



ST. MARY'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

# STATE OF THE SCHOOL

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## From the School Board President - Tim Turner

Here I am again to write about one of my favorite subjects, St. Mary's Episcopal School. The school continues to excel at turning out exceptionally well-adjusted, well-educated, respectful and loving children prepared to lead by example. But since we all know that already, I want to update you on the state of our financial strength at the school.

I continue to read about and experience the effects of the economic downturn. I know and understand that it has affected many members of our St. Mary's family. In testament to the recognition of the value of a St. Mary's education, our enrollment has held steady, although requests for financial aid have ticked upward. So far, thanks to our many wonderful patrons, our fundraising efforts do not reflect the downturn experienced by the economy as a whole. Our Annual Fund for last year actually had more donors than the year before. The net effect on our financial situation is that we're budgeting a smaller net income number than in previous years, but it is still a positive, reasonable number. Couple that with the remarkable financial stewardship of this Board's predecessors, and you have a school that is in a good position to do great things.

In fact, in an atmosphere of scarce economic resources, I think it's a good time for all of us to re-evaluate our priorities. Our children's education comes first. This commitment is what creates such passionate fans of St. Mary's. Additionally, I have had the opportunity to reflect on all the lives touched by our children who have learned the importance of serving God through serving others. On behalf of the Board of Directors of St. Mary's Episcopal School, I'm pleased to report that the School's finances are strong and I want to again say thank you to the many supporters of our beloved school.



## Moving to the next level Head of School - Nancy Hetherington

The current state of our school is strong. We have maintained enrollment numbers even during this downturn of the economy. We have completed all our outdoor initiatives to have the finest outdoor learning environment in the area. Our faculty and staff are a committed group of individuals who view their work at SMES as a responsibility rather than a job. We joyously worship together each week and continue to offer our students extraordinary ways to serve others. Our school culture promotes respect and teaches emotional, as well as social learning skills. Our standardized test scores continually rank us in the upper 12% nationally. So I am pleased to report that the current status of St. Mary's Episcopal School is very good.

However, after completing a five-year reporting process for accreditation purposes this past spring, and receiving exemplary commendations for our school, I realize we cannot sit back; satisfied with being a very good school. It is time to strive toward the next level.

And just how does an organization, such as SMES, move from being very good to being GREAT? As a result of recent training and planning, our Board of Directors is now even better equipped to guide our school in this direction – to provide the leadership and vision to move our school from a very good educational model to an extraordinary one!!! That is where our work begins this year.

Yes, we are a very good school in very good shape. But that is not good enough. The future shines brightly and we look toward moving to the next level.

# State of the School – 2009

## Expansion Committee - Elizabeth Hall

It is an exciting time at St. Mary's Episcopal School. In the spring of 2008 we began exploring the possibility of expanding to include 6th through 8th grades. That fall we underwent a lengthy feasibility study, after which the school board decided to expand our mission to include "growing the school older".

An in-depth study of curriculum began and our Spanish teacher Dr. Beckie Bigler took on the additional duties of part-time curriculum coordinator. Dr. Bigler is analyzing the current curriculum to identify potential areas where improvement is needed, as well as developing the curriculum map to include 6th through 8th grade. During this entire process we are focused on keeping a "balanced butterfly" with equal emphasis on culture, community, Christianity and curriculum.

Through analyzing the curriculum, as well as trying to more accurately define our "niche", we are looking at ways to more fully incorporate our expansive campus. We are exploring ways to improve marketing & public relations, as well as identifying alternative fundraising sources. We are also focused on meeting the enrollment benchmarks identified by the feasibility study & school board. This will allow us to maximize current classroom & teacher resources while providing the number of students needed to expand. The expansion committee is working to maintain the excellence St. Mary's is known for and is excited as we explore the amazing possibilities which lie ahead.

## Knowing and Growing our Program - Beckie Bigler

It is a privilege to serve SMES as curriculum coordinator. As an elementary Spanish teacher, Hallie and Eli's mom, and a former university professor, I am grateful for a unique perspective on the curricular journey from childhood to adulthood. In formal education, the term "curriculum" refers to a set of courses offered at a school or university. As an idea, curriculum stems from the Latin word for race course, meaning the course of deeds and experiences through which children grow to become mature adults. Our goal is to provide SMES students with the best possible learning experience, an effective blend of program offerings, pedagogy and assessment.

Work on the feasibility study was a great opportunity to showcase our school, its faculty, program and students. In the months since we welcomed such positive feedback, work continues. **Three ongoing curricular goals include:**

- Faculty:** Curriculum Mapping - to know and grow our current program.
- Students:** Differentiated Learning – to teach in ways that students learn best.
- Program:** Increased Collaboration – to encourage professional growth and advance the mission of SMES.

There is satisfaction and there is challenge in being a very good school. Our vision is to grow our school both older and better. In that process, there are great opportunities for personal and professional development.





# ST. MARY'S

EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

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