

**SAINT MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

**AIKEN, SOUTH CAROLINA**

**DIOCESE OF CHARLESTON**



**STRATEGIC PLAN**

**May 2010 - Draft**

## PREFACE FROM THE PRINCIPAL



*Marguerite B. (Peggy) Wertz,  
Principal*

On behalf of the teachers, pastor, board, parents, and students, I am pleased to present to you the St. Mary Help of Christians Catholic School Strategic Plan. This Strategic Plan outlines the goals to move St. Mary's School forward while maintaining a challenging academic program, through a variety of learning opportunities and teaching strategies, to enable students to reach their highest potential morally, intellectually, spiritually, physically, and culturally.

The St. Mary's School Advisory Board has developed this Strategic Plan to identify goals and objectives. The St. Mary's School Strategic Plan Goals are:

- ✚ Increase enrollment to support two classes per grade level.
- ✚ Increase St. Mary's School's external visibility.
- ✚ Retain and maintain a highly qualified faculty and staff.
- ✚ Initiate and maintain the St. Mary's School Endowment Plan.
- ✚ Maintain infrastructure and facilities to support technology advancements.

These strategic goals are further developed with implementation objectives to guide the stakeholders (teachers, pastor, school advisory board members, and parents) to achieve these goals. Progress reviews will be completed by school advisory board and communicated annually. We invite you to become a participant in moving St. Mary's School forward to the next level.



## **INTRODUCTION**

St. Mary Help of Christians School Strategic Plan seeks to build upon our school's long history of providing students a quality education opportunity, while recognizing the parent as the child's first and most important teacher. St Mary's teachers challenge the student intellectually and personally to reach his/her potential. The stakeholders strive to give the child an education for social progress by concentrating on his responsibility for others. We accentuate the positive in the child's self-image and encourage self discipline, which we expect to be further reinforced at home.

St. Mary Help of Christians School academic program serves kindergarten through the eighth grade. Approximately 75% of the students are Catholic and students of all faiths are welcome. St. Mary's School will execute its mission to enhance our reputation for academic excellence in providing a well rounded Catholic education in a caring, safe, family environment.

Since 1974, St. Mary Help of Christians School has maintained accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and School (SACS) and is one of the few accredited Catholic Schools in the Dioceses of Charleston. The SACS Accreditation means:

- Qualified teachers who are continually working to improve their practices and teaching methods in order to increase student performance,
- A rich, diverse, and sound academic curriculum, and
- Access to a range of student activities and support services.

St. Mary Help of Christians School Strategic Plan was developed based upon the following assumptions:

- An academic program, that serves kindergarten through the eighth grade,
- No major facility additions,
- Financially self sustaining,
- A faculty that maintains South Carolina Certification, and
- A continuation of SACS Accreditation.

This Strategic Plan outlines goals and objectives to deliver a quality Catholic education while "Embracing the Family, Nurturing the Spirit, Challenging the Mind, Supporting the Journey, and Preparing the Way".



## **HISTORY**



*St. Mary Help of Christians Catholic School  
First Grade in 1955-1956*

The St. Mary Help of Christians School history goes back to the turn of the century. Established by Ursuline nuns in 1900 as a boarding school for wealthy young ladies, St. Angela Academy received its name from the Ursulines' foundress, St. Angela Merici. In 1906, six years later, at the request of their bishop, the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy from Charleston, South Carolina, assumed the school's operation. The school then served the educational needs of female boarding students as well as both male and female day students. In 1939 Bernard Baruch, a friend of James Byrnes, helped the Sisters finance a red brick building, an addition to the old school which is now a part of St. Mary

Help of Christians Parochial School.

When the Savannah River Plant came to Aiken in 1950, the Catholic population skyrocketed. Bishop Emmet Michael Walsh wanted a parochial grammar school established. Accordingly, the brick building on York Street became St. Mary Help of Christians Parochial School supported by student tuition and the hard work of the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy. Thus St. Angela's private grammar school ceased to be and only the high school retained that name. The Sisters continued in the grade school, a parochial school under the jurisdiction and support of St. Mary Help of Christians Parish.

In 1955 the Dominican Sisters from Adrian, Michigan, took charge of St. Mary Help of Christians School, staffing it until 1970 when they left. Again the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy assumed the administration and continued to provide a Catholic education to those parents seeking one for their children at St. Mary Help of Christians School until June, 1997. Since that date, the administrative duties of the school have been the responsibility of a Catholic lay principal.



## **MISSION**

The community of St. Mary Help of Christians Catholic School has this Mission:

St. Mary Help of Christians Catholic School, under the guidance of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, embraces the uniqueness, dignity, and potential of all of God's children. We are committed to providing a well-rounded Catholic education: both in faith and in reason, in catechetics as well as academics. We strive to build character, while teaching and modeling compassion, all under the patronage of Our Blessed Mother, Saint Mary Help of Christians. By providing instruction in the Catholic faith, and in its practice, in prayer, in the Mass, in the sacraments and in following the moral life in Christ, we strive to strengthen our children in spirit, in mind, and in body, and to prepare them to lead lives based on Christian faith and good reason.

## **VISION**

The community of St. Mary Help of Christians Catholic School envisions a school in which:

All students live God's love in their lives and grow spiritually in the Catholic faith, through Scripture, Tradition and Catechism, to enable them to live a new life in Christ, and to help them to play their part in serving in society and in the Church.

All students grow strong in the practice of their faith, in prayer, the Mass, the sacraments, and following the moral life in Christ, to lead them into a lasting and eternal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Continuous effort is made to make a Catholic education available to all students of our parish, and improvements in instructional methods, materials, technology, and facilities are made to meet the needs of all students and to maintain high standards of academic achievement.

All of our students are provided with a challenging academic program, through a variety of learning opportunities and teaching strategies, to enable them to reach their highest potential, morally, intellectually, spiritually, physically and culturally.

A disciplined environment exists, promoted by a commitment to our students' developing good character traits, self-discipline, respect for and responsibility to others.

The uniqueness of each student's need for growth and development are assessed and the school directs its resources towards those needs.

All of our students are encouraged to become "good citizens of this world, loving God and neighbor and enriching society with the leaven of the Gospel, and who will also be citizens of the world to come, thus fulfilling their destiny to become saints" (Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB, The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools).





## **INCREASE ENROLLMENT TO SUPPORT TWO CLASSES PER GRADE LEVEL**

To reach a sustained enrollment of two classes per grade level, an estimated 2% growth rate in the total enrollment annually over the next five years with a projected total enrollment of approximately 300 students. A concerted effort will be made to create a student body that is socially, ethically, and economically diverse while maintaining a strong Catholic identity.

### **Objectives**

1. Undertake a comprehensive effort to dramatically increase the quality and frequency of socialization of prospective students and parents.
2. Enlist the support of a marketing committee to develop a marketing theme that presents a positive public image for St. Mary's appeal to both parents and students and integrate this approach into all social and communication opportunities.
3. Emphasize our strengths and counter common misconceptions through targeted publicity.
4. Establish metrics in the first year to assess the quality and frequency of exposure to prospective parents and students.



## **INCREASE EXTERNAL VISIBILITY**

Increasing the visibility of St. Mary's School within St. Mary Help of Christians Catholic Church and other local Catholic Churches (St Gerard's Catholic Church and Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church), and the surrounding Aiken community.

### **Objectives**

1. Sponsor events/meetings/presentations for the school, that includes other parishes and the community.
2. Establish a competitive scholarship program
3. Build a partnership with local pre-schools
4. Encourage St. Mary's School student body to adopt a ministry within the parishes (St. Mary Help of Christians, St Gerard's, and Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Churches).



5. Actively encourage grandparents and parishioners (St. Mary Help of Christians, St Gerard's, and Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Churches) to volunteer at St. Mary's School.
6. Use the St. Mary's School Athletics Program to display the values, teamwork, and success with Public and Private School Athletics Programs.



## **RETAIN AND MAINTAIN A HIGHLY QUALIFIED FACULTY AND STAFF**

Retain and maintain a highly qualified faculty and staff to continue to provide a quality education.

### **Objectives**

1. Retain more teachers with education degrees.
2. Increase teacher's compensation
3. Increase the percent of teachers certified in assigned areas and grade levels.
4. Acquire and retain certified math and science teachers, especially in the middle school grades.
5. Retain dedicated religion class teachers



## **INITIATE AND MAINTAIN THE ST. MARY'S SCHOOL ENDOWMENT PLAN**

Initiate and maintain the St. Mary's School Endowment Plan to supplement financial resources for school capital improvements and expansion (this goal is an exploratory endeavor and will be re-assessed after the first year).

### **Objectives**

1. Establish an Endowment Planning Committee
2. Establish Endowment purpose.
3. Explore Endowment funding mechanisms
4. Identify timeline for Endowment implementation.





## **MAINTAIN INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES TO SUPPORT TECHNOLOGY ADVANCEMENTS**

Maintain infrastructure and facilities to support technology advancements by upgrading St. Mary's School computer network to wireless system, and increase interactive whiteboard access for all classes within two to five years.

### **Objectives**

1. Upgrade computer network to wireless connections to allow for more flexibility in classroom and reduce network vulnerabilities. Purchase and install wireless router(s).
2. Upgrade core switchbanks and uninterruptible power supply for each switchbank.
3. Upgrade existing communication hardwires to reduce power surge vulnerabilities.
4. Purchase at least one interactive white board annually until each classroom has this educational tool.

