

OUR LADY OF MERCY

ANNUAL REPORT TO PARENTS

2019-2020



A MESSAGE FROM FATHER BILL AND MRS. THOMAS

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. - Philippians 4:8

Dear Mercy Community:

We are pleased to present Mercy's annual report to the parent community. This report represents the dedicated, collaborative efforts and achievements of school leadership, faculty and staff, and the School Advisory Council to ensure our mission of excellence in Catholic education. Most importantly, the accomplishments are a living example of Mercy's commitment to support every child achieving full potential of mind, body, and spirit.

This report is structured on the National Standards and Benchmarks of Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools which serve as both a guide and assessment tool for Catholic school effectiveness and sustainability.

The worldwide pandemic presented Mercy, and all schools, with the enormous challenge of educating children in an environment that ensures safety and well-being for all in the community. Mercy met that challenge and continues to plan for safe environments for the fall through professional development, parent and student feedback, research, and on-going reflection and planning. No one is able to predict what we may face when we return to school, but Mercy is preparing comprehensive plans for a variety of scenarios including the need to transition periodically from on-line to campus learning. The continued efforts of the Mercy community reflect the passion we share for our students and mission.

While managing the impact of the pandemic, Mercy's School Advisory Council (SAC) and working committees produced a comprehensive three-year strategic plan to continue the school's strategic efforts started in 2015. This plan ensures that Mercy will remain focused on priority goals to promote long-term academic excellence, facility maintenance, and sustainability.

The blessings of Mercy are many. As we look to the future with Mercy's new interim principal, Doreen Engel, we give thanks for these blessings and for the efforts of our community, which will help guide Mercy's future and its continued success.

With assurances of prayers for you and your families, we are
Yours in Christ,

Rev. William Byrne
Pastor

Mrs. Deborah Thomas
Principal

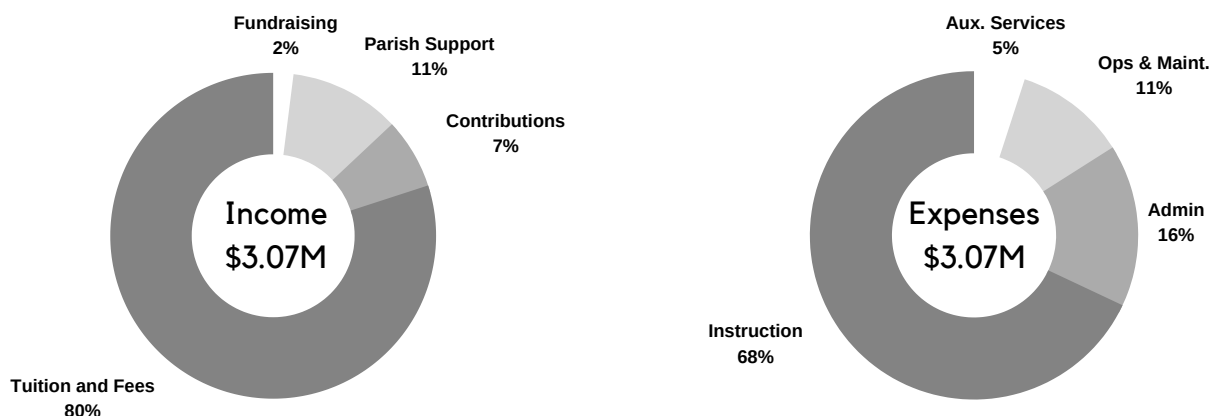
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Faith. Resiliency. Action. The three tenets that guided Mercy to hold strong in the face of challenge, will equip us to succeed in an uncertain future. As we reflect on the challenges of the spring and those still to come, we are confident in our ability to achieve our mission. Our successes were many this year, and it is important for us to recognize and celebrate these achievements, as they are the springboard for our transition forward. We turn to our **faith** for comfort, we show **resiliency** in our efforts to achieve our mission, and we will continue to take **action** to chart our own course for the future.

KEY SUCCESS INDICATORS

- The School Advisory Council approved implementation of a true-cost tuition model to begin in the 2020-21 school year.
- Increased diversity: 57% of students represent minority populations; faculty full-time equivalent represents a 28% level of racial and ethnic diversity.
- Mercy is only one of 9 schools in the ADW (out of 53) to have fully implemented a Strategic Plan.
- Universal Design for Learning and data-driven instruction have significantly increased teaching impact: almost **half** of middle school students received in-classroom individualized instruction (prior to Mercy Live transition).
- Parish-School partnership is stronger than ever through a growing number of shared initiatives: food drives, Mercy 5K, Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, Ministry Fair, Pentecost Picnic.
- The Class of 2020 was awarded over \$100K in scholarships; all graduating students were accepted to their high schools of choice.
- Mercy has achieved a daily student attendance rate of 95% for five consecutive years.
- The strength of the Pre-K foundation and accelerated Kindergarten program continues into grade 1 where the baseline Scantron test results showed that 73% of students read at an above average level in the fall of 2019.
- Mercy once again achieved National Blue Ribbon qualifying scores across every grade level in math and reading.
- We welcomed 50 new students to Mercy this year.
- Successful transition to full distance learning on Day 1; strategic planning for Fall 2020 will be complete by July 22.

Our 2019-2020 Budget



In 2019-20, safety and security upgrades, science room renovations, and curriculum updates enhanced Mercy's educational programs and facilities:

- Installation of new main entrance security doors and access key boxes; new protocol developed for after-hours entry.
- Investments made in Universal Design for Learning curriculum and coach, and continuation of small group instruction.
- Full redesign and renovation of the Science Lab.
- Complete renovation of main entrance restrooms.
- Successful transition to full distance learning model.

Strategic Plan Goal

All Mercy stakeholders will embrace a Catholic Identity rooted in Gospel values, center on the Eucharist, and commit to Evangelization.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Every grade level, including the preschool, have daily faith instruction that follows the standards outlined by the ADW. The middle school curriculum was expanded to include a course of study in Theology of the Body.
- Members of Mercy faculty formed a Catholic Identity sub-committee to expand our prayer efforts in the school community.
- Seven 6th grade students attended the first annual ADW Mission Day.
- 4 prayer partner masses were celebrated.
- Supported Parish and Food for the Poor efforts to build a school in Jamaica.
- Mercy parents participated in workshops to explore and understand the Theology of the Body curriculum.
- Faculty presented reflections, prayers, Catholic history, and intentions throughout the pandemic.
- Facilitated parish-school May Crowning and virtual rosary event for entire community.
- 2,600 pounds of food was collected for St. Martin's and McKenna Center food pantries
- School uniforms, supplies, and winter coats were given to over 230 children in need.
- 45 sock stockings filled with toiletries went to homeless shelter for men.

Catholic Identity is Strong at Mercy

Mercy Parent Score

4.10

AdvancED Global Score

4.02

Mercy Staff Score

4.36

AdvancED Global Score

4.14

The results of Mercy's recent Catholic Identity Survey, written by AdvancEd to measure a school's adherence to Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary Schools. The survey score range, which was administered on-line to parents and employees, was 1-5, with 5 indicating strongly agree. *Almost half of parents surveyed responded; 92% of staff responded.*

