

U.S. Department of Education
2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[] Public or [X] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [] Title I [] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Mrs. Jen Reker-Murphy
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Saint Mary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2845 Erie Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Cincinnati State OH Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 45208-2353

County Hamilton

Telephone (513) 321-0703 Fax _____

Web site/URL <https://www.smshp.com/> E-mail jreker@stmaryhp.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Ms. Kathy C. Kane E-mail kckane@catholicaoc.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Archdiocese of Cincinnati Tel. (513) 263-3450

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mrs. Kelly Bollinger
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date _____

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2023 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 0 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
0 Middle/Junior high schools
0 High schools
0 K-12 schools
- 0 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

☒ Urban (city or town)
☐ Suburban
☐ Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2022 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Students
PreK	0
K	59
1	60
2	53
3	57
4	49
5	47
6	49
7	50
8	52
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	476

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0.5 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.5 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 92 % White
 - 2 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2021 - 2022 school year: 12%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	26
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	31
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	57
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	464
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.12
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	12

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

French, Italian, Korean, Spanish, Vietnamese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %
10 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 1 %

Total number students who qualify: 7

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 4 %
Total number of students served 18

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services with an IEP should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>0</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>2</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>11</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>5</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 0 %
Total number of students served: 0

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 3

11. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	19
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	8
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

12. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 17:1

13. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	97%	96%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2022.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

15. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes X No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2006

16. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

To educate, inspire, and energize children with an emphasis on Catholic faith, academic excellence, a commitment to serve and lead, and the acceptance of others.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

<https://www.smsnp.com/admissions/registration-form/>

18. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Saint Mary School (SMS) is located in the historic Hyde Park neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio. A six mile drive from downtown, Hyde Park is an urban community in a highly walkable neighborhood. Residents of all ages, income levels, and ethnicities call Hyde Park their home, and with three public elementary schools and seven other private schools within just three miles of SMS, there exists an abundance of educational options for families.

What brings families to SMS? The close-knit community is one of the primary reasons cited by families, staff, and teachers as to why they send their children or choose to work there. Built in 1908, SMS has long been a fixture in the community. While the original Catholic faith tradition remains an integral pillar of the SMS philosophy, a student-centered approach has grown up around its core, just as the school itself has been renovated and expanded over the years around the spire of the original cathedral.

Many of SMS students' parents or grandparents attended this school, and the teaching staff includes several alumni. These generational connections strengthen the community roots of SMS even as it evolves to best respond to the needs of a new generation of students. SMS parents are deeply invested in the school; it benefits from an active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and parent volunteer corps, and the newly established Mission Effectiveness Committee provides counsel to the principal.

When recently surveyed, parents and teachers agreed the most instrumental components of SMS's success are the shared values and high academic expectations. That is, the school expects its students not to simply succeed in their academic pursuits, but to be stewards of the Catholic faith. There is an emphasis on spirituality, generosity, and kindness to others that is verbalized each school year with a new theme; the 2022-23 theme of "Give Grace" epitomizes the hard-won lessons learned during the Covid pandemic.

Indeed, while SMS has a long history of academic achievements and excellent placement in Cincinnati's competitive high school environment, "Give Grace" speaks to the importance placed on social-emotional learning alongside academic success. Recent changes in school leadership have resulted in a fresh approach to traditions, inviting teachers to redesign their classrooms; lessons; and assessments, bringing in consultants to integrate and strengthen the curriculum, and providing parents with more ways to support students' personal growth and learning.

In 2022, SMS received an Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools (EANS) grant from the State of Ohio to hire a School Improvement Consultant. This consultant has been working with staff to map curricular pathways vertically and horizontally, ensuring teachers are working in concert from kindergarten through eighth grade to help all students find success.

A corresponding emphasis on professional development has cultivated an environment in which teachers are learning from one another and outside specialists to further educational goals. Teachers have been invigorated by the focus on continued learning and are implementing new ways to design the classroom environment, introduce differentiated instruction, communicate learning objectives, and assess effectiveness.

This analysis of academic goals and strategies has been applied to students' social-emotional needs. The pandemic required increased responsiveness to students' individual learning styles and also necessitated the development of new ways to support their social-emotional health. Due to SMS's independence, small size, and dedication of our staff, the school was able to stay fully open throughout the course of the pandemic and thus stay in close contact with students' evolving needs.

