



UNITED IN EXCELLENCE

Catholic Academy of Sussex County Strategic Plan 2026-2029

Reverend A. Brown Memorial School Pope John XXIII Middle School Pope John XXIII High School



Dear Friends of the Catholic Academy of Sussex County,

The Long Range Strategic Plan for the Catholic Academy of Sussex County is our blueprint to ensure the continuing tradition of excellence that makes our three schools, Pope John XXIII High School, Pope John XXIII Middle School, and Reverend George A. Brown Memorial School, the premier Catholic school system in the region. Three schools, one unified Academy.

This plan is the result of a long and careful analysis of our strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities. The data collected from administrators, students, teachers, parents, alumni, and other concerned stakeholders was invaluable to this project.

Since the consolidation of Catholic education in Sussex County in 2015, our Academy has been growing and improving. We are confident that the Academy will continue to exemplify this tradition of excellence as we embrace this plan.

As part of the strategic planning process, we analyzed what actions and plans will help the Academy to succeed. The areas identified for this plan are considered "Pillars" that support all that we do as an institution. These Pillars include: Catholic Identity and Mission, Teaching and Leading, Student Experience, Connection and Community Engagement, and Function and Facility.

The Long Range Strategic Planning Committee began its work with the initial Steering Committee meeting on November 20, 2025. That date seems so long ago, but we have accomplished so much in that time. This has been a highly collaborative effort, characterized by the hard work of all members of the Steering and Pillar Committees.

This Strategic Plan will enable us to move forward by making choices that focus our resources in a way that enables us to live up to our mission to be an "Honor to Our Father."

I sincerely thank all of those involved in this effort. It is through our shared sense of purpose that the Academy will continue to be a symbol of excellence in education.

Yours in Christ,

Daniel O'Keefe
President

Steering Committee

Lindsey Applegate
Chris Applegate
Lauren Auchter
Craig Austin
Samantha Bennett
Fr. John Calabro
Fr. Richard Carton
Eileen Clifford
Joyce Cluess
Roey Cofrancesco
Paul Corcoran
Joe Della Ferra
Rose DeRosa

Ryan Horan
Sal Dispenziere
Gene Emering
Cole Farrand
Joe Giovannone
Brendan Gross
Diana Hiler
Annika Johnson
Nicole Kachmar
Catherine Kiff-Vozza
Patricia Klebez
Jen Marchetti

Benny Marino
Michael Marotte
Danielle Mazuy
Brian McAleer
Kathleen Reidmiller
Fr. Michael Rodak
Daniel Rosanelli
Susan Santore
Frank Setlock
Genevieve Sumski
Marian Velivis
Laura Williamson

Pillars

Catholic Mission & Identity

Matt Cooney (Chair)
Patrick Black
Fr. John Calabro
Brian Carlson
Diana Hiler
Melissa Honig
Shannon Jones
Abigail Kral
Rebecca Masone
Russell Raffay
Fr. Michael Rodak
Elias Strombom

Teaching & Leading

Patricia Klebez (Chair)
Samantha Bennett
Joe Giovannone
Susan Haggerty
Nicole Kachmar
Chris Kapplemeier
Patrick Koester
Laurie Lynch
Mike Marotte
Gwen O'Hearn
Kathleen Piwko
Kathleen Reidmiller
Susan Santore
Cole Farrand
Joyce Cluess
Kristine LePera
Meghan Bode

Student Experience

Genevieve Sumski (Chair)
Lindsey/Chris Applegate
Lauren Auchter
Eileen Clifford
Roey Cofrancesco
Rose DeRosa
Diana Hiler
Kaitlyn Honig
Melissa Honig
Ryan Horan
Brian McAleer
George Mihalik
Any Pucci
Dan Rosanelli

Connection & Community Engagement

George Mihalik (Chair)
Cole Farrand
Annika Johnson
Catherine Kiff-Vozza
Jen Marchetti
Danielle Mazuy
Gen Sumski
Rick Magennis

Function & Facility

Gene Emering (Chair)
Paul Corcoran
Joe DellaFera
Benny Marino
Jim Reffi
Frank Setlock
Marian Velivis
Susan Santore

Our Mission

As part of this strategic plan, we will develop a new, academy-wide mission statement.

Reverend Brown. As a Catholic school community, we believe that through modeling kindness, forgiveness, and compassion, we can make a difference in God's world. We believe all children should feel safe, loved, and inspired throughout their academic and spiritual journey to be passionate learners and live Christ-centered lives.

Middle School. Pope John XXIII Middle School is a Catholic community that inspires students to become compassionate lifelong learners by nurturing Gospel values, fostering academic excellence, promoting service, and developing global awareness.

High School. Through the inspiration of Pope Saint John XXIII, we seek to strengthen Catholic faith, promote academic excellence, integrity, and leadership; and practice love, care, and compassion for all human beings in the gospel spirit of Jesus Christ.

Process and Participants

An Academy-Wide Plan, From Start to Finish

This three-year strategic plan began in November 2025 with an orientation meeting in the Biondo Research Center that drew over 50 stakeholders. Guided by President Daniel O'Keefe and a dedicated Steering Committee, the process was powered by five Pillar Groups. These volunteers conducted extensive SWOT analyses and external benchmarking to draft the goals and strategies that serve as the plan's core.

Community Input, Community Validation

To ground these ambitions in reality, we executed a deep dive into relevant data and welcomed community input through interviews, focus groups and e-surveys. Three months of this discovery laid the foundation for a full-day planning session on March 21st. Following refinements with the leadership team, the final roadmap was ratified by the Board of Trustees and the Diocese, ensuring a unified vision for the Academy's future.

22 interviews
4 focus groups
503 e-surveys

Students
Faculty & Staff
Parents
Alumni
Community

Our Vision

In the next three years, we will increasingly unite as one Catholic academy so that we can better educate the whole child and strengthen our shared community of faith.

Just as we imagine the ideal profile of a graduate and then consciously build all of the steps to get them there, in this plan we have envisioned how our three outstanding schools can become one unified academy.

With aligned leadership, programs and communications, we can improve the experience for all students, all families, all faculty and staff, and all alumni.

Five Strategic Directions

1. In learning, service and worship, we will more fully promote and practice our Catholic faith throughout our three schools, our campus and community.
2. We will foster a unified standard of excellence in teaching, leadership, and academics to ensure high expectations and high outcomes.
3. We will continue honored traditions, provide new extracurricular activities and ensure student wellness, to build an experience in which every child feels valued, challenged, and inspired.
4. We will cultivate an engaged, connected community and clearly communicate how they can invest time, talent and treasure for the betterment of the Academy.
5. We will maintain, enhance, and modernize our facilities and campus to foster a truly dynamic learning environment, attract new families, and ensure long-term sustainability.

The Catholic Academy Aims High

Ten academy-wide initiatives in this plan

- ☐ New Academic Council to set and monitor P-12 standards
- ☐ Family Mass, enhanced worship spaces and more student participation in liturgies
- ☐ Expanded electives and career-preparation programs
- ☐ Five-year master facility plan driving maintenance and improvements
- ☐ New trustees and activated committees on the Board of Trustees
- ☐ Transparent reports on fundraising programs and outcomes
- ☐ Sports and extracurriculars sharpened through data analysis and investment
- ☐ Fresh focus on student wellness with professionals and programs
- ☐ Professional development and retention incentives for all faculty and staff
- ☐ Modernized learning spaces and labs

A Commitment to Excellence

Following approval by the Board of Trustees and the Diocese of Paterson, the strategic plan will be shared with the entire Catholic Academy community in the fall of 2026.

From our first meeting, there was a commitment to not only build an ambitious vision for the next three years, but also, to see it through.

Implementation and transparency measures include:

- Plan Steward - one staff member will coordinate efforts, track progress and prepare a quarterly report to the board
- Board oversight - the newly expanded Board of Trustees will review plan progress at every meeting
- 90 Day report - a detailed report will be made public three months after the launch.
- Annual report - plan progress will also be communicated every year in the academy's annual report

Questions, thoughts and suggestions can be made at any time by contacting the President's office at 973-729-3045.

Catholic Mission and Identity

In the past few years, the news reports an encouraging trend: people of all ages - but especially the young - are returning to religion for a sense of community, purpose and meaning in their life.

Three-Year Direction: In learning, service and worship, the Catholic Academy will more fully promote and practice our Catholic faith throughout our three schools, our campus and community.

Objective 1: Be the visible “hands of Christ”.

1. Create an Academy-wide calendar that aligns our faith-based events and opportunities across all three schools.
2. Integrate service hours into athletics and extracurriculars (pilot with one team, then scale).
3. Launch family-friendly service opportunities so students and parents can serve together.
4. Refresh and promote signature drives (Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, Mary's Meals) with festival-style fundraisers and parent involvement.

Catholic Mission and Identity

Objective 2: Build stronger, unified Catholic communities across the Academy.

1. Host Academy-wide liturgical and formation events (opening Mass, family Masses, faculty retreat, seasonal prayer challenges).
2. Offer recurring family formation (Bible study, gratitude retreats, post-retreat discipleship groups).
3. Use social media to invite participation and catechesis (Ask Father feature, seasonal content tied to Church calendar).
4. Create regular cross-campus fellowship (hospitality after Mass, car-line fellowship, alumni & family gatherings.)

Objective 3: Deepen student engagement and reverence in worship.

1. Implement grade-level Teaching Masses and classroom preparation to teach the meaning of the Mass.
2. Improve worship space and atmosphere (gym enhancements, visible sacred symbols, adjusted lighting, banners).
3. Strengthen student participation in liturgy (music development, student testimonies, intentions via Google forms).

Teaching and Leading

In this world of rapid change, we hear the call to be an institution that will both ground students in timeless truths and prepare them to shape the future through lives of purpose and accomplishment.

Three-Year Direction: The Catholic Academy will foster a unified standard of excellence in teaching, leadership, and academics to ensure high expectations and high outcomes.

Objective 1: Recruit, support, and retain highly qualified faculty through competitive compensation packages and professional development opportunities.

1. Implement a unified Academy salary scale and competitive compensation structure.
2. Provide ongoing, Academy-wide professional development and collaborative learning time.
3. Create clear job descriptions, evaluation processes, and career-step pathways for faculty.
4. Fund and prioritize targeted professional growth tied to student outcomes.

Teaching and Leading

Objective 2: Unify P–12 curriculum to ensure rigorous, aligned learning across all grades.

1. Establish an Academy Academic Council with cross-school faculty and admin to set and monitor P–12 standards.
2. Implement required vertical and horizontal articulation cycles each semester.
3. Adopt common assessments for core subjects.
4. Pilot a Director of Curriculum role (or designate lead) to coordinate alignment and data use.

Objective 3: Broaden and deepen academic offerings to match student interests and workforce needs.

1. Expand electives in world language, computer science, and career-relevant skills based on student demand and faculty expertise.
2. Create a pathway for hiring community professionals and adjunct instructors for specialized courses.
3. Use enrollment and capacity thresholds to determine sustainable elective offerings annually.
4. Pilot interdisciplinary, project-based courses that span grades.

Teaching and Leading

Objective 4: Standardize academic expectations and assessment to ensure that every student benefits from a consistently high standard of excellence.

1. Define and publish an Academy Graduate Profile that drives curricula, assessment, and behavior expectations.
2. Align grading scales, honors criteria, and report formats across all schools.
3. Adopt shared instructional best practices and annual learning-walk cycles.
4. In our teaching, balance the use of modern technology with traditional approaches.
5. Require triannual review of curricular rigor and student outcome data to inform adjustments.

Objective 5: Ensure the Academy's continued growth through a robust and transparent Board of Trustees.

1. Expand the Board to 10–12 vetted, skills-based members with diverse expertise and implement staggered terms.
2. Adhere to the bylaws and launch standing committees, including Finance, Governance, Curriculum, Development, and Facilities.
3. Mobilize Board members to help drive fundraising, donor stewardship, and family recruitment campaigns.
4. Publish Board member profiles and professional biographies on the Academy website.
5. Provide regular updates on Board initiatives and strategic progress through the Academy's Annual Report.

Student Experience

We recognize that for a child to develop the whole of their talents, activities and guidance beyond the classroom must be diverse and balanced in opportunity, resources and recognition.

Three-Year Direction: We will continue honored traditions, provide new extracurricular activities and ensure student wellness, to build an experience in which every child feels valued, challenged, and inspired.

Objective 1: Improve extracurriculars, athletics, and guidance through a data-driven evaluation.

1. Perform a 3-5 year data review of athletics, extracurriculars and guidance to evaluate structure, staffing, participation, outcomes.
2. Based on that data reorganize or add new programs while implementing standards and structure to ensure consistency and equity.
3. Define clear roles and staffing models (FT/PT, volunteers) and training expectations for each area.
4. Showcase high-impact programs with regular community events to build pride and visibility.
5. For all activities and guidance, strive for clear, consistent communications to support family expectations and participation.

Student Experience

Objective 2: Develop the whole person with an Academy-wide Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and mental health pathway.

1. Add a certified counselor with specialization in mental wellness to support all Academy students .
2. Convene counselors from all schools to create a PK–12 SEL curriculum aligned with Catholic values.
3. Integrate SEL into classroom instruction and school culture; align code of conduct with SEL competencies.
4. Provide sustained professional development and expert support for faculty, staff and administrators.
5. Launch structured peer leadership and mentoring programs to reinforce SEL skills across grades.

Objective 3: Strengthen admissions and retention through targeted support and funding.

1. Expand financial aid resources through alumni, local businesses and designated fundraising initiatives.
2. Implement a coordinated retention system using advisors, coaches, club leaders, and guidance check-ins.
3. Pilot work group to track student engagement outcomes (sports, clubs, academics) and use results to inform retention intervention, focused on 8th-9th grade in Year 1.
4. Align electives and extracurriculars with student interests and career pathways to keep students engaged.

Student Experience

Objective 4: Position Pope John as a leader in college counseling and student preparation.

1. Update the school profile (GPA decile, GPA distribution, AP results) to better communicate academic strengths.
2. Begin college and career education earlier for students and families (savings plans, career surveys, course mapping).
3. Build strategic relationships with more colleges and visiting representatives to communicate the Pope John student profile.
4. Invest in professional development for counselors on best practices for recommendations and college advising.

Objective 5: Elevate our athletic program to boost school spirit and student engagement.

1. Increase program visibility and viability through camps, clinics, and youth feeder programs (Jr. Lions).
2. Launch initiatives to grow game attendance and school spirit (spirit clubs, Student Athlete Council, special events).
3. Standardize game-day visibility (jerseys, spirit apparel, formal recognition nights) and promote home games.

Connection and Community

The only way that we can achieve excellence - for every student and for the Academy - is through a consistent commitment from our entire community.

Three-Year Direction: We will cultivate an engaged, connected community and clearly communicate how they can invest time, talent and treasure for the betterment of the Academy.

Objective 1: Build a connected, global network of graduates who are actively engaged in the Academy's mission through mentorship, advocacy, and support.

1. Formally launch an Academy-wide Alumni Association to foster P-12 pride and networking.
2. Establish a formal "Transition to Alumnus" process and a "Wall of Legacy" to celebrate graduate achievements.
3. Create career-specific alumni groups to provide guidance and internship opportunities for current students.

Connection and Community

Objective 2: Elevate the Academy experience for all families through professional communication, operational excellence, and a "service-first" culture.

1. Establish a single P-12 Parent Association to streamline engagement and volunteerism across all divisions.
2. Implement recurring professional development for all staff focused on responsiveness and proactive communication.
3. Enhance the "student-to-family" connection through intentional touchpoints and personalized faculty outreach.

Objective 3: Ensure community confidence and long-term growth through clear financial communication and coordinated philanthropy.

1. Redesign our advancement and communications team and operations to meet the needs of this plan.
2. Commit to the regular publication of year-end financial summaries and impact reports to build donor trust.
3. Launch an annual Academy-wide fundraising calendar to align all divisional, athletic, and parent-led efforts.
4. Mobilize "Academy Champions", a group of informed advocates who represent the Academy's vision to the wider community.

Connection and Community

Objective 4: Align all internal and external communications under a single, cohesive P-12 identity that reflects our commitment to excellence.

1. Centralize communications to ensure a consistent message and "Standard of Excellence" across all Academy channels.
2. Leverage digital platforms and community influencers to authentically tell the Academy's story.

Function and Facility

With our facilities, fields and property, we possess a uniquely valuable asset: the only P-12 Catholic education campus in all of Northern New Jersey.

Three-Year Direction: We will maintain, enhance and modernize our facilities and campus to foster a truly dynamic learning environment, attract new families and ensure long-term sustainability.

Objective 1: Create and implement a 5-year Master Facility Plan.

1. Conduct a comprehensive facility audit (buildings, roofing, parking, fields, safety systems, environmental hazards) and cost estimate.
2. Prioritize projects into phases (immediate repairs, near-term upgrades, major capital projects) with budgets and timelines.
3. Develop a financing plan (capital campaign, grants, restricted funds, partnerships) tied to each project phase.
4. Establish an annual review process to update the Master Plan based on condition, funding, and enrollment.

Function and Facility

Objective 2: Ensure ongoing oversight and accountability for facilities.

1. Create a Board Facilities Committee with a designated staff liaison to monitor plan progress and budgets.
2. Publish a quarterly facilities dashboard (project status, spend vs. budget, upcoming work) for transparency.
3. Define roles and contracts for maintenance, custodial staffing, and vendor contracts to prevent deferment of maintenance.
4. Institute an annual “state of facilities” report shared with families and stakeholders.

Objective 3: Improve campus safety, functionality, and core infrastructure.

1. Address critical safety and compliance items first (fire alarm, water treatment, asbestos remediation).
2. Repair and upgrade high-impact systems (roofs, HVAC, plumbing, electrical) on a prioritized schedule.
3. Improve site access and parking safety (lighting, paving, signage, traffic flow).
4. Expand custodial and maintenance capacity to sustain improvements and prolong asset life.

Objective 4: Modernize learning spaces and technology to support 21st-century education.

1. Expand computer science offerings, and staff IT to support three-school operations.
2. Invest in targeted classroom and media-center upgrades (AV, AI workstations, projectors, printers).
3. Pilot modernized learning environments (refurbished classrooms, flexible furniture, dedicated STEM labs) and scale.