emergency Services for the ongoing training, evaluation and support that they have provided during our training preparations.



## INFUSED TECHNOLOGY



As an educational belief of our community, we are dedicated to having “facilities and equipment that are current and prepare students for a technologically oriented world”. With this belief statement in mind, I have grown increasingly impressed by the ways in which our school community has infused the tools of technology within the classroom and those that which provide support at home. This year, our teachers’ use of Google Apps For Education (also referred to as G-Suite) has developed a symbiotic partnership between the curricular instruction that is provided by our faculty and the vehicle of engaged learning that is made available through the educational applications of Google. As an added tool in which to facilitate the collaborative and individual creativity of the G-Suite resources, our purchase of a Chromebook cart of laptops that moves around the building, serves as a means in which to further enhance student achievement and prepare our “students for the technologically oriented world” in which they live. The web based tools offered through Google and the use of the Chromebooks have allowed our students to even more enthusiastically engage with the learning process and support that they have provided during our training preparations.

## SPORTS



Our Athletics program provides a unique educational experience to boys and girls in grades 5 through 8. Although we are typically competing against teams with a predominance of 7th and 8th grade students, we have found that our multi-grade level participation allows our young people to mature as both athletes and leaders through many years of direct competition. This structure has shown to nurture unity within our upper grades, as well as cultivate a positive spirit and shared camaraderie that is not likely to be found at any other school. This year’s sport teams have been younger in comparison to our competition, and yet we have nevertheless experienced great success beyond the many wins we have achieved on the courses, courts and fields of the Eastern Shore. Furthermore, our students are always developing the qualities of sportsmanship, teamwork, enthusiasm, effort, determination and perseverance.

As we look ahead to next year, we are proud to announce that our Boys Soccer team will join Golf as our second co-ed sport. Accordingly, in the fall of 2017, for the first team in school history our Soccer team will become a co-ed sport for all eligible grade levels. The evolution of our athletic program continues to stand tall as an inclusive, unifying and character building aspect of the educational product that we provide to our school families.

## Service

As a means in which to honor our mission of providing “service to others,” our students have used the first half of the school year to dynamically live out the virtues of our faith in service toward the marginalized and forgotten citizens of our community. Accordingly, our young Penguins have served as leaders for:

- *Students with Special Needs Field Day* for Pinehurst Elementary
- *Jingle Bell Ball* for residents at John B. Parson’s Assisted Living Center
- *Caroling with Care Project* for convalescent patients at Anchorage Nursing Care Center
- *Healing Wall Project* for cancer patients at PRMC
- *Hallo-Giving Parade Project* for patients at Anchorage
- *Flag-Planting Project* at Springhill Memory Gardens for departed Veterans
- *Monthly trips to serve lunch* at the Joseph House Ministries Dining Room
- *Penguin Plushies Stuffed Animal Collection* for children affected by home fires
- *Operation Gratitude* candy collection for members of Armed Forces serving abroad
- *Pajama’s for a Peaceful Night Sleep* collection project
- *Let LOVE Grow* mitten and glove collection project for persons of need within our area

Through acts of both direct and indirect service, our students have used the Fruits of the Holy Spirit as a means in which to care for and share love with our local neighbors.







*“In it  
for the  
outcomes.”*  
Debra Traum  
Vice Principal

# CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

**St. Francis continues to offer a rigorous academic program** in which students receive individualized support for instruction. We continually review and update our materials for instruction in order to provide our students with an integrated approach that cements their content knowledge and scholastic skills. As typical of Catholic Schools, students learn discipline and study skills to prepare them for college and career readiness. There have been many highlights over the course of the year. The Go Math series and its online components have proven to support and strengthen our math program as shown in the improved Terra Nova scores. Our reading program, Journeys, has an integrated style that has boosted our performance in language mechanics scores. It also has online instructional and assessment components that help teachers provide individualized educational opportunities.

in grades PreK-8 participate in a lab period of hands-on lab experience each week. These investigations demand that students think critically and problem solve.



**The purchase of thirty Chromebooks** has opened the door to Google Classroom. Teachers and students are elated by the many uses for this technology, as well as expanding the numbers of student that can be working online at one time. We are truly preparing our students for a society that increasingly needs to not only put thoughts on paper, but place them online to be shared.

**Our alumni and their families often share** with us how well our students have been prepared for high school and beyond. Father LaBarge recently shared that when he participates in the Baccalaureate Services at local high schools our students consistently demonstrate leadership in their respective schools. These and many other anecdotes continually instill confidence in our academic program at St. Francis.



**Our annual STEM fair was a great success** again this year. Judged by local scientists from SU, Wor Wic, our parish and the business community; students proudly presented their science and engineering projects. This year first place for 8th grade included an experiment on the Urban Heat Effect which had global climate change implications. It employed the use of a drone to collect data. Over 50 projects fascinated the community with their problem solving, design and build and critical thinking skills. This capstone event is the perfect showcase for our students' significant talents, as well as the great science education students receive using the Lab Learner program as the resource for science instruction throughout the school. Students



## MIDDLE STATES RE-ACCREDITATION AND ACTION PLAN ACHIEVEMENTS

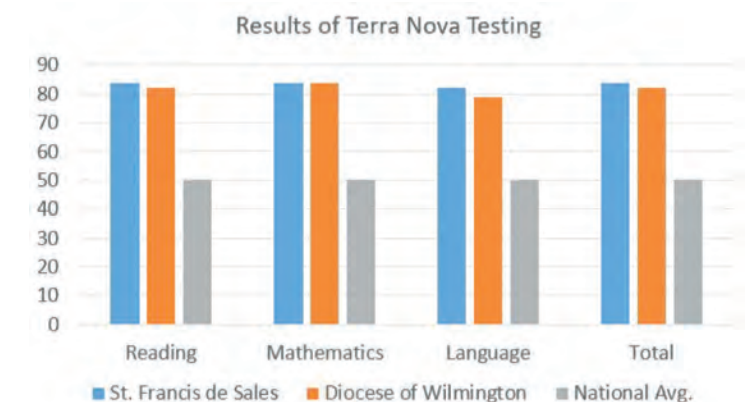
In the spring of 2016, St. Francis was re-accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. This year long process included an internal and external review, as well as goal setting in the form of an Action Plan. This was developed with the input and support of all stakeholders in the school community. To date, the school has made significant progress toward meeting these substantive goals.

Writing composition has become a priority which includes maintaining a writing portfolio for each student and integrating writing through all curricular areas. Measurable goals were set for achievement on standardized assessments with scores for 2015 being the benchmark year. This included both the Terra Nova and the ACRE tests.

- The National Catholic Educational Association has created a standardized test given in fifth and eighth grades as a way to assess the knowledge our students have about their Catholic Faith. Seventy two percent of our students scored higher than the national average in all six domains.
- Terra Nova is the most widely used test in the United States to assess student achievement in all subject areas. St. Francis has specific goals for the math and language arts sub tests. Since adopting *Go Math* as our resource for instruction, our school continues to show gains in all math subtests on the Terra Nova. The school gained more than 7% in math computation scores and more than 4% in the math composite

score. In the area of language mechanics, another target subtest, the school increased its scores 7%.

Additionally, our school scored higher than the Diocesan average in the reading, language mechanics and mathematics sub tests. Last year St. Francis scored in the fourth quartile for all subject areas targeted by our Middle States plan. We are proud of the progress our teachers and students have made in working towards attaining our long term Strategic Plan goals.



*Terra Nova is a series of standardized achievement tests used in the United States designed to assess K-12 student achievement in reading, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, vocabulary, spelling, and other areas. The test series is published by CTB/McGraw-Hill. The national median is set at 50%.*

*St. Francis de Sales students surpassed the national average scores by more than 32% in each category in the last year's testing.*

## THE CAMPUS

On campus resources continue to grow:

- Modern Classrooms and Technology
- The Philip & Barbra Long Parish Center
- Gymnasium
- All-Purpose Room for Stage and Sound
- Science Lab
- Computer Lab
- Sisters of Mercy Prayer Room
- Library
- Cafeteria
- Campus Wi-Fi and Centralized Network
- Music and Band Room
- H.S.A. Uniform Store

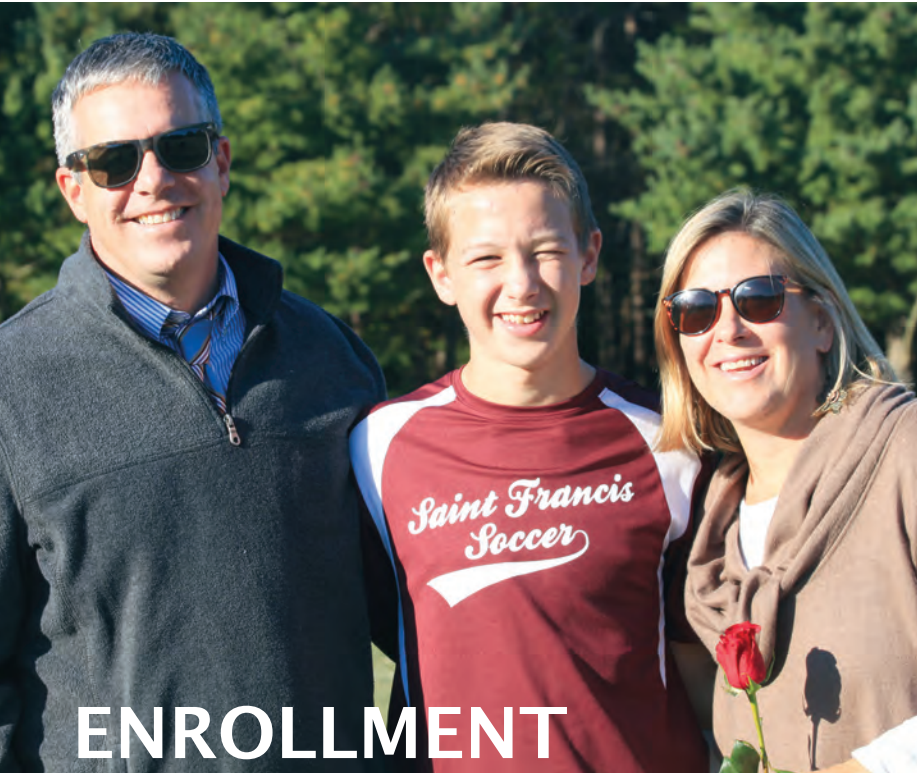


## “COMMUNITY MEETING”

There is something joyful about the morning. As most of you know, every morning our entire school gathers together. Our morning ritual offers the perfect backdrop to the unity that exists within our school family. If you were to pay a visit to the Parish Center at 8:15am on any given day, you would likely hear the Gospel being read, prayers being offered, petitions being shared, hymns being sung, triumphs being celebrated, and of course, birthday wishes being serenaded. What's more, this daily gathering offers all students the opportunity to develop the skills of public speaking. At St. Francis, this forgotten educational skill is alive and well. And as a fitting conclusion to our Community Meeting, a spirited reminder that “PENGUIN PRIDE Lives Here!” resonates between the walls of the Parish Center. There is something joyful about the morning - its called our daily Community Meeting.

*We Believe Every Child Can Benefit from Catholic Values and a Catholic Education.*



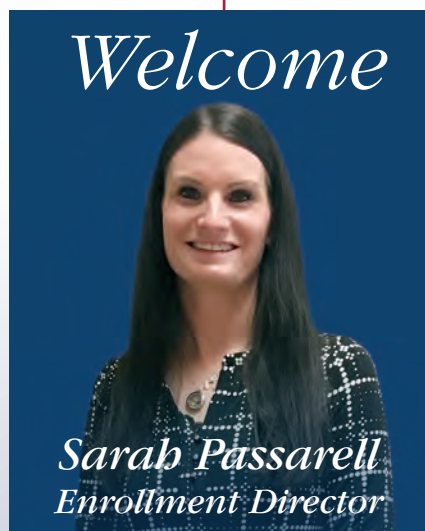


## ENROLLMENT OUTREACH

Our renewed efforts to initiate and maintain dialogue with our parent community occurred this fall as we hosted our first ever *“Coffee and Conversation”* grade level meetings. These Monday morning chats were offered as a means in which to further strengthen the partnership that exists between school and home; as well as to nurture an open dialogue regarding the SFdS experience. The informal setting of this exchange also provided a social gathering for parents to interact and connect. I am grateful for the prideful remarks and the constructive candor that was shared and know well that this type of positive spirit will engender an authentic and cooperative relationship between our school and parent community.

This year also saw the establishment of the *Penguin Parent Ambassador Team*. This wide-ranging group of parents assumed the role of sharing the good news of our school with prospective parents within our broader community. Their presence has been felt with their involvement in our “Welcome Wednesday” admission events and by the presentations they have offered at mass and the outreach they have extended to our Religious Education parents. Their efforts have brought a voice to the powerful story of the Christian ideals, the strong academic program, and the family based environment that is offered within our school community.

Recognizing the need to offer greater attention to our admissions and marketing strategies, this winter we have recruited a part-time *Enrollment Director* position whose professional duties are aimed at the overall planning, management and coordination of our admissions program. We are so very pleased to have **Sarah Passarell** join our team as the new Enrollment Director. Sarah is a Parishioner, student parent, and brings a great amount of experience and spirit to our team. She will be responsible for implementing a marketing and outreach program to promote St. Francis de Sales Catholic School. We are excited for the enrollment growth that will develop through the addition of this position. Please be sure to welcome Sarah when you see her.



*Sarah Passarell*  
*Enrollment Director*

## OUR SCHOOL ADVISORY BOARD

### The Advisory Board Drafts a Five Year Strategic Plan

The SFdS School Advisory Board has constituted to provide counsel to the Principal and the Pastor for the vision of the school. Following the very successful completion of the Middle States septennial review and reaccreditation process during academic year 2015-16, the Advisory Board began the process of distilling the lengthy Self Study report into a five-year strategic plan for 2017 through 2022.

This plan is not a long-range plan (10 years or more) but a renewable five-year plan that is meant to guide the decision-making of the school on an annual basis. The academic goals in the plan emerge from the faculty-defined goals in the Middle States Self Study. Additional sections of the plan cover enrollment management and financial goals. The Pastor, Principal, and Faculty have been consulted throughout the drafting process.

The guiding mission in the plan is for St. Francis de Sales School to provide a world-class Pre-K through 8th grade education on the Eastern Shore with a focus

on Science, Math, Arts and Spanish. The school education is defined by the rich tradition of Catholic learning that dates to the Middle Ages and has marked the great intellectual advancements of the Western World.

The Advisory Board was impressed by the leadership of the school administration and faculty through the Middle States accreditation process. The new Strategic Plan builds upon this once every seven year self-study process and sets bold but achievable goals for St. Francis de Sales School.

In the coming months our Advisory Board will finalize the Strategic Plan and then turn its attention to supporting the faculty in achieving the learning goals they have defined, and supporting the administration in achieving the enrollment management and financial goals the Plan defines.

Brian Stielger  
School Board President

# OUR HOME SCHOOL ASSOCIATION: OUR PARTNER IN SUCCESS

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PLANS

The Home School Association's (H.S.A.) priority is to provide funds for capital improvements and rich learning experiences while building a strong bridge between our school and the families we serve. New this school year, the H.S.A. is funding many activities in which we would typically request donations from families. The H.S.A. is covering all expenses for Donut Sundays, bus driver tips for field trips, staff meals and snacks for meetings and in-service days, and generous Scrip Card certificates as Christmas gifts for all school staff.

None of the contributions above would be possible without our school and parish families attending and supporting the many fundraising events hosted by the H.S.A.. Events such as Spirit Nights at local restaurants, Designer Bag Bingo, Santa Social, and the Penguin Run, not only raise monies but also promotes fellowship among our parish community. However it is the H.S.A.'s main celebration, Auction Night, that we depend on to continue our work in supporting our school, staff, and students. This year's auction on March 11th promises to be another amazing event for our school.

Looking ahead, the H.S.A. intends to host another Food and Fellowship event this spring after a successful fall event that was held in September. We are continuing to look for ways to engage our parents in the many volunteer opportunities we have available. Finally, the H.S.A. strongly supports the school's need for an increased marketing presence in the community, and has committed to providing funding to ensure our school's message is made known.

### H.S.A. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Pledged \$75K to Finish Classrooms and Conference Space in the Parish Center
- New Desks in the Finished Classroom Space in the Parish Center
- Educational Software (ex: Go Math upgrade)
- Google Chromebooks for Student Use
- New Basketball Uniforms
- Retractable Basketball Hoops in the Parish Center
- Teacher Web pages
- Transportation Costs for all End-of-Year Class Trips
- 8th Grade Leadership Challenge
- 6th Grade Vocations Awareness Field Trip
- Food Service POS System's Annual Upgrades
- Faculty Laptops
- Headphone/Microphone Headsets



Art education at St. Francis encourages our young people to discover, create and enjoy the

broad forms of beauty that surrounds them. And as Walt Whitman once described, "the art of art (and) the glory of expression" is "simplicity." With this view in mind, the last five months have seen our students make use of natural everyday items as a means in which to artistically express their own ideas. The assigned art projects have helped the students understand the dimensional properties of shading, visual balance, basic color concepts and how to show perspective within their work. The student have learned to consider new approaches of "simplicity" by creating art through the use of paper clips, sea shells, pipe cleaners, and magazine clippings which has inspired our young students to bring the creation of art to life.



# COMMITMENT TO OUR STUDENT'S EDUCATION IS IN OUR HISTORY

St. Francis de Sales School was established in 1949, when five Sisters of Mercy took a ferry across the Chesapeake Bay at the invitation of then pastor, Monsignor Eugene Stout, "in order plant" the first seeds of Catholic school education on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. As a result of hard work and great anticipation, ground was broken for the school on Monday, June 20, 1949.

The school was to be located on Camden Avenue in Salisbury in one of the more upscale and established neighborhoods of the area. On April 2, 1950, the cornerstone was laid. St. Francis de Sales Catholic School was dedicated on July 9, 1950. The school was opened with one hundred five students in Grades 1-6 on September 6, 1950.

In 1951 the school was enlarged and the enrollment was expanded to include Kindergarten through Grade 8. Our school currently serves families from the five lower Eastern Shore counties of Wicomico, Worcester, Somerset, Dorchester in Maryland and Sussex County in Delaware, with a present enrollment of one hundred seventy six students.

The vision and commitment which established Catholic education on the Eastern Shore of Maryland continues today in St. Francis de Sales School. A community of dedicated clergy, teachers, parents, and parishioners collaborate to give quality formative education to each student.



ST. FRANCIS  
DE SALES  
SCHOOL

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR

*As the Pastor of Saint Francis de Sales, I value the presence of our School. The School predates the Church on this property but now there is an integration between all of the elements on the campus. My goal as Pastor is to continue the long tradition of Catholic education here at Saint Francis de Sales. I hope to be Pastor until 2026 and I envision the Parish and the School continuing to grow and continue to work together.*

Father Chris

Pastor

## OUR NAMESAKE



Saint Francis de Sales is known as the "Gentleman Saint." As bishop of Geneva for the first three years while spreading the Good Word, he trudged through the countryside. He had doors slammed in his face and rocks thrown at him. In the bitter winters, his feet froze so badly they bled as he tramped through the snow. He slept in haylofts if he could, but once he slept in a tree to avoid wolves. He tied himself to a branch to keep from falling out and was so frozen the next morning he had to be cut down. And after three years, his cousin had left him alone and he had not made one convert. Francis' unusual patience kept him working. No one would listen to him, no one would even open their door. So Francis found a way to get under the door. He wrote out his sermons, copied them

by hand, and slipped them under the doors. This is the first record we have of religious tracts being used to communicate with people. He is the patron saint of writers and journalists. He is an outstanding role model of determination and dedication in our work encouraging religious values in our students.

**For Enrollment and Admissions Information E-mail: [spassarell@sfdc.org](mailto:spassarell@sfdc.org)**

*[www.stfrancisdesales.net](http://www.stfrancisdesales.net)*

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