



Strategic Plan

2023-2028





MISSION STATEMENT

Aquinas Academy is a private school formed in the Catholic tradition for boys and girls grades prekindergarten through twelve. The Academy was formed, and will be governed, by parents who are deeply committed to the moral and intellectual formation of their children, which they recognize to be their ultimate responsibility. The Academy is committed to ensuring that this formation takes place in the context of solid Christian teaching and piety which is completely loyal to the teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church.

Accordingly, the mission of Aquinas Academy is:

- To serve parents in carrying out their fundamental responsibility to ensure the moral and intellectual formation of their children;
- To foster in the Academy's students a fuller understanding of, and deep appreciation for, their Catholic Faith in a manner completely loyal to the teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church;
- To offer Academy students an intensive traditional/classical curriculum covering all the major areas of the liberal arts and natural sciences, in an academic program that is both rigorous and college preparatory;
- To help each student reach his or her fullest potential and acquire the tools necessary to succeed in higher education and professional life;
- To produce exceptionally well-formed and authentically Catholic Christian leaders whose future accomplishments are of service to others and give glory to God in the midst of the world;
- To offer such a program to qualified students from a wide range of social, economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds.

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Dear Aquinas parents, students, faculty, alumni, benefactors, and friends:

We are excited to present the Academy's latest 5-year strategic plan, entitled *Furthering the Mission: The Strategic Plan for Aquinas Academy for 2023-2028*. This new Plan is the culmination of a year-long process by the Board of gaining valued input on strategic goals from Aquinas faculty, students, parents, and alumni.

We are grateful for the thoughtful input we received from so many who care deeply about furthering Aquinas' Mission: to form Catholic Christian leaders, in an academically rigorous program, whose future accomplishments are of service to others and give glory to God.

We look forward to continuing to work with you on achieving these strategic goals to joyfully fulfill that Mission for the benefit of our students.

Peter Blume
BOARD PRESIDENT

Leslie Mitros
HEAD OF SCHOOL

Curriculum and Supporting Resources

From its founding the mission of Aquinas Academy stands on two pillars:

1. “To offer Academy students an intensive traditional curriculum covering all the major areas of the liberal arts and natural sciences, **in an academic program that is both rigorous and college preparatory**; while helping each student reach his or her fullest potential and acquire the tools necessary to succeed in higher education and professional life.
2. To produce exceptionally well-formed and authentically Catholic leaders whose future accomplishments are of service to others and give glory to God in the midst of the world.”

GOAL ONE

Strengthen the Writing Curriculum

OBJECTIVES

- A. Complete the Faculty’s work on aligning writing curriculum vertically (1st-12th grade) and across disciplines.
- B. Expand in-class writing opportunities and faculty’s instructional editing of student work.
- C. Commit additional resources to writing and humanities programs via additional teacher recruitment and development and books/materials.

GOAL TWO

Provide Greater Academic Support to Struggling Students

OBJECTIVES

- A. Recognizing our challenging curriculum, increase teacher resources (number and time- availability) for more tutoring support/availability during and after school hours.
- B. Continue to take advantage of the reading support specialist from the intermediate unit as needed, while also hiring a reading support specialist to assist those students who may not qualify for the intermediate unit support but can benefit from additional reading support.
- C. Train Lower School teachers to perform the AimsWeb reading screening evaluation three times per year to further benchmark student reading proficiency.
- D. Provide parents a list of faculty members who tutor.



GOAL THREE

Improve Hands-on/Experiential Approach to Lower School Science

OBJECTIVES

A. Commit additional resources in the form of manipulatives and other materials and faculty development.

GOAL FOUR

Incorporate Theology of the Body into the Religion Curriculum

OBJECTIVES

A. Text/curriculum to be selected by faculty with board approval.

GOAL FIVE

Further Integrate Technology with Instruction While Maintaining Appropriate Balance with Traditional Pedagogy

OBJECTIVES

A. Continue current school cell phone policy banning phones during school hours.

B. Amend current school plagiarism policy to appropriately address use of new technologies such as ChatGPT.

C. Teach students how to critically evaluate internet sources across the curriculum.

D. Restart the after-school Robotics Club.



GOAL SIX

Achieve a proper balance and uniform commitment to excellence in our academic, arts, and athletics programs

OBJECTIVES

A. Use recent foundation grant to renovate/refurbish former middle school space for improved and dedicated art and music facilities.

Student, Faith, and Family Life

At the heart of Aquinas Academy lies a strong belief in the significance of faith, relationships, and community. We value and prioritize the establishment of profound connections among all members of our school community. Our primary objective is to support parents in nurturing the intellectual and moral development of their children, while fostering a caring educational atmosphere infused with Christian love and Catholic devotion.

Belief in His Real Presence means we will never leave our Lord. It is necessary to pass this on to our children to maintain their faith.

GOAL ONE

Deepen Commitment to the Eucharist by maintaining the centrality of Holy Mass

OBJECTIVES

- A. Promote reverence and participation at daily school liturgies.
- B. Develop deeper understanding of the blessings and graces available through participation in daily Mass, particularly for middle and high school students.
- C. Maintain relationships with Priests to ensure continuation of daily Mass.
- D. Ensure that Mass is consistently integrated into the school schedule while respecting the school day routine.
- E. Consider opportunities for Adoration/Rosary/Prayer for families outside of the school day.

GOAL TWO

Continue Commitment to Spiritual Formation for all Stakeholders, including Families and Faculty

OBJECTIVES

- A. Improve orientation for new families to Aquinas Academy with regard to mission, expectations, and opportunities for spiritual growth.
- B. Provide opportunities to promote strong parenting practices through various resources including print, audio, and in-person.

- C. Continue to offer teachers spiritual enrichment for their own formation and to benefit the students.
- D. Continue to provide mentorship and direction to students through the Advisory Program.
- E. Provide resources to assist students in the transition from Lower to Middle School, and Middle School to High School.
- F. Cultivate an understanding of Christian vocation – marriage, celibate lay vocation, vocations to the priesthood and religious life.
- G. Increase and encourage student service opportunities.

GOAL THREE

Foster a Commitment to Human perfection

OBJECTIVES

- A. Maintain awareness of the needs of students and families with regard to school/family balance.
- B. Provide age-appropriate opportunities to further develop peer relationships in the school day/week.
- C. Develop Aquinas Academy Coaches to incorporate the virtues encouraged within the classroom to foster a unity of spirit and mission in all curricular and extracurricular areas.
- D. Optimize use of facilities, time efficiency, and transportation for extracurriculars.
- E. Ensure effective and timely communication in all areas of the Academy's life.

GOAL FOUR

Continue Commitment to forming authentic Catholic Leaders whose accomplishments are of service to others and give glory to God in the midst of the world

OBJECTIVES

- A. Engage alumni and parents to actively participate in school life by sharing with students their varied professional experience, faith journeys, and access to career and service opportunities.
- B. Expand the College Counseling program to begin in ninth grade and to encourage students to stretch themselves and apply to the best schools that fit their skills and interests.
- C. Cultivate a school culture of service by engaging students at all grade levels in meaningful service-learning projects.

Campus/Facilities Overview

Aquinas Academy's strategic plan includes improving our overall student and parent experience by enhancing the quality of our campus and facilities. In consideration of the required funding for larger capital projects, some of the identified goals will extend beyond this five year plan.

The listed goals have been prioritized based on the findings of this committee, including parent, faculty and board member feedback, as well as the capital funding requirements.

The strategic plan to improve our campus and facilities may be pursued by working to achieve the following Tier 1 and Tier 2 goals.*

**Tier 1 and Tier 2 goals are categorized based on parent/faculty focus group feedback, capital campaign plans and feasibility.*

Some of these initiatives will require submission and are subject to the approval of Hampton Township.

TIER ONE GOALS

GOAL ONE

Improve student, faculty, parent and visitor safety and security

OBJECTIVES

- A. Install BluePoint security system throughout entire campus as per our security consultant's guidance.
- B. Provide training of all administration, faculty, and staff by security consultant.
- C. Install interior (mechanical) door locks on classroom doors as per our security consultant's guidance.
- D. Increase number of fire/safety/security drills throughout school year.

GOAL TWO

Upgrade/Expand the chapel to add needed capacity and improve the liturgy by providing a more comfortable and functional environment

OBJECTIVES

- A. Extend the building by approximately 25 feet (chapel level only).
- B. Install modern, efficient, quiet heating and air conditioning system.
- C. Replace front entrance doors to chapel with more aesthetically appropriate doors (possibly donated by parents).

D. Repair or replace pews/kneelers (existing are in disrepair). The Diocese may be able to help with “new to us” pews with kneelers from closed church(es).

E. Replace/upgrade flooring.

F. Replace stained glass windows and add storm windows.

GOAL THREE

Renovate the old middle school (i.e. chapel basement)

OBJECTIVES

A. Free up needed classroom space in the High School by making dedicated space in the old middle school for Art, Music/Band, Choir.

B. Provide a weight room to support our Athletic programs, gym curriculum, and prospective Military Academy candidates.

C. Provide needed costume storage for our Theater program.

GOAL FOUR

Improve Athletics by enhancing the quality and accessibility of our Athletic (Dolan) Field

OBJECTIVES

A. Improve field availability (up time), quality and durability by installing a drainage system including proper sub-base, drainage lines and new synthetic turf.

B. Improve field accessibility by paving a road base from lower school parking lot.

C. Improve quality of complex by installing an electronic scoreboard & field lighting.

D. Improve quality of complex by installing an equipment storage shed.

E. Improve quality of complex by adding additional bleachers.

GOAL FIVE

Improve campus accessibility and outdoor recess experience

OBJECTIVES

- A. Review/re-configure parking lot layout, traffic flow and recess area(s).
- B. Add a second playground near the parking lot recess area.

GOAL SIX

Remodel the Library

OBJECTIVES

- A. Remodel a space in the old kindergarten/current pre-school building for a Library.

TIER TWO GOALS (LONG TERM)

GOAL SEVEN

Improve/grow the Fine Arts program(s) for students of all ages

OBJECTIVES

- A. Explore long-term options in conjunction with the Campus Master Plan to build an Auditorium.



GOAL EIGHT

Build an Auxiliary Gym to accommodate gym classes, recess and sport practices

OBJECTIVES

A. Explore long term options in conjunction with the Campus Master Plan to build an Auxiliary Gym.



Recruitment and Retention

Aquinas Academy seeks to achieve an enrollment level that perfectly enhances the student experience. We strive to find the right balance between a school community expansive enough to offer a rich array of opportunities and experiences, yet compact enough to maintain low student-to-faculty ratios and nourish a closely bonded community.

Our most potent strategy for attracting and retaining families remains the exceptional quality of our people: the dedicated faculty, supportive staff, welcoming families, and our bright, curious students themselves.

GOAL ONE

Reach target enrollment levels through attracting and retaining mission-minded families, with a special emphasis on the High School

OBJECTIVES

- A. Reach target enrollment of 200 students in the High School (50 per grade), 135 students in the Middle School (45 per grade), and 216 students in the Lower School (36 per grade), with 551 K-12 enrollment.**
- B. Recruitment:** Update marketing materials with integrated K-12 vision, emphasizing continued growth and new facilities; host open houses; visit schools; hold shadow days and other events to attract families.
- C. Retention:** Hold conversations with 6th and 7th grade students and their parents regarding high school; share the integrated K-12 vision with our families at earlier levels and at increased frequency; invite alumni back to speak with middle school students.
- D. Mission-Minded:** Target Catholic grade schools, parishes, and homeschool co-ops to reach mission-minded families.
- E. Form a committee focused on the High School to formulate recommendations to further enhance the Spiritual, Academic, and Social experience of students.**

GOAL TWO

Communicate the advantages of Aquinas Academy to a new generation of parents

OBJECTIVES

- A. Showcase the breadth of the Aquinas student experience, beginning with academics and faith formation, but with increased focus on community, service, and student activities.
- B. More fully articulate the vision for an integrated K-12 education and formation experience at Aquinas, with the High School serving as the capstone experience.
- C. Spotlight our exceptional faculty through expanded biographies, interviews, etc.
- D. Continually upgrade the school website to include the latest best practices for content and messaging.

Finance and Development

Our financial strategy aims to support school growth and to ensure the availability of top-notch facilities and resources while maintaining fiscal discipline and competitive tuition rates.

GOAL ONE

Attract and retain highly talented faculty and administration by providing competitive wages and benefits

OBJECTIVES

- A. Offer a comprehensive benefits package to full-time employees.
- B. Increase funding for professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

GOAL TWO

Maintain competitive tuition rates while supporting families with financial needs

OBJECTIVES

- A. Expand the school's involvement in the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program to further assist families in need.
- B. Expand the scope of the Aquinas Scholarship Special Purpose Entity partnership program.



GOAL THREE

Manage the school's operating budget to ensure that 85%-90% of expenses are covered by tuition and fees

GOAL FOUR

Secure additional funding for the remaining 10-15% of the operating budget through development initiatives

OBJECTIVES

- A. Diversify the donor base by engaging alumni and other potential supporters.
- B. Increase donations to the Annual Fund.
- C. Focus fundraising efforts on a limited number of high impact events such as the Walk-A-Thon and Galas.

GOAL FIVE

Plan for anticipated capital projects through a multiyear Capital Campaign

Athletics Committee

The purpose of our Athletics Program is to support the Academy's mission through athletic competition. Specifically, the program focuses on the character formation and physical development of student-athletes in order that they reach their fullest potential.

All involved in Aquinas Academy Athletics are expected to work towards fulfillment of these goals, giving glory to God in action and in speech. The below Strategic plan will help us better fulfill the purpose of our Athletics Program.

TIER ONE GOALS

GOAL ONE

Build a Weight / Fitness Room in the old Middle School

OBJECTIVES

- A. Renovate the existing classroom in the old Middle School closest to the stairwell going up to the Chapel (coordinate with other old Middle School renovation plans).
- B. Install lock on door so space is only used for gym class and by athletics teams with supervision.
- C. Install padded floor and buy used, or receive donated, equipment.
- D. Install two pull up bar systems (required for our Military Academy bound students).

GOAL TWO

Improve transportation for High School athletics

OBJECTIVES

- A. Buy additional passenger vans.
- B. Put Aquinas Academy logo / name on the existing van and additional vans.

GOAL THREE

Turf Dolan Field

OBJECTIVES

- A. Turf entire field to allow for additional practice space.
- B. Line field for soccer, field hockey, and lacrosse.
- C. Expand width of field by digging into hill side and building retaining wall.
- D. Use overflow dirt to expand southwest side of field.
- E. Move playground from northeast corner to southeast corner of field.
- F. Replace woodchip playground surface with turf surface for more seasonal use.
- G. Install scoreboard and build storage shed in northwest corner.
- H. Conduct light study and install lights if approved by Hampton Twp.

TIER TWO GOALS

GOAL FOUR

Align Lower School Sports Offerings with High School Sports Offerings

OBJECTIVES

- A. Have more competitive High School sports through development in Lower and Middle School.
- B. Have better insight into participation for each sport to assess viability of the sport at High School.
- C. Have each sport that is offered in the High School be offered in the corresponding season at the Middle School level.
- D. Have single sex teams starting in the 7th grade.

GOAL FIVE

Improve Gym Class

OBJECTIVES

- A. Conduct Marine Corp (or other national standardized) Fitness test for all students.
- B. Create structure to teach students how to play a variety of different sports.

GOAL SIX

Highlight Athletic Success, specifically at the High School level

OBJECTIVES

- A. Purchase and install banners in gym.
- B. Remove existing banners to promote standardization of banners.
- C. Update and increase visibility of All-WPIAL and All-Section plaques outside of the gym.
- D. Create plaques for the Crusader award, Athlete of the year (for both boys and girls), and WPIAL Scholar award and place those outside of the gym.
- E. Remove lockers from the gym hallway and install trophy cases.

GOAL SEVEN

Formalize / Expand the Athletic Committee and Boosters Clubs

OBJECTIVES

- A. Expand the Athletic Advisory Committee to include a broader group (Lower School, Middle School, and High School parents) to allow for greater transparency and parent involvement.
- B. Expand the Athletic Boosters Club role and scope. Update existing guidelines and communicate to all High School parents. Boosters should apply to WPIAL teams only.

Faculty and Administration

The quality and effectiveness of the faculty is one of the most critical factors in the success and growth of the students.

It is essential that faculty be academically strong and well-formed in the faith in order to be equipped to be able to hand on to others the fruits of their contemplation of the truth — “Contemplata aliis tradere”.

Enhancing our Administrative staff should provide much-needed time for our Head of School to more actively pursue and support the development of faculty to ensure consistently positive classroom and extracurricular experiences for students.

GOAL ONE

Attract and retain qualified and well-formed faculty to meet the increasing need for teachers (during a time when teachers are less available)

OBJECTIVES

- A. Ensure that faculty salaries are competitive with or above those of similar private and Catholic schools in this area.
- B. Continue to provide benefits that are affordable, given the income of the faculty.
- C. Consider increasing the incentive for faculty and staff to contribute to the school’s 403B plan.
- D. Make monies available, through both Title IV funding through Hampton Township and school operating funds, to support professional development that directly benefits classroom instructional practices.

GOAL TWO

Enhance the continued development of our Faculty

OBJECTIVES

- A. Increase professional development mentoring (master to newer teacher) and fund greater attendance at professional courses/conferences.
- B. Conduct a thorough and regular teacher observation process for both formative and evaluative purposes.
- C. Continue to cultivate/prioritize among the faculty the close faculty-student relationships that are the heart of the Aquinas Academy experience.

D. Emphasize a culture that places tremendous value on excellence in teaching and formally recognize that excellence by establishing and funding teaching awards.

GOAL THREE

Consider the scope of responsibilities for each member of the administrative team and their general availability to the teaching staff

OBJECTIVES

A. Be sure that administrative staff has the availability to assist classroom teachers during the school day as needed. Consider scheduling to ensure that a member of the administrative team is available during each period of the day to handle any urgent situations.

B. Ensure that staffing is appropriate for enrollment.

C. On a rotating basis, allow for some MS/HS faculty to carry a lighter teaching load in order to provide coverage for teachers who are absent or need coverage due to field trips, etc.

GOAL FOUR

Plan for the evolving leadership structure of President and Head of School on a timeline to ease the transition of leadership

OBJECTIVES


A. Carefully outline responsibilities of the President and Head of School of Aquinas Academy prior to transition to this more typical private school model.

B. Conduct a fair process of evaluation of any internal and external candidates for the position of Head of School.

C. Complete the decision-making process during the fall of 2023 for the summer of 2024.

D. Initiate the addition of the role of President prior to implementing the responsibilities of the new Head of School.

Timeline of Milestones

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- 1996 The Academy is founded with 13 students for the purpose of offering a rigorous classical curriculum covering all the major areas of the liberal arts in an intensive college preparatory program, and receives the Bishop's approval.
 - 1999 Students enrolled in grades K through 12.
 - 2000 First high school graduating class.
 - 2002 Purchase of an eleven-acre site containing four parish buildings from the Diocese of Pittsburgh.
 - 2003 Construction and dedication of Dolan Field.
 - 2004 Computer lab opens.
 - 2005 Mary Smith Hall opens, the first dedicated High School space.

First science laboratory
 - 2009 The Rhodora J. Donahue multi-purpose building opens and includes a gym, cafeteria, office spaces, locker rooms and storage rooms.
 - 2014 Mross-McGonigle Hall, a 22,000-square-foot classroom building, opens to high school students.
 - 2015 Aquinas Academy High School is ranked the #1 Catholic High School in Pennsylvania by Niche.
 - 2022 New 24,000 square -foot Academic Building opens to Lower and Middle School students.
 - 2023 Parking lot expansion and installation of Blue Point Security System.

