



## **Executive Summary**

**Saint Augustine of Canterbury School**

**Diocese of Metuchen**

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## **Introduction**

Every school has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the school makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way a school stays faithful to its vision. Many factors contribute to the overall narrative such as an identification of stakeholders, a description of stakeholder engagement, the trends and issues affecting the school, and the kinds of programs and services that a school implements to support student learning. <br><br> The purpose of the Executive Summary (ES) is to provide a school with an opportunity to describe in narrative form the strengths and challenges it encounters. By doing so, the public and members of the school community will have a more complete picture of how the school perceives itself and the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement. This summary is structured for the school to reflect on how it provides teaching and learning on a day to day basis.

## **Description of the School**

**Describe the school's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school serves?**

Saint Augustine of Canterbury School is a Roman Catholic parochial elementary/middle school located in Kendall Park, New Jersey under the stewardship and leadership of the Diocese of Metuchen. In 2013 the school celebrated the 50th Anniversary of its founding.

The school officially opened on September 5th, 1963 with 125 students ranging from kindergarten to fourth grade. In the spring of 1970, founding Pastor Father John J. Reilly called for volunteers to construct an annex to the existing school. For fifteen weekends over 100 volunteers shared their talents in the construction of the new wing. When completed, this structure provided two large classrooms and an all-purpose room. Today, this annex is used to house the pre-school programs. 2001 was a year of tremendous growth for the school. Construction was completed on a new wing to house the Elementary School, and the existing school building was renovated to become the current Middle School. In 2006 a detached building used as a garage and storage space was repurposed and renovated through the generosity of the Saint Augustine of Canterbury chapter of the Knights of Columbus. Christened "Canterbury Corner", the building now houses two Pre-K classrooms and a meeting hall dedicated in honor of Knights of Columbus founder Father Michael J. McGivney.

Today, Saint Augustine of Canterbury School continues to be one of the leading schools in the Diocese of Metuchen. Current enrollment stands at 523 students spanning Pre-K 3 thru Grade 8. The majority of students are from the school's home parish and immediate South Brunswick Township area with additional students arriving from the adjacent townships of Franklin and North Brunswick.

Our Pastor is highly supportive and resourceful towards Catholic Education and works in close collaboration with the Principal, faculty, and staff to make Saint Augustine of Canterbury School a "state of the art" school. The school is currently under the direction and leadership of the Religious Teachers Filippini. The Sisters assume an active role in the school administration, Religious Education, library services, and office assistance. Their presence serves as a beacon of love and respect fostered throughout the school.

The Saint Augustine of Canterbury School faculty is composed entirely of laypersons. They are highly-qualified, dedicated, and enthusiastic educators whose Catholic faith and commitment to academic excellence are evident inside the classroom and out. Several of the teachers have children who attend Saint Augustine School, and two are themselves alumni of the school. The faculty is divided into grade-level units: 5 teachers in the Pre-K Unit (Pre-K 3 and 4), 6 teachers in the Primary Unit (grades K to 2), 6 teachers in the Intermediate Unit (grades 3 to 5), and 9 teachers in the Upper Unit (grades 6 to 8). The Pre-K and Elementary classes are self-contained with the students remaining in their own classroom for the majority of the day. For the Middle School, the school day is divided into 8 periods with students moving to different classrooms based on subject. Rounding out the faculty are specialized teachers for the Art, Music, Technology, and Physical Education classes attended by all students and the World Language classes offered to Middle School students.

The demographic nature of the student body mirrors that of the parish and surrounding area with a diverse mix of races, ethnicities, and economic strata. While we are a Catholic school and serve a predominantly Catholic school community, students of all faiths are accepted and welcomed with open arms into the Saint Augustine School family.

Continuing a technology expansion program that began in 2002, St. Augustine School has made several significant advances over the last three years. The Computer Lab received a complete refresh in 2011 with 28 brand new PC workstations, two color laser printers, and a flat-

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bed scanner. Two iPad carts with 30 iPads each were purchased and deployed to the Elementary and Middle School units. Each unit also has access to its own mobile cart containing 30 full-size laptops. In addition, a mobile cart containing 30 netbooks is reserved for grades K to 3, where the smaller form factor is better suited to the younger students. Each classroom is equipped with a desktop PC, networked printer, and a presentation cart containing a laptop, projector, and speakers. All teachers have access to an interactive whiteboard/SMART Board either permanently deployed in their classroom or easily accessible from a pool of shared devices. Our youngest learners in Pre-K have their own SMART Table for hands-on interactive activities.

All of this classroom technology is supported by a robust network infrastructure, which was recently upgraded with a Gigabit Ethernet backbone and enterprise-grade Wi-Fi access points deployed throughout the school building.

A unique feature of Saint Augustine School is our student-led TV station, the Knights Television Network (KTN). Begun in 2004, KTN broadcasts morning prayers and announcements, school news, and special events to all classrooms and common areas in the school building via a closed-circuit TV system. In 2010, KTN received Today's Catholic Teacher Magazine's Innovation in Education Award for the innovative way in which it enables students to spread good news throughout the school. Over the past three years, the closed-circuit system has been upgraded with flat-screen monitors in every classroom and integrated into the school's cable TV service. KTN itself has also grown significantly with the addition of a teleprompter, Chroma Key screen (a.k.a. "green screen"), remote transmission capability, and the construction of a dedicated broadcast studio adjacent to the school library.

In 2014 Saint Augustine School became one of the first schools in the area to acquire a 3D printer for faculty, staff, and student use. Beginning with the 2014-15 school year, it will serve as a catalyst for introducing and integrating STEM concepts into all areas of instruction. The printer will also help to expand the scope of projects created by our Odyssey of the Mind, Engineering, and Robotics clubs.

Saint Augustine School maintains an impeccable physical plant and pristine school grounds with an exemplary record of regular maintenance and upgrades. Most recently, the old HVAC system in the school gym was replaced with a modern state-of-the-art multi-zone system. All of the fluorescent lighting fixtures in the school building were replaced with more energy-efficient units. Other recent building upgrades include: refurbishing the Elementary and Middle School faculty rooms, new main doors with remote-controlled security locks, new flooring in several areas of the school building, and electronically controlled retractable stadium seating in the gym.

Outside, the playground area used primarily by the Pre-K program underwent a complete overhaul with the construction of two multi-level "jungle gym" play sets, where the children can play actively and safely. The school parking lot, which began to show the effects of the last few severe New Jersey winters, was entirely repaved in 2013. Maintenance of the school grounds themselves is ongoing with new trees, shrubs, and flower beds being planted regularly.

Saint Augustine School is privileged to serve an engaged, active, and supportive school community. Participation in school-sponsored events and functions is typically very high with many parents arriving early to help set up or staying late to aid in the clean-up. Parents also frequently attend in-school events such as the monthly School Liturgies, special prayer services, grade-specific Parent Days, assemblies, and awards presentations. Many parents volunteer to act as advisors or moderators for extra-curricular clubs and serve as chaperones for field trips and "road trips" taken by competition teams such as sports, Odyssey of the Mind, and Robotics. Parents also volunteer as cafeteria and playground aides. The school is blessed to have a nationally-recognized Home and School Association, which sponsors fundraising, social, and spiritual events made more successful through the generous support of the school community.

It is this unique synergy of Parish leadership, school administration, support staff, faculty, students, and community at large which makes us truly "a vine of strengths rooted in Christ".

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With the decrease in the number of Baptisms in our parish over the past several years and the changes in the demographics of South Brunswick Township and surrounding areas, maintaining the high level of Catholic student enrollment is a significant challenge. One way to meet this challenge would be to construct a marketing plan to recruit Catholic students from neighboring parishes that lack their own local Catholic school and to attempt to procure bus transportation that would permit these students to attend Saint Augustine School.

The other main challenge is in the area of advancement. Through the action of the School Advisory Council, a plan was set forth to appoint an Advancement Officer and create a Saint Augustine School Alumni Association with the goal of establishing and maintaining contact with school alumni for marketing and fundraising purposes. Initial steps towards this goal were taken in 2012 with the implementation of an Alumni Registry and database managed by the school's Technology Coordinator. The database was used successfully to send invitations to all alumni currently on file for the school's 50th Anniversary celebration in November 2013. However, the position of Advancement Officer remains unfilled, thus affecting the development of an active Alumni Association. Resolving this challenge is key to meeting the schools current and future advancement goals.

## **School's Purpose**

**Provide the school's purpose statement and ancillary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs. Describe how the school embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students.**

Saint Augustine of Canterbury has a successful history of fifty years that continues to educate generations of young people, forming them in faith and knowledge, and providing them with the skills that are necessary to make a positive contribution to the Church and society. More importantly it has fulfilled its mission "to foster in its students a love and respect for the values found in Catholicism. Saint Augustine of Canterbury School is dedicated to proclaiming the message of Jesus, to teaching His truth and extending His love while providing an academic program based on excellence and full development of the talents and abilities of the students. The children will develop a lasting relationship with God and a respect for self and others within the framework of an education that fosters self-discipline, creativity, and flexibility. The students will be given the independence to develop their distinct personality that God has given them." Our goal is to encourage our students to be living models of our mission at school, at home, and in the community.

The Catholic Church teaches that the education of children in the truths and life of the Church is the primary responsibility of the parents. Recognizing the demands on parents and their desire and need for help in the education process, the Church has operated Catholic schools to assist parents. The Saint Augustine School faculty and staff, under the sponsorship and leadership of the Religious Teachers Filippini, participate in this ministry. Understanding that each individual is a unique person made in the image and likeness of God, Catholic schools strive to educate the whole person: body, mind, and spirit. Our efforts are directed to impart knowledge of God, the world, the value of preserving human life and the dignity of each person. Our school community is a blend of many cultures; therefore, the students learn to respect and appreciate these differences by learning more about each other. Recognizing the gift of diversity among our students, we strive to free the spirit of each person for growth and for service to the community.

Following its annual School Improvement Plan, Saint Augustine School has focused on integrating 21st century learning skills and classroom technology as tools with which to adapt and implement the Common Core State Standards for Math and English Language Arts in accordance with Diocesan guidelines. This learning environment, in which technology is as accessible to the teacher as a chalkboard and as organic to the student as paper and pencil, provides greater opportunities for students to develop and hone skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. Due to the partnership and teamwork of the teachers with the full support of the school's Technology Department, we continue to meet or exceed our expectations for growth in these areas.

Embarking on an unprecedented program of professional learning, Saint Augustine School has ensured that its teachers have received diverse training on the effective use of technology in their classrooms. This includes interactive SMART Boards, iPads, netbooks/laptops, and Web 2.0 tools.

Spiritual, academic, and social formation also continues to be a main focus. Enhanced through co-curricular activities, which continue to increase at the request and interest of the students, student life is alive, well, and filled with enthusiasm. The Student Council, National Junior Honor Society, athletic program, student retreat programs, and service learning programs are a few of the most active groups involving a large number of students. Many clubs and activities are extensions of classroom instruction. Others provide healthy experiences through competition and leadership. These programs build a framework for success by meeting not only the intellectual needs of the students, but also their spiritual, moral, and social needs. The joy and willingness with which the faculty, staff, and school community help the students serve as an example of dedication and generosity to them and create a bond of unity within the school.

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We are a school committed to living the Gospel of Jesus Christ, reaching out to all we meet as we model ourselves after His teachings. Our every action is directed toward establishing and sustaining a personal relationship with Christ through our daily prayer life, reminding us to continually see God in the classroom, the athletic event, the cafeteria, the faculty meeting, and in our surroundings. Our Catholicism enables us to best express our Christian faith: a faith brought to fruition through our prayer, academic curriculum, discipline, social events, dress code, athletics, co-curricular activities, and community service projects.

Implementation of the diocesan "Good God Choices" initiative began in 2012. "Good God Choices" promotes Christian anti-bullying awareness through websites and grade appropriate activities. In 2013 the program expanded to include daily reflection and prayer.

There is an active witnessing to our Catholic culture and tradition in our school. Many of our teachers volunteer as Eucharistic ministers, choir members, and teach Religious Education classes at Saint Augustine or their own parish. A group of teachers volunteer to lead activities in Vacation Bible School for a week in the summer. These experiences encourage respect for one's self and others. Service comes naturally to the adults and, in turn, teaches the children how to live their faith.

Catholic education cannot be realized without the witness of a school community built on close communication among faculty, staff, parents, students, priests, and religious. Since the Mass is central to our faith, this community celebrates liturgies and prayer services together. The Parish Liturgist works with the students to prepare them for school Masses and prayer services so that they may enter into the Liturgy in a meaningful way. Together they reflect on the Scripture readings of the day, explore the history of the feast day and saint being celebrated, discover the meaning of the words in the songs and hymns selected, and learn about the signs and symbols specific to the day's Liturgy.

Through fidelity to the teachings of the Catholic Church, Saint Augustine School's heritage continues. It is shaped by the dedication and caring of the administration, faculty, and staff who endeavor to maintain a caring, supportive, and safe atmosphere in which self-esteem can be nurtured and learning can take place. The binding force that brings success and fruitfulness is that special gift called "spirit". The students, faculty, and family of St. Augustine School live this spirit through giving service to others and by knowing and loving God. Our mission goes beyond what we say and what we do. It is who we are.



## **Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement**

**Describe the school's notable achievements and areas of improvement in the last three years. Additionally, describe areas for improvement that the school is striving to achieve in the next three years.**

Some of Saint Augustine of Canterbury School's notable achievements in the last three years are:

This year, the school's Home and School Association was honored by the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) with an Award of Distinction for Promoting Catholic Identity.

For the last two years, the school's Odyssey of the Mind teams have won the New Jersey State Championship in their respective divisions and have advanced to the World Finals.

For the last three years, a Saint Augustine School sixth grader has been among the winners of the New Jersey Association for Educational Technology (NJAET) annual Six Sounds Podcast Contest.

Saint Augustine School students at various grade levels have been named winners in the Diocese of Metuchen Respect for Life Poster Contest over the past three years.

In April 2012, Saint Augustine School received a Certificate of Excellence from the Diocese of Metuchen Office of Schools in recognition of the school's outstanding performance in the New Jersey Department of Education Emergency Drill.

Also in 2012, Saint Augustine School was one of 11 schools - and the only Catholic school - selected by the New Jersey Department of Education to participate in Kids Tech Day, where students presented a Language Arts project created using various forms of media and technology.

That same year, Saint Augustine School was named a winner in the Alliance for Excellent Education's National Digital Learning Day Video Contest in the category of Best Teacher Celebration Video.

On Monday, October 14, 2013, Saint Augustine School joined in the "Hour of Code", a campaign to introduce 10 million students to one hour of Computer Science sponsored by code.org. Participation was school-wide with all students completing an Hour of Code activity appropriate for their grade level.

Saint Augustine School opened Catholic Schools Week 2014 with a joint prayer service shared via Skype with a Catholic high school in Laredo, Texas.

The school Art Department put on its first ever Middle School Art Show and Exhibition featuring the work of students in the Middle School Fine Arts classes. The event also included an auction of the students' artwork with all proceeds being donated to a local charity.

Saint Augustine School is among the first schools in the area to acquire a 3D printer for student, faculty, and staff use. Although currently located in the Computer Lab, the 3D printer will become the cornerstone of a proposed STEM Lab where students will be able to fuse STEM concepts and 21st century learning skills into projects for any class or subject area.

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The School Advisory Council (SAC) established an Endowment Fund subsidized by an annual 50/50 raffle, which to date has raised \$48,000. The SAC also established an Alumni Registry and database as a first step towards creating an active Alumni Association.

Scholarships awarded to graduating eighth graders continue to increase. Over \$60,000 in scholarships have been awarded to Saint Augustine School students in the last several years.

Standardized test scores, specifically the Terra Nova and the NCEA Assessment of Catechesis/Religious Education (ACRE) tests, continue to exceed local and national averages.

The school continues to have a strong Catholic identity, dedicated faculty and staff, strong enrollment - especially among Catholics, and the full and generous support of school parents and the community as a whole. Many of the classroom teachers provide after-school academic support for their students on their own time without additional compensation.

The faculty was emotionally and professionally invested in ownership of the AdvancED self-study and accreditation process.

Saint Augustine School has experienced significant growth and improvement in several areas:

The main school building, auxiliary buildings, and campus grounds continue to be maintained in pristine condition. Energy-efficient lighting was installed throughout the school. The faculty rooms were upgraded and are now fully equipped. The bathrooms, Elementary School wing, Pre-K classrooms, and Canterbury Corner/McGivney Hall building all received new flooring. After having weathered several severe northeastern winters, the school parking lot was completely repaved.

In the gymnasium, safety padding was replaced, and the parquet floor was completely resurfaced. The upper level bleacher area was upgraded with electronically-controlled retractable stadium seating. Finally, the HVAC system was replaced with a modern multi-zone system.

A closed-circuit video surveillance system was installed to monitor critical areas of the school building, loading dock, main entrance/gathering area, and playground. As an added security measure, the main doors were upgraded and equipped with a remote locking mechanism controlled from the school office.

Saint Augustine School took steps towards adapting the Common Core State Standards in accordance with Diocesan guidelines. New series of Common Core Math and English Language Arts textbooks were purchased, including traditional and on-line instructional materials. On-line textbooks were also provided for other subject areas, where available.

Great improvements have been made in the area of technology. The school's wired and Wi-Fi networks have been upgraded with a Gigabit Ethernet backbone and enterprise-grade wireless access points. The school's multi-purpose Conference Room is equipped with a Polycom videoconferencing system that allows our students to connect with other students, educators, and subject-area experts from across the country or around the world. The Computer Lab recently received a complete refresh with 28 new desktop PC workstations replacing older, obsolete models.

The accessibility of technology to teachers and students in the classroom has, also, made significant strides. Grades K to 3 have access to a new mobile cart containing 30 netbooks. The school recently purchased two iPad carts containing a total of 60 iPads; one cart dedicated to

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the Elementary School and one for the Middle School. An interactive SMART Table was acquired for and is shared by the Pre-K 4 classes in Canterbury Corner, and the non-functional interactive whiteboard in the Pre-K 3 wing was replaced with a new SMART Board.

The student-led Knights Television Network (KTN) has continued to expand since its inception ten years ago. Most recently, a dedicated broadcast studio was constructed adjacent to the school library, and studio equipment was upgraded to include a professional teleprompter, green screen, and remote audio/video transmitter.

Several extra-curricular programs are new or have been expanded in the last three years. A Yoga Club is available to students in all grades. The already successful Odyssey of the Mind program was extended with the creation of the Odyssey of the Mind Engineers Club for students in Grades 1 and 2. Fifth thru eighth graders can join the new Robotics/Lego League Teams. Students interested in art can participate in the Middle School Fine Arts Club and the Youth Abstract Art Club. For the musically inclined, the parish Music Director leads a Middle School Chime Choir that performs at school Masses and other special events.

Saint Augustine School has identified the following areas for improvement that form the basis for our stated goals and action plan for the next three years:

The school's Purpose Statement will evolve to reflect the New Evangelization in the 21st Century and provide a template for students on how to live their lives rooted in the Gospel.

The faculty will be instructed on new and innovative teaching strategies infused with technology to be used in the classroom.

Students will advance their writing skills to achieve a minimum growth of one proficiency level per year.

The school will communicate information to St. Augustine's families regarding currently available support services.

Teachers will engage in professional development to communicate good writing skills and improve student proficiency in English Language Arts.

## **Additional Information**

**Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.**

In the 2008-2009 school year, the Education Office of the Diocese of Metuchen, as a result of the Meitler Study, recommended that every school in the diocese develop a strategic plan following specific guidelines to strengthen its mission and ensure its vitality and viability for the future. Saint Augustine of Canterbury School began this process by identifying key school and parish leaders who, along with the Pastor, school Principal, and Vice-Principal, would form a School Advisory Council (SAC). The SAC is divided into committees overseeing the school's Catholic identity, governance, curriculum, facilities, technology, finances, enrollment/marketing, and advancement. These committees share ideas and insights based on the school's history, where it is currently, and where it would like to be in the future. The SAC participates in local and diocesan planning meetings. Focus groups, committee chairpersons, and committee members assist the school's administration in analyzing and interpreting data, discussing and sharing, reviewing feedback, and making commendations and recommendations. The end result of this collaboration is the creation of a School Strategic Plan which is reviewed and ratified every three years. The participants make a full commitment to this process and are supported by the Diocese throughout each step.

Saint Augustine of Canterbury School is blessed with a sound financial structure due to the vision of the second pastor, Rev. Msgr. William R. Capano, who instituted the Fair Share Tuition policy. The rationale behind this tuition scale is to invite parents who are blessed financially to embrace their "fair share" of the actual cost of educating their child. The lowest tier of the tuition scale is established by the Diocese of Metuchen with each tier increasing incrementally until reaching the "actual cost" of the child's tuition at the highest tier. Parents do not have to substantiate their income when they select their tuition tier. In spite of this, the vast majority chose the high end of the tuition scale. Through the Fair Share Tuition Plan over the past years, the school account has been able to reimburse the parish for any school subsidy (basically repairs and improvements to the school) that it shows at the end of the fiscal year, and there has been no subsidy shown on the fiscal report to the Diocese.

The school nurse presents a workshop on blood-borne pathogen safety to the faculty and staff each year before classes begin in September. She has introduced a buddy system for allergies, educating classes on not sharing snacks, washing their hands if they have had peanut butter, etc. Our cafeteria has dairy-free and peanut-free tables for these students. The nurse also holds CPR certification training sessions throughout the year, including for students in eighth grade, and acts as the moderator for the after-school Beginner and Advanced Babysitting Clubs, where she provides lessons on proper care and child safety.

The school offers assemblies and programs for teaching respect for self and others. The sixth graders take the S.A.F.E. (Substance Awareness for Empowerment) course offered by the South Brunswick Police Department. It teaches the children about peer pressure and how to say no in situations that make them uncomfortable or could be dangerous. When funding is available, the CAP program is offered for adults and children. The local police department is invited to host a workshop for our families and students on safe and respectful use of the Internet. The eighth graders attend the diocesan program "Because I'm Worth It" which is offered in the spring. The eighth graders also attend "The Awesome Gift of Life and the Threat of Abortion" workshop presented by the Diocese Respect for Life Office.

Catholic Schools Week is always a special celebration for the school community. It begins with Open House on Sunday afternoon. Older students serve as tour guides to show prospective families around the school. There is a theme for the week that involves the entire school. Both academic and spiritual activities occur each day. In 2013, the Catholic Schools Week opening ceremony was highlighted by a joint prayer service shared via Skype with Saint Augustine High School in Laredo, Texas - a first for both schools. As a result of this

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unprecedented event, our schools have formed a lasting bond of sharing and collaboration.

The AdvancED process at Saint Augustine of Canterbury School has been rooted in a deep commitment on the part of the Diocese, our chairpersons, the steering committee, faculty, and staff. The teachers went beyond the walls of their classrooms and saw a deeper picture of what education looks like for an entire school community in every aspect of its "life". It has given us a renewed sense of purpose and direction for the future. During this process we have made continuous improvement as a team.

Everyone from teachers to parents, students, and community have been a vital part of the process. Our Catholic School Mission through this process encourages us to hold ourselves accountable as a school community for the excellence and rigor of learning and assessing, faith formation, and nurturing of community which we must guarantee for future generations.

"Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost, every Catholic institution is a place to encounter the Living God who in Jesus Christ reveals His transforming love and truth." -- Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI