



# **Executive Summary**

**Saint Francis of Assisi School**

**Archdiocese of Baltimore**

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## **Introduction**

Every school has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the school makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way a school stays faithful to its vision. Many factors contribute to the overall narrative such as an identification of stakeholders, a description of stakeholder engagement, the trends and issues affecting the school, and the kinds of programs and services that a school implements to support student learning.

The purpose of the Executive Summary (ES) is to provide a school with an opportunity to describe in narrative form the strengths and challenges it encounters. By doing so, the public and members of the school community will have a more complete picture of how the school perceives itself and the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement. This summary is structured for the school to reflect on how it provides teaching and learning on a day to day basis.

## **Description of the School**

**Describe the school's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school serves?**

For more than 60 years, St. Francis of Assisi School has been successfully providing education to students in Northeast Baltimore City and outlying communities. We strive to offer innovative programming while maintaining the core tenets of our long tradition of success.

St. Francis is an open, inclusive community where the Catholic faith is celebrated and shared. The student body of 250 students includes ages 2 through 14. Our staff is comprised of 22 teachers whose experience ranges from two to more than thirty years of teaching.

The diversity of our community is a great blessing. School families come primarily from the neighborhoods of northeast Baltimore City. Because of our location, we are able to serve middle class, working class, and poverty-level communities. Fifteen percent are eligible for free and reduced meals. Nearly 45% of the students are parishioners of St. Francis Church. About 33% of the students apply for financial assistance.

The diversity of our community is a great blessing. The student body is 35% African-American, 53% white, 10% multi-racial and 2% Asian. Some of our students have ancestors who immigrated here as far back as 1623, and others are new immigrants who arrived as recently as last summer. In total, more than 45 national heritages are represented in our student body.

For the vast majority of our families, it is a significant economic sacrifice to send their children to a Catholic school. We receive generous aid from the Archdiocese as well as the parish, but we need to support wider efforts to make Catholic education affordable for all who desire it.

## **School's Purpose**

**Provide the school's purpose statement and ancillary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs. Describe how the school embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students.**

Mission Statement (Revised, 2015)

Drawing on the ideals of our patron saint, rooted in the neighborhoods of Northeast Baltimore, branching out to the wider world, and envisioning a future even stronger than our past, St. Francis of Assisi School forms children for a life of scholarship, spirituality, and service in the Catholic faith tradition:

Scholarship developed through student inquiry, rigorous assessment, and dedication to lifelong learning

Spirituality reflected in a joyful relationship with God and compassion for others

Service creating a better and more peaceful world as students embrace cultural, ethnic, and social differences

For more than half a century, "not just a school but a way of life."

The school's mission calls us to bring to life, in this community, the values and vision of Saint Francis. Our patron saint is well-known for his emphasis on peacemaking and caring for the earth. The school's location alongside Herring Run Park and across the street from Lake Montebello in Northeast Baltimore places us at the heart of natural spaces within vibrant city neighborhoods. Our recent accreditation as an International Baccalaureate World School fits well with this mission. In addition, we are uniquely situated alongside middle class, working class, and poverty-level communities in Baltimore City; this location allows us to have an economically diverse student body as well.

In encouraging positive behavior, we invite students to "be like saints" S-A-I-N-T = SPEAK kind words;ACT with Care; IMAGINE Yourself Succeeding; NEVER Give Up; TAKE PART With Your Whole Heart. Each morning in our prayers, we ask St. Francis to make us instruments of peace. Every afternoon ends with a cheer: "Let your spirit soar!"

## **Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement**

**Describe the school's notable achievements and areas of improvement in the last three years. Additionally, describe areas for improvement that the school is striving to achieve in the next three years.**

St. Francis of Assisi is proud of several notable achievements in the past several years. First of all, in the summer of 2015, after a three-year process of preparation, our school became authorized to offer the prestigious International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program. This rich, internationally recognized approach to teaching and learning has aligned us with the best practices of schools around the world. We are the first non-public school in Baltimore City to offer this program, and we are also the first IB middle school in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Second, we have documented significant improvements in our standardized testing scores over the past five years. On average, scores for reading and math longitudinally across all grades rose as follows: Total Reading (11 percentiles), Total Math (6 percentiles) We hope to maintain these strong scores by continuing our signature programs including Singapore Math and Great Books and by implementing new curricular approaches in science, social studies, and the arts in the next few years.

Third, from an operations perspective, we have stabilized our enrollment so that we have reached our targeted capacity, and we operate with a balanced budget. We have added to our staff an Advancement Director who is charged with marketing, grant-writing, and developing additional sources of income such as Annual Giving. Over the past five years, we have received more than \$240,000 in grants from local foundations.

Fourth, we are proud of our strong use of technology, including a 1:1 iPad program in the middle school and the use of projectors, laptops and desktops throughout the day in every classroom. This summer, we are applying for a major grant to update and streamline our technology equipment so as to provide a modern, standardized experience across the school.

Finally, we are proud to have a licensed preschool that is fully enrolled and offers a clearly delineated program. Our next project in terms of positioning ourselves as a school of excellence is to pursue the highest level of state accreditation (MSDE) for our Preschool.

The small size of our campus is a challenge and with a fully enrolled school, we are bursting at the seams. In recent years, we have invested in significant improvements including new bathrooms, security doors, and classroom upgrades. We look forward to developing and implementing a master building plan over the next three years that will encompass major renovations and possible expansion of our building to accommodate the strong enrollment and the need to improve offerings in the arts and sciences.

## **Additional Information**

**Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.**

For the past six years, St. Francis has been part of a distinctive tri-school partnership (known as the Northeast Schools Alliance) that includes a public school, a charter school, and a private school, all under a shared mission to strengthen the neighborhood by strengthening local schools. The partnership has been funded through a grant from Healthy Neighborhoods and the Goldseker Foundation.