



# **Executive Summary**

**Saint James School**

**Diocese of Trenton**

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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.

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 James Elementary School is located in the town of Red Bank, New Jersey and dates back to 1879, when it first opened as a K to 12 School on Pearl and Wall Street. With the school population increasing at an accelerated pace in 1961, the new Saint James grammar school was erected on Peters Place where it now shares the grounds with Red Bank Catholic High School. Together, Red Bank Catholic High School and Saint James Elementary School form a Preschool to 12 School Campus.

The town of Red Bank has an estimated population of 12,000 residents with 50% being Caucasian, 34% Hispanic, 12% Black or African American, 3% two or more races, 1% Asian and 1% Native American. The town of Red Bank has not experienced a population percent change in the past 3 years; however, the 2010 census does show an increase in the Hispanic population from 17% in 2000 to 34% in 2010. The median age of both males and females in the town of Red Bank is on average about 5 years younger than the surrounding towns with the median age being 35. The median annual income is about \$63,000.

The school presently services 476 students. Of the 476 students, 64 are residents of Red Bank. The remaining 412 students reside in 33 small and large communities surrounding Red Bank. In the 2014-2015 school year, Caucasian students accounted for ninety-two percent of the four hundred seventy-six students. The remaining student population is comprised of about 1% African American, 4% Asian, and 3% Hispanic students.

In the past 5 years, most of the surrounding towns have opted to implement a full day kindergarten program, which has had a direct effect on the Saint James School kindergarten enrollment. As a result, 1 of the 3 kindergarten classes has been eliminated. To combat the decline in the kindergarten enrollment, the Preschool Program has been enhanced with a new reading curriculum and the creation of learning-centers. A community service program was also created--Read, Rock and Roll!, to market the Preschool Program. Read, Rock and Roll! is a free preschool program that enables parents/caretakers and children 2 ½ to 5 years old to experience what the Saint James Preschool program has to offer. Participants come 1 day a week for 6 weeks. The Read, Rock and Roll! program is offered 3 times during the school year. Since its inception Saint James Preschool enrollment has increased by 88%.

This past school year, 2014-2015, Saint James also introduced a Transitional Kindergarten program to accommodate students who benefit socially, emotionally and academically from an extra year of a pre-school program. This program is unique in that Saint James is the only school in Monmouth County to offer an academic transitional kindergarten program.

Saint James Elementary School also offers cost free after school enrichment programs for grades K to 3. These programs offer students the opportunity to enhance their academic skills and stimulate their curiosity. Saint James School's certified teachers instruct these enrichment classes.

Saint James Elementary School has a staff of 40 teachers, 10 classroom paraprofessionals, 2 secretaries, 1 marketing director, 1 business administrator, a part-time counselor/social worker, a vice-principal and a principal. The school shares its custodial and security staff with Red Bank Catholic High School.

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Our teachers hold New Jersey teaching certificates with 3 teachers holding dual certificates in Special Education. According to our parent and community survey, our school promotes clear communication between the school and parents/community through a variety of ways. In addition, the school promotes high academic and behavioral standards for all students, and a culture of participation and responsibility.

The faces, enrollment and building structure have changed in the last 136 years, but not the commitment of Saint James School to prepare our students for a life of faith and honor by providing an empowering education that is rooted in the Catholic doctrine and academic excellence.

## **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.**

### Mission Statement

Saint James Elementary School is dedicated to preparing our students for a life of faith and honor by providing a challenging and empowering education that is rooted in the Catholic Doctrine and academic excellence.

### Vision

Saint James School is a community based on Catholic faith, tradition, and values. For over a century, our vision has been and continues to be the preparation of students for their roles as contributing Christian members of society. By cognitively and consistently providing opportunities for children to grow in the knowledge of God, self, and the changing world in which they live, Saint James School endeavors in cooperation with parents to develop individuals of good moral character. Recognizing that parents are the primary educators of their children, we foster parental involvement to accomplish our educational mission. Together we strive to create a nurturing environment in which the whole child grows as a complete person, one who understands and embraces Catholic values and acts upon them in response to the daily events of life.

### Values/Beliefs

WE BELIEVE in providing students with a sound foundation of Catholic beliefs based on structured religious studies, as well as to witness the Good News of the Gospel through their daily experiences. Our emphasis is to teach as Jesus did, leading by example, and seeking the goodness and uniqueness of each individual.

WE BELIEVE in creating an awareness of responsibility to the community-at-large through active participation in community service.

WE BELIEVE and acknowledge that parents are the primary educators of the child. The relationship between the school and parents as co-educators is essential in the development of the whole child and is vital in the continuing process toward educating each student.

WE BELIEVE in celebrating the uniqueness of each student by fostering positive self-awareness through a curriculum that involves cooperative and team effort based on a sense of responsibility to and respect for fellow students.

WE BELIEVE in providing an atmosphere that fosters learning as a life-long process in which students develop as risk takers, problem solvers, decision makers, active learners, skillful communicators, and come to appreciate the role of technology in their daily learning.

WE BELIEVE in providing each student with the stimulus to pursue knowledge through a balanced program of learning and self-motivation, enabling the student to strive for excellence, while meeting the individual needs of each student.

WE BELIEVE in instilling the understanding that the individual is a composite of body and spirit through active participation in healthful practices, sports programs, and physical education.

Saint James Elementary is a Catholic school and to that end students learn about and experience the gospel in their daily activities. The school provides students with various opportunities to engage in service to the community (monthly grade level Charitable Giving Program, volunteering at Lunch Break), praying (monthly school Masses, prayers before, during and after school), and religious activities (Stations of the Cross, Retreats, Little Flowers, Altar Servers). On average, 85% of Saint James students go on to Catholic High Schools, and on average, 4 students each year are accepted to Monmouth County Career Academies or Magnet Programs within the local public school districts.

Aside from providing spiritual nourishment, the school affords students various opportunities to develop and refine their emotional, social,

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physical and academic skills. Students participate in sports, extra-curricular activities (after school clubs), peer leadership activities (across grade level buddies), and academic challenges (i.e. Word Masters, Spelling Bee, Mast Academic Tournament, Geography Bee, Math Club).

Saint James Elementary School is proud of the extra-curricular and academic opportunities afforded to our students. We have a dedicated staff who provides students with before and after school academic help for students having trouble grasping various concepts. Faculty members' dedication also extends to after-school activities in which students are given the opportunity to extend their learning while having fun in After School Enrichment Programs.

Saint James Elementary School is an example of a family community. The entire school community understands and embraces Saint James School's mission and vision. Parents, students and staff work together in creating an environment in which all share a supportive and caring attitude toward each other. Teachers prepare a weekly Parent Review Envelope (PRE) that keeps parents informed of their child's progress. This on-going and frequent communication establishes a sound connection between home and school. Parents are also encouraged to volunteer by supporting, coordinating and participating in After School Enrichment Programs. These enrichment programs encourage and foster unity among all stakeholders.

Saint James Elementary School is very proud of its friendly and safe atmosphere. Our students are very respectful and well behaved. With the guidance of the school's social worker, the teachers and administrators continuously implement programs that support respect for self and others, and tolerance of individuals.

Academically our students meet or exceed state levels on state assessments. Teachers, parents and the administrators work together to create optimal learning environments for all students. Parent Portal, Progress Reports, Report Cards and Parent-Teacher conferences are just a few of the ways a child's academic progress is communicated. Classified students receive in-class support with some receiving individualized instructional programs geared to the student's needs and goals.

## **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.**

Saint James Elementary School strives to keep abreast with technological advances. All classrooms are equipped with projectors, SMART Boards and at least one computer. In the past 3 years we have updated our Technology Lab with desktops (towers and AIO) and laptops. The school also has acquired 90 iPads and 20 Surface tablets. The school's technology infrastructure has also been updated to accommodate wireless devices. This updating process will continue in the next 3 years to include an increase of AIO computers and tablets.

Saint James is proud of its innovative programs aimed at increasing enrollment. Our Read, Rock and Roll! program is a parent/child enrichment program for children ages 2 ½ to 5. The program, not only provides the community with a service, but it gives parents and children the opportunity to experience our preschool program within the context of a 1-hour, 1 day a week, 6-week program. The number of registrants who continue with our preschool measures the success of the program.

To increase student retention, Saint James School tries to build and reinforce the connection between preschool and K-8 students, teachers and parents. The program Discover and Explore Kindergarten allows preschool students to have the experience of being a Saint James School kindergartener by attending a kindergarten class and participating in various academic activities with kindergarten teachers. Preschoolers also participate in various liturgical, academic and social activities with the Saint James School student body (e.g. Stations of the Cross, Advent Readings, Reading Buddies, Morning Buddies, Easter Egg Hunt Buddies, school Masses).

The Saint James Elementary School Summer Enrichment Camp continues to grow in the number of participants and in camp selections. In the last 3 years we have opened up the camp program to all children in the surrounding towns in an effort to expand our community outreach and to also enhance the school's climate of pride and academic excellence. This summer (2015) Saint James School is excited to introduce a STEM class to the camp selections. Future goals include increasing the number of selections with the addition of music and dance camps.

The Saint James Athletic Association prides itself on providing 11 sport teams for student participation in grades 1-8. This coming school year 2015-16, fencing will be offered as a competitive clinic with plans to form a future fencing team.

In the past 3 years, the Mathematics and World Language programs have been changed to include a high school instructor for the 8th grade Algebra I and Spanish I classes. This change has led to a more rigorous delivery of instruction and has enabled Saint James students to be more competitive among their public and private school counterparts. The school has also experienced an instructional shift by way of heterogeneous grouping, differentiated instruction and extended instructional time in the area of mathematics. These instructional strategies have enhanced teaching and learning. The school's overall Terra Nova scores have risen in all grades in the past 3 years. The school will continue to work on increasing the Terra Nova scores in the area of mathematics for grades 3 and 4, which show results just below the school's desired percentile.

As the school continues to strengthen its academic programs, the middle school science classes, as with English Language Arts and Math classes, have been restructured to form smaller class sizes. Students are now better able to utilize their critical thinking skills while engaging in hands-on activities. Future goals include the restructuring of technology classes in an effort to introduce coding.



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Saint James Elementary School seeks continuous school improvement in order to prepare students for an ever-changing global society. In the next 3 years, Saint James Elementary School plans to institute a STREAM program in grades 6 to 8. Integrating the disciplines of Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Arts and Math (STREAM) will foster creativity, innovation, collaboration across grade levels and a connection between schoolwork and real life problem solving. In anticipation of launching this program, the school has already begun to upgrade computers and the WiFi infrastructure. The middle school math, social studies and science textbooks have also been updated and all feature an online component. This school year, teachers and the administration will evaluate the middle school reading series and a new reading series will be purchased for the 2016-17 school year.

To introduce the STREAM program this school year 2015-16, a committee will be formed to investigate STREAM projects for 8th grade students for implementation in the 2016-17 academic year. Also this year, the technology teacher working collaboratively with the major subject teachers will develop projects that incorporate at least two major subject areas. By 2017, it is anticipated that students in grade 8 will have completed one STREAM project and that by 2018 all middle school grades will have completed at least one STREAM project.

Working towards the STREAM program this past school year (2014-15), a girls' math club (Girls Calculating Math-GCM) was created for girls in grades 6 to 8. The creation of this club was to encourage girls to develop a love of math and engineering. Students worked collaboratively on projects that incorporated math and art. This coming school year 2015-16, a boys' math club will begin. Both math clubs will introduce students to finance and more specifically to banking. Students will learn how to write a check, balance a checkbook and explore how technology has changed personal banking.

Saint James will continue to search new avenues to enable students to explore, identify and develop their skills and gifts.

What you are is God's gift to you, what you become is your gift to God.

Hans Urs von Balthazar, PRAYER

## **Additional Information**

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

Please see above responses.