With students restricted to small cohort classrooms, teachers invented ways to create more inviting spaces, held outdoor instruction whenever possible, and frequently checked in with students to assess morale. Parents, though unable to enter the building, continued to plan class events remotely, organized a supply center in the staff lounge, and heeded closely to school nurse instructions.

These initiatives have inspired the school's approach ever since. Classrooms are evolving into more flexible

environments, a new Outdoor Learning Center is now a permanent fixture, an Assistant of Student Affairs (ASA) position has been created, and more professional development opportunities for teachers have resulted in greater job satisfaction, a notable achievement during a time when many are exiting the profession.

Meanwhile, long-held traditions and programs are reappearing. As restrictions were lifted, weekly masses, schoolwide assemblies, and other school-building traditions have resumed. Saint Families have begun reconnecting students from every grade level, with older students responsible for leading the younger in discussion and activities. The athletics program, extracurricular activities, and presence and service in the local community have likewise come back at full strength.

SMS is now poised to move fully past the pandemic to implement the new objectives and strategies recently identified in a new five-year plan. This plan has been created in response to a data-driven examination of standardized test scores and qualitative feedback from all stakeholders and guides the school's vision moving forward.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

In grades K-2 English/Language Arts (ELA), the focus is on letter and word recognition, phonemic awareness, early literacy skills, reading to self and aloud, and journaling. While Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's Journeys series provides the basis of SMS's ELA curriculum, teachers are moving away from the textbooks and towards a more integrated approach, redesigning their curricular model to utilize classic and contemporary literature for more well-rounded instruction. Teachers introduce students to many different types of literature, while mentor sentences are introduced to acquaint students with grammar and good writing technique. Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) is utilized to create leveled reading groups, STudent Achievement in Reading (STAR) and Accelerated Reader (AR) tests assess comprehension, and teachers employ periodic cold-reads to track students' progress. Students are encouraged to write often, and simple rubrics are introduced. Regular conferences allow teachers to provide students with immediate feedback as they work toward a more proficient and advanced technique.

Intermediate grades 3-5 take a progressively integrated approach to teaching the ELA standards. Reading instruction takes place through a variety of novels that expose students to different genres, writing styles, themes, and authors. Vocabulary, spelling, comprehension, and writing activities are included in each novel study. Students and teachers share ideas and participate in rich class discussions, centering on key ideas from their reading. Students are invited to self-select reading materials that are of interest to them, and each student develops accompanying trimester reading goals. Writers' notebooks are kept for students to free-write on assigned topics, and pieces are "published" in the classroom with accompanying writers' celebrations. Informational text selections are also employed to teach nonfiction concepts and often cross disciplines. Grammar continues to be taught through weekly mentor sentences from class novels or high-quality picture books. Students are given time to independently read and write each school day, and writing rubrics become increasingly complex. Traditional spelling, vocabulary, and reading comprehension tests are utilized at all grade levels to help track student progress, but teacher observations, writing feedback, and in class participation provide important opportunities for assessment. In addition, in grades 3-7, Iowa Assessments become another indicator of individual and collective student achievement levels.

In grades 6-8, the junior high curriculum involves a mixture of classic and modern literature that is age-appropriate yet challenging. Students are taught to comprehend the literature and recognize its main themes, and also think critically about what they read. Socratic seminars are employed to provide ownership of learning and help students increase depth of knowledge together, facilitated by scaffolding questions posed by the teacher to further build understanding. Junior high students engage in writing every day as an integral part of their instruction. Interactive notebooks are utilized to provide students multiple and varied low-risk ways to express ideas. More developed pieces are taken thoroughly through each step of the writing process, with specific rubrics to give students a clear understanding of the goals and expectations. Peer revisions and grading, along with individual teacher conferencing, are employed throughout the writing process, which ultimately culminates in a finished piece that is reviewed by the teacher, graded based on the rubric, and qualified with extensive written feedback.

1b. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

SMS's K-8 mathematics curriculum is based on Big Ideas Math: Modeling for Real Life, a rigorous math program built on the most current and widely accepted educational research. SMS recognizes mathematics requires a systematic, building-block approach in which students must master a set of concepts and skills through repetition and practice before progressing to the next level. As such, basing the entire K-8 curriculum on a single cohesive program ensures students are provided with a logical progression of learning from concrete to abstract concepts, with constant assessments to make certain students are progressing through each level according to their aptitude and ability.

