

St. Martin's Episcopal School

Strategic Plan 2010

*Learners at the
Center of Learning*



Metairie, Louisiana



Vision

Placing every learner at the center of the learning experience.

Core Operating Principles

Our strategic plan is built on a foundation of core operating principles. These principles guide our school community in every aspect of learning.

An intellectually rigorous academic environment

- We seek bright and motivated students who intend to be successful in school and in life and are committed to our unique school philosophy.
- We acknowledge and organize around the concept that people enjoy multiple intelligences and learn differently from each other, creating an exciting atmosphere for learning.
- Our teaching approach is student-centered, dialogue-driven, and critical thinking-oriented, promoting a truly robust classroom where students are given the freedom to flourish.
- Data-driven research informs our approach to the teaching-learning experience so that we remain effective and accountable to the students and parents who select our school.

The intentional integration of faith and learning

- Our guiding Episcopal tradition has promoted the intentional integration of faith and learning for over 60 years.
- We instill lifelong moral and ethical character development, leading students not only to prepare for college, but to live a meaningful and purposeful life.

A community-based approach to learning

- Our students are known, needed, cared for, and have an opportunity to shape their environment through our unique community-based approach.
- Families are the centerpieces of our community and provide the partnership between the school and the student that enables our work to be successful.
- We value inclusivity and practice it throughout our school community, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to lead and learn.
- We seek and value diversity in our school community, seeking students, families, and faculty from diverse backgrounds yet with a common commitment to our core principles.



A collaborative philosophy which focuses on personal relationships, not power of authority

- People teach and work alongside each other in our school community, placing collaboration and team building ahead of competition and divisiveness.
- School-wide relationships are fostered in trust, placing the true focus on personal relationships rather than power or authority.

A balanced preparation for life

- We cultivate total human development, from academics to art, athletics to music, to prepare students for a purposeful, meaningful, and productive life.
- We focus on student learning and teach for the transfer of information and learning objectives. Learning shapes the whole person as we intentionally integrate the mind, body and spirit into all learning endeavors.
- We provide our students a global lens, connecting them to trends that are shaping our world. And, we promote economic and ecological sustainability in order to be the best steward of our resources.

An emphasis on life-long learning

- We are a total and comprehensive independent school family, with toddlers to 12th graders, creating a robust and authentic school community.
- We prepare students not only to thrive in excellent colleges, but to lead meaningful and productive lives as they acquire core competencies that enable success long after graduation.
- Education is not static but ongoing. We believe in lifelong learning, placing emphasis on learning and professional development for the skills we need tomorrow, not simply today.
- Our school follows and nurtures a natural intellectual, social, moral and physical development sequence of our children. This understanding allows for us to create curriculum and programs that stimulate growth at the different stages in a child's life.

Student-led servant leadership

- Our student-led service programs help others today and build bold leaders tomorrow.
- Our students impact the community positively through their engagement in important outreach programs.



An intellectually rigorous academic environment

Students First

Our teaching approach is student-centered, dialogue-driven, and critical thinking-oriented, promoting a truly robust classroom where students are given the freedom to flourish.

- I. Gradually transition from a teacher-driven to a student-centered learning process over the course of an academic career.
- II. While maintaining a rigorous curriculum of content, we will facilitate the exploration of student interests and provide for independent and collaborative research and communication of a synthesis of the learning experience.

People Learn Differently

We acknowledge and organize around the concept that people enjoy multiple intelligences and learn differently from each other, creating an exciting atmosphere for learning.

- I. Provide an environment that encourages and supports each student according to his/her strengths across the curriculum.

Data-Driven

Data-driven research informs our approach to the teaching/learning experience so that we remain effective and accountable to the students and parents who select our school.

- I. Gather and use data about student learning styles, teaching methods and student standardized testing such as the ERB and PSAT.

Bright, Motivated, and Successful

We seek bright and motivated students who intend to be successful in school and in life and who are committed to our unique school philosophy.

- I. We seek to admit students from families who intend for their children to be academically and socially successful.
- II. Our teachers will maintain high expectations of student performance and accountability as it relates to developing intellectual rigor.



The intentional integration of faith and learning

Tradition of Faith and Learning

Our Episcopal tradition guides us in the intentional integration of faith and learning.

- I. Provide religious instruction to students.
- II. Expose students to the Episcopal tradition.
- III. Expose students to major world traditions, particularly traditions within our own student body.
- IV. Chapels will be an integral part of our STM community.

Faith and Learning-Education for Life

We instill lifelong moral and ethical character development, preparing students to live a meaningful and purposeful life.

- I. We will create a community of mutual respect and which holds students accountable for their behavior.
- II. We will educate students, faculty and parents on choices and consequences.

Life Skills

- We will articulate the current Life Skills curriculum in each of the divisions (LS, MS, US) and assess the need for changes.
- We will incorporate the Life Skills curriculum in an interdisciplinary manner.

Service Learning

- Within each division, we will compile a list of current service projects, assess the value of each project, and implement suggested changes.
- We will compile a list of school-wide service projects, assess the value of each project, and implement suggested changes.
- We will explore opportunities to participate in new service learning endeavors.

Parent Education

- We will assess our current efforts to support parents with respect to the academic, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being of their children.
- We will educate parents about current research and methods in education and parenting by presenting workshops on relevant topics that are age-specific to their children.



Diversity

- We will expand our 5th and 8th grade workshop schedule to include collaborative diversity and tolerance programs with Middle School advisory groups.
- We will team with the diversity groups of other area schools to sponsor and run citywide diversity workshops.

Honor Council

- The US Honor Council will provide a student-led forum for determining the consequences of honor code violations.

A community-based approach to learning

Our purpose is to bring past, current, and future members of the St. Martin's community together as one by using St. Martin's as a medium of communication as well as a support network for one another.

Students

Our students are known, needed, cared for, and have an opportunity to shape their environment through our unique community-based approach.

- I. We will renew the "buddy" system so that older and younger students have more contact time to develop relationships with one another.
- II. We will devise and plan student-to-student panels ("Saint's Connection) to make the transition between crucial grades easier.

Family

Families are the centerpieces of our community and provide the partnership between the school and the student that enables our work to be successful.

- I. We will help new families feel connected to one another, in addition to being welcomed and integrated into school life.
- II. We will identify ways that families and students can work side by side on service projects.
- III. We will plan events for parents of the alumni every reunion year.



Others

We value inclusivity and practice it throughout our school community, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to lead and learn.

- I. We will foster an appreciation for the connectedness of each division of the school, and allow faculty and staff from different grades to have a window into the world of those outside their discipline, division or age level.

Diversity

We seek and value diversity in our school community seeking students, families, and faculty from diverse backgrounds yet with a common commitment to our core principles.

- I. We will bring people not yet connected to St. Martin's onto campus for events that showcase our strengths and unique gifts.

A collaborative philosophy which focuses on personal relationships, not power of authority

Collaboration

People teach and work alongside each other in our school community, placing collaboration and team building ahead of competition and divisiveness.

Trusting Relationships

School-wide relationships are fostered in trust, placing the true focus on personal relationship rather than power or authority.

- I. All relationships among students, faculty, staff, and administration are founded upon mutual respect and sincere efforts at understanding.
- II. Learning and teaching are carried out as open-ended inquiry and interactive dialogue, not as hierarchical pronouncements of superior knowledge.
- III. Students respect teachers as caring and committed professionals; teachers respect students as younger individuals who are learning about the world and themselves and trying to establish a personal voice and identity.
 - Make use of Senior Leadership Day, the Honor Committee, and other student-centered opportunities to emphasize the importance of faculty/student co-operation and understanding.
 - Use the adviser/advisee relationship as a microcosm for the further development of the desired student/teacher perceptions and interactions.
 - Adapt and apply aspects of the Project Adventure Respect Curriculum that foster the goal.



- IV. The processes of cooperation and collaboration are valued as forms of learning in their own right and not seen simply as means to an end.
- V. Creative and expressive endeavors such as art, theater, music, dance, and other forms of achievement not customarily seen as purely academic are encouraged, celebrated, and valued throughout the school community.
- VI. Service learning commitments are integral and substantial parts of the overall learning experience.
- VII. Broadly inclusive activities, projects, celebrations, and commemorations are regular aspects of school life, and the full range of the activities and achievements of school community members are recognized.

A balanced preparation for life

Total Human Development

We cultivate total human development, from academics to art, athletics to music, to prepare students for a purposeful, meaningful, and productive life.

- I. Using data from various areas of the school, we will evaluate at each level what we are missing in order to have a more balanced individual.
- II. We will balance our scheduling to include all areas of total human development.

Teaching for Transfer

We focus on student learning and teach for the transfer of information and learning objectives.

- I. We will create a more collaborative style of teaching.
- II. We will balance teaching styles to combine digital and analog.

Holistic Approach

Learning shapes the whole person as we intentionally integrate the mind, body and spirit into all learning endeavors.

- I. We will actively articulate and pursue the development of St. Martin's pride and spirit through involvement, support and promotion.
- II. We will create a well-balanced student by supporting programs that develop awareness of processes necessary for a more healthy mind, body and spirit.
- III. We will make better use of the advisory system, especially in Upper School.



Global Thinkers

We will provide our students a global lens, connecting them to trends that are shaping our world. And, we will promote economic and ecological sustainability in order to be the best steward of our resources.

- I. We will actively pursue a more ecologically and environmentally responsible campus and St. Martin's community.
- II. We will develop an age appropriate awareness of global thinking.

An emphasis on life-long learning

Whole Family

- I. As a comprehensive, independent school community that includes toddlers through 12th graders, parents, faculty, staff, and alumni, we will channel our resources, making the student the focus of our attention.

Preparation

- I. We will promote a positive learning environment where fun and creativity form the basis for curiosity and a love for learning.
- II. We will implement programs that provide smooth transitions from the Cottage through Upper School.

Lifelong Learning

- I. We will provide our students with the opportunities to learn the skills they need to be successful in tomorrow's world.
- II. We will create programs that allow for individuation.

Developmental Sequence

- I. We will create curricula and programs that stimulate growth and recognize each student's level of ability based on the intellectual, social, moral and physical development of the student at each stage of his life.
- II. Teachers will be taught to recognize the level of abilities of the students and to master methods for nurturing those abilities.



Student-led servant leadership

We provide a coherent structure for the systematic development of leadership and a commitment to community service in St. Martin's students.

- I. Our students will be dedicated to serving their communities in a positive way. In each division, St. Martin's will have specific service projects planned and implemented for students at all levels.
- II. In all divisions, the school shall treat commitment to service as a flagship aspect of our educational commitment and an essential element of the curriculum.
- III. Our students will attain and demonstrate leadership skills that impact their communities in a positive way, both today and in the future. Therefore, in each division, St. Martin's shall extend and give emphasis to programs that develop and enhance student leadership skills.