

Good morning! Thank you so much for the opportunity to share St. Mary's Episcopal School news with you today. Can you believe that we are in our 20th year of St. Mary's Episcopal Preschool? Nor can I! when I think back to 20 years ago and remember our first little class with 16 children of multiple ages many of whom were parishioner's children, it warms my heart to think of where we were and what we've become. We owe thanks to you, parishioners, our school parents, teachers and church staff for where we are today! The mission for St. Mary's School, to be grounded in the Episcopal tradition and to share the love of Jesus with our children, was developed by the original board and has remained our guide to providing a strong community, coeducational school for children ages 2 to 6 years old.

Our school today is thriving! We have 79 students (our capacity is 80). 2 classes of two-year olds, two classes of 3-year olds, two classes of 4-year olds and 1 Junior kindergarten. We have full time working parents, part time working parents, we have stay at home moms, and even stay at home dads. We draw from 16 different zip codes as far as Chester and Montpelier. Our southside friends are challenged by the 288-traffic pattern but continue to cross the river for a unique opportunity many call a "hidden gem."

I'm sure I don't have to explain to you why we are often called a hidden gem. This beautiful campus alone in its natural setting provides us with many perfect opportunities for promoting the wonder of God's creation and providing unique learning experiences for these children. We tout our research-based child-centered curriculum as one that helps to meet the individual needs of each child that we serve. In this approach children learn through play in their classrooms as well as in the outdoor spaces. The Nature Trail that was developed a few years ago, provides a unique outdoor classroom setting where our children can experience God's creation in a multi-sensory way. The church provides weekly chapel time with Miss Amelia in the Episcopal Tradition where there is an opportunity for each child to develop one's spiritual self through the practice of rituals, songs and prayer. The children also have Music Enrichment three times a month in addition to the music instruction the teachers provide in their individual classrooms, which gives each child a time to learn to joyfully express themselves through songs and movement. Our music teacher also offers a Mom/Tot Music program 2 to 3 times a month for the community. We would love to have any of you participate in this program that we hold in the Youth building while our school is in session. This week we had 4 new families come to this program. On the first and third Thursday of the month, we also host a Mom/Tot program in the Youth building. This is a play group and provides the moms and/or caretakers an opportunity to spend time in fellowship with one another while allowing little ones to learn to play.

Our preschool program meets from 9-12, and our JK continues until 2:00 pm beginning in January. We offer early morning drop-off beginning at 8:00 am and after school enrichment

programs such as Soccer Shots, tennis, OOey Gooey Science and Ballet. This year we have at least 12-15 students in each after school program. We also include an additional "Lunch Bunch" until 2:00 for those children who need or want to stay for this additional two-hour frame.

Last year, the church provided the school with a much-needed security system. As you can imagine, security is foremost on these young parents' minds and ours, too. I am sure this security system is also a positive presence for the church. This year, the front playground fence was added. Doesn't it look beautiful! That 18-year-old fence was struggling to continue to stand on its own. We owe a great deal of Thanks to the church for helping us to keep things updated and safe for these little ones.

Your participation in our Bake Sales and our school carnival (April 26th – mark your calendar) has allowed us to continue to provide scholarships money for some of our families in need, as well as to enhance our curriculum with additional supplies and in school field trips such as music groups, storytellers and puppeteers.

We are currently accepting applications for the school year 2020-2021. As we have very little turnover in our student population, our enrollment for next year is looking very promising. We have a few openings in our older classes and, of course, have "spots" in our 2-day program which is where it all begins. Our parents, grandparents and parishioners have been our best marketers. So thank you and keep up the good work!

Each year, we send a number of children to "big school" or kindergarten. This year, we will send close to 30 children. It brings such joy to see how each of these children have developed into confident individuals who love and respect one another and approach learning with such eager attitudes. This school, this hidden gem is providing the foundation for a lifetime of success for these little ones. Thank you for your part in that. We always are looking for ways to partner with the church in this community. Please continue to let us know ways that together, we can develop new opportunities and continue to make a difference in this community!