



# Mapping BRIGHT FUTURES

## 2017–2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Sponsor a Child Supporters  
Discuss Their 20-Year  
Commitment

Alumna Voices Her Story of Grit  
and Gesu's Impact

Learning Support Teacher  
Inspires Students for 10 Years

Thank You to Our Generous  
2017–2018 Donors



**GESU** | 25  
SCHOOL EST. 1993  
ESTABLISHED IN FAITH. UNITED IN PURPOSE.





# From the President

Dear Friends of Gesu School,

A Gesu education is a map to a bright future. Our dedicated community comes together to mold well-rounded, engaged students with strong character. Co-directed by the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) and the Jesuits, Gesu School provides quality education to 450 students to enable them to break the cycle of poverty and violence.

Our curriculum abides by the IHM tenet that “every child can learn,” meeting the needs of remedial to advanced learners. In the Jesuit tradition of *cura personalis*, Gesu cares for the whole person. Our unique soft skills MAGIS initiative, woven into Pre-K–8<sup>th</sup> grade, fosters Motivation, Awareness, Grit, Independence, and Social Competence.

Gesu alumni demonstrate that these approaches to education work. They are confident and poised to overcome challenges on their journeys to success. In a city where approximately 65% of public high school students graduate from high school in four years, 90% of Gesu alumni graduate high school on time, and of those graduates, 86% go on to college or post-secondary education.

The pages that follow share highlights from our 2017–2018 school year and showcase how Gesu sets high expectations to ensure that our students achieve their vision for successful futures. I hope you enjoy these stories:

- An inspiring interview with Pat and Brad Cannon, stalwart Gesu School supporters for more than 20 years and via three different states
- A testament to Gesu School’s holistic education and stellar faculty, from an alumna who boldly confronted learning challenges and channeled them into a successful college career and ambitious professional goals
- A profile of a loyal, award-winning teacher whose individualized instruction and unceasing positivity chart the course for her students’ achievements

Thank you to our supporters, who impact lives and make a Gesu education possible through your time, prayer, talent, and generosity! You are an essential part of our Gesu community.

Peace and blessings,

Bryan H. Carter  
*President and CEO*

P.S. I welcome you to visit Gesu School to experience our community in action. To schedule a tour, contact the Development Office at 215-763-9077 or [development@gesuschool.org](mailto:development@gesuschool.org). Stay current on Gesu news. Visit [gesuschool.org](http://gesuschool.org). Click “Join our email list.”

Front Cover Photo: A Gesu School Pre-K student explores her future career possibilities. Photos by Sabina Louise Pierce



## Sponsor a Child Donors from Across the Country Change Children’s Lives

Pat and Brad Cannon reflect upon 20 years of commitment to faith, family, and Gesu.

Pat and Brad Cannon connect with Gesu alumni attending a pre-college program at Boston College. “The alumni we met in Boston were so engaging and charismatic....They had an esteem that only Gesu can instill.”

Pat and Brad Cannon’s dedication to the Gesu community spans nearly 20 years across three states. Since 2011, they have supported students via Gesu’s Sponsor a Child Program. Now in Boston, they remain closely connected, even meeting alumni visiting colleges. For the Cannons, sponsoring Gesu students intentionally paralleled raising their two daughters and allowed them to pass on their philanthropic spirit.

### WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO GIVE TO GESU, PARTICULARLY THE SPONSOR A CHILD PROGRAM?

Brad: Pat and I were living in the Philadelphia area and had been looking for a charity focused on education. **One parent for each of us had gotten out of extreme poverty through faith, family, and education.** On an airplane, Pat read an article about Gesu in *USA Today*. We took a tour a short time after.

Two things really sold us. First, there was a young teacher who had been at an exclusive private school. He realized it wasn’t his mission. It was to go back to Gesu. Those kids adored him. Second, the young lady who gave our tour was a graduate. Throughout her life, she explained that everyone made excuses for her. At Gesu, people were the first to believe in her and didn’t cut her any slack. These were

lessons that resonated with us from our family about getting out of poverty—accountability and people believing in you. We recognized those things in Gesu. We wrote a check that day, probably for more than we could afford. We never regretted it.

