

2021 & 2022 **IMPACT REPORT**







Dear Friends of Gesu School.

During the last two years, Gesu School, along with the broader education landscape, has experienced seismic shifts. To meet our community's needs, Gesu adapted teaching methods, revamped our facilities, and prioritized health and safety. To share the stories of this unique time of transitions, we have intentionally combined our annual reports for 2021 and 2022.

Gesu has persisted during this uncertain period, unwavering in our mission to help students transcend all forms of poverty through a comprehensive, innovative education. The faith, creative hope, and love inherent in this mission propelled us forward. Rooted in the traditions of the IHM Sisters and Jesuits, these values manifest themselves in the difference Gesu makes in students' lives.

Gesu navigated the pandemic with innovation and care, following a plan diligently prepared by doctors, educators, and administrators and compliant with public health guidelines. We continued to care for the whole child and the whole family during virtual classes and the return to hybrid and fully in-person learning. Our team has provided resources to combat food insecurity and educational seminars on staying healthy. Consistent outreach from counseling staff continues to support mental health and wellness.

Teachers continued tackling new instructional methods with unrelenting commitment and grace. Students remained eager to learn and connect, from morning prayer streamed from our Gesu chapel, to online science labs and yoga. As our team shifted to hybrid learning, we continued delivering a robust curriculum with ingenuity. Our return to in-person school has been deliberately attentive to holistic learning and acclimating students to classroom routines and socialization.

The pages that follow share our community's voices and highlight what makes the "Gesu difference." We hope you find these stories inspiring.

Thank you for being part of our community. We continue to hold all in our prayers.

Peace and blessings,

Bryan H. Carter
President and CEO

P.S. I welcome you to experience our community in action and stay current on Gesu news. Visit gesuschool.org and click "Tour our school," or "Join our email list." To schedule a conversation or an in-person tour, contact the Development Office at 215-763-9077 or development@gesuschool.org.

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(Above) Third grader Demi enjoys a weekly library visit.

(Below) Gesu embraces the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." Vernon Gooseby, a 12-year member of Gesu's maintenance team, guides 6th grader Kharee in tying his tie.

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Thank you to our generous donors, who continue to be "women and men for others" for Gesu during these challenging times.

The Gesu Difference Is...



Innovation & Sare

Response to the **COVID-19 Pandemic**

> $F^{
> m all}$ 2020 ushered in a year of transitions. For the first time, Gesu launched our academic year in a virtual format to ensure the health and safety of our community. To accommodate 35 families unable to provide child care at home, Gesu established a remote learning center. Trained volunteers supervised students during virtual learning.

During this challenging year, Gesu School continued to innovate to meet the needs of families and our learners. Drawing from our mission statement and core values, Gesu nurtured our community through holistic education. Our team melded counseling and wellness support with robust academics, spiritual guidance, and a soft skills curriculum. Gesu also supported families' material needs, including weekly food distribution.

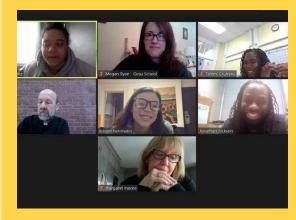
On January 11, 2021, Gesu began implementing a phased reopening plan for 6th-8th graders whose families opted for in-person learning. Our 3rd-5th graders returned two weeks later, with the final cohort of Pre-K-2nd graders arriving in February. Our tireless teachers continued to adapt to a hybrid learning environment, reaching virtual and in-person learners and remaining committed to safety and wellness. Our community stayed connected through school-wide initiatives and daily, virtual grade-level meetings that included prayer, birthday celebrations, and Black history moments.



Gesu 7th grade bovs in Mr. Campanella's classroom settle into in-person learning with safety precautions in place.



Gesu President and CEO Bryan Carter leads morning prayer and the Gesu rap, along with daily announcements and a Black history fact.



Weekly faculty meetings included ongoing professional development in virtual and hybrid learning strategies. Staff also forged ahead with planning for Gesu's accreditation renewal with the Middle States Association's Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools.

Creativity in Instruction

Throughout the year, teachers and students continued adapting to new learning environments. Teachers embraced digital innovation, along with our urban outdoor space. The Gesu rooftop transformed into an outdoor classroom for 2nd grade science experiments and a safe space for Kindergarten picnics.

Technology

Gesu maximized our technology to ensure that at-home learners accessed live instruction and could interact with classmates. Every teacher became Google Education Certified. With strong infrastructure already in place, our IT team integrated upgrades and introduced iPads in every classroom.



Students in Ms. Klein's advanced math classes learn real-world applications, such as forecasting college loan costs and budgeting. In-person and virtual students collaborated through Google Classroom and apps.

66 When shifting to virtual learning, students responded best to interactive lessons. This meant creating lessons based around applications and websites that would make learning fun, while also providing me with quick, reliable data. I used websites that students were already familiar with from class, such as Kahoot! and Google Draw. I also utilized virtual whiteboards to show the steps required to solve problems in a way that the students were used to and that solidifies connections to material. The transition was smooth and easy. Participation was at 100%, much higher than call-and-respond learning.

The students were excited to come to my class because there were virtual games to play, or click-and-drag activities, rather than worksheets. They were completing the same problems from the text, but in a way that felt more authentic to them. I was also able to see their level of understanding immediately. It was a win-win."

-Taylor Klein, Advanced Math Teacher

Partnerships

From Model United Nations with Saint Joseph's University to artists in residence programs with cultural institutions, Gesu maximized our partnerships to generate creative learning opportunities and keep students engaged, including those learning remotely.

Gesu 7th graders participated in a STEAM collaboration with the Wagner Free Institute of Science's SNAP program (Science, Nature, and Art in Philadelphia) and Saint Joseph's University's biology department. With a resident teaching artist, students created projects like Zeer pot clay models and discovered how they function as cooling devices in regions where access to electricity or refrigerators is limited.

Partners like Dancing with the Students reimagined programming online. Seventh graders learned ballroom dance in pods. Program managers fused video to create a one-of-a-kind celebration for students to watch their performance.

Gesu 4th grade boys participated in the Kimmel Center's Jazz4Freedom program. With a virtual artist in residence, students studied the importance of jazz and its influence on social change, from the Harlem Renaissance to the Civil Rights Movement. They discussed current social issues like gun violence and expressed their views through dance, writing, and music.





Arts

Gesu recognizes the arts as critical in providing outlets for exploration, mindfulness, and as creative response to social issues. Our weekly visual arts and music programs reached virtual and in-person students.

Award-winning Music Teacher and Choir Director H.L. Ratliff brings the breadth of music to Gesu students from the classical orchestra's instrument families, to pioneers of the Jazz Age, and current rap artists. Younger students study musical notes, along with rhythm and beat. Classes engage in movement to reinforce these concepts. Middle school students research Black musicians of the 40s and 50s and share PowerPoint presentations. Students discuss social issues that emerge in rap music, such as voting and poverty.

46 As a Music Teacher for 25+ years, for me, this has been a year of challenge and discovery. Due to the pandemic, students could not sing. Keyboards, recorders, percussion, and choir were silenced. Probably 90% of my teaching arsenal was not usable for a virtual classroom.

Fifteen months later, I'm proud to be more tech savvy and share notable virtual music moments. Google Meet allowed me to present active rhythm exercises to Pre-K through 1st grade. Orchestra Safari, interactive

games developed by Carnegie Hall Music Educators, facilitated teaching instruments. Music notation software helped 5th and 6th graders read music and perform duets."

H.L. Ratliff, Music Teacher and Choir Director

(Right) A 4th grader enjoys clapping patterns of rhythm and beat with Teacher and Choir Director H.L. Ratliff. Students learning remotely and in-person collaborated to create original rhythms.





66 There was such a relief to switching from virtual to in-class learning. It was tough to connect virtually. I felt like the students who came back for in-person learning were rejuvenated. They were delighted to be back in the classroom learning again with their friends. I felt like doing different activities such as Jazz4Freedom, Boy Scouts, and Shalom, a program that teaches students skills to make healthy lifestyle choices, were a good escape for the students. They broke up the monotony of virtual learning. I felt it was really hard to keep students' attention when they were surrounded by distractions."

—Sean O'Brien, 4th Grade Boys Teacher

Civic Engagement & Service

Hallmarks of a Gesu education include civic awareness and action. These efforts persisted during virtual and hybrid learning.



The Gesu and St. Joseph's Prep communities came together to care for our North Philadelphia neighborhood by participating in the Philly Spring Cleanup in April. Students, families, and staff raked and recycled leaves and yard waste, removed trash, and planted trees.



Cub Scouts (left) and Girl Scouts (above) continued to meet throughout the year. Thanks to Gesu parent Naima Saunders for leading Girl Scouts Troop 9043 and to Monica Johnson and Raquel Johnson of Boy Scouts for America's Cradle for Liberty Council for leading Gesu's Boy Scouts Troop.



Spirituality & Community Connection

The Gesu team created ongoing opportunities for faith sharing and community building to support one another. To keep our Gesu community connected and spiritually sustained during virtual learning, the Mission & Ministry team led monthly Mass or prayer services, along with weekly "Magis moments," spiritual thoughts from the Catholic tradition shared via email with families, staff, and students.

To commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Gesu middle school students and our Mission & Ministry team shared a virtual school-wide prayer service. The service included scripture readings and reflections by Dr. King on justice, peace, and love.

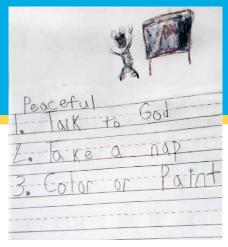


Wellness & Social-Emotional Learning

Weekly wellness classes with Gesu counseling staff prioritized socialemotional learning (SEL). Counseling staff discussed topics like racial justice, mindfulness, and coping during the pandemic. Teachers also integrated SEL into routine lessons. Monthly Mass and special events like Unity Day highlighted inclusion and kindness.

66 Each week we read a *Little Spot* book to focus on a specific area of socialemotional learning: a *Little Spot* of sadness, anger, and anxiety. Those stories
broke down those emotions, so kids could understand them and identify them,
and then gave breathing tricks or other strategies to find their 'peaceful spot.' *A Little Peaceful Spot* tied all that together and discussed how we can calm down,
and how we should allow ourselves to feel those emotions, but just not allow
them to get so big that we don't feel well."

-Melanie Colozzi, 1st Grade Teacher



A 1st grader identifies three ways to find a peaceful spot.

Name: Chase

Date: 01/04/2021

G.L.A.D. Break Reflection

One thing I was grateful for over break was being with my family.

One thing I learned over break was it's about giving and not receiving.

One thing I accomplished over break was to get fresh air and play outside.

One thing that delighted me over break was the smile on my families' face.

The Gesu Difference

Gesu's 1st-4th grade counselor led

holidays and practice positivity.

G: Something or someone you're

A: An accomplishment like getting

D: Something that delighted you

grateful for L: One thing you learned

enough sleep

weekly virtual mindfulness lessons. To

start off the New Year, students learned

the GLAD technique to reflect on their

Philadelphia's low- to moderateincome population already faced disproportionate obstacles. For many, the pandemic has widened the gap.



100% of Gesu administrators, counselors, teacher's aides, & social workers

helped track down students having difficulty with getting and staying online



0 missed school days during transition to remote learning



200 families received Christmas gifts to help brighten the holiday season



300 Chromebooksrapidly distributed to
students who needed
devices for virtual learning



100 families provided with grocery store gift cards



3,100+ weekly meal boxes served to families and community members



January 11, 2021 phased reopening began for Gesu students

The Transition to In-Person Learning



esu integrated intentional care and creativity into our transition back to in-person learning—from safety precautions in classrooms and shared spaces to ongoing academic and wellness support for students. Faculty and staff embraced the IHM Sisters' principle of meeting students where they are and nurturing each individual. The Gesu team leaned on our mission, drawing daily inspiration from our Catholic roots in social justice, faith, creative hope, and love.

Here, Gesu teachers and staff share their impressions of the shifts in learning and the school environment during the pandemic. We wholeheartedly thank them for their persistence, adaptability, and genuine care for our Gesu community. They are the "Gesu difference."

- back in the building. They appreciate and know how important education is. The students have a better understanding of how life can throw a curve ball, and they have to adapt."
- —Jo-Anne Young, 7th Grade Teacher

Kristen Herrmann, 3rd Grade Teacher

Ms. Herrmann has taught at Gesu since 2019. She holds a B.S. in Elementary Education and Special Education and a Minor in Faith-Justice Studies from Saint Joseph's University. After completing two volunteer years as an ACESJU Fellow and earning her Master's as a Reading Specialist from SJU, she has remained at Gesu an additional two years as 3rd Grade Girls Teacher. Beloved by students, she is known for her commitment to their growth through positive reinforcement. Ms. Herrmann's classroom is vibrant, joyful, and filled with girl power affirmations that inspire her students to set goals and support each other in their efforts.

What impact has the pandemic had on your students these past two years?

The pandemic has affected the students in all areas of their lives. Students really had to adapt to learning virtually, while making sense of all these new changes in their communities and their lifestyles. They really missed seeing their friends and teachers at school. Adapting to virtual instruction was very difficult for students, especially the younger ones who were not familiar with new apps and websites. Their parents were often working from home in the same room, or their siblings were in virtual school right next to them. Most of their learning environments were very distracting.

Students were also forced to become their own advocates and speak up when they were not understanding the material or the curriculum, because teachers couldn't see the work they were completing on the paper in front of them. When students returned to school in-person, many had to adjust to the long days and school routines.

With the return to in-person learning in 2021–22, what were 2–3 of students' most pressing needs?

One of the biggest impacts of the pandemic on students was on their emotional well-being. Some students were stressed or lonely being at home for as long as they were. Some felt angry that their lives had changed so drastically. When students came back to school in-person, teachers focused a lot on teaching mindfulness, emotion regulation, and reflection. I really think students, and adults, pushed through the pandemic and showed so much grit and resilience. But the hard part was reflecting on it, realizing how much it changed our lives, and accepting the emotions that come with that realization.

The other most pressing need was academic. Some students did not progress academically as much as they would have if they were in the classroom. A huge part of my job last year was to assess my students and identify their learning gaps quickly, so I could readdress them. Additionally, we needed to reestablish daily routines like individual silent reading and math fact fluency.

How did you adapt your teaching to meet those needs?

I adapted a lot of my teaching methods to meeting the students' new needs. I wanted the students to feel like they still had a safe space to learn, even if the classroom was virtual, and that they were all a part of a class community. In March 2020, I held individual tutoring sessions online for struggling students who needed direct instruction for the remaining months of kindergarten. I used Seesaw, a program that allowed



students to record themselves speaking, reading, or doing the work I assigned. I especially loved hearing their voices and recordings because I missed them so much.

During the 2021–2022 school year when I taught 3rd grade, we relied heavily on Google Classroom to post and complete assignments. I had to convert a lot of my assignments, worksheets, and assessments from paper to a virtual format. I made sure to start every day with a morning meeting to check in with every student on Google Meet. I also held virtual "office hours" after the students logged off to help those who did not understand the material for that day or who had internet issues.

Additionally, my classroom management system needed to radically change to a system that students could "cash in" their points to choose a brain break video, stay on Google Meet with me and a friend for lunch, or, the big prize, which was to choose a whacky food for me to eat on camera to see my reaction.

Were there some positives that emerged from teaching during the pandemic?

I think the biggest silver lining I found from the past two years was a newfound sense of gratitude for having my students back in the classroom and learning in a traditional way.

Mark Smith, Director of Facilities

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unexpected demands in maintaining Gesu's infrastructure, both in technology and physical plant, with a school building that has stood for 100 years. With an extensive 18 years of experience in facilities management, Mark Smith led the Gesu Maintenance and IT team to ensure ventilation, cleaning, and bandwidth could support the ever-changing needs of virtual and hybrid learning. We thank this team for their willingness to work long hours on the front lines to keep our Gesu students and staff safe and to enable our community to keep learning, without any missed school days. Their dedication is exceptional.

What were some of the challenges in the school building during the pandemic?

The challenges affecting all school buildings resulted from the initial lack of information from the government regarding prevention practices as well as the urgency to create solutions that would bring kids back to in-person learning more quickly. There wasn't much information on how to open schools or even businesses, and lots of information from the CDC changed often.

Specific to Gesu's facility, we experienced the following struggles:



COVID-19 Prevention

- Additional energy costs from running mechanical equipment longer to properly ventilate the building
- Wear and tear on mechanical equipment from longer run times and more restrictive filters
- Cost and availability of labor to follow disinfecting guidelines
- Cost of materials specific to COVID-19 prevention, such as plexi shields, masks, and sanitizer for students and staff, along with cleaning supplies, filters, and parts

Technology

- Increasing the building's IT infrastructure
- Distributing Chromebooks and laptops to the entire school community and providing tech support throughout the pandemic

How did the Gesu maintenance team ensure the building would be as safe as possible and could accommodate students' and teachers' needs during virtual learning and when returning to in-person learning?

Gesu's maintenance team had to increase cleaning protocols at night, adding levels of disinfection in the classrooms and public areas. We had to implement touch-point cleaning throughout the school day to maintain clean surfaces. We added physical markers and barriers around the entire building to keep students and staff at a safe distance.

The school's bandwidth had to be more than tripled to maintain connectivity for all of the teachers and students to stay in contact through virtual learning and hybrid learning. Each classroom was equipped with an iPad and SMART television. Gesu was able to accommodate these needs because of solid planning and overall financial health. Pre-K and Kindergarten students had access to iPads, and upper grades had Chromebooks. All classrooms have SMART panels/boards.

The IT team distributed Chromebooks and computers to all students and staff and provided support during distance learning. Sometimes this would include talking mom, dad, grandma, and grandpa through steps of logging on to a computer or virtual classroom to help support and maintain the children's household, which had become their classroom.

The maintenance and IT team is very dedicated to Gesu. Everyone remained understanding and flexible to the needs of the school, from reorganizing the entire building to make room for social distancing to wiping down touch surfaces throughout the day and spending hours disinfecting Chromebooks and computers. In an unprecedented time of worry about our own families, the Maintenance and IT team was dedicated to their Gesu family.

Jo-Anne Young, 7th Grade Teacher

Recipient of the Steven Scott & Linda Bradley Teacher Appreciation Award

Gesu 7th Grade Girls Teacher Jo-Anne Young was recognized with the Steven Scott & Linda Bradley Teacher Appreciation Award for dedication to students. Ms. Young has exhibited extraordinary commitment to her students and to her craft in her 26 years at Gesu. She holds a B.S. in Science from Morgan State University and an M.Ed. in Science Education and Administration from Neumann College.

Throughout the pandemic's many transitions, Ms. Young leaned on her faith and her experience. She explains, "I adapted by first praying that I could do my part as a teacher." She restructured the 7th grade curriculum and applied the necessary technology, for instance, to design online science labs. To make biology interactive, she assigned students to map out cells as a travel brochure to a fun place: their neighborhood or even an amusement park. Students gave an online "tour," presenting their travel destination and reviewing parts of the cell. Per Ms. Young, such projects improved technology skills dramatically.

In response to students' social and academic needs, she integrated online social circles and individualized tutoring into the virtual learning schedule. She also wove in movement breaks to help students relax and refocus.

As students transitioned back to hybrid and in-person learning, she decorated their desks and left snacks and positive messages on them to brighten their days. "I tried to make the virtual students feel special as well," Ms. Young reflects. "We celebrated birthdays with Stevie Wonder's song. I gave students the opportunity to sing the chorus. The birthday person did a little dance. Wow, it was a great three minutes!"



Ms. Young observes that the transition back to fully in-person learning in 2021–22 came with some challenges for students, particularly from prolonged "lack of face-to-face interaction." For example, she has assisted students with rebuilding proper communication skills and regaining comfort with mingling. While she notes there was some hesitancy about returning to in-person learning, the school's precautionary measures alleviated fears. "The students enjoy being back in the building," she asserts. "They appreciate and know how important education is. The students have a better understanding of how life can throw a curve ball, and they have to adapt."

In addition to supporting her students, Ms. Young's generous spirit extended to her colleagues. She organized tributes to the maintenance team, front office staff, and individuals throughout virtual and hybrid learning to acknowledge their contributions and unite our community. She also led her students in creating care packages for Teacher

Appreciation Day and in spearheading an Earth Day rooftop cleanup project.

Ms. Young is a true woman for others in her selflessness. We thank her for sharing her optimism during these challenging months.

66 Ms. Young is a very informed person. She's energetic. And she cares about her students' education

> I had science, social studies, and ELA with Ms. Young. I think science was my favorite because we did labs and hands-on projects, like posters.

I remember cleaning up the Gesu roof for other students, so they can play on a clean playscape area. We also made cards for Gesu teachers and staff to thank them for their work. I think Ms. Young had our class do these to learn to show kindness."

—Brianna, Grade 7

The Gesu Difference Is... Dedication from Our Entire Community

Sisters and Gesu supporters Connie Buckley and Molly Pierce are staunch advocates for educational equity. Their family's enduring legacy of giving to Gesu encompasses three generations.

For Connie and Molly, awareness of social responsibility took root in childhood. Their parents, philanthropists and advocates, launched the Leo & Peggy Pierce Family Foundation to support those confronting food insecurity in the Philadelphia region and in Florida.

Today, the family's second and third generations continue to impact the lives of low-income families. Eager to carry on their parents' legacy, Connie and Molly have been dedicated to Gesu's Sponsor a Child

program for 25 years. The sisters embrace each opportunity to meet with their sponsored students and collect their letters as keepsakes. Mutual friendships have flourished over the decades.

Now, Connie's daughter, Hannah McKeever, continues to honor her family's vision. Hannah committed to Gesu's Sponsor a Child program in 2020.

Here, Connie, Molly, and Hannah share their Gesu story and reflect on the "Gesu difference." We are grateful for their longstanding dedication to Gesu's mission and their fierce commitment to confronting poverty and transforming lives.

A gift to the Sponsor a Child program covers the majority of the annual cost to educate one Gesu School student. The impact is transformational, for both students and sponsors. Learn more about how you can make an impact at gesuschool.org. Click "Join our mission."



Molly Pierce

Our parents were very into education. Their big thing was giving back to those not as fortunate as we are. We're going to stick with the school and support it because of the education and what Gesu provides—the mission. We love Gesu School.

We hope to get to know the students through 8th grade, learn what they're about, and where they come from. I have the letters, the pictures, the artwork starting from 1st or 2nd grade. They're like a collector's item. It's very warming to the heart that the student wants to know you, too, and will take the time to send a letter and picture and sit with you for an hour and a half at lunch and play board games. This is the best!

Kudos to the teachers at Gesu because they are the ones who are molding and working with the parents and guardians to work with the kids and get them to a better place."

The importance of continuing my family's Gesu legacy definitely stems from my grandpop's experiences with urban education and seeing the direct correlation between education and poverty. A proper education allowed him to reach his full potential and gradually pull himself and his family out of poverty, which never would have been possible without financial assistance. From this I have learned the importance of helping those that may not have equal opportunities when it comes to education. I believe every child should be given the same opportunity despite race, financial status, and where they live.



Connie Buckley

I've been lucky enough and blessed to have

access to great schools. Other kids in different zip codes don't get that. It's not fair. We tend to be in our little bubbles. Gesu is 20 minutes from my house.

Sponsor a Child is definitely an educational process for me as well. To listen to the kids and find out about their families and siblings. Some have pretty tough stories—the poverty and discrimination of financial resources.

To see what Gesu does to grow the kids emotionally, socially, spiritually—we wish other schools could follow Gesu's model. It's just a wonderful school, and I wish we had more Gesu Schools."



Hannah McKeever

The Gesu program is something I find very impressive in regards to the structure of classrooms and resources provided. The fact that Gesu provides emotional support is an incredible service to all students.

I joined the program in 2020, which was a very strange time in the world. Due to COVID, I had not had the chance to meet Skylar in person but had received artwork from her, including a homemade Christmas ornament that certainly cheered me up. I finally had the chance to meet Skylar at a May event. It was great to have in-person interaction, learn more about her, and see her personality come out. Her enthusiasm and bubbly personality were contagious. We played every board game that was available. I am very much looking forward to events over the course of her Gesu schooling and continuing to get to know Skylar."

A Tribute to Gesu's Teachers of the Year 2021 and 2022

Your generosity enables teachers to impact a generation.

Annette Pickett 8th Grade Teacher

Teacher of the Year 2021



Annette Pickett is a force. Fiercely dedicated to teaching and our Gesu community for 24 years, she is a role model in her strength, faith, and love for knowledge.

In 2020, Mrs. Pickett was recognized with the Hearts & Heroes award for essential workers, an honor supported by the Philadelphia Eagles' Alshon Jeffrey and Shop Rite Stores. In 2021, Gesu faculty and staff nominated her for The Knetzger Outstanding Teacher Award. A lifelong learner, Mrs. Pickett earned her B.S. and M.S. in Education from Saint Joseph's University and is pursuing a second graduate degree, an Ed.D. in Technology and Education, from Walden University. Her research evolved during the pandemic, which illuminated issues of equity. Her dissertation focuses on integrating technology into learning, beyond typing or gaming, and empowering more experienced educators to gain confidence in its applications.

Prior to her current role teaching 8th grade, she taught 5th grade and Kindergarten. "I like 8th grade the best," Mrs. Pickett attests, "because I get a glimpse of the potential young men and women students will become. I enjoy watching students take those beginning steps to independence."

Her English Language Arts and history classes challenge students with high expectations, including a 10-page "Pickett research paper," more typically taught in high school. She inspires students to think critically about history and its effects on current events. Topics include the Holocaust, global warming, and racial inequities. Her classes balance research with experiential learning, like creating FlipGrid videos to strategize battles and understand the allied invasion in Europe during World War II.

Alumni return continually to express their gratitude. Mrs. Pickett reflects, "I see them achieve in high school or attend the colleges they once dreamed about. They come back and tell me. The light in their eyes is priceless. These are the memories I hold close to my heart."

Mrs. Pickett advocates for her students' personal and academic development, as well as her colleagues' success. A teaching mentor and an avid techie, she shares her expertise schoolwide. During the transition to virtual learning, she led trainings to ensure Gesu's teachers shifted seamlessly to the Google platform.

Annette Pickett embodies the "Gesu difference."







- Mrs. Pickett and I were grade partners for about fifteen years. She is a natural-born teacher. I know for a fact that she spends many hours preparing for her teaching each week. The best way to describe Mrs. Pickett's impact on her students is to see the number of graduates who return to Gesu to thank her for the way she prepared them for high school."
- -Laura Weatherly, Coordinator for Mission & Ministry, 8th Grade Teacher
- appreciative of Mrs. Pickett being hard on me to help shape and mold me as I transitioned into high school and further on into college. Visiting Gesu, I would always tell Mrs. Pickett of the accomplishments I have made, and she was always proud of the woman I've become. I am happy with the words of wisdom she has instilled in me. I wouldn't be where I'm at in life without the tough love Mrs. Pickett showed me."
- -Dymon James '10
 Behavioral Health Technician, Solis
 Cohen Elementary School; Temple
 University, M.Ed. '21 Higher
 Education Administration;
 Shippensburg University '18, BSW
 Social Work; Mastery Charter Lenfest
 Campus '14
- **66** As a parent, I always knew my daughter, Asia West, was in good hands with Mrs. Pickett, from Kindergarten to 5th grade, to 8th grade. I remember Asia's first day in Kindergarten. She cried and wouldn't part from me. Mrs. Pickett took her hand, looked me in the eyes and said, 'She will be fine. I have her.' Mrs. Pickett did just that for nine years. She truly had Asia's best interest at heart. She is an exceptional teacher and person, a true example of love and leadership. Asia and I still have lots of talks about Mrs. Pickett and her added value to my daughter's accomplishments."
 - -Anissa Taylor, Gesu Parent
- 66 Mrs. Pickett is my all-time favorite teacher. I had her in Kindergarten, 5th grade, and partially in 8th grade. She undoubtedly had an impact on my life. I credit her for keeping me grounded and focused during my impressionable adolescent years. She was tough, but in a good way, because she wanted the best from her students. I am forever grateful and so thankful for her teachings!"
 - —Asia West '08, Senior Project
 Manager, Merakey; Drexel University,
 '20 MBA; St. John's University, '16,
 BS Business Administration and
 Management; Springside Chestnut
 Hill Academy '12

that she's caring and a good listener. When a student needs help, she's there. Pat always arrives early and stays late. She is very committed to her work. She gives her time outside the classroom, whether going to basketball games or volunteering on weekends."

Linda Hartzell,Retired Gesu Art Teacher

Pat Leaf Science Lab Coordinator Teacher of the Year 2022





Pat Leaf brings ingenuity, heart, and pragmatic experience as a former lab technician to the Gesu science program. She holds an A.A.S. in Nursing from Community College of Philadelphia. For 20 years, she has shared her professional experience and knowledge in the classroom. As a Gesu parent of Dontae '06, she remains deeply invested in student success.

In her role as Science Lab Coordinator, Ms. Leaf crafts lesson plans to align with those taught in each grade and designs hands-on experiments to reinforce concepts. "I want to inspire students to learn new things about science because science is everywhere," she notes.

During the pandemic, Ms. Leaf created a roving science lab to keep students engaged in learning. Due to space limitations in Gesu's lab, she delivered experiments to classrooms and in virtual spaces. Hands-on STEM experiments often integrated design thinking and included building floating tinfoil boats to test buoyancy and constructing stackable towers from index cards to understand weight, balance, and the engineering process.

Ms. Leaf tailors experiments to students as young as Pre-K, instilling the curiosity and drive to become a lifelong explorer. Pre-K students learned the scientific method through a "Skittles experiment." Ms. Leaf observes, "It's important to start the process of scientific inquiry as early as Pre-K to stimulate the mind with creativity and introduce the science curriculum." Ms. Leaf and Pre-K Teacher Peggy Moore guided students to predict outcomes when water is added to the candy. They observed a rainbow form, reinforced learning on colors, and discussed balancing occasional treats with fruits and vegetables.

Ms. Leaf continually works beyond classroom hours, volunteering with science projects and as a track coach for more than ten years. And she provides students with access to top-notch resources and opportunities. In 2021, she collaborated with Teacher



Jo-Anne Young to bring the United States Naval Academy's Girls Only STEM Day program to Gesu middle schoolers. For six years, she's facilitated the Wagner Free Institute of Science's SNAP program, Science, Nature, and Art in Philadelphia. Students collaborate with resident teaching artists to learn topics like geology by molding pottery dinosaurs and creating 3-D art depicting the Earth's layers.

Additionally, she forged a partnership with the Philadelphia Horticultural Society's Green City Teachers program in 2017 to cultivate a community garden. Collaborating with Art Teacher Linda Hartzell, she helped faculty integrate gardening across the curriculum—science, math, and art. In fall, 7th graders raked leaves and planted bulbs. In winter, they designed and painted water barrels. Later in spring,

students released butterflies and pruned the plants. Through the experience, they grew in knowledge, practical skills, and teamwork. Ms. Leaf asserts that the project "gave students a sense of pride in their neighborhood."

We thank Ms. Leaf for sharing her joy for exploring STEM and her unwavering support for Gesu students.



66 Ms. Leaf is a special teacher because of the love and care she has for each and every student. The same love and care she has given me my entire life, she gives back to the students as if they were her own."

—Dontae Leaf '06, Drexel University '21, B.S. Professional Studies; Valley Forge Military College, Associate's in Humanities

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

Aumni Accolades Andre'a Rhoads '18: A Conversation

with Philadelphia's Youth Poet Laureate

esu is proud to share excerpts I from an interview with alumna Andre'a Rhoads '18. Gesu's advanced writing courses sparked her love for the written word. Since earning this honor in July 2021, she continues to reveal her strong voice, writing for U.S. Senator Bob Casey's Black History Month event and serving as Peace Promoter for the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations.

Currently, she is writing *In the Hive*, a book of poetry. She visited Gesu in April to read for National Poetry Month and to inspire students.

What did you enjoy about Gesu's advanced writing classes? Did you feel challenged? When you arrived in high school, did you feel prepared for the writing and research?

Advanced writing taught me about different types of poems like sonnets and haikus, and it showed me poetry isn't always about rhyming words. I did feel challenged for my first couple of classes. After a while, I got into the swing of things and I felt like a true artist.

Yes, I felt very prepared for the writing and research at Little Flower. I felt prepared for the life of high school because of Gesu. Teachers like Mrs. Pickett, Mrs. Randa, Mrs. Ryder, and the entire staff and village of Gesu raised me and built me to overcome challenges and obstacles. Not only were we given lessons for school subjects, but

Andre'a Rhoads '18

Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls '22

High School Activities & Achievements:

- Leader for Black Student Union
- Concert Choir member
- Gesu Alumni Council inaugural member

Gesu Activities & Achievements:

- Student council secretary and treasurer
- Gesu Gospel Choir member, service, sports, theater
- Inaugural recipient of Anne Reimel award from the Martin de Porres Foundation at graduation

also lessons for life. These experiences helped shape me to be the person I am today because they helped me learn time management, balance, and responsibility. Gesu also taught me to be more involved with others and that there is no "I" in team.

What else from your time at Gesu helped you prepare for this achievement as Philadelphia's Youth Poet Laureate? What advice do you have for Gesu students?

Gesu taught me to believe in myself and that dreams come true when you work hard for them. Gesu is part of the reason I received this achievement because they showed me that nothing is too big for me, and that if I put my mind to it, I can do it. Seeing so many alumni do amazing things and come

back and tell their stories made me want to be like them.

To the current Gesu students and all those after them, and even to the alumni, keep dreaming and keep believing. When things get hard, don't give up. God knows your place on this Earth and everyone has a story to tell, even you. Continue to use your gifts, and raise your voices. Don't let anyone silence you. I've been where you are, I've worn your uniforms, I've walked the same hallways as you, and I've sat in the same classrooms and chairs. I am living proof that dreams come true. You can do anything and be anything as long as you have faith and believe. Also continue to have navy blue, white, and gray running through your veins because Gesu will always be your family no matter what.



How do you hope to use the role as Youth Poet Laureate to share your voice on a wider platform? How can you reach other teens?

I hope to use my role as Youth Poet Laureate to empower, inspire, teach, and motivate. I think I can reach other teens by talking about current events and issues. Also by speaking and writing on topics that they can relate to. I want to be an advocate or a bridge between the adults and the youth. Adults don't always understand what the youth goes through in times like these and vice versa, so I hope that my work can shine a light on both sides of this. This is important because we all need to come together no matter the age, race, gender, or sexuality. We need to uplift each other.

What are your career ambitions?

For my future career, I want to be an author, director, and screenwriter. I also want to try to start my own businesses and create a few inventions. My mind is continuously working and flowing. I believe that one occupation isn't enough for me and that the world needs more creativity from women's point of view, especially from an African American background.

Read the entire interview and media coverage at gesuschool. org/philapoet.

Above: Andre'a shares her poem "If These Hallways Could Talk" with guests at the 2022 Gala. Right: Andre'a at her Gesu School 8th grade graduation.

Excerpt from

"If These Hallways Could Talk," a Tribute to Gesu by Andre'a Rhoads '18

Read at the 2022 Gesu Gala

If these hallways could talk They would give us words of encouragement They would tell us all the things we CAN do Because they already know Life will tell us we CAN'T They would tell us about A deferred dream In hopes that we continue With all of our goals Knowing that we can leap Over any obstacle life throws at us The hallways we once walked down Knew our names, our stories and our strides Those hallways did not judge They opened their arms and hearts Just like a family would Or like a family should So I guess it's safe to say Brothers and sisters These hallways knew our protest And opinions were important So they encouraged us to SPEAK UP They knew black girls and boys were magical The powerful majority That was proud to be a student Flashing navy blue, white and gray Because it looked good on us Education looked good on us MAGIS looked good on us RESPECT looked good on us



Graduate Support Program News

T aunched in 2016, the Peter Gould L& Robin Potter Graduate Support Program aims to ensure that Gesu students and alumni continue their educational advancement, fulfill their potential, and maintain productive roles in society. The GSP supports all alumni after they have moved on to high school, college, or the workforce and assures alumni that Gesu will always be their home.



Highlights from 2021–2022

- Annual Virtual High School Fair with 28 high schools and 6 boarding
- Parent Academy courses for middle school families: high school fit, application process, financial aid
- Ongoing virtual lunch-and-learn sessions with high school admissions offices
- Ongoing virtual outreach to high school alumni
- Quarterly group sessions to discuss responses to racial injustice and share personal experiences

Left: At the 2021 High School Fair, Aliyah Bullard MS '88 (right), Assistant Director of Admissions at Abington Friends School, collaborated with current student Jade '20 (left) to connect Gesu families to the institution.

- Back-to-school Alumni Council rooftop social for 75+ high school and college alumni
- Annual High School Fair with 30+ schools who met with 100+ Gesu middle school families and students
- Monthly 8th grade parent meetings on the high school admissions process
- Parent Academy courses for 6th and 7th grade families: high school admissions timeline, selection process, cost
- Ongoing virtual lunch-and-learn admissions sessions with regional high schools and partnershipbuilding with high school admissions departments
- · Routine visits with Gesu alumni at high school and college campuses
- Alumni Council leadership development and targeted engagement efforts
- Strategic plan for an Alumni Advisory Board and to formalize a Gesu Alumni Association

Gesu High School Alumni Council

The inaugural council launched in 2020 to:

- Maintain consistent relationships with current Gesu alumni throughout their high school years, allowing for more accurate data collection, consistent advising, and a stronger connection to Gesu.
- Develop leadership skills.
- Support current Gesu students as they look towards high school.
- Build a sense of community and commitment to Gesu through volunteerism and fundraising.

Founding Members:

Dhmyni '17 Andre'a '18 Manaii '18 Adrian '19 Alphonso '19 Faith '19 Makayla '19 Nateerah '19

Maurisha '20

Members of the 2021–22 Alumni Council planned a back-to-school picnic on the Gesu rooftop.

High Schools Class of 2021

Academies at Roxborough High School Archbishop Wood High School

Boys' Latin of Philadelphia

The City School

Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School

Franklin Learning Center

Friends Select School

Carver Engineering and Science

La Salle College High School

Liquori Academy

Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls

Malvern Preparatory School

Maritime Academy Charter High School

Mercy Career & Technical High School

The Philadelphia High School for Creative and

Performing Arts (CAPA)

Roman Catholic High School

Science Leadership Academy, Center City

St. Joseph's Preparatory School

Saints Neumann Goretti Catholic High School

Upper Darby High School

Valley Forge Military Academy

Walter B. Saul High School

West Catholic Preparatory High School

*Selections as of June 9, 2021

Class of 2022

Archbishop John Carroll High School Cardinal O'Hara High School

Central High School

The City School

Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School

Franklin Learning Center

Carver Engineering and Science

The Haverford School

Liquori Academy

Mercy Career & Technical High School

Merion Mercy Academy

Monsignor Bonner & Archbishop Prendergast High School

Murrell Dobbins Career & Technical Education High School

Philadelphia High School for Girls

Roman Catholic High School

St. Joseph's Preparatory School

Saints Neumann Goretti Catholic High School

The U School

Vaux High School

West Catholic Preparatory High School

*Selections as of June 8, 2022

Are you a

For more information on the Graduate Support Program, including Gesu reunions, college admissions resources, and career networking, contact Vice President Ed Beckett at Gesu graduate? career networking, contact vice President Ed to 215-763-3660 or ed.beckett@gesuschool.org.

@GesuGradSupport

@GesuGradSupport

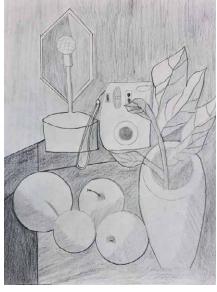
gesuschool.org/alumni-graduate-support

Student Gallery

"Modern-Day Mona Lisa" By Cionni, Grade 6



"Still Life"By Schyler, Grade 4



In virtual art class, Gesu students learned principles of drawing a still life in pencil, focusing on light and shadowing.

Find a way-Or mean to-Return a favor-

Give back favor-

In love without-

Valuing something-External in return-

"Forgive" Acrostic PoemBy Londyn, Grade 4

"Church of the Gesu"

By Brook'lin, Grade 7

Gesu middle school students learned about perspective, vanishing points, and horizon lines. This drawing captures the Gesu rooftop with the Church of the Gesu and our playground.





Visit Gesu School's social media pages and YouTube Channel to enjoy musical selections and other student presentations. youtube.com/gesuschoolworks

Dear God,

I'm so thankful that you gave me family.

I'm so happy that you helped me with school.

I love you God because you gave me life.

Please help me tomorrow as I do my school work.

Please watch over my family and friends.

Amen.

By Peyton, Grade 2

Black History and Culture Projects

Gesu Art Teacher Bria Hawkins '09 teaches Black artists' cultural significance and contributions. Middle school students studied the history of quilting in African and African American cultures and told stories of influential Black figures with paper quilting.

Chadwick BosemanBy Sha'Hyrah, Grade 7



Jesse OwensBy Valarie, Grade 7





bell hooksBy Yasmia, Grade 8



Cicely TysonBy Anaya, Grade 8



"Black Lives
Matter
Surrealism
Project"
By Jael, Grade 6



"Black Lives Matter Surrealism Project" By Patyence, Grade 6



"Spring Watercolors"

By Pre-K

Focus on Poetry

Collaborative Poetry Program

Gesu and Loyola High School of Los Angeles

Words Matter. For National Poetry Month in April 2022, Gesu collaborated with Loyola High School of Los Angeles for an innovative Jesuit school partnership to study African American poetry. Middle school students in Aileen Moore's Gesu Advanced Writing classes engaged in experiential learning with high school students on the Black Arts Movement and the Harlem Renaissance, then responded to these influences in their own poetry. Our thanks to Loyola students and Doug Brown, Loyola's Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and English/Social Studies Instructor, for building thoughtful lessons to spark Gesu students' creativity.

A virtual poetry event celebrated students' learning and the achievements of Gesu alumna Andre'a Rhoads '18. Philadelphia's Youth Poet Laureate 2021–22. The event included a reading by Andre'a '18 and a tribute to her by National Poet Laureates, including award-winning writer Mahogany L. Browne. Three winners of the Gesu poetry contest also read their powerful writing. Enjoy a poem by 6th grader Ariel below.

The National Catholic Education Association's Momentum Magazine and the Jesuits Schools Network's Hemispheres e-publication featured the Words Matter program.



Gesu Advanced Writing Teacher Aileen Moore generates discussion with 7th graders participating in the Words Matter program.



Doug Brown, Loyola High School of Los Angeles English/Social Studies Instructor and Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, facilitates a class in African American Poetry.



If I am a threat I am dangerous If I am dangerous I am unapproachable We say that we are free but in reality I'm never going to be free I have to worry about my brother and my mother My brother cannot walk down the street Without there being a tweet About a black boy shot because he looked suspicious We see the tweet and it makes us vicious But we cannot act on that or else we will be locked away Locked away so far away from everyone you love And all you want the most is to be free and fly like a dove Uncle Messiah locked away Cousin in her room waiting for daddy to come home Cause in reality she still feels alone Being black means being seen as these things But what they don't see is our ancestors were Kings and Queens

If I am not white I am a threat

"I Am" Poems by **Second Grade**

Gesu 2nd graders share perceptions of their world, using their senses, their sharp wit, and their soulful wisdom.



"I Am" by Zy'bre

I am a talented artist and singer I wonder what my birth sign means I hear a voice in my head that tells me to keep going even when things are hard I see my uncle every day I want to be an artist I am a talented artist and singer

I pretend that I am a rock star I feel happy when my mom comes over I touch my bed because it is comfortable I worry about all the guns and hope we can move I cry when something happens to my mom or grandma I am a talented artist and singer

I understand math because it is easy for me I say I love basketball I dream of earning my black belt I try to work hard but sometimes it's frustrating I hope people stop shooting other

people I am a talented artist and singer



"I Am" by Paige

I am creative and independent I wonder who invented colors I hear basketballs bouncing I see care going slow I want to be a make-up artist I am creative and independent

I pretend to paint I feel sad when I get left out I touch the playscape every day I worry how my day is going to be I cry when I get hurt I am creative and independent I understand my family I say "I love you" to my mom a lot I dream that I will be a good person when I grow up I try to focus in school I hope I will buy a house I am creative and independent

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Ariel,

Memorable Moments September Moments

For our community's safety, Gesu began the school year with virtual learning. For families unable to provide child care during online school, Gesu created a **remote learning center** for 35 students to access virtual classes.



Visit gesuschool.org and our social media channels for videos and more photos. Read our blog on the home page. Or, click "News & Events."

November

2020 Symposium

On November 11, Gesu welcomed nearly 1,800 attendees for our 23rd Symposium on Transforming Inner-City Education with Ibram X.



from 2020-2021

Kendi, bestselling author, leading anti-racist voice, professor, and historian. Professor Kendi was named one of *Time's* **100 Most Influential People of 2020.**

Professor Kendi shared his insights on dismantling racism, the courage to have difficult conversations, and anti-racism in the context of urban education. **Moderator Trina Gary** facilitated dialogue on topics such as policies that are harmful to Black communities and how schools can serve as spaces that foster healing in our nation.

To read media coverage of the Symposium, visit gesuschool.org/recap2020symposium.

Thank you to Valedictorian Sponsor Cozen O'Connor, Salutatorian Sponsor CVS Health, Graduate Sponsors Merion Mercy Academy and William Penn Charter School, and all of our sponsors.

January

On January 11, Gesu reopened for 6th-8th graders who opted for an in-person trimester in our socially distanced classrooms.



Gesu and St. Joseph's Prep celebrated the MLK Day of Service with a virtual event: a prayer service and reading groups led by parents, Gesu and Prep alumni, and Gesu junior board members. Participants also collected sandwiches and hygiene kits for local shelters. Special thanks to Gesu and Prep alumni panelists who led a social justice forum.

February-



Congratulations to Learning Support Teacher Dana Gilbert (left) and 8th Grade Girls Teacher Annette

Pickett (right) for being recognized with the Hearts & Heroes award for essential workers. The award is supported by the Philadelphia Eagles' Alshon Jeffrey and Shop Rite. Thanks to these teachers for their compassion and dedication.



Students from Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine visited 5th graders to discuss career

paths in medicine. Along with **Teacher Mike Talvacchia**, guest speakers also discussed practical applications with 5th graders' studies in biology. Thanks to third-year medical students Daniel Casey, Molly Casey, Frederick Okoye III, and John Spikes II for inspiring Gesu students.

March

Congratulations to two
Gesu 6th graders for
placing in the Walnut Hill
Community Association's
Black History Month Essay
Contest. Amiya earned
2nd place for her essay on
Octavius Catto. Jordyn
earned 3rd place for her
piece on Senator Cory
Booker. Gesu is proud of
these students for their
solid research and writing
skills and sharing their
voices.

Nationwide, 640 donors contributed to Gesu's 2021
One Day Challenge, raising a record-setting \$89,401.24!
Special thanks to The Z
Foundation, Tim & Ellen
Foster, Mary Kate Leonard, and an anonymous donor for supporting the ODC with matching gifts. Students donated \$591.97 with "change for change." Our community is



filled with gratitude. This year has been difficult for all, and Gesu is humbled by this outpouring of generosity. Over the last seven years, the One Day Challenge has raised \$450,193.65.

May



Gesu middle schoolers demonstrated sportsmanship and grit, getting back on the field for baseball season. Thanks to the coaching staff: Service Coordinator and Spanish Teacher Jack Paris, Counselor Amanda Rice, and Teacher Mike Talvacchia.



Gesu parents and alumni mobilized to plan a rooftop picnic to celebrate our 8th graders. **We appreciate Gesu parent Eboney Gilliam and the Gesu Alumni Council** for volunteering and bringing joy to our students during this difficult year.

Congratulations to
Gesu Music Teacher
and Choir Director H.L.
Ratliff, honored with the
2021 Bakari Trailblazer
Award from St. Joseph's
Prep. Mr. Ratliff, a Prep
alumnus, co-founded the
African American Alumni
Association (A4) & Mentor
Program at the school and
was director for 17 years.

May

GALA The GESU Difference

Thank you to all who supported the 2021 Gesu Gala! Your generosity enables Gesu School to continue delivering innovative and holistic education during this critical time. The Gala raised more than \$223,950!

Congratulations to 2021 Spirit Medalists The Hamilton Family Charitable Trust and Stephen & Cheri Ziegler for their decades-long dedication to Gesu. The gala also honored Gesu Lead Counselor Jonathan Jackson '99, recipient of the James F. Higgins '45 Distinguished Alumni Award, for his leadership and care.

Thank you to all 2021 Gesu Gala sponsors for their investment in our students' education, especially Presenting Sponsor The Hamilton Family Charitable Trust and Legacy Sponsors Susan Martinelli Shea and Dr. Larry Wells & Dr. Bernadette Wheeler. Sponsors enjoyed an exclusive virtual cooking class with celebrity chef and Bravo Top Chef All-Star Jennifer Carroll of Carroll Couture Cuisine.

We appreciate our Gala Co-Chairs—John & Jennifer Curry and Dr. Larry Wells & Dr. Bernadette Wheeler—for their efforts to promote and support the event.







from 2021-2022

- August -

Gesu and St. Joseph's Prep partnered to host a back-toschool community event. Special thanks to Cradles to Crayons Philadelphia for donating backpacks and to the Prep's Mission and Ministry volunteers for distributing them and organizing games for Gesu students. Families

and friends enjoyed a picnic and book giveaway, too. Read media

media
coverage in
CatholicPhilly.com and ScoopUSA
on gesuschool.org.

October-

Gesu middle school girls explored science, technology engineering, and math (STEM) careers through hands-on projects led by college mentors at the **United** States Naval Academy. The Girls Only STEM Day program utilized everyday supplies and fun activities to cultivate confidence and pique interest in these fields. The six



projects included cracking codes with a cryptography challenge and building a robotic end effector to lift objects. Each topic highlighted a female STEM hero.

June





2021 Graduation

Gesu is proud of our 8th graders, who graduated on June 9 in the Sherrerd Gymnasium. We recognize their resilience and drive during this challenging year.

Gesu's Class of 2021 earned more than \$424,000 in scholarships and financial aid. Graduates will attend top high schools.

6abc Action News highlighted Gesu students. Watch on our Facebook page @gesuschool. Find photos on Gesu's Facebook page or website at gesuschool. org/2021graduation.

Thank you to commencement speakers Elana McDonald, MD and Delana Wardlaw, MD, the Twin Sister Docs, nationally recognized community healthcare advocates.

November-

2021 Symposium

Gesu hosted our 24th Symposium on Working Together to Manage Pandemic Stress in Our School Communities. Speakers Marsha Richardson, Psy.D., of the University of Pennsylvania, and



Jabari Whitehead, Ed.D., of Chatham Park Elementary School and Saint Joseph's University, reflected on the challenges from the last two years and highlighted strategies for addressing how to navigate a new school environment. Moderator **Darryl J. Ford, Ph.D.** of William Penn Charter School facilitated the dialogue.

The Symposium reinforced the importance of connection among school stakeholders and discussed silver linings, such as resilience and optimism, which are emerging as key learnings from the pandemic. Visit gesuschool.org to read coverage in this CatholicPhilly.com article, "Catholic ministries, schools 'meet kids where they are' amid mental health crisis."

Thank you to Valedictorian Sponsors Cozen O'Connor and M & S Foundation and to all of our sponsors.



donated 1,994
nonperishable items for
the annual canned food
drive to support the St.
Martin de Porres food
pantry and the Old St.
Joseph's Church outreach
program. Student council
spearheaded the service
project.

December



Photo by Sabina Louise Pierce

The Gesu Gospel Choir performed its first in-person concert since 2019.

February

Gesu President and CEO Bryan Carter was honored with the Trailblazer Award from Saint Ignatius High School. The award is presented to Saint Ignatius alumni of color who have made history, forging new ground as innovators and pioneers, both at Saint Ignatius and beyond.

Congratulations to three Gesu basketball teams, all region 58 CYO champions: girls varsity, boys JV, and boys varsity! We're proud of their teamwork and determination. Thank you to coaches Joe Caraway, Fr. Ray Donaldson, S.J., Ryan Hooper, and Isiah Wilson for their dedication.





March



One Day Challenge

Gesu School exceeded our goals for the 2022 One Day Challenge! 821 friends raised more than \$109,000! Students donated \$910 in "change for change." Each gift provides hope and life-changing education. Special thanks to matching gift donors: The Z Foundation, Tim & Ellen Foster, Mary Kate Leonard, K10 Kids Foundation, and three anonymous donors.

In the spirit of justice and reconciliation, Gesu donated 5% of proceeds from the One Day Challenge to Jesuit Refugee Services to assist Ukrainian refugees.



Gesu welcomed **Stephanie Humphrey**, **tech and lifestyle TV journalist, author**, **and former engineer**, who spoke with 6–8th graders about becoming "tech smart." Discussion included engaging in social media in safe, mindful ways and understanding consequences of online behavior.

May

After peer review by educators and administrators and a year-long institutional self-study, Gesu School announced that our **Middle States reaccreditation** had been recommended. The Middle States Association is a worldwide leader in accreditation and school improvement. Thanks to teachers **Caroline Lamb** and **Dillan Leonard** for their leadership.

Congratulations to Gesu 7th Grade Teacher Ryan Hooper, the U.S. Army's first officer to be directly commissioned as a Civil Affairs Military Government Specialist. His area of expertise is education.

June-







Gala

The 2022 Gesu Gala, Rooted in Faith, Emerging in Hope, raised \$265,000! We're grateful for our community's generosity and the opportunity to gather in person to celebrate Gesu School. The gala honored our 2022 Spirit Medalists:

The Ethel Mae Hocker Foundation has provided transformative scholarship support to Gesu students for more than ten years.

H. Scott Miller has managed Gesu's investments *pro bono* for 15 years, preserving Gesu's financial stability and enabling our school to advance our mission.

Congratulations to **Tamika Michelle Evans '92, the 2022 Distinguished Alumni Award recipient**, for her impactful work as a lifelong educator, CEO of Global Leadership Academy Southwest, and Gesu Trustee and parent.

The evening also featured the Gesu Gospel Choir and an inspiring poetry reading by **Philadelphia Youth Poet Laureate Andre'a Rhoads '18**.

Thank you to our gala sponsors, especially **Premier Event Sponsor James & Agnes Kim Foundation and Presenting Sponsor Connelly Foundation**.

2022 Graduation

Congratulations to the Gesu School Class of 2022! We are proud of these confident, compassionate, and talented students.

Special thanks to **commencement speaker Dr. Ala Stanford** for sharing her story and inspiring our students to achieve their greatness. **Dr. Stanford is a Top 10 CNN Hero and Region 3 Director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** overseeing Children Youth and Families, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Office of Disabilities and Early Childhood Education.

6abc Action News covered the ceremony in the Church of the Gesu. **Enjoy our photo gallery on gesuschool.org or on our Facebook and Instagram pages @gesuschool.**





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Gesu's Anti-Racism in Education Professional Development Series 2020-2021

Gesu School is committed to ongoing dialogue and study around anti-racism in education. Our faculty, staff, and administration are collaborating on an action plan to translate these ideas into practice. We are adapting curricula to address anti-racism across grades and fostering a school environment that promotes anti-racism at every level of school culture, from institutional decision-making to daily interactions.



August 2020



Professor Ronald Whitaker II, Ed.D. of Cabrini University led a professional development day on HELP: A Critical Framework to Understand Issues of Race, Racism, and Systems of Inequities. The session focused on how Gesu can build an infrastructure of inclusivity. Dr. Whitaker is Culturally Responsive Assistant Professor of Education, Assistant Dean for the School of Education, Director of District and School Relations. and Director of the Center for Urban Education, Equity, and Improvement.

October 2020

Gesu's Board of Trustees engaged in a series of trainings in anti-racism, including a seminar on racial literacy with Jackson Collins, Ed.D., former Upper School Dean at Episcopal Academy. The seminar, entitled Cards on Race: A Tool to Examine Race in America, featured an interactive approach to discussing racial socialization, racial stress, and racial identity.

February 2021

Gesu hired the first Vice President for Mission, Identity, and Inclusion to manage our Mission & Ministry program. Ed Beckett will spearhead diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and integrate mission throughout policies, practices, and programs. He brings extensive leadership experience in Catholic schools and deep institutional knowledge as a former Gesu and St. Joseph's Prep Religion Teacher, parish youth ministry staff, and long-time Gesu Trustee.

March 2021

Author and professor Ali Michael, Ph.D. presented Building a Beloved Community, tailored to Gesu's team. Goals included deepening understanding of why race matters at Gesu and building racial competency as

faculty and staff. Dr. Michael is Co-Founder and Director of the Race Institute for K-12 Educators. She teaches in Princeton University's Diversity and Inclusion Program and the Equity Institutes for Higher Education from the University of Southern California. She is author of Raising Race Questions: Whiteness, Inquiry and Education, winner of the 2017 Society of Professors of **Education Outstanding Book** Award, and co-editor of the bestselling Everyday White People Confront Racial and Social Injustice: 15 Stories and the bestselling Guide for White Women Who Teach Black Boys.

Staff Conversations

Gesu initiated **ongoing** anti-racism discussions to foster awareness and engage in community building around critical topics such as identity and allyship. The purpose of each dialogue is twofold: to share personal experience and discuss institutional action to support students' learning and growth, while strengthening an anti-racist school culture.

Anti-Racism Initiatives 2021–2022

To augment the professional development series in 2020–2021, and as part of our self-study for the Middle States Association reaccreditation process, Gesu faculty and staff have devised an anti-racism committee, an anti-racism action plan through 2027, and ongoing initiatives at the board level and across the institution. Objectives include learning to understand racial injustice and build respect for diversity and each individual.

Curricular and Co-Curricular Initiatives

Gesu faculty engage in anti-racism work in theory and applied practice. They are developing a shared anti-racist/ DEI resource bank of lessons and a book list for individual anti-racism study. Further, faculty have implemented Social Psychologist and Professor Claude Steele's research on minimizing stereotype threat in the classroom climate and in standardized test preparation.

All grades engage in routine affirmations to reinforce cultural pride and cultivate self-esteem. Grades K-5 are integrating monthly multi-cultural literature circles. An after-school club and roundtable, Identifying Blackness, has provided space for 6th-8th graders to discuss topics such as racism in history and current times—how this affects Gesu students and how they can respond to experiences with racism. This club will continue as the DEI club.

School-Wide Efforts

Gesu morning announcements recognize the history and contributions of diverse peoples. Each month, Gesu features a different culture, including Hispanic-LatinX, Native American, Asian American Pacific Islander, and Jewish American heritages. Gesu also celebrates Black History Month and Women's History Month with learning opportunities such as schoolwide trivia, bingo, and live museums.

Gesu continues our partnership with the Anti-Defamation League of Philadelphia. We are proud to be recognized as a No Place for Hate[©] school for more than ten years for our annual school-wide programs that foster empathy, celebrate diversity, and strengthen cultural competency. Events include Read for Respect Day and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service.

Board of Trustees' Anti-Racism Work

Gesu's Board of Trustees launched a DEI subcommittee. The board discussed Heather McGhee's The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together and applied the concepts to their leadership role at Gesu.







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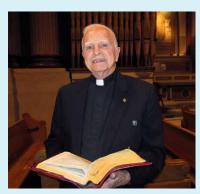
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Rev. Neil Ver'Schneider, S.J. served the Gesu parish and Gesu School since 1989 as Assistant Pastor, Chaplain, and Assistant Principal.

Fr. Neil ministered to Gesu students, staff, and families and to the wider neighborhood. His work centered on growing children his ministry at Gesu, Fr. Neil noted, spiritually, academically, and socially and on forging solidarity with those marginalized by various onot give up amidst challenges, forms of poverty.

He taught our school community environmental stewardship by championing a recycling program and global citizenship by educating about missions, such as Jesuit Relief Services. To expand opportunities for students, Fr. Neil created GEM, the Gesu Extra Mile enrichment program, which has included chess, drama, and service.

On what he treasured most about "Seeing the students grow, become more responsible, try new things, and become more thoughtful and caring as they go through Gesu, high school, and beyond. The generosity and dedication of faculty and staff who make Gesu work are daily gifts."



Fr. Neil's leadership and humble example as a "man for others" endure in our Gesu community. We offer our prayers and condolences to his family.



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Financials & Numbers

At Gesu School, we strive to steward your gifts wisely so as to have the greatest impact for our 424 students. We invite you to review our audited financial statements on our website.

\$3,273,500

total financial aid to 424 students in FY21

\$12,900

cost to educate a child in FY21

\$3,208,695

total financial aid to 431 students in FY22

\$13,400

cost to educate a child in FY22

54%

percentage of Gesu families with an annual household income of less than \$30,000

07408

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Number

100%

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-D'Miyah, Grade 8



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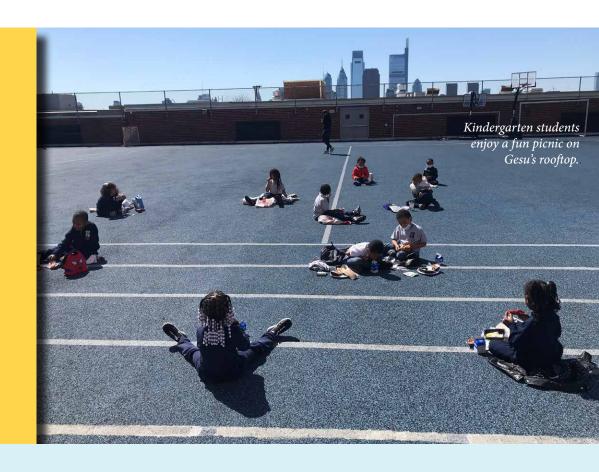
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