In grades K-2, the Big Ideas curriculum is expanded with the use of hands-on activities and manipulatives as students become acquainted with numbers, patterns, place value, and addition and subtraction. Math problems are modeled by the teachers and then worked through again individually or in small groups. Students are invited to solve the same problems in multiple ways to account for differences in learning styles. Even as students progress to higher order thinking skills, basic math facts remain a priority at SMS, with students strengthening math fact fluency through flashcards, addition and subtraction worksheets, and online games. Quizzes and chapter and unit tests are utilized in all grades to provide formative and summative feedback.

In the intermediate grades, as concepts become more complex, the mathematics curriculum further evolves to become more spiral rather than mastery-focused. Students continue to be presented with, practice, and master new concepts but are increasingly revisiting and reviewing throughout the year, always adding to their prior learning rather than simply memorizing without retention. In addition, techniques that support Universal Design for Learning become increasingly helpful as students' learning differences begin to become more apparent. Interactive notebooks are introduced to encourage students to take notes in a way that makes the most sense for the student, teacher and peer number talks allow students to share their thinking and strategies for problem solving, and small groups create opportunities for students to work together. Summative and formative quizzes and tests combined with Iowa Assessments provide important quantitative information, augmented by self-reflections, problems of the day, exit slips, and teacher observations during spiral math review sessions.

As students matriculate through junior high, the curriculum and spiral learning continues to evolve. Students begin to get into the deep-level learning required to prepare them for high school level Algebra I and II and Geometry. In the upper grades, students are challenged to transfer the skills acquired to new abstract concepts and apply their understanding to real-life situations. Here the stratification of learning becomes even more apparent, as the students who are prepared to think abstractly and have the discipline to put forth the required effort are offered Algebra I in eighth grade. All students learn the expectations required of a high school class, moving more quickly through material and promoting dedicated study habits, organizational skills, and test-taking strategies.

1c. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

The K-8 science curriculum at SMS is based on the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Science Fusion series, chosen for its focus on higher level thinking and application of content. Throughout the grades, students learn through hands-on experiments in class as well as school assemblies, career speakers, and field trips to places such as the Cincinnati Zoo and the Center for Science and Industry in Columbus.

Kindergartners begin their science education in learning centers with hands-on materials and simple test-and-hypothesize exercises. Over the next several years, students progress to more intensive Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) projects and the increased use of interactive science notebooks to encourage creative ways of envisioning solutions to scientific questions.

Students in all grades learn by doing, participating in hands-on individual and group laboratory experiments to complement the virtual and video labs often utilized in classroom instruction. To support this important aspect of the curriculum, a new K-5 STEM lab opened at SMS in January 2023. This new dedicated space includes all of the basic laboratory equipment—microscopes, hand lenses, beakers, test tubes, scales, and computers—alongside materials, which enable teachers to integrate computer technology, engineering, and mathematical concepts into their lessons and across curricula.

The new lab complements the existing junior high science laboratory and the Outdoor Learning Center, which is often employed for science lessons. There, natural world data is collected and analyzed, plants are cultivated and harvested, and recycling and composting is demonstrated. In the upper grades, writing is heavily incorporated into the curriculum along with current scientific events, with students monthly researching and presenting a scientific topic of interest in essay form.

Students are taught to take notes and create outlines (graphic or artistic interpretations are encouraged) and

regularly assessed at the formative and summative level with thumb checks, exit slips, teacher observation, quizzes, and tests. Clear rubrics are provided for grading along with extensive teacher feedback for any written papers, presentations, labs, or group projects.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

The Social Studies curriculum at SMS emphasizes the growth of students' awareness of geography and the global community, promoting appreciation of the history and cultures of all peoples of the world. The curriculum stresses interdependence with the rest of the globe, and current events are of particular importance in this changing world.

In grades K-5, the curriculum is based on the My World Interactive series, but this is only the starting point. Students' learning begins with a focus on concepts of community and government, how history evolves, and differences in cultures and traditions. Teachers create their own activities, inspired often by Teachers Pay Teachers and collaborating with other educators in the Archdiocese. In fourth grade, the curriculum moves to in-depth explorations of American History via Everything You Need to Ace American History in One Big Fat Notebook, continuing in fifth grade with History Alive. Current events also begin to take more prominence in fifth grade as CNN10 and Time for Kids are utilized to research current events in the news.

In junior high, each grade level delves deep into a particular area of study: history and geography of the ancient Eastern Hemisphere in 6th grade, World History in 7th, and American History in 8th. Students compare cultural developments across civilizations and note their influence on later generations. They are invited to consider how ideas and events from the past have shaped today's world and are also required to think critically and provide personal critiques of historical issues.

While conventional quizzes and chapter and unit tests remain an important part of assessments through all grades, dynamic class discussions, presentations, and writing are emphasized. Students work in Powerpoint, Google Slides and FlipGrid to master their presentation and speaking skills and are also required to write expository and argumentative essays, which delve deeper into historical situations, analyze various perspectives, consider history in its context, and develop and refine personal judgements and opinions.

1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:

SMS recognizes our responsibility to provide students with opportunities to practice the critical thinking, problem solving, collaborative ability, and work ethic necessary to succeed in college and beyond as life-long learners and productive members of society.

Through a variety of opportunities and programs, all 7th-8th grade students take on increasingly prominent leadership roles in the school. They lead all-school announcements and prayers every morning, take primary responsibility for the coordination of schoolwide service activities, and partner regularly with younger students in religious, reading, and STEM projects. Through Saint Families, older students lead and mentor the same group of younger students monthly. SMS sponsors a highly visible Student Council, with all 6th-8th grade students eligible to run for election to representative and leadership roles. In 2021-22, the Student Council designed a new Junior Leadership Program, an after-school program in which students in grades 3-5 are introduced by their older peers to the principles of good citizenship and leadership. Finally, the entire 7th grade class travels to Washington, DC each year to explore the nation's capital and witness the country's leadership firsthand.

To introduce career readiness, the Electives Program offers students in grades 7-8 the opportunity to choose an area of study each trimester, which promotes an exploration of interests and skills, for example, woodworking, cooking, and entrepreneurship. The recently developed Entrepreneurship Elective offers 7th-8th grade students the opportunity to develop ideas for new products and pitch their concept to instructors. Last year's top three teams had the chance to compete in a community "Shark Tank" competition at a local high school and present their ideas before a panel, one of which won the entire competition. Periodic Student Markets are also held at the Outdoor Learning Center after school for all students to market and sell

their products to other students, staff, and parents; this is a fun and educational forum for all students to experience the workings of commerce firsthand.

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

Students in grades K-8 visit the art studio two times weekly for 45 minutes, where they are encouraged to express themselves through the visual arts in a wide range of media. Students learn art principles, history, and appreciation and try their hand at printmaking, three-dimensional design, sculpture, paint, pen-and-ink, pastels, and pottery. Art-making is taken seriously at SMS with students evaluating their own personal effort on each project, which is also graded on a written rubric. Each year an annual school art show is presented, and student work is also selected for the local Hyde Park Art Show, where it is evaluated by professional judges.

The music specialist sees students in his studio twice each week for 45 minutes, where students are instructed in the Orff Schulwerk program, a child-centered, play-based approach to music and dramatic education. In grades 3-5, students learn to play the recorder, and 8th graders the ukulele. In addition, students are encouraged to join school band beginning in 3rd grade, “Music Marvels” in grades 3-4, and the school choir for grades 5-8. The music specialist oversees multiple performing arts productions, including a kindergarten concert and 1st grade play, 3rd grade songfest, a 4th grade production, the 8th grade variety show, a junior high musical, and a school-wide talent show.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

All SMS students attend Physical Education (PE) classes twice a week for 45 minute class periods, one of which is dedicated to Health/Nutrition in grades 7-8. SMS’s approach is to build a foundation in which each student comes to understand their own physiology and how they can engage their bodies in a physically healthy way, along with the care of their mental and spiritual health.

Our PE/Health curriculum follows the State of Ohio and Archdiocese of Cincinnati’s PE standards, but also refers to research-based practices, which improve youth mental health through better exercise, sleep, and nutrition choices. The instructor combines traditional spiritual practices, such as the Jesuit structure of prayer, first taught by St. Ignatius Loyola in the 16th century, with more contemporary approaches like the Breathwrk app, which focuses on guided breathing exercises based in scientific research.

SMS's vision is for Health/PE to be less about performance within the typical fitness system of grading students, and more about students actually practicing the development of life-long healthy habits. Upper level students keep weekly journals to chronicle what they are learning and how they are applying it to their own lives, and student progress reflections are an integral part of their assessment.

2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)

SMS students receive Spanish instruction from our certified multi-age language teacher, with grades K-5 attending one class period of 45 minutes weekly and 6-8 twice weekly. The program allows students to develop an appreciation for foreign language and cultural diversity through an emphasis on communication and connectedness with Spanish-speaking regions.

Grades K-5 focus on building vocabulary and common spoken phrases to gain confidence and familiarity; then, Spanish is expanded in junior high to build verbal communication skills and develop writing competency. Students in grade 8 are given the opportunity to take the National Spanish Exam and place into

Spanish II in high school. The Spanish program culminates with an optional trip to Costa Rica in 8th grade, where students can actively engage in the culture and speak the Spanish language with native speakers.

As students progress through the curriculum, a special emphasis is placed on acknowledging and accepting cultural differences when meeting others. This ability to place themselves in a greater worldview is extremely helpful beyond simply learning a foreign language and is an important part of SMS's goal to promote culturally responsive teaching and learning as described in Part V, Question V.

2d. Technology/library/media

In SMS classrooms and dedicated computer lab, students gain familiarity with programs and applications that prove useful throughout their lives: Microsoft Word, Excel, Powerpoint, and internet search engines. Students use computer technology in every discipline, developing skills in word processing, database, email, Internet research, digital photography, web page creation, graphic presentation, desktop publishing, and online learning.

Grades K-3 utilize SeeSaw to familiarize younger students with an online classroom support environment. In grades 5-8, Microsoft Teams is an integral component of classroom participation, teacher assignments, and student organization.

Every classroom at SMS is equipped with a SmartBoard, and teachers utilize an array of online learning resources to augment their lessons, including Teachers Pay Teachers, RazKids, BrainPop, YouTube, Amazing Classroom, Class Notebook, Kahoot, Quizlet, Quizziz, FlipGrid, and Google slides.

Each student visits the computer lab for two 45-minute class periods weekly. Here students master keyboarding skills using two programs: Keyboarding Without Tears and Type to Learn. They also explore the array of resources in the lab, including digital video cameras, 3D printers, and coding robots.

SMS also boasts a 1,400 square foot library, offering an array of reading material in a comfortable layout, which encourages students to read for enjoyment. Every grade visits the library once each week. All students are permitted to check out titles, and the librarian is available to teachers for collaboration and augmentation of their curriculum.

2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share

As a Catholic school, religious faith is a foundational component of daily curriculum offerings. Every grade meets for a 45 minute religion class daily, and all students attend weekly Mass. Students read and discuss Scripture, learn about the life of Christ and the saints, and establish how to be stewards of Christ's loving and accepting teachings. Students lead daily prayer announcements, are responsible for readings and petitions at weekly Mass on a rotating basis, and each grade has an annual retreat day. It is important to note here that while faith offerings spring from a Catholic foundation, they are inclusive for all students. The focus is on love, kindness, and service to one another and the surrounding community.

The community service program is pervasive and ongoing: there is always some way a student is able to help. SMS partners regularly with a local under-served school, with students collecting food items for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter "stock the pantry" drives and additional gift giving projects. Junior high students take on the responsibility for the organizing, packing, and delivering of these items. This, combined with a 20-hour annual service hour requirement, provides older students with multiple opportunities to practice putting their faith into action.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

As mentioned previously in Part IV, students at SMS are assessed on an ongoing basis, beginning before they even gain admittance to the school to ensure all are provided the best possible instruction for their

differentiated needs. In grades K-2, students' early literacy skills are regularly tested with DIBELS and STAR tests; beginning in third grade, Iowa assessments are also utilized to determine who requires early intervention. These students visit the reading specialist two to three times each week to work on individual needs in small groups. Here, students receive explicit, structured, multi-sensory reading instruction to supplement classroom learning. Elkonin boxes, letter blocks for word building, decodable readers, blending cards, and iPads are used to help students build phonemic awareness skills, sight word recognition, decoding skills, fluency, and comprehension.

Students' Iowa Assessment scores are also used to identify those who need additional assistance in mathematics. These students receive additional instruction as needed— sometimes twice weekly, sometimes daily— to make certain they are fully comprehending the mathematics concepts taught in the regular classroom. Manipulatives and hands-on activities are incorporated in small groups to provide students with additional ways to learn and reinforce math concepts, so they keep pace with their peers.

As described in 3C below, if a student needs additional help, the school's intervention specialists and parents decide together whether the process of public school district or private testing might be helpful. No matter the accommodations or results of testing, all SMS students are mainstreamed and included to provide a full academic learning experience.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

In the same way, students performing above grade level at SMS are identified through the DIBELS, STAR, and Iowa assessments as well as teacher observation. Students who are ready for more of a mathematics challenge meet multiple times weekly— in some grades every day— with the specialist in small groups. In the younger grades, students are challenged to build on their interest and abilities as they explore more complex concepts through logic puzzles and games; whereas, older students begin to move through the curriculum more quickly and with greater depth to prepare them for the study of Algebra I in 8th grade. Beginning in kindergarten, students with exceptional reading abilities also participate in weekly, small pull-out groups to tackle more challenging material.

Within the classroom, students performing above grade level in language arts, social studies, and science are provided individual challenges, including increased self-directed reading goals, more extensive feedback, and higher expectations in writing and presentation assignments. These students are also offered additional extracurricular opportunities including a junior high book club and Power of the Pen team. In addition, teachers encourage more advanced students to utilize their talents and assist their classmates with peer tutoring in class and after school, matching students who might benefit from some additional help with those who are able and willing to be of assistance.

3c. Students with disabilities:

SMS is fully handicapped accessible and is prepared to accommodate any student requiring special assistance. The entire community works together to make certain each student is able to access their education; for example, a 7th grader who was burned in a house fire has been surrounded with assistance; he has a temporary tracheotomy and cannot speak, but teachers, students, and parents work around his challenges to make certain he can attend school and achieve normalcy. In addition, a parent-led fundraising drive is currently underway to develop a new American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant playground for an incoming kindergartener who has no mobility of his lower extremities.

In terms of learning disabilities, SMS keeps pace with the most recent research and observations in education. During the pandemic, teachers observed more marked differences in learning styles and testing abilities in the student population and developed new methods to meet all students' educational and social-emotional needs.

Identification of students with learning disabilities begins in the classroom and is at first, typically data-driven, augmented with additional teacher observation and parental input. The school psychologist and intervention specialist assist teachers in the development of school accommodation plans if a student is

struggling. Approximately 25% of students receive learning assistance, including preferential seating, getting notes from a classmate or teacher, keeping an extra set of textbooks at home, or having a teacher check over their planner. If a student continues to struggle, they are evaluated further and an Individualized Student Plan (ISP) is developed with a Cincinnati Public School specialist, which allows for changes to the actual curriculum and how it is presented to the student. Eighteen of 476 students are provided with additional accommodations, including, but not limited to, extended testing times, having a teacher read the test to the student, reduced homework requirements, or typing instead of handwriting answers.

3d. English Language Learners:

SMS currently has ten identified English Language Learners (ELL), who work with the speech pathologist and classroom teachers to ensure they are able to participate fully in curricular offerings. Assistance to ELL students looks much like the accommodations listed above; this ensures these students are included with minimal disruption to their learning or the classroom at large. ELL students are able to receive preferential seating, use visual aids, and listen to directions or text read aloud if necessary. A language dictionary is permitted on assignments, and any new vocabulary is previewed with the student so he/she is prepared for class. In addition, assignments, tests, and projects are modified on an as-needed basis to make certain the student finds success in his/her efforts.

3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

At SMS, students are at the center of every decision made. During the pandemic, the school community drew closer than ever to make certain all students were engaged in learning, supported in their social-emotional needs, retained a positive outlook on their lives, and were motivated to keep working together towards their futures.

This commitment is evident throughout the school. Classrooms are redesigned to allow for flexibility, lighting is adjusted to create a more pleasant atmosphere, calming music is often played, the outdoor learning center and other sites offer variety, and classrooms and hallways are curated with student work. In addition, SMS recently welcomed a fully-trained school service/therapy dog to further support the social-emotional wellbeing of students and staff.

Instruction is presented in multiple ways to meet all learning styles, with teachers employing a variety of methods including explicit direct instruction, