



BETTER TOGETHER



ASCENSION
CATHOLIC ACADEMY



Our Mission

A beacon of innovative, inclusive urban Catholic education where scholars soar as beloved children of God, and communities prosper.

Fall 2018



ASCENSION
CATHOLIC ACADEMY

Dear Friends,

Ascension Catholic Academy is embarking on its third year, and we are working strategically and with determination to ensure the continued success of each of our scholars.

We are excited to have the University of Notre Dame's Higher Powered Learning Program as a new partner in that mission. A team from Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education is working with a cohort of our teachers to implement blended learning in classrooms. Read more about this initiative on page 5.

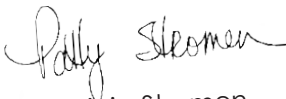
We also are celebrating many accomplishments of the past two years:

- Our total enrollment has grown from 461 in 2015-16 to 544 this school year. That's an 18% increase.
- We have crafted our Mission Statement and Guiding Principles, which drive everything we do.
- Our new website — ACAmn.org — and our updated school websites are useful resources for our supporters and families. Our fresh logo and branding is helping us spread awareness of our innovative model for urban Catholic K-8 education.
- We have outlined our Academy priorities, strategies and goals in a document we call our Framework for Success. As part of this process, we have named desired outcomes and determined the action steps each school needs to take to reach them. Read more on page 4.

We hope you find this, our first Ascension Catholic Academy Annual Report, informative and inspiring. Consider it your invitation to tour any of our campuses. Please visit ACAmn.org and all of our schools' websites (listed on the next page) to learn how you can support our scholars.

Blessings,


Fr. Dale Korogi
Executive Director


Patricia Stromen
President

Our Guiding Principles

Everything we do is framed by our Guiding Principles, which are rooted in the Roman Catholic faith.

- **Integrate Catholic Identity.** Through our faith in Jesus Christ and the mission of the Catholic Church, serve all people as beloved children of God, recognizing their gifts and contributions.
- **Engage with Rigor and Expectations.** Provide a welcoming, accessible environment and rigorous individualized academic instruction that build engagement and a love of learning.
- **Develop Whole Persons.** Provide care, compassion, and opportunities for spiritual, social, emotional, academic, and life-skills development.
- **Foster Cultural Responsiveness and Equity.** Build equitable, inclusive classroom and school environments where scholar and family cultural heritage is valued, visibly recognized, and celebrated in the whole school experience.
- **Build Relationships and Partner Collaboratively.** Create and deepen meaningful relationships built on trust, respect, and mutuality. Work together to build the Academy, share ideas, and learn from and with all stakeholders.
- **Learn, Grow and Lead Continuously.** Build a culture of continuous learning, growth, improvement and inspiring leadership at all levels of the Academy.
- **Develop and Steward Resources.** Develop and steward shared resources that are sufficient to support quality, continuity, and growth.



Like Ascension Catholic Academy, our logo is composed of many parts that form a whole. The orange shapes represent the people in ACA's thriving community: scholars, staff, educators, families, board members, partners and donors. The red U that surrounds each person symbolizes the support that we give to our scholars and to each other. Together

the red shapes form a cross, at the center of all we do, and the vibrant yellow triangles reflect our energy and point toward the cross. All shapes are intentionally imperfect and organic, as if cut from construction paper by a child. When the logo is paired with a school logo, it becomes the colors of that school. This shows the Academy's respect for each school's unique history, culture and personality.

Our Schools

ascensionschoolmn.org
 johnpaulschoolmn.org
 stpclaverschool.org



ASCENSION

future full of hope

Enrollment341
**Qualify for free/
 reduced lunch**76%
Scholars of color ...97%
English learners..... 12%
Catholic.....37%

Since 1897, Ascension Catholic School, a ministry of Church of the Ascension, has been teaching the Christian faith in the Roman Catholic tradition.

Throughout its history, Ascension Catholic School has served as both a reflection of its community and as an instrument for change on the North Side of Minneapolis. We help move lives forward through education and spiritual formation. Ascension is dedicated to the development of academic excellence within the structure of a disciplined and Christian-oriented environment. It aims to prepare its students for becoming intelligent and responsible adults. Today, all are welcome at Ascension Catholic School without regard to academic level, home situations, language skills, religious beliefs, or financial resources. Benito Matias has been principal since 2016.



ST. JOHN PAUL II Catholic School

Enrollment 124
**Qualify for free/
 reduced lunch** 85%
Scholars of color ... 85%
English learners..... 62%
Catholic..... 92%

St. John Paul II Catholic School in Northeast Minneapolis is built on a history of serving immigrants and all of the faithful, which continues today. Its mission is to provide a rigorous, faith-infused education in grades K- 8 and to care for the whole child, working to remove any barrier to education a family may face. Tricia Menzhuber, pictured above, is the new principal.



SAINT PETER CLAVER CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Enrollment 79
**Qualify for free/
 reduced lunch** 75%
Scholars of color . 97%
English learners..... 4%
Catholic 22%

St. Peter Claver Catholic School is a vital part of the fabric of the Rondo community in Saint Paul and has been serving children and families for nearly 70 years. It has a rich history as a beacon for the care and development of the whole child, and the school continues to play that role today. This is Terese Shimshock's third year as principal.

Framework for Success

Ascension Catholic Academy takes a strategic approach to the work of educating scholars. That is why we developed our Framework for Success, which outlines our priorities and the strategies we use to achieve them. Each school has specific goals and action steps for each strategy. You can read more about them in our school-specific Fall Updates, which can be downloaded from the schools' websites.

PRIORITY NO. 1

Scholars

Scholars will be rooted in their faith, prepared for high school academic success and possess the necessary social-emotional tools to thrive.

Strategies

We will create an environment of individualized learning through ensuring scholars engage in and take ownership of their learning while educators are empowered to serve the whole child.

We will empower scholars to thrive in their social-emotional, life-skills and cultural development.

We will empower families to actively engage in the education of their scholar including academics, social emotional learning and faith development.

Through faith in Jesus and the teachings of the Catholic Church, we will empower scholars to understand themselves as a beloved child of God with gifts to be developed and shared.

PRIORITY NO. 2

Academic Leaders

Faith-driven and culturally responsive academic leaders will inspire scholars, faculty, staff, families, community partners and each other to enliven our mission and Guiding Principles.

Strategies

We will cultivate and deepen distributed leadership that builds the capacity for change and improvement.

We will empower leaders to learn, grow and lead continuously by leveraging cohesive professional development.

We will develop and steward resources that support quality, continuity, wellness and growth.

PRIORITY NO. 3

Educators

Faith-driven and culturally responsive educators will facilitate high quality learning experiences that prepare scholars for high school academic success and equip them with the necessary social-emotional tools to thrive.

Strategies

We will empower educators through individualized coaching and strategies to drive scholar academic and social-emotional success.

We will provide robust, differentiated professional development that includes clear expectations and ongoing support with an emphasis on the role that every educator has in the development of each scholar's literacy skills.

We will foster a professional learning culture that engages educators in meaningful collaboration and leadership development.



Blended Learning



St. John Paul II



St. Peter Claver



Ascension

Tapping into Higher Powered Learning

Ascension Catholic Academy is at the forefront of one of the most promising initiatives in education: Blended Learning.

The Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) at the University of Notre Dame selected Ascension and St. John Paul II Catholic Schools as two of the five Minnesota schools to implement its Higher Powered Learning Program.

ACE educators are working with teams to bring excellent and sustainable Blended Learning at Academy schools over a three-year period.

ACE staff members saw five characteristics in our schools that helped them select ACA for the program. They described these in a blog post.

- **Diverse student population:** Working with diverse scholars is at the heart of ACE's mission.
- **Audacious school leaders:** They saw Academy leaders as "willing to take risks and reimagine the future."
- **Dynamic teachers:** ACA teachers "demonstrated a tremendous growth mindset as they constantly try new things and seek to improve."
- **Potential for growth:** With technology and resources, ACA schools could serve many more children.
- **Feeling of home:** "There are strong support systems in place at each school, impressive teaching practices already occurring, and warmth radiating throughout the buildings."

Read the entire blog post at johnpaulschoolmn.org/news.

Ascension is beginning implementation in grades 2, 3 and 4, and JP II is starting the program in its middle-school grades. However, increased emphasis on education aided by technology is occurring in all Academy schools. And as we progress through the three-year program, that will be even more true.

Blended learning combines classroom instruction with online studies. It adapts to each scholar's skill level. Online lessons allow teachers to use their classroom time to work in smaller groups and reinforce important skills. Visual, auditory and written components meet the needs of all learning styles.

Ascension Catholic Academy Board

Suzie Colianni
Chair, Community Volunteer

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Founding partner,
Ciresi Conlin LLC

Ann Dayton
Community Volunteer

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Pastor of Our Lady of Grace,
Chaplain St. John Paul II

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Schools Center of Excellence

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Imholte Strategic Consulting

Ben Jaffray
Cargill, retired

Dr. Josie Johnson
Civil Rights activist

Fr. Dale Korogi
Academy Executive Director,
Pastor of the Church of the
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Sharon Ryan
Community Volunteer

Patty Stromen
Ex-officio, Academy President



Q/A with Board Chair Suzie Colianni

Why We Created Ascension Catholic Academy

You were involved at the very beginning, before the Academy was formed, in discussions about what a “new model” for urban Catholic education would look like. Why did those involved think a new model was necessary?

Urban Catholic schools across the country are having a hard time staying afloat. The financial model for a stand-alone urban Catholic school in neighborhoods where the community is struggling to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads is not sustainable. The majority of families can pay only very limited tuition, and yet they value the safe, faith-based successful education that we can provide. By creating the Academy model, we are able to centralize many of the business functions of education and provide an opportunity for the educators to collaborate and grow. Together our schools are stronger.

What were the hopes and dreams for the Academy?

When the opportunity came to us through a funding partner, we felt called to expand our mission to provide successful, faith-based education to as many children as we could. We had learned many things with the Ascension Catholic School model, and we had some success.

What were seen as the obstacles?

The main obstacle was and continues to be financial. Because all of our schools depend on the generosity of others, fundraising is ongoing. Having a stable donor base at each school is a goal that we continue to strive for.

You are the Academy Board Chair, a volunteer in all three Academy schools, and — along with your husband Bert — are a sustaining giver. You even once went up in a cherry-picker to take an all-Academy photograph. What is it about the Academy that inspires such generosity?

Our scholars, pure and simple, are the inspiration for everything I do with the Academy. The best part of all of my activities is the time I spend with our beautiful scholars. I want to do everything I can to help them succeed. Not only for them, which of course is the most important, but for our community and our world. Education is the key to success. Our community is crying for skilled workers. We have those future skilled workers in our schools. I want to help our scholars soar – kind of like soaring up 85 feet in a cherry-picker to take a picture! Every time I feel challenged with the work, I just need to think about those sixth graders I help with math or the third and fourth graders in reading, and there is no challenge too great to overcome. I have been so blessed in my life. Giving my time and treasure to help give others a chance is the least that I can do.

“We wanted to expand our mission to try to provide successful, faith-based education to as many children as we could.”

Financials

Ascension Catholic Academy is fiscally conservative, with **86% of our expenditures going to salaries and benefits**. Of our income, a vast majority — 90% — comes as gifts from individuals, partner parishes and foundations.

Budgeted Income

| | 2017-18 (audit in progress) | 2018-19 |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Regular Income | \$805,343 | \$784,242 |
| Special Income | 4,563,390 | 4,834,116 |
| Fund Raisers | 37,082 | 36,400 |
| Cafeteria | 286,867 | 313,175 |
| Athletics | 3,512 | 4,250 |
| Misc. | 20,391 | 17,650 |
| SLAM | 119,370 | 180,400 |
| TOTAL INCOME | \$5,835,955 | \$6,193,233 |

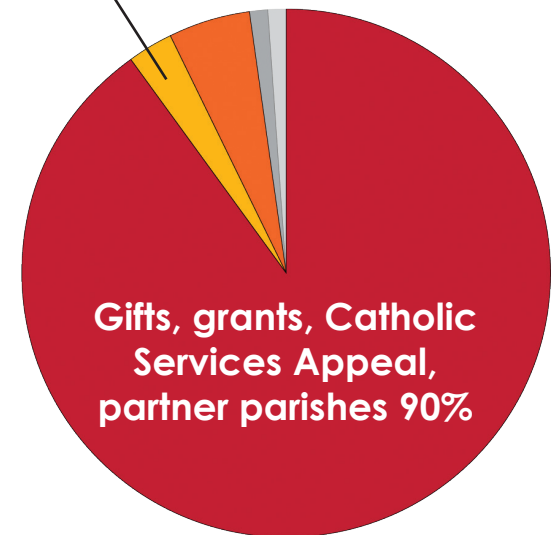
Budgeted Expenses

| | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Salaries | \$3,991,655 | \$4,099,518 |
| Benefits | 722,695 | 885,689 |
| Administration | 238,446 | 280,775 |
| Advancement | 56,702 | 75,300 |
| Academic | 78,776 | 112,000 |
| Athletic | 9,203 | 7,500 |
| Utilities | 202,447 | 198,375 |
| Repair and Maintenance | 57,761 | 60,250 |
| Insurance and Assessments | 66,882 | 65,800 |
| Misc. | 2,849 | 2,725 |
| Food Service | 322,955 | 312,000 |
| SLAM (non-salary) | 32,716 | 35,300 |
| TOTAL EXPENSE | \$5,783,087 | \$6,287,146 |

NET INCOME **\$52,868**

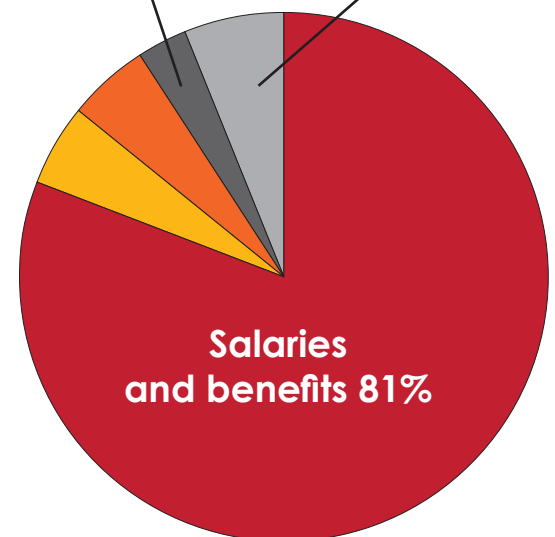
Note that this is the budget for the entire Academy, which combines Ascension, St. John Paul II and St. Peter Claver schools with the Academy Central Operations. Specifics of each school's financials are available to download on their websites under the "Our Funding" tab.

What our families can pay through tuition and fees 3% **INCOME**



CAFETERIA INCOME 5%
SCHOOL FUNDRAISERS 1%
MISC 1%

Academic supplies 3% Fundraising expenses 6%



MAINTENANCE AND INSURANCE 5% **EXPENSES**
FOOD SERVICE 5%

Our Supporters

Thanks to each of you for the support you have given to St. Peter Claver, St. John Paul II, Ascension School, Ascension Catholic Academy Central Operations, Ascension Parish or Friends of Ascension. Our donors are separated into three lists:

- Donors to **a school or the Academy**.
- Donors to **Friends of Ascension**, a separate 501(c)3 that directs gifts to Ascension Catholic School's Annual Fund.
- Donors to **Ascension Parish**; the Academy is the largest ministry of the parish.

There are many others who have given gifts of less than \$100. They aren't listed, but their generosity is valued just the same.

If there are errors in this list, please let us know.

Donors to a school or the Academy

\$500,000 and above

Friends of Ascension
Catholic Grade SchoolA, C
GHR Foundation..... A, C, JP, ACA

\$100,000 - \$499,999

Catholic Services
Appeal FoundationA, C, JP
Mark and Nancy Hanson A
Doug and Sandy Milroy..... JP
Robins, Kaplan, Miller,
and Ciresi Foundation for Children A
Staley Family Foundation JP
Whitney & Elizabeth
MacMillan Foundation A

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Aim Higher Foundation.....A, C, JP
The Barry Foundation..... A
Church of the Assumption C
The Church of the Holy Cross..... JP
Robert H. Healy A
Lenzmeier Family Foundation..... A

\$10,000 - \$49,999

Anonymous A
AnonymousA, JP
Basilica of Saint Mary A
Patrick and Colleen Bollom A
Len and Marge Busch A
Catholic Community Foundation C
Catholic Schools
Center of ExcellenceA, C, JP
The Church of Our Lady of Grace JP
The Commers Family..... A
Ron and Joan Cornwell A
The Culp Family Foundation A
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Endowment Fund..... C, JP
Family of Faith Education
Assistance- Inter City..... C
Friends of Pope John Paul II JP
FSA Properties LLCA, C, JP
Growing in Faith Fund..... A
David and Lana Haben JP
John and Amy Haben JP
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Charitable Foundation..... A
Holy Name of Jesus..... A
Dave and Nicole Hoover A
Jerome J & Ursula Choromanski
Foundation.....A, JP
Kent Family Charitable Trust.....A, C, JP

Laurence and Jean LeJeune A
The Longview Foundation..... JP
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Our Lady of Lourdes..... JP
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Society for the

DONOR PROFILE Pat and Gary Sauer

'We hope to see proud, well-adjusted young people'



Gary and Pat Sauer see St. Peter Claver Catholic School as a vital part of the Rondo area of St. Paul. In addition to generous financial support, they provide backpacks of supplies for all of our scholars and food and volunteers for our Back-to-School BBQ.

Why do you give to St. Peter Claver?

We care about St. Peter Claver as a safe, nurturing, small learning environment primarily for African American children. We see it as a 'shining light' in the neighborhood as well as a school that really celebrates the African American culture. We want to see the school be successful to remain the safe, nurturing learning environment in this neighborhood as well as a place where African American children can feel a sense of their culture and be proud of who they uniquely are!

What do you see as the return on your investment?

We hope to see proud, well adjusted, young people educated and able to be whomever they were created to be!

Propagation of the Faith A, C
 Karen Winter A

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 and Patricia Marek-Kehoss A
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 Helen O. Swanson Family Fund A
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 Richard Miller A
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 Sheila Morgan A
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 The Palen Family Foundation.....ACA
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 Loretta Wold JP
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 Sharie Young.....JP
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 Fr. Dale Korogi
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 Temple Israel
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 Bradley Guggisberg..... A
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 Joseph and Joan Hammell..... A
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 Timothy and Patricia Hillmeyer JP
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 Humboldt Family Foundation C
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 Matthew Kelly C
 Mary Klein..... C
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 Reverend Dale Korogi JP
 Richard and Beverly Kowalik JP
 Matthew and Jennifer Kraskey..... JP
 E. Joseph LaFaveA, C
 Land O'Lakes Foundation..... A
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 Margaret Lewis A
 Thomas and Jane Loso A
 Father Erik Lundgren JP
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 Reverend John M. Malone A

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| Jim and Meg Mannix..... | A |
| Chorbishop Sharbel Maroun..... | JP |
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| Lawrence and Andrea McGough..... | JP |
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| Thomas and Mary Nicoski | A |
| Tom Noerenberg and Cindy Schneider..... | ACA |
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| Saint Bridget Catholic Church..... | JP |
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| Michael and Michelle Traeger | C |
| Maureen and Joseph Trenary | JP |
| Sandra Vargas..... | A |
| Mark and Sara Veldman..... | JP |
| Karen Viskochil | A |
| John Wallerius..... | A |
| Kim and Jan Vanderwall..... | ACA |
| Mark and Catherine Welna..... | JP |
| Eileen Whelan and Jeff Karhmann | A |
| Michael and Barbara Wigley..... | A |
| Women's Club of St Hedwig..... | JP |

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|---|----------|
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| David and Sharon Baudler..... | A |
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| John and Patricia Belian | JP |
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| John Bernier | JP |
| John and Cynthia Beuerlein | ACA |
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| Gerhard and Carol Brahms | A |
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| William Breer | A |
| Greg and Kim Brenny | JP |
| Margaret Brinkhaus..... | A |
| Jennifer and Frank Brixius | A |
| Cheryl Broich..... | JP |
| Bob and Rita Buckvold..... | A |
| Tyrone and Delia Bujold | A |
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| Mary and Thomas Cameron | A |
| Karen Capiz | A |
| Kevin and Joanne Carr | JP |
| Isaac J. Carter | A |
| Chris and Carrie Case | A |
| Catholic Eldercare..... | JP |

VOLUNTEER PROFILE JOHN 'FISH' FISCHER

'I wanted to find some way to work with kids'

Fish Fischer was looking for a new project after he retired from his career in the concrete business. We are thankful that he chose St. John Paul II Catholic School.

What first brought you to JP II as a volunteer?

I started volunteering at JP II in October 2017, just as I was retiring. I wanted to find some way to work with kids in a school setting. JP II worked out well because of its location and its emphasis on developing the whole person in an educational setting — integrating academics, sports, music and spiritual teachings.

You do a lot of different things here: build, garden and help with KidStop projects. Anything else?

I do volunteer with the Tuesday Toilers at Holy Cross Church, and that work often brings us into the school to make minor repairs and maintenance. I help out in KidStop, and this year have been helping in fifth grade math. And I have helped with story time in the library.

Why do you keep coming back to JP II?

I was blessed with a good education. It takes a lot of resources to provide children with quality instruction. What I have found at JP II is a staff that is dedicated to meeting these challenges and integrating all essential elements into their work. When I walk down the halls of the school and am greeted by many of the students, that is a very rewarding experience. And every now and then, you get that moment when you are helping a scholar with something that they can't understand, and they suddenly get it. It is a privilege to be a witness to that.



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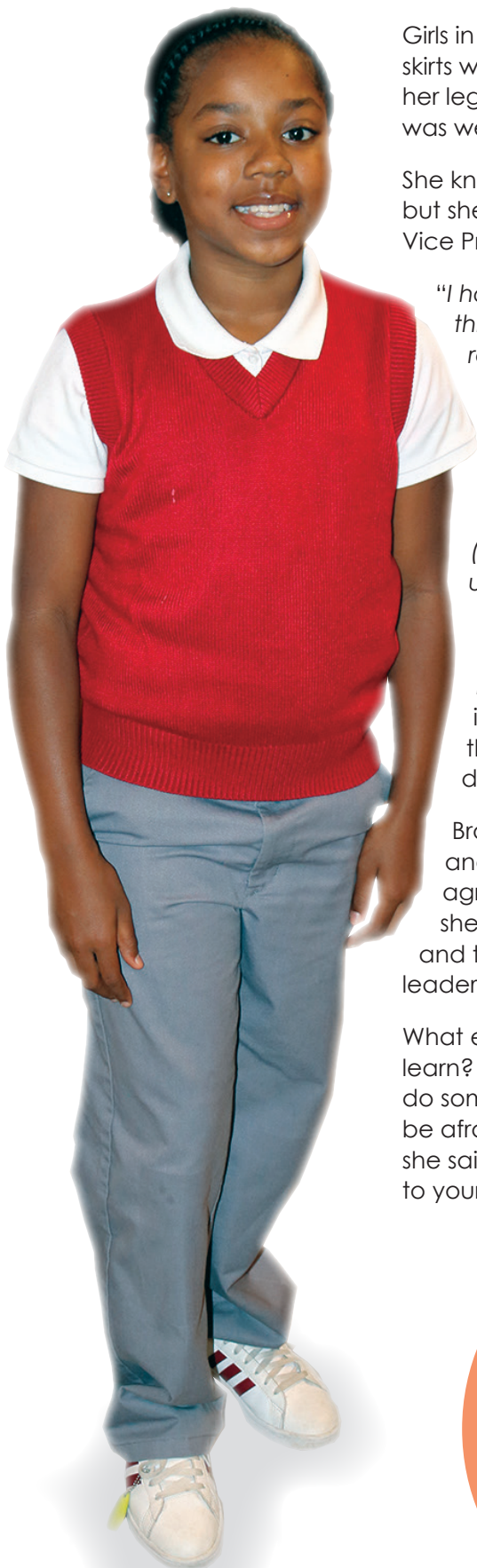
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Many of the photographs in this report were a gift from David Pierini.

Brooklyn didn't see herself as a changemaker. All she wanted was to be able to wear pants to school.

Learning LEADERSHIP



Girls in elementary grades at Ascension Catholic School could only wear skirts with leggings — until this year. One day, when Brooklyn spilled milk on her leggings, she was given a pair of pants to wear. "I just felt good when I was wearing pants, comfortable," she recalls.

She knew that previous efforts to change the uniform policy had failed, but she decided to try again. With guidance from Dr. Sousada Grande, Vice Principal, she wrote a letter to Principal Benito Matias. It said, in part:

"I have something very important to discuss with you on behalf of the third, fourth, fifth and sixth grade girls. We would like to request a review of the school uniform policy for girls. We believe girls should have the option to wear pants. There are several reasons why we are making this request:

(1) Pants are more affordable for families. Skirts cost \$42.90 to \$49.90, whereas girls twill dress pants cost \$21.99 to \$31.99

(2) Pants are more comfortable, and leggings can be uncomfortable

(3) Pants keep us warm in the winter."

Mr. Matias was persuaded. "Brooklyn's letter framed the issue in a way that it wasn't framed before," he said. "I have seen the uniform sheet many times and never focused on the cost difference."

Brooklyn, now in 6th grade, said the experience changed her and made her more mature. Dr. Grande agrees: "This issue was something she felt passionate about, and that is what develops leadership skills."

What else did Brooklyn learn? "If you want to do something, don't be afraid to do it," she said. "Just stick to your goal."

SERVING THE WHOLE CHILD

Social Emotional Learning

Brooklyn's growth as a leader is an example of what we strive for in our attention to Social Emotional Learning. When we say we serve the whole child, it means that we ensure each scholar's development in faith, academics and social emotional life skills.

We adopted the Top 20 Training Program as our academywide Social Emotional Learning curriculum.

Each quarter, all of our schools honor scholars whose behavior and choices exemplify these traits.

The Top 20 Program's cornerstones are

- Help others succeed.
- Communicate "you matter."
- Honor the absent.
- See the problem/ own the problem.