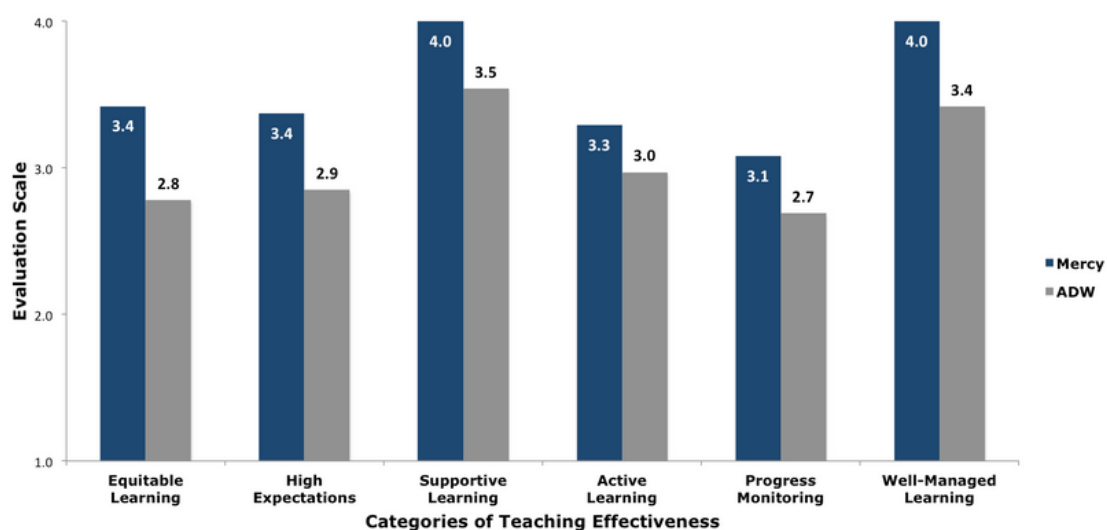
Strategic Plan Goal

Mercy leadership is focused on sustaining and enhancing our means to prepare students and teachers for a Catholic education in the 21st century.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Achieved Blue Ribbon eligibility through continued excellence in teaching practices.
- Awarded grants from Catholic Coalition for Special Education, Tribute 21, Shepherd Foundation, and Catholic Business Network.
- UDL and data driven instruction had significant impact on teaching effectiveness: 47% of middle school students received in-classroom instructional support (prior to Mercy Live).
- 56 hours of In-house Professional Development was provided to all teachers to address Universal Design for Learning: 20 hours of in person PD, 16 hours of learning and practice opportunities, and 20 hours of collaborative work sessions.
- 26 teachers enrolled in the Professional Development training program.
- A modified and relevant version of the PD course was conducted for Pre K.
- Tracked missing homework trends to measure and evaluate how all learners are consistently offered multiple assessment opportunities and methods throughout the school year.
- Mrs. Christine Green awarded the Making IT Happen Award from the CCSE for inclusive teaching efforts.
- Assessed and improved classroom technology across all grade levels.
- Continued to streamline administrative record keeping and communication.
- Conducted weekly all-staff surveys to assess effectiveness of online instructional methods.

Teaching Effectiveness



As part of the ADW Accreditation, Mercy teachers were observed and evaluated on major teaching effectiveness categories; those necessary to create the most optimal environments in which students can learn. Mercy achieved above the ADW average in **ALL** categories. Evaluations were done by Cognia (formerly AdvancED), a non-profit global network of educators.

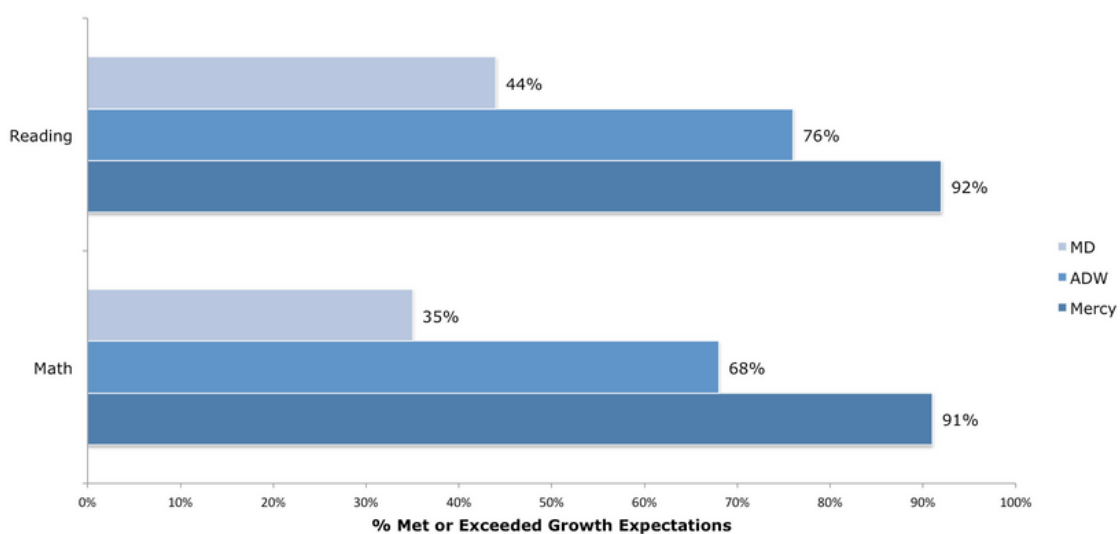
Strategic Plan Goal

Faculty and families in partnership will provide all students with access to a rigorous, 21st century-centered curriculum in the least restrictive environment.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Increased support in classrooms for students with various needs:
 - UDL Coach was present in every core content class for 7th grade.
 - UDL Coach taught 16 students directly in the 7th/8th grades.
 - UDL Coach consulted with all 6th grade teachers to provide in-class support.
- HSPT overall composite score for 8th grade class earned above average rating - the highest category awarded.
- Collaboration amongst special education teachers and homeroom teachers to provide accessible work for all students.
- 52% of 5th-8th grade students taking advanced math curriculum.
- Maintained Advisory program for Grades 6-8.
- Enhanced Leadership program for Grades 7-8 to include Capstone Project and Financial Literacy sessions.
- Increased student ownership in NJHS and Student Council. Electives, (Art studio, Health/fitness, Broadcast Studio) designed with student input.
- Administered MAA American Mathematics Competition to 19 high achieving students in grades 6-8.
- 28% of students in grades 2 through 8 qualified to be identified by the Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth program.
- 47% of 2020 graduates received academic scholarships, leadership cognition, and advanced placements.

Scantron Scores Reflect Educational Excellence



Scantron Performance standardized assessment was administered to students in grades 2 through 8. The information is used to determine annual growth and areas of focus for improvement in Mathematics instruction. Mercy performed **significantly higher** than Maryland public schools and the overall ADW average.

Strategic Plan Goal

Marketing: Each parent has the confidence in school leadership, is satisfied with the overall educational experience, and has a meaningful connection to the school community.

Finance: Working in partnership with the Parish Finance Council, Our Lady of Mercy School will develop, implement, and annually review a long-range financial plan that provides for a balanced operating budget, affordable tuition, and funds strategic initiatives.

Facilities: Mercy will provide a clean, orderly, safe, cost-effective, and instructionally supportive school environment that contributes to the school's mission of educating our children to meet the intellectual, physical, and emotional demands of the 21st century.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Formalized a standing Finance Committee.
- Developed true-cost tuition model and gained support of leadership and parent stakeholders.
- Instituted a monthly budget review process which improved financial decision making.
- Increased parent awareness of facilities issues.
- Completed a priority list of current needs in school building and campus.
- Completed Science Lab renovation, main entrance bathroom renovations, installed main entrance security doors, and updated after-hours access control.
- Field renovation: Irrigation system repaired, field aerated, seeded, and fertilized.
- Expanded Mercy's social media reach with launch of Instagram account.
- Participated in ADW Cohort 1 rollout of Raiser's Edge donor management platform.
- Held first annual 5K fundraising event; over 300 participants from across the region raising \$46,000.
- Began development of comprehensive alum database.

Investing in the Future



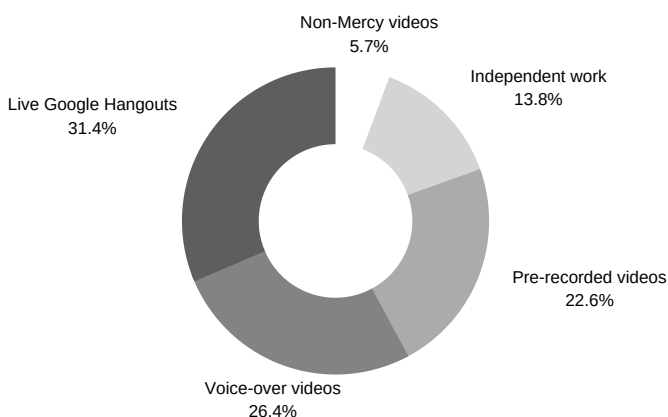
Our Lady of Mercy has experienced a culture shift in distance learning that highlights the strength of our foundational instruction skills and growth mindset of our teachers. The goal was to make the transition for students and families as seamless as possible. Our success in doing so is in large part to our strong foundation as a school community and the expertise of our teaching team. Over time, Mercy was able to shift the quality of instruction to meet the individual needs of students and families as we always have in the building while continuing to grow our own skills as educators.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Multi-layer communication campaign to support parent and student transition to distance learning included: 4 recorded parent information videos, 6 live parent Q&A zoom sessions, and two rounds of parent phone calls.
- Multi-layer communication campaign to inform parents on Mercy's Fall 2020 planning efforts included 3 live parent presentations and Q&A zoom sessions.
- 92% of parents surveyed said their questions were addressed during the Q&A.
- General and grade level Zoom conferences held with parents to provide direction and an overview of Mercy Live.
- Evaluation of tech devices K-8 to promote 1:1 future program.
- Supported technology integration in all curriculum areas with online learning.
- Faith-focused efforts included Fridays with Father, daily Mass videos, and Month of Mary.
- Comprehensive Mercy Live Strategic Plan is being developed to provide practices and procedures for parents, students, faculty, and staff to enable a seamless transition and ability to pivot if necessary.
- Expanded use of Google platform was implemented to ease online teaching and learning.
- Enhanced focus on current best practices and daily strategies ie- evaluations, classroom atmosphere, student engagement, evaluating ADW standards and Scranton results, providing for all learners.
- 89% of 4th-8th grade students were confident they were effective, successful students during distance learning.
- 87% of parents surveyed felt their students were connected to Mercy.
- Launched Mercy Mentors program with 10 NJHS student mentors (6-8 grade).

Learning to Deliver Online Learning

Preferred Method of Learning Content
(Survey of 4th-8th Graders)



How Did We Do It?

Weekly team meetings to collaborate and discuss the individual needs of students.

Identify and resolve common barriers to distance learning.

Assess functionality in common grade bands to determine developmentally appropriate content.

Weekly staff surveys to identify best practices and current trends.



As children, both my wife and I had fathers as teachers and later principals. We have first-hand experience of the duties and responsibilities of a teacher and principal. It is with pride that we say that with the leadership of Mrs. Thomas and Father Bill, Mercy was spot on in starting online classes from day one of the stay at home executive order . . . This has greatly increased our respect and gratitude for teachers. I don't think we can ever pay you enough for all you do. Teachers are the foundation, growth and success of every career out there.

- Dr. Ivan Zama, Parent

The pandemic has caused great fear and hardship worldwide, and yet the distance learning experience with our Mercy faculty has been a highlight of my career as a school leader. Our teachers have faced a crisis with compassion and determination and have used, I am sure, every teaching skill they possess to keep our students engaged. Each day I am amazed at what they accomplish without complaints – which demonstrates their passion for teaching. Their children come first. The individual care they are delivering to students through a computer is a miracle to watch.

- Mrs. Deborah Thomas, Principal

Mercy did a terrific job in transitioning to distance learning. Literally the day after school closures were announced, Mercy teachers sprung into action with a robust learning schedule for the kids. It's like they did not miss a beat.

- Mrs. Kim Beahn, Parent

I have been amazed by the perseverance, enthusiasm and unwavering dedication I've seen from my colleagues, and I'm so proud to see all members of the Mercy staff embrace innovative approaches to instruction and a willingness to try new strategies despite so many variables and unknowns.

- Mrs. Vivian Nourse, UDL Coach and Middle School Teacher

In times of crisis or great transition, good emerges. From the inception of distance learning on March 12, the faculty and staff at Our Lady of Mercy School have made every effort to provide a quality faith-centered educational program for our students. Every aspect of Mercy Live, our distance learning program, has been developed with a thoughtful and holistic approach - including parent communication, religious practices and activities, whole and small group live instruction, teacher created videos, and ongoing professional development.

- Mrs. Christine Green, Assistant Principal, 5th Grade



SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL & COMMITTEES

The School Advisory Council (SAC) fully represents each stakeholder category, being comprised of 8 school parents, 4 parishioners, 9 school faculty and staff members, 3 parish staff members, and 2 members of the greater business community. Bringing valuable expertise and experience, these members have operated in committees, tasked with achieving the goals and priorities in the plan.

SAC MEMBERS

- Valerie Adeleson, SAC Co-Chair, Parish Member, Senior Vice President. Federal Compliance Consulting
- Kim Beahn, Parent Communication Liaison, Parent
- John Beahn, Co-Chair Facilities Committee, Parent
- Jay George, Facilities Committee, Parish Member, Parish Chair of Social Justice Committee
- James Greeves, Finance Committee, Controller - Koons of Silver Spring, Mercy Alumnus, Parent
- Jay Heath, School Finance Committee, Attorney, Parent
- Laura Heilman, CYO Representative, Policy and Planning Committee, Parent and CYO Coach
- Bob Johnson, Facilities Committee, Parish Member, President of Natelli Custom Homes and Renovations, Parent of Mercy Graduates
- Linda Budney LaRoche, Policy and Planning Committee, Parish Member, School Volunteer, holds degree in Canon Law and works with the Archdiocesan Tribunal, Dame of Malta, Serves on Boards of Saint Meinrad Seminary and Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless
- Maura Lannan, Chair Policy and Planning, Reporter, Parent
- Emily Montgomery, Academic Committee, Dir. of the Moreau Options Program, The Academy of the Holy Cross
- Jennifer Palmiere, Chair Finance and Marketing Committees, Director of Marketing and Dev. at Mercy
- Francis Scango, SAC Co-Chair, Policy and Planning Committee, Retired Principal of Blessed Sacrament School, Principal Mentor for the Archdiocese of Washington, Catholic Schools Office
- Sheila Shea, Academic Committee, Special Educator in Mont. County, St. Rose of Lima Master Catechist, ADW Trainer on Special Educ. Best Practices, Board of Directors, Kennedy Institute in Washington, D.C.
- Lauren Wyble, Secretary, Academic Committee, Faculty Member

STANDING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Executive

Deborah Thomas, Principal
Fran Scango, Co-Chair
Valerie Adelson, Co-Chair
Jennifer Palmiere, Dir. Marketing and Dev.

Building and Grounds

John Beahn, Co-Chair
Christine Green, Co-Chair
Bob Johnson, Parish
German Lopez, Facilities Director

Finance and Marketing

Jennifer Palmiere, Chair
Father Bill, Pastor
Jay Heath, Parent
Karen Robertson, School Admin Manager
Jay George, Parish, Social Concerns

Policy and Planning

Maura Lannan, Chair
Linda Budney LaRoche, Parish
Kim Beahn, Parent
Laura Heilman, Parent
Fran Scango, SAC Co-Chair

Academic Planning and Review

Deborah Thomas, Chair, Principal
Christine Green, Asst. Principal
Lauren Wyble, Lower School Representative
Maribeth Harris, Intermed. School Representative
Vivian Nourse, Middle School Representative
Sheila Shea, Special Educator, Mont.County

Catholic Identity

Lorene Moutanabbih, Chair, Faculty
Anna LaNave, Parish, Dir. Faith Formation
Ann Walker, Parish, Dir. Religious Education