Pat: Every classroom we went into, the kids stood and greeted us. There was a mutual respect among the teachers, students, and leaders. What a sense of community we felt. If you set high expectations, it’s amazing how people find a way to achieve them. **Gesu set high expectations. We just loved that standard.**

### WHAT HAS FUELED YOUR LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO GESU?

Pat: **Gesu is raising future leaders with a solid foundation of opportunity and faith in a loving, caring community.** It’s just a special place with all that it encompasses. **To teach kids those values and see the results, it’s inspiring for us.**

Brad: **We wanted to see a positive impact and contribute to an organization that actually demonstrates that consistently. We’ve never hesitated for 20 years.** We have such confidence that the money not only goes to the right cause, but that it will be delivered

and that it counts. We like to give over time, and it’s good to have an organization we can trust with a mission that we can believe in.

### WHY DO YOU FEEL IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMAIN PART OF THE GESU COMMUNITY, EVEN FROM BOSTON?

Pat: **Through all those years, what would shine through were hope, optimism, respect, community. We felt a connection, and our family felt a connection.** We would put up students’ pictures and letters in our kitchen and talk about them with our kids.

The alumni we met in Boston were so engaging and charismatic. They were excited about the world. They felt a sense of opportunity that some kids don’t find right now. We could sense it. They had an esteem that only Gesu can instill.

Brad: You can tell they are going places and that they will get something good done when they get there. Gesu hasn’t lost its ability to make an impact on kids’ lives. They were impressive and so warm, too, full of hope and optimism. Their communication skills were impeccable.

**Giving children an opportunity where they can feel like they can do anything in this world is a gift.**



# Lauren Robinson '12: Temple University Junior Shares Gesu's Impact

Your support shapes bright futures.

As a 4<sup>th</sup> grader, Lauren Robinson '12 sang at the first Gesu Gala. In 2018, she returned to the event to address an audience of more than 300 as a strong, poised college student. Read excerpts from her inspiring speech.

**TO FORGE SUCCESS, YOU MUST HAVE THE RIGHT TOOLS. GESU GAVE ME THOSE TOOLS WITH WHICH I HAVE FORGED MY PATH.**

I am studying advertising with a concentration in art direction. I hope to use my degree to add diversity to the advertisements that we are shown every day. I also hope to do freelance work for a non-profit. I did not always have these ambitions or the skills to reach my goals. It took a lot of hard work to map out my path to a bright future. **Gesu was a landmark, a beacon on that map, which gave me the skills to succeed on my journey.**

**GESU DID MORE FOR ME THAN JUST STRENGTHENING MY ACADEMICS. GESU CHANGED MY LIFE. WITHOUT THE GUIDANCE OF THE TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS, I WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKE A TRAVELER READING A MAP WITHOUT LANDMARKS – LOST WITH NO DIRECTION.**

Gesu helped to cultivate my public speaking ability through theater and choir performances, forensics club, praise dancers, and class presentations. I can now pitch my ideas in advertising class with confidence. I can walk into a job interview and look the interviewer in the eye, smile, and give a firm handshake because I am confident in what I bring to the table. Through a Gesu connection, I interned with the Wealth Management Department at Bryn Mawr Trust. **All of this is thanks to the life skills, opportunities, and support that I received and continue to receive from Gesu. Thanks for your support of this amazing school!**

**“LAUREN WAS ALWAYS THE SAME OPTIMISTIC, JOYFUL, HARDWORKING YOUNG WOMAN SHE IS NOW. You would never know she experienced difficulty with school unless you saw it for yourself. She never allowed it to keep her down or stop her from pushing toward her goals.”**

—Dana Gilbert, Learning Support Teacher



**LAUREN ROBINSON '12**  
Woodlynde School '16  
Temple University '20

Photo by David DeBalko

**EVERYONE AT GESU BELIEVED IN ME. THEY KNEW MY JOURNEY WAS UNIQUE AND CHALLENGING, BUT WITH THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN MY CORNER, THAT I COULD SOAR.**

During my elementary years, I began to struggle with homework. I couldn't spell or sound out vocabulary words and consistently tested below grade-level in language arts. I was drowning in science and social studies because I couldn't remember information from the multiple chapters I had read. I spent countless, grueling hours at my kitchen table trying to retain everything, but something wasn't clicking. I knew there was a roadblock on this path that was bigger than I could have expected.

With the help of my aunt, my teacher, and Sr. Ellen Convey, IHM, Principal, I was tested and diagnosed with a tracking problem comparable to dyslexia. I was devastated. I felt defeated. But Gesu stepped in and restored my belief in myself and my abilities. They wasted no time placing me in learning support and giving me the personal attention that I needed to find ways to combat my learning disability. Gesu's Counselor, Mrs. O'Neill, even worked with my aunt to hand select a high school, The Woodlynde School, to provide the type of support for learning differences that I was accustomed to.

Left: Lauren Robinson '12 at the 2012 Gesu Gospel Choir Christmas concert.

## Award-Winning Learning Support Teacher Inspires Students for 10 Years

**Thanks to your generosity, Gesu provides outstanding education for remedial to advanced learners.**

A quiet, yet fierce advocate for student success, Dana Gilbert exudes endless positivity in her English Language Arts classroom. Her students tackle learning disabilities in reading. Many bring some frustration and a propensity to quit. Once she hooks them in with her unwavering encouragement and books like *Wonder*, their attitudes shift. “They come begging to read,” she says.

After school, she teaches reading to 2<sup>nd</sup> graders in Gesu's Youth Education for Tomorrow (YET) literacy program. Alumni flock to her classroom. In 2018, Ms. Gilbert's colleagues awarded her the Knetzger Teaching Prize.



Photo by Sabina Louise Pierce

### DANA GILBERT

West Catholic Preparatory  
High School

B.A. English, La Salle  
University

M.S. Secondary Education,  
Saint Joseph's University

M.S. Ed Reading Specialist,  
Saint Joseph's University

**“WHEN A LEARNING DISABILITY MAKES IT HARD TO READ, it is hard to even fathom enjoying reading. At least that was my experience. However, Ms. Gilbert managed to change my mind. I still use a lot of techniques that she taught me then in my reading today. For that, I am forever grateful.”**

— Lauren Robinson '12

**I BELIEVE IN BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS AND USING STORIES AS THE CENTER OF OUR LEARNING.**

I spend a lot of time finding books that will appeal to my students. People have a much easier time reading when content is interesting to them. **I love helping kids who hate reading to find a love for reading.** Most of school is a struggle for them. The issue is they quit easily. Once they do something and see it's possible, that starts to diminish. In my eyes, a great teacher does both—understands the students and teaches the content.

**I TRY TO MAKE MY CLASSROOM A WELCOMING PLACE, A SAFE SPACE. I WANT MY STUDENTS TO KNOW THAT MY ROOM IS HOME FOR THEM.**

My students find themselves sprawled across the floor, standing at a bookcase, or sitting in the big, comfy chair, just as long as they are working. My bulletin boards are collaborative to help students take ownership of our classroom. **I like for them to see pictures of themselves and work that they have done posted around the room, so they remember that they are part of this space. We are a unit.**

**GESU IS HOME FOR ME AND HAS BEEN FOR MOST OF MY ADULT LIFE. I TEACH MY STUDENTS YEAR AFTER YEAR. I FEEL AN OBLIGATION TO THEM. ALUMNI VISIT AND LET ME KNOW HOW THEY ARE. IT ALWAYS GIVES ME PURPOSE.**

They still see me as a support. One comes to talk about books; I didn't even teach him. Others come for recommendation letters. **I go to current and past students' sports games or anything I'm able to attend. It's not to be impressive. I want them to know that somebody cares about them outside of the classroom and beyond their family.**

**I HOPE MY STUDENTS WILL TAKE PERSEVERANCE AND GRIT WITH THEM WHEN THEY LEAVE.**

They all experience challenges. I never deny that to them. **I approach them in an upfront and honest way about their difficulties, while helping them to realize that they can overcome anything with a good support system and the fight to keep pushing.**



The Knetzger Outstanding Teacher Award, endowed by a gift from Jay and Kathy Sherrerd in memory of Gesu Board Member Edwin Knetzger, is presented annually to that faculty member demonstrating the highest quality of teaching ability and commitment.



# Memorable Moments

from 2017–2018

**SEPTEMBER** The Gesu Junior Board of young professionals hosts our first rooftop beer garden! Over 80 attendees enjoyed a fun-filled evening to support Gesu School with outdoor games, food donated by Farmer's Keep, and skyline views.



**OCTOBER** Mayor Jim Kenney joins Gesu Pre-K students for Jumpstart's Read for the Record Day, a national early literacy day. Thank you to Jumpstart Philadelphia at Temple University for its commitment to Gesu students and to Mayor Kenney for being our guest reader!



**NOVEMBER** Gesu's 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium on Transforming Inner-City Education explores trauma-informed education and features **Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg**, a nationally recognized physician and expert in child development. Nearly 300 attended. **Find video, photos, and expert-recommended resources on Gesu's website.**

**JANUARY** Gesu gathers over 70 neighbors, students, and friends from St. Joseph's Prep to commemorate **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s** legacy of service with a block clean-up, packing hygiene kits for Project HOME, and creating art for seniors and homeless people.

**FEBRUARY** U.S. Senator Bob Casey, Gesu 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher and Basketball Coach with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps in 1982 and 1983, visits Gesu students and his former classroom. We thank Senator Casey for his service to children in PA.



**MARCH** More than 675 donors nationwide support Gesu's One Day Challenge, raising an incredible \$51,915! Our sincerest gratitude to **The Z Foundation** for sponsoring their 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive One Day Challenge and donating \$15,000! We thank each donor for supporting 450 students' education, especially **Tim & Ellen Foster** and a generous anonymous sponsor. We acknowledge our students, who contributed more than \$1,058 in "Change for Change." Our upcoming One Day Challenge is March 14, 2019!

**APRIL** Congratulations to Gesu School Board Members, **Sr. Mary Ellen Tennity, IHM**, elected General Superior of the IHM congregation and **Sr. Stephen Anne Roderiguez, IHM**, elected to the General Council as **First Councillor**. We wish them blessings in their new roles. The Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary co-direct Gesu School.

**APRIL** The Gesu Justice League, Gesu's student-driven anti-bullying program, speaks at a state capitol rally in support of **House Bill 2009**, which proposes anti-bullying curriculum across PA schools. We are proud of these 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> graders for raising their voices.



Photo by David DeBalko

**MAY** The 2018 gala draws 325 attendees! Gesu raised more than \$385,000 in total, including \$55,000 through our auctions and \$40,000 for Gesu's after-school program. We are so grateful for this vital support for our mission. Congratulations to 2018 Spirit Medal recipients, **J. Gordon Cooney, Jr.** and **Steve Piltch**, whose commitment to Gesu School and urban education is extraordinary. Special thanks to the 2018 Gala committee and co-chairs and to all sponsors, in particular **Presenting Sponsors, M & S Foundation and Morgan Lewis.**

View photos and videos from the gala, including student performances and Gesu Spirit Medalists, at [gesuschool.org/2018galarecap](https://www.gesuschool.org/2018galarecap).



2018 Gala committee co-chairs: Jack & Tammy Dodds, Ed & Georgine Trumpbour, and Kevin & Karen Lucey. Photo by David DeBalko



**MAY** Children's Scholarship Fund Philadelphia hosts a **Career Day for Gesu 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> graders**, inspiring them with professional possibilities, from journalism to banking.

Visit [gesuschool.org](https://www.gesuschool.org) for photos, videos, and more on these highlights. Read our blog on the homepage. Or, click "News & Events."

## Financials

At Gesu School, we strive to steward your gifts wisely so as to have the greatest impact for our 450 students. We invite you to review our audited financial statements on our website.

**07408**  
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## Gesu Class of 2018 High Schools

- Academy at Palumbo
- Archbishop John Carroll High School
- Archbishop Wood High School
- Bishop McDevitt High School
- Boys' Latin of Philadelphia Charter
- Constitution High School
- Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School
- Franklin Learning Center
- Friends' Central School
- Germantown Friends School
- Girard College
- Imhotep Institute Charter High School
- Liguori Academy
- Little Flower Catholic High School
- Mercy Career & Technical High School
- Merion Mercy Academy
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- Multicultural Academy Charter School
- Roman Catholic High School
- SS John Neumann-Maria Goretti High School
- St. Joseph's Preparatory School
- West Catholic Preparatory High School
- Vaux Big Picture High School





# THANK YOU

## to our 2017–2018 Fiscal Year Donors!

**Your support brings quality education to North Philadelphia.**

Every effort has been made to accurately list all gifts. If your name is not listed, or if you notice an error, contact the Development Office at 215-763-9077.

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Gesu School recognizes our leadership-level donors who have made gifts of \$50,000 and above with membership in the Pierre Toussaint Society. Venerable Pierre Toussaint, the society's namesake, is a hero from our Catholic heritage. Born into slavery in Haiti in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Pierre Toussaint was brought to New York City, where he became a successful hairdresser. He used his earnings to free many slaves and finally himself. Once a free man, he performed many acts of charity, including the establishment of an orphanage and a school for black children. When most fled the city during a yellow fever epidemic, he stayed to nurse the sick. His dedication to the well-being and education of the poor makes Pierre Toussaint a fitting patron for Gesu and our donors.

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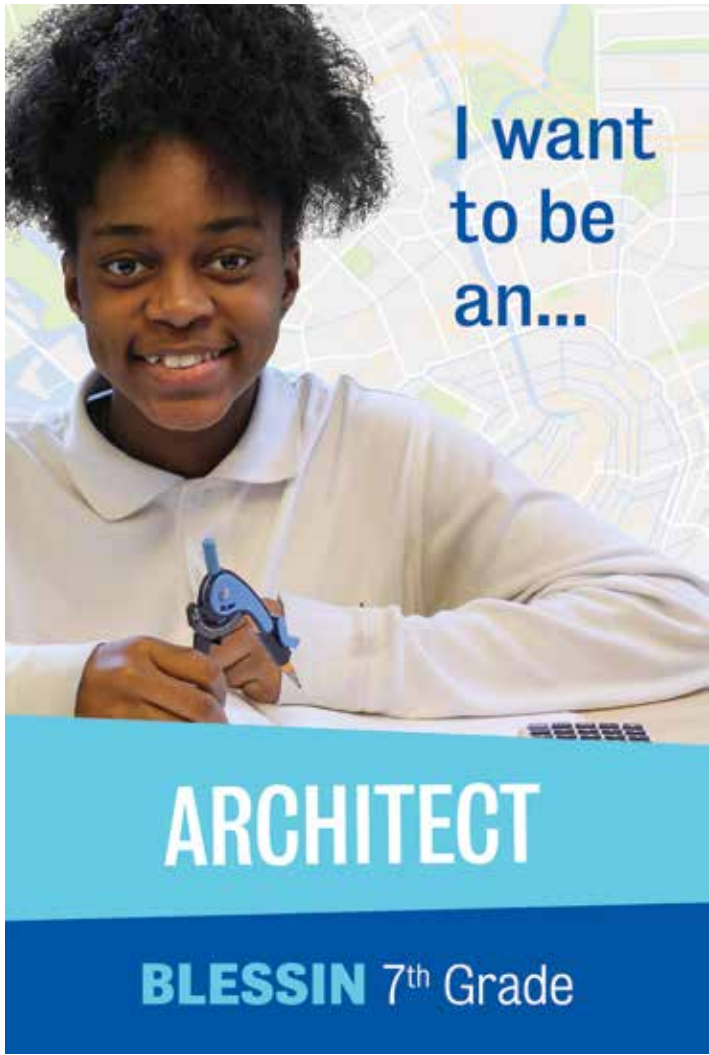
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**In the last year, Gesu mourned the loss of these members of our community.**

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for his legacy of giving since 1995, including endowed scholarships and support for multiple campaigns, notably Building for Tomorrow, endowment, and the Gerry and Marguerite Lenfest Early Learning Center.



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for his commitment as lead sponsor of the Gesu Gala for numerous years, devoted supporter of Gesu's Sponsor a Child program, and his generosity to multiple campaigns for endowment and renovation, particularly Building for Tomorrow and the Debbie Martinelli Resource Room.





“Gesu School’s students face the dual challenges of poverty and violence, and the resultant traumas those challenges can cause. The van Ameringen Foundation is pleased to have made a grant to help fund the school’s focused approach on trauma-informed education and its emphasis on delivering vital counseling services to all students. We’re proud our grant will help Gesu School provide their students with the counseling support necessary to unlock more of their full potential.”

— Ken Kind  
President,  
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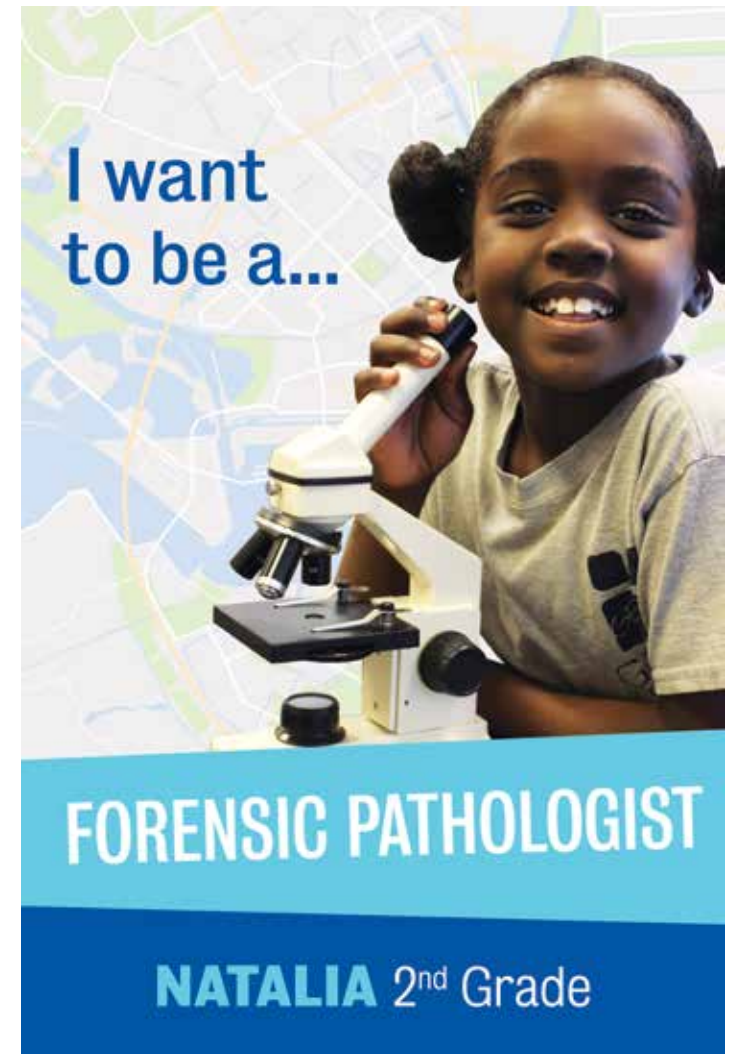
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To commemorate Gesu's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as an independent Catholic school, a generous donor launched a 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Challenge to match any **NEW** or **INCREASED** dollars up to \$25,000.

**MAKE AN IMPACT TODAY! Use the enclosed envelope to help us meet our goal and support 450 students' education. Donate online at [gesuschool.org](http://gesuschool.org). Thank you!**





**GESU** | 25  
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**We invite you to see how a Gesu education maps students' bright futures by visiting our school. Whether through your time, talent, or financial support, thank YOU for making an impact on 450 students' lives!**

### THE MISSION:

Inspired by the Jesuit and IHM traditions of social justice, faith, hope, and love, Gesu School strives, without selective admissions, to provide a quality, innovative education for its neighbor children to break the cycle of poverty and violence.

### THE RESULTS:

In a city where approximately 65 percent of public high school students graduate from high school in four years, 90 percent of Gesu alumni graduate high school on time, and of those graduates, 86 percent go on to college or post-secondary education.



**SAVE  
THE  
DATE**

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