



STRATEGIC PLAN 2020

HEAD OF SCHOOL, CHUCK SABO
Adopted by the Board of Trustees, January 2020



DEAR ST. BERNARD ACADEMY COMMUNITY,

We are excited to share with you the product of 18 months of collaboration between the Board of Trust, the parents, faculty and staff, alumni and students. With the oversight of the Winkler group we produced this final plan approved in January of 2020 by the Board of Trust. It has a strategic focus in six areas: Catholic Identity, Student Experience, Rigorous Academics, High Quality Faculty, Diversity and Financial Sustainability. This plan will be our roadmap for the next five years.

As we began the process we were mindful of working within the directives of our mission and mindful of the connection to our wonderful history. We remain committed to academic excellence and to the development of the whole child. In order to continue on the path we have been on this project was undertaking knowing that the world as we know will demand many different things from our graduates. We have that responsibility to them and in fulfilling that responsibility we must be mindful of the direction of St. Bernard Academy.

The process included inviting the entire community of stakeholders to participate in a Strengths survey. The response was overwhelming with many suggestions. The next step including holding a two day retreat to explore the topics brought out of the survey and to craft these six over-arching goals. Each goal was painstakingly refined and priorities were then identified to fulfill these goals. Over the next five years it is the charge of the administration to pursue these goals through specific tactics and strategies. Regular updates will be shared with the entire community as progress continues.

The process also allows for any plan adaptations that need immediate attention and any will be communicated as well.

As we prepare to implement this plan we know that St. Bernard Academy is and always has been about the people of our community – parents, faculty and staff, grandparents, alumni and friends of the academy. Without this network of care and support many of the goals we have celebrated over the last 154 years would have not been recognized.

Sincerely,



SHANE CORTESI
Chairman, Board of Trustees



CARL SABO
Head of School

A RICH HISTORY, 154 YEARS IN THE MAKING.

In 1866, six Sisters of Mercy came to Nashville and opened Saint Bernard Academy to 400 female students. Forty years later, the Sisters moved the school to our current location in Hillsboro Village, adding on a new high school building in 1960. In the fall of 1988, parents of the school formed a not-for-profit foundation and purchased the high school building from the Sisters of Mercy, ushering in our new era as an independent, co-educational elementary school.

Today, St. Bernard Academy is comprised of the original high school building and several additions serving 386 students three years old through 8th Level. Our campus fully supports student life and enrichment activities with several distinctive features including a chapel, science lab, music room, art studio, student support center, and new space for additional fine arts, administration, and aftercare services.

1866

Six Sisters of Mercy arrive in Nashville from Dublin, Ireland to open St. Bernard Academy in downtown adjacent to the State Capitol.

1873

Mercy Sisters halt classes and spend five weeks caring for the sick and dying during the Nashville Cholera Epidemic.

1905

St. Bernard Academy and Convent move to 21st Avenue South campus.

1924

A new wing is added to the St. Bernard Convent building including a large chapel, cafeteria, and additional sleeping quarters for the Sisters.

1960

SBA expands to include the high school building at the corner of Bernard Avenue and 24th Avenue and is considered state of the art for its time, especially since it was air conditioned.

1988

SBA parents purchase the school from the Sisters of Mercy. SBA becomes the first elementary school in the country to be purchased by a nonprofit group of parents.

2004

SBA completes an extensive campus renovation and building initiative to add the James W. Carell Dining Hall, the Catherine McAuley Chapel, and a new art room and Kindergarten.

2014

SBA launches Building Our Future to expand its campus and provide new opportunities for its growing student body.

2016

SBA opens a 16,000 square foot expansion including a new entrance on Bernard Avenue, new offices, new classrooms, and a new multipurpose space. The opening coincides with the school's 150th anniversary.



ST. BERNARD ACADEMY'S CORE CHARACTERISTICS

We believe that living out our mission nurtures our students spiritually, personally, and academically, motivating them to strive for achievement in our eight core characteristics:

MERCY

Our foundation from the Sisters of Mercy compels each of us to treat everyone with compassion



RESPECT

We recognize and value the unique differences that each person brings to our school community.

INTEGRITY

Students are taught and encouraged to make good decisions even when no one is looking.



RESPONSIBILITY

We are accountable to ourselves and those around us through our words and deeds.

HONESTY

We believe that being truthful builds character and grows healthy relationships.



CITIZENSHIP

Each of us is committed to care for those around us and for our school.

EMPATHY

We teach and model empathy to help students develop a greater understanding for the feelings of others.



SERVICE

We are people of faith who commit our lives to God and our resources to serve, advocate, and pray for those in need around the world.



PORTRAIT OF ST. BERNARD ACADEMY GRADUATES

CONFIDENT LEARNERS

who apply learning across all disciplines with curiosity and passion.

COMPETENT PROBLEM SOLVERS

who are able to apply strategies to challenging and complex everyday problems.

INDEPENDENT THINKERS

who apply critical thinking skills to engage in stimulating conversations about our everchanging society.

ENVIRONMENTALLY AWARE CITIZENS

who recognize the responsibility that they have for others, to each other and the world.

COMPASSIONATE CITIZENS AND LEADERS

who understand what it means to be ethical and inspire others to be their best.



ST. BERNARD ACADEMY'S STRATEGIC VISION

STRATEGIC GOAL #1

Stay financially disciplined while growing responsibly as a Catholic School.

Independent schools, like St. Bernard Academy, must plan for financial stability for future needs but must additionally find a balance between several competing issues. Compensation must remain competitive and tuition levels regarded as reasonable; the school must remain accessible to a variety of groups including religious and socio-economic ones in order to provide for diversity in all of its forms. All academic and co-curricular programs must be engaging and challenging; the campus and facilities need to reflect the ever changing appeal and site improvements must be planned and monitored; long term financial stability must be secured.

Strategic Initiatives:

- Cap the student population to a size that the current physical facilities and administrative infrastructure can comfortably accommodate.
- Establish a multi-year tuition management plan that maintains a competitive advantage in the marketplace, keeps revenue ahead of expenses and allows for reasonable unexpected economic impact
- Contain costs and seek sustainable non-tuition, non-grant sources of revenue. Balance growth of community, needs and programs with expenses.
- Maintain financial reserves in accordance with the SBA Board of Trust by-laws and lender covenants, while paying down debt as our cash position allows.
- Conduct a deliberate evaluation of the current physical plant, focusing on optimization of use, updating and modernizing and low-cost opportunities for growth.
- Proactively communicate the financial well-being of the school, including current and future costs, financial obligations, revenue and sources of funds projected to maintain the superior educational value and services provided.



STRATEGIC GOAL #2

Ensure the continuance and deepening of a strong Catholic identity as an integral part of the mission of the school.

St. Bernard Academy is an independent Catholic school, an active member of the National Catholic Education Association, partner with Mercy Education System of the Americas, and partner with the Diocesan schools of Nashville. Our identity is driven by the Catholic church while our overall student population is quite diverse. The SBA school community is committed to fostering compassion and respect in addition to recognizing the individual qualities of each student.

Strategic Initiatives:

- Evaluate mission, values, and external communications strategy as it relates to Catholic identity and culture.
- Continue to recognize the influence of and engage the Sisters of Mercy.
- Develop a plan to enhance the catechetical and theological teachings at all levels.
- Enhance Catholic Social teaching.
- Maintain a welcoming environment for families of all faith traditions.



STRATEGIC GOAL #3

Develop a plan to nurture the gifts of body, mind and spirit of SBA students.

Student life at St. Bernard Academy is centered in the development of the whole child. Not only are we aware of each child's academic development but we are intentional about placing emphasis on their physical, emotional, and spiritual development as well as a commitment to service. This is accomplished through a variety of programs presented not only by the counseling staff but also by the teaching staff. Additional activities, like our little buddies program, are presented to build a sense of community and belonging.

Strategic Initiatives:

- Incorporate health and wellness in each student's experience.
- Incorporate access to social emotional instruction to all students
- Increase faculty and staff knowledge and understanding of child development and best practices at respective grade levels.
- Incorporate best practices through the Student Services Department in support of all students and families.





STRATEGIC GOAL #4

Maintain rigorous academic programs and develop robust curricular options.

At St. Bernard Academy, we expect our faculty to cultivate academic excellence, with higher order thinking skills, problem solving abilities, and inquiry-based experiences. As we continue to strengthen our academic offerings and enrich our instructional practices, we ensure that each grade and unit fully prepares our students for the next level, and that our graduates are well equipped for their journey through college, work, and life beyond.

Strategic Initiatives:

- Maintain a low student to teacher ratio.
- Develop opportunities for creativity, risk taking and innovation across all disciplines.
- Evaluate program offerings to ensure students reap the greatest benefits.
- Expose students to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) applications and other experiential learning opportunities schoolwide.
- Expand opportunities for increased participation in the arts.
- Enhance writing opportunities across all disciplines.



STRATEGIC GOAL #5

Foster an environment that encourages and respects diversity in all areas including socio-economic status, religion, race, culture, gender and thought.

St. Bernard Academy is recognized by the Diocese of Nashville as an independent Catholic school. SBA enjoys a professional working relationship with the diocese and at times will share resources. SBA is an active member of National Catholic Education Association and receives students of all faith traditions fostering a welcoming environment of respect, kindness and compassion. It should be noted that our overall student population is quite diverse and the academy recognizes the uniqueness of each child.

Strategic Initiatives:

- Pursue opportunities for increases in diversity among the student body, faculty and staff and the Board of Trustees.
- Ensure integration of diverse narratives and perspectives into academic curriculum and co-curricular activities.
- Expose all SBA students to principles around social justice and global and local citizenship.
- Engage local, diverse communities to create partnerships.
- Enhance writing opportunities across all disciplines.



STRATEGIC GOAL #6

Recruit and retain a high quality, diverse faculty and staff.

St. Bernard Academy recognizes that the success of the students is related to an experienced and talented teaching faculty. It is therefore incumbent upon the school to recruit and retain such individuals while providing for their professional growth and continued development. Every effort will be made to identify and retain these mission appropriate individuals.

Strategic Initiatives:

- Develop a formal teacher recruitment plan that identifies and provides means to recruit the best faculty and staff.
- Develop and implement a plan to retain a high performing faculty and staff.



A TRADITION OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Board of Trust wishes to thank all who participated in the construction of this strategic plan. The conversations were intentional and demonstrated a real commitment to the future success and sustainability of St. Bernard Academy. With guidance from the Winkler Group during the process, this document was made possible. Thanks to the Strategic Planning Committee, St. Bernard Academy Faculty and Staff, the St. Bernard Academy Administrative team, St. Bernard Alumni and Alumni Parents, members from the Home and School Association, and all of the Strategic Planning participants.

FINAL COMMENTS

As we reflected on the direction of our Strategic Plan, improvements to our campus facility came to light. At some point, as we continue our responsibilities to sustaining the future of St. Bernard Academy, prayerful consideration must be given to the following:

- Additional classroom spaces
- Expand and improve the cafeteria and the food preparation area
- Improvements to the gymnasium up to and including replacing it
- Student creative spaces such as maker space, STEM/Computer lab
- Auditorium/Student Center
- Additional parking





STRATEGIC PLAN 2020



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