

Sacred Heart Commission on Goals
Visiting Team Reflection
Academy of the Sacred Heart
New Orleans, Louisiana
November 11-15, 2023

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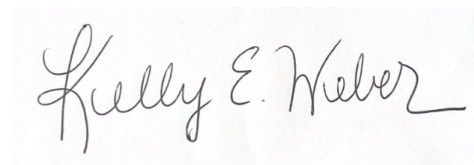
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“Strengthen in us, Oh God, the work You have begun in us.”

These few words from St. Rose Philippine Duchesne served as a centerpiece for our time with The Academy of the Sacred Heart, affectionately known as ASH. When we think about the Sacred Heart Commission on Goals process, it is easy to think only of the five-day Visit. What we know to be true is the work began before our arrival and will continue after our departure, confidently and courageously as your School embarks on its next chapter. Throughout our entire reflection, we pray for continued strength and blessings for this community.

The Visiting Team began our work before we arrived on campus with each of us reading the Self-Study and meeting on Zoom to discuss themes and trends. We made our travel arrangements and excitedly arrived on the afternoon of Saturday, November 11. The weather may have been unseasonably cool during our Visit, but we only felt warmth from the entire community. From our early conversations with the Chair of the Steering Committee to each adult constituency meeting and especially with the students, southern hospitality made our visit feel like home.

We began Sunday with Mass at the Basilica of St. Stephen. The readings from Scripture highlighted two themes: wisdom and love. Monsignor Christopher H. Nalty’s homily reminded us that we can only acquire true wisdom through love. This theme was present consistently throughout the Visit. Any school hopes to lead students to wisdom, but at this School, all wisdom is rooted in love. We heard this word time and time again during our few days on campus. Faculty, staff, parents, administration, alumnae, and students reiterated that what makes this School special is the love shared within the community. A faculty member remarked, “We love each other in this room,” while a parent noted “My daughter is loved here.” This love creates a community where wisdom thrives because of a shared mission, and we feel fortunate to have shared in it this week.

The Visiting Team thanks the chair of the Steering Committee for her exceptional leadership. Through her organization, dedication, reflection, and steadfast commitment to mission, the Steering Committee produced a Self-Study that showcased the many ways in which the *Goals and Criteria* are alive and well at ASH. Throughout the Visit, she ensured all voices had time with the Visiting Team and made our work as seamless as possible.

The Visiting Team also thanks the Steering Committee members for their devotion to the SHCOG process over the last year. Through their commitment to reflection and honest conversations, the Self-Study highlights where the School hopes to go with authenticity and integrity.

The Visiting Team extends our gratitude to the entire Academy of the Sacred Heart community for sharing your home with us this week. You value tradition but embrace progress. Our conversations with you revealed a community with a deep history and a bright future. As you cherish your past, we know you will welcome the next era with an ethos of joy, hope, and celebration.

Throughout the Visit, our purpose was to listen to themes that emerged from conversations and reflect them to you. Within each meeting, the dedication to the SHCOG process with space and grace was apparent. Each constituency organically spoke not only of their inclusion in Year One and the Self-Study but also about their hopes for the future. In our conversations, themes emerged that revealed moments of common celebration and shared struggle. The Visiting Team met with the Action Plan Committee Chair and the community is eager to collectively develop measurable steps forward.

We are happy to report to the Provincial and the Provincial Team that the Academy of the Sacred Heart lives the mission of the Society of the Sacred Heart deeply and authentically. The *Goals and Criteria* remain the foundation of the School as they continue discovering and making known the heart of Jesus in the world.

Foundational Principles

The Visiting Team met with the Board of Trustees in the Upper School Global Education Center; the symbolism of this setting is striking. This space, which is carefully designed to offer a cutting-edge communal learning area, represents the growth of the Board of Trustees to be more mission-focused and forward-thinking. In the conversation, fidelity to The Foundational Principles and the *Goals and Criteria* was evident.

The Board of Trustees upholds the three-part identity of Catholic, Sacred Heart, and Independent. The Academy of the Sacred Heart makes decisions consistent with Catholic teaching and enjoys a positive relationship with the Archdiocese of New Orleans. The school has a partnership with the nearby Basilica of Saint Stephen that allows them to administer sacraments. The school is also accountable to the Society of the Sacred Heart. The Chair of the Board, several trustees, and the Head of School attended the Network Annual Trustee Education to Mission Conference in October 2023. They held a board retreat hosted by Nat Wilburn, Head of Conference. The school is accredited by the Independent Schools of the Southwest through the 2026-2027 academic year.

Trustees identified that as a result of the SHCOG process, they are more thoughtful about how they approach decisions with the guidance of the *Goals and Criteria*. Many noted that while the goal language is common, they are growing in their understanding of the criteria. A trustee shared the suggestion to more directly connect decisions with the specific criteria they meet. The trustees also discussed a desire to increase diversity in the student body and to think intentionally about allocation of scholarship money. As they anticipate a new strategic plan, they are committed to root it in the *Goals and Criteria*. They spoke with pride about the growth of the school in the past years. This growth includes enrollment, renovation, and school programs. The Visiting Team applauds their reflection and encourages them to continue to use not only the Goals, but also the Criteria to guide decision-making and funding for new programs, positions, and initiatives.

Trustees feel confident that they have processes in place to sustain their work and believe they have developed an effective onboarding program. This stability will be essential as the Academy of the Sacred Heart prepares to

welcome a new Head of School in summer 2024. The Board of Trustees spoke with gratitude for the leadership of the current head and holds confidence in the potential of their incoming head. The Visiting Team encourages the Board of Trustees to continue to support the leadership transition through this school year and into the next one.

The Visiting Team commends the Board of Trustees for their openness to grow in their understanding and application of the Foundational Principles and the *Goals and Criteria*. This moment in school history is one of strength but it is not one of complacency. Healthy enrollment and finances have emboldened them and the entire Academy of the Sacred Heart community to embrace the future while remaining rooted in the mission.

Goal I: Schools of the Sacred Heart commit themselves to educate to a personal and active faith in God.

Train their hearts to a love of religion and all the virtues it inspires. If we do other than this, we are simply giving instruction. Our aim is to turn the hearts of children to God.

– Mother Janet Erskine Stuart

On Monday afternoon, the Visiting Team met with a group of Lower School students, who greeted us with cards of the Sacred Heart prayer said daily by all Little Hearts and Lower School students, leading our meeting with the prayer. When asked to identify those aspects of the Academy of the Sacred Heart that bring them joy, a second grader said, “My school helps me to be a child of God.” On Tuesday morning, an Upper School student expressed how prayer practices, including a more grown-up version of the Sacred Heart prayer, help them to develop deeper understandings of their relationships with God and others, and how traditions like Basket Mass help the community grow together in faith and in the knowledge that we are here to serve those in need. The Middle School students listed multiple ways in which the school helps them grow closer to Jesus and Mary through Mater’s Feast, May Crowning, and the singing of beloved songs together at mass. Students of all ages spoke of adults throughout the community who help them to see God in the world around them and to become closer to the heart of Jesus through their example of words and actions.

Adults alike spoke about their profound experiences of faith life. One Little Hearts Teacher described that “All the *Goals and Criteria* are in the Mass. We spread the love of the heart of Jesus; it’s all there in the Eucharist.” The parents shared how they see prayer life grow through the years, and appreciated the vibrancy of retreat life. The Alumnae spoke of their lasting memory of their graduation day, gathering for a final prayer with their “sisters” in the chapel where the class candle holder is named. The Children of Mary Alumnae group, devoted to the Blessed Mother, continues to meet monthly to engage in prayer and outreach. It is evident that Goal I is lived vibrantly at the Academy of the Sacred Heart in New Orleans.

The community of ASH proudly lives the mission of the Society of the Sacred Heart, embracing its Catholic, Independent, Sacred Heart identity. From the icons around The Rosary’s beautiful and historic campus, to the

images of Mater and Philippine at the Mater Campus, to messages of faith and prayer on the walls and windows, to the actions of the people who make up this faith-filled community, it is clear to the Visiting Team that the Academy of the Sacred Heart values the development of its members in a faith that glorifies the heart of God for the world to see. The faculty and staff take pride in modeling the attitudes of the heart of Jesus in their interactions with students, parents, and each other. Over the course of five days, the Visiting Team encountered people filled with love for their faith, hope for the future, and love for the girls and young women they serve.

Situated in a predominantly Catholic area, the population of ASH represents the wider community in its predominantly Catholic Demographic. At the same time, the students spoke about learning about other religions and faith traditions through their classes. The high school offers a world religions course, while the younger students learn about other faiths through their religion, social studies, and art classes. The high school students also talked about the Global Education Center hosting recent informational sessions on the Israeli-Palestinean conflict.

A variety of opportunities and spaces are available for each and every community member to participate in personal and communal prayer. The community of ASH values its strong Catholic faith tradition and encourages students, faculty, staff, parents, alumnae, and trustees to a variety of prayer experiences that include divisional masses, all-school masses, rosary groups, and prayer services. It is evident that the school values opportunities for prayer and reflection and provides opportunities for members of the community to participate. One member of the Facilities Team made sure to note that “We are never left out.”

The students are able to explore their relationship with God and each other by participating in exercises that help break down the gospel reading for greater understanding; in Lower School, the Sophie’s Spirit Girls act out the gospel, as do the Middle School advisory groups. The Sacred Heart prayer hand motions help to remind the Little Hearts to “Love as you love, study and learn, help those who need me, be a friend to all, and make wise choices.” Members of the community referred to the practice of *espacio* as a valued way to be in touch with the interior life. The Little Hearts are taught reverence and to be still in a moment of silence. The Lower School has embraced the ability to lead *espacio* in their classrooms and appreciate the guidance of the Campus Minister who has provided resources. The Mater Mass, at which a senior who most fully embodies the qualities of Mary is chosen by her peers, was described as a sacred tradition inspiring the younger students to emulate those characteristics. The Basket Mass in December was also hailed as a moment when the community unites to offer help where it is needed. Some disquiet was heard around the new plans to add service day to the schedule on the day of the Basket Mass, limiting attendance by some of the members of the community. The Visiting Team encourages the community to engage in open dialogue about this recent change.

Additionally, adults and students alike talked about their interactions with the environment. The Middle School students spoke of being on Green Teams and the importance of being mindful of food waste and recycling. The Upper School Students referred to the glass collection that helps to make their city better. From planting

gardens, taking care to compost uneaten parts of lunch, to recycling paper, aluminum, and plastic, it is evident that the community is deeply committed to exploring its relationship with God, self, others, and creation.

There is no doubt to anyone who walks the grounds of the Academy of the Sacred Heart that the community reflects an ethos of joy, hope, and celebration. It is visible in every hallway and classroom, yet intangible. From the youngest students who find joy in mass, singing songs of praise, and sharing their faith with others, to the adults who celebrate their students and each other on a daily basis, to the alumnae who return with the hope of giving back to the community who helped form them, there is a sense that true happiness is found in the love of the Heart of Jesus. As is etched into the windows of the Mater Campus library, “Honor and Glory to God Alone.”

Goal II: Schools of the Sacred Heart commit themselves to educate to a deep respect for intellectual values.

We must know how to inspire in our pupils a passion for the beautiful.

-St. Madeleine Sophie Barat

At The Academy of the Sacred Heart, the Visiting Team found a vibrant and intentional implementation of Goal II in touring the campuses and speaking with members of all constituencies.

The Visiting Team noted clear support of Goal II in the Academy of the Sacred Heart’s intentional use of space. Across both campuses, physical layouts of common spaces, classrooms, and enrichment areas demonstrate the School’s commitment to utilizing space to support student learning. The flexibility of the Global Education room and the “Bubble” are prime examples of best practices in creating educational spaces. The Visiting Team commends the School for re-imagining spaces to further instill a love of learning, such as the Innovation Labs on both campuses, and encourages community members to continue to be thoughtful in their work in subsequent phases of their Rosary Renewal initiative.

The Visiting Team celebrates the Academy of the Sacred Heart’s embrace of creativity and imagination. The School chooses to use significant portions of wall space to display student work, such as visual art depicting favorite passages from summer reading assignments, paintings of pigs in the style of Pablo Picasso, and collected works of senior art students. Additionally, artwork from alumnae is exhibited in the Colton Performing and Fine Arts Center. The commitment to fill these incredible buildings with examples of beauty, imagination, and creativity speaks directly to cultivating aesthetic values.

Teachers at the Academy of the Sacred Heart are fully committed to Goal II in utilizing a variety of teaching and learning strategies. Across divisions, the Visiting Team heard teachers discuss the importance of using multiple methods in reaching students. We also heard students confirm that varied approaches to learning styles are being used and are appreciated. Students spoke about how teachers employ multiple strategies for instruction and that

teachers show students that there is more than one way to arrive at the right answer. Middle School students said that teachers encourage them to “do it [their] own way.” The School also works to meet all learners where they are, as demonstrated by expanding their learning support team.

The Academy of the Sacred Heart’s teachers participate in professional development and seek out additional opportunities for it. Within the School, faculty members work between divisions to align curriculum. Members of the Lower School faculty mentioned an appreciation for division-specific professional development. The Self-Study indicates the faculty’s desire for the School to fund in-person professional training. The Visiting Team encourages further discussion about opportunities to support teachers with additional professional development.

The Visiting Team witnessed the impact that was clearly reported in the Self-Study regarding the Innovation Labs and the Global Education program. Teachers enthusiastically pointed to these initiatives as examples of what they were most proud of about the Academy of the Sacred Heart. We heard about how both programs had come to be and how they have enhanced the educational experiences of students at ASH. The Visiting Team also learned in the Self-Study that members of the Middle and Upper Schools desire additional development of the curriculum for the Global Education program. We celebrate that this work is already underway, and we encourage the Academy of the Sacred Heart to continue the conversation about how this program can best serve learners across all divisions.

When students were asked how the School helps them love to learn, the Visiting Team heard students identify the Innovation Labs and Global Education programs as exciting parts of their academic journeys, noting they enable them to “dig deeper” into what they are learning. Students also listed individual projects at the different grade levels they have enjoyed especially or that they are looking forward to. There is a feeling of excitement from the students when they talk about what and how they are learning. There is a palpable sense of pride from all constituencies in the love students at the Academy of the Sacred Heart demonstrate for their learning.

The Self-Study identifies academic success and reports a love of learning in students; the Visiting Team affirms this and adds that students also love their teachers at the Academy of the Sacred Heart. Across divisions, students spoke about teachers making learning fun and helping them see learning as a process of discovery. Students in all divisions named specific activities teachers had used to make learning more engaging and meaningful to them.

Goal III: Schools of the Sacred Heart commit themselves to educate to a social awareness which impels to action.

We are called to reach new frontiers, to go out, to ‘set sail’ and go with others...to defend justice, peace, and the integrity of creation in response to all those searching for meaning in their lives.

from General Chapter 2016

The Global Education program demonstrates a deep commitment to educate to global perspectives and cultural literacy. Educators of students of all ages spoke of how they value this unifying focus and how it transforms education. Students are encouraged to explore a broad range of worldviews in age-appropriate ways. Upper School students and faculty relish their time in the Global Education Center where they dive deeper into complex topics such as the war in Ukraine and the Israel-Palestine conflict. The Lower School embraces a carefully designed Global Hearts curriculum. Middle School students and faculty remain optimistic for the reintegration of dedicated Global Education programming in their division. The focus on Global Education allows for collaboration between academic departments, school divisions, and curricular and co-curricular programs. The Visiting Team joins with the School in celebrating this program as a way to expand horizons and build global citizenship.

At ASH, sustainability is not a buzzword but an integrated value for students of all ages. A faculty member from Little Hearts remarked on how their students embrace composting with attention and joy. Lower School students proudly expressed how they tend a garden that teaches them to care for God's creation. Middle School students spoke with pride about their Green Teams. Walking through campus, the presence of clearly labeled receptacles helps the entire community know how to sort waste. The facilities team is committed to updating energy and light systems to be eco-friendly. The Sustainable Hearts Committee is composed of members from multiple constituencies including students. Their work unites the School to serve the common good, demonstrates the power of student leadership, and earned recognition for the School with designation as a Green Ribbon School in 2022.

In the Self-Study, the School identified the need for more direct and local service as an area of growth. The Visiting Team affirms this recommendation. In conversations it was clear that the community is generous through item collections such as Basket Mass, blessing bags, and fundraising for charitable causes. Upper School students expressed appreciation for upcoming direct service opportunities and a desire for the School to support more local service off campus together with one saying, "This is the place we come from. We can make it the place we envision it to be." Faculty and staff appreciated the recent opportunity to participate in a service day together, noting they built community while serving others. Students also discussed that they welcome the incorporation of more current events from their local communities in hopes of becoming active citizens.

Throughout the Visit, it was evident that ASH actively works toward global mindsets while also offering opportunities for service and sustainability. The Visiting Team also heard the need for increased reflection on these programs. An Upper School student shared they wanted "to make changes locally that will inspire them to help globally." The Visiting Team encourages further exploration of ways to connect the social awareness of local and global injustices to the necessary service to be agents of change. Additionally, the Visiting Team suggests carving out time for reflection in order to nurture an understanding that service is an act of love and interdependence.

Within the Self-Study and throughout the SHCOG process, ASH identified that the expansion of DEI resources and programming is an essential need. Part of this relates to enrollment and hiring, but also to providing the space and skills to analyze systemic injustice. These practices are critical for the entire community. All constituencies discussed these areas for growth and indicated a willingness to engage in open and deep dialogue. They recognized they have made progress but the work must be ongoing, renewed, and embraced by all. As a parent shared, “It makes the whole community better to have a diverse community.” Many constituencies expressed appreciation for the work of the previous DEI Coordinator and the need for this position to be filled soon. The Visiting Team heard examples of Catholic Social Teaching guiding conversations of ethics in religion classes and the English and Library faculty diversifying reading materials. The Visiting Team also heard a variety of understandings of what diversity, equity, and inclusion look like at ASH, and encourages the School to consciously define these terms to a shared understanding so that DEI can develop in ways that not only enhance the ASH experience for individuals, but also for the collective community.

During constituency meetings, different voices shared the idea that an Academy of the Sacred Heart education is a privilege, and a privilege that must be leveraged in the service of others. There is a shared understanding that to whom much is given, much is expected. The School has many programs in place to guide students to be girls who can change the world. The Visiting Team celebrates the work that has been done and supports the continued deepening of these areas.

Goal IV: Schools of the Sacred Heart commit themselves to educate to the building of community as a Christian value.

Be an angel of peace wherever you are.

Mother Mary Aloysia Hardey

Walking through the doors of the Academy of the Sacred Heart you are presented with the School’s strong Network commitment and identity. In the foyer of the Mater campus, you are greeted with an information center featuring a map that highlights all of the international Sacred Heart Schools, as well as a pull-out display highlighting the Network of Sacred Heart Schools in the United States and Canada. As you enter the Rosary campus, hallways are filled with representations of the rich history of the Society of the Sacred Heart and the Founding Mothers. There is a clear intention throughout both campuses to constantly remind the students that they are anchored in shared faith and tradition throughout the world. An Upper School student expressed the feeling of having a “vibrant” network identity. The School prioritizes opportunities for international and domestic exchange programs as well as hosting Network Summer Service projects with other Sacred Heart communities. In the classroom, students build community with Zoom calls to other Sacred Heart schools around the globe. In one instance a Sacred Heart school in Mexico was able to teach students how to make traditional dessert over Zoom. Middle School students expressed a strong value for the Network of Sacred Heart traditions such as Mater Admirabilis, May Crowning, Congé, and Prize Day. During the Visit, the Middle School held an annual bake sale in support of the full tuition for one student at the Sacred Heart school in

Uganda. All of these interactions help the students to feel a strong connection to the larger community of the Sacred Heart Network.

One of the recommendations cited in the Academy of the Sacred Heart's Self-Study was the need for an organized and effective Formation to Mission program. The Visiting Team was delighted to see the strides made by the Head of School in educating the entire community of the need for Formation to Mission. The overall sense is that the school was already living the mission, yet there was a need for an intentional recommitment to the *Goals and Criteria*. The word "intentional" was used regularly with regard to the Formation to Mission plan that is being implemented. All community members were included in this effort from the alumnae, Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, parents, and students. Regular meetings took place over the course of the past eighteen months on campus led by the Head of School and Division Heads. There were ten parent coffees held to help educate the parent community as well. One student expressed "at an early age the *Goals and Criteria* are ingrained in you and as you grow in the school the Formation to Mission becomes more intrinsic."

It is evident there is a strong sense of community throughout the Rosary and Mater campuses of the Academy of the Sacred Heart. While there is a desire among the faculty and staff to have more school-wide community offerings, each individual division cited a strong sense of collaboration and respect among their colleagues. When employees were asked why they choose to stay at the Academy of the Sacred Heart, one individual expressed, "We are here because of each other." Phrases such as "have each other's backs," "one big family," and "each of our work affects the other's work" were also used. Middle School and Upper School students both cited a feeling of "sisterhood" among students as well as a sense of community between students and teachers.

While there is a desire for more community events across divisions, the current offerings have been greatly valued. Middle School iLab was mentioned as a great community building experience through group projects. Girls are expected to bring their own superpowers to the groups to develop skills to work together and practice conflict resolution. Students at every level talked about what the January 2023 Community Day meant to them. There have been collaborations across divisions in curriculums such as dance, science, and world languages. There was an excitement within the Upper School faculty that ASHFAN will be returning to the cottage. The ASHFAN teachers expressed a deep appreciation for faculty members on the Mater campus sharing their time and talents in their classroom. The Visiting Team suggests the school find ways for continued collaboration amongst all of the faculty throughout the entire campus.

The parents we spoke to expressed that the Academy of the Sacred Heart offers them a safe and empowering educational environment for their children. A member of the facilities team shared their goal is "to keep buildings safe and efficient so students can learn and grow." There was also a strong feeling of community and belonging. The connection and generational commitment to the school is unique and something that should be celebrated. This decades-long dedication to the school by many families shows that they cherish this institution of learning. There were also a number of parent alumnae who returned to the Academy of the Sacred Heart in roles of employment and volunteerism. The Mothers' Club had just held the school Auction on

the previous Friday, also chaired by an alumnae parent. There is a strong connection to the community among all alumnae, young and old. The ASH sponsored Children of Mary is a prayer group that meets once a month, provides outreach to the larger community, and is one of the oldest continuing chapters in the country.

The desire for both the student body and faculty and staff to reflect the diversity of the greater New Orleans area was a consistent message throughout all of our conversations. Multiple constituencies affirmed that the entire community would benefit from having a more diverse school and expressed the importance of all students having teachers who look like them. In conversations with the Head of School and parents, we heard the idea of “opening the gates” as a metaphor for opening up the ASH community to the greater community. The Head of School has actively reached out to parishes in the greater New Orleans community to introduce them to the Academy of the Sacred Heart and the opportunities for enrollment. The Board of Trustees has made a strong commitment to allocating funds dedicated to financial aid, affirmed by members of the business office who spoke about a streamlined financial aid process. The Visiting Team encourages the School to reflect on ways to provide students who qualify with support for class trips, technology, and other costs of student life, so that every student can enjoy the full ASH experience.

Goal V: Schools of the Sacred Heart commit themselves to educate to personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom.

Strength of character is certainly needed to face life in the world and to stand by right principles, especially in the age in which we live.

-St. Rose Philippine Duchesne

Goal V of Sacred Heart education is thriving at the Academy of the Sacred Heart. This is apparent in every hallway, classroom, and in all of the interactions that the Visiting Team witnessed over the duration of the Visit.

Throughout the Network of Sacred Heart Schools, Goal V is often referred to as the “wise choice” goal. The Visiting Team heard this as a common refrain during the Visit. From a Little Hearts student using sign language to reference a “wise choice” mistake to an Upper School student asking a teammate if she made a “wise choice” on the volleyball court, the common language has permeated both school buildings. The School makes a concerted effort to honor this goal. In fact, many students commented that Goal V is their favorite goal because it allows them freedom in the hallways and more privileges, like eating outside and painting their nails, as they progress through their schooling. As the School continues to evolve its Formation to Mission plan, the cohesive language and common approach will only help all community members to live the Sacred Heart Mission more fully.

“Our girls change the world” is a clear message about how the School values the education it offers. This tagline captures the belief that Sacred Heart girls are exceptional. The education that they experience will assist them as they transform their environment and positively impact their world. Mater campus students are motivated to

change the world through service as they lead sustainability initiatives and educate others on recycling and composting. Similarly, Upper School students detailed their involvement with the Network Student Advisory Committee. Leadership evolves in many areas in the Middle School. One Middle School student described the immense responsibility she had while hosting and touring prospective students and another commented about how happy she was to lead a bake sale that supported her sister school in Uganda.

The deliberate programming and celebration of traditions help each student discover new interests and also ask them to practice agility. While students are always encouraged to pursue their passions and gifts, a Middle School student commented that she is excited about the 8th grade play because students are able to showcase their talents, yet this is also a time for others to be stretched outside of their comfort zones. On a daily basis, students show resilience and they learn when they err and make mistakes. A Lower School student commented, “We aren’t perfect students or teachers. Sometimes the mistakes are funny and we learn from them.” Upper School teachers praised their students for taking ownership of their own learning by advocating for themselves during extra help sessions. Students are taught to use their voices, speak up, and act according to their beliefs. As a student reflected, “We are asked to be problem solvers. And we are asked, How can we fix the problem?” The School empowers its students to be strong, independent, courageous, and confident leaders in this world.

The need for a healthy and balanced life continues to gain national and international attention from the media and mental health experts. At the Academy of the Sacred Heart, balance is achieved in many ways. The Little Hearts Faculty expressed appreciation for the boundaries implemented that limited distractions during the school day and prioritized the safety and education of each child. However, other constituencies expressed that technological advancements, while valuable to the learning experience, have limited the adults’ ability to disconnect from screens and find balance. Upper School students commented that they have been educated about safe and responsible technology use, especially in relation to social media and the permanency of their digital footprint. While many students stated that classroom use of technology is balanced, others commented that at times it feels as if they are “using technology for the sake of using technology.” They expressed their desire to have options to disconnect from their computers and use pencil and paper to complete their work. Through the SHCOG Process, the Middle School faculty realized the manner in which they were using phones for internal communication led to distractions. Proactively, they switched to walkie-talkies during supervisory times to allow them to be more present and attentive to the children under their direct supervision.

While the Self-Study described communication as a challenge at the School, it was noted by many constituents that there have been recent improvements in this area. Parents and alumnae commented that while communication from ASH is comprehensive, the School has yet to find the best method to make communication informative, while at the same time not overwhelming. Many faculty and staff constituency groups stated that there is a need for a more streamlined approach to how information is disseminated internally and across both the Mater and Rosary campuses. There was also consensus that there is a need for more dialogue among divisions and for the inclusion of more voices during the decision-making process. The Visiting Team read in the Self-Study and heard in its conversations a desire for a human resources position. We encourage ASH

to explore ways to provide areas in which the responsibilities of this role can be made available to the faculty and staff.

As the Academy of the Sacred Heart moves forward through this SHCOG process, the Visiting Team is confident that members of the community will continue to grow in the Sacred Heart mission as they honor the *Goals and Criteria*. This School truly is living the mission each and every day. Your website asks, “How will you change the world?” With courage and confidence, the students and alumnae fully embody what it means to be a Child of the Sacred Heart. It is apparent from this Visit that ASH girls have and will continue to change the world!

Commendations

1. The Visiting Team commends the Academy of the Sacred Heart for the intentionality with which they address the use of space, innovative solutions to curriculum and programs like the iLab, Global Education Center, and sustainability efforts that inspire curiosity, creative use of the imagination, and a life-long love of learning.
2. The Visiting Team commends the School for their commitment to actively engaging the students of today in the long-standing faith traditions and high-standards of academic excellence that are integral to the authentic ASH journey experienced by generations of alumnae.
3. The Visiting Team commends the community for their immediate response to an identified desire for increased Formation to Mission and to their renewed commitment to implementing a comprehensive Formation to Mission plan that fosters a deep appreciation for the charism, mission, and heritage of Sacred Heart Education while also embracing the 2020 *Goals and Criteria*.

Recommendations

1. The Visiting Team commends the School for beginning the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion and recommends continued focus on the recruitment of students, faculty, and staff of diverse backgrounds. Beyond recruitment, we recommend the school look closely at how they can cultivate belonging and full participation to realize the complete ASH experience, knowing that a diverse school community enriches the experience of every community member.
2. The Visiting Team recommends strengthening communication and dialogue throughout the School community to be clear, open, direct, and timely. The Visiting Team additionally recommends the School to effectively evaluate communication methods so faculty and staff feel heard and valued.
3. The Visiting Team recommends deepening the work of social awareness, action, and reflection to nurture an understanding that service is an act of love and interdependence.

Conclusion

Our time here at the Academy of the Sacred Heart was filled with moments of faith, hope, love, and a bit of rain following a New Orleans dry spell. Rainwater provides for new growth, just as the Sacred Heart Commission on Goals cycle of reflection waters the blossoming programs, thriving initiatives, and newly-planted seedling ideas the School has created. The Visiting Team was honored and privileged to witness this moment in the history of the Academy of the Sacred Heart. We acknowledge the shared commitment and work of many generations to bring you to this moment of strength and are certain that your continued dedication will shepherd ASH to a brilliant future.

Life faces you with courageous challenges at every step of the way. You are on the path, exactly where you are meant to be right now,...and from here, you can only go forward, shaping your life story into a magnificent tale of triumph, of healing, of courage, of beauty, of wisdom, of power, of dignity, of love.

- Mother Janet Erskine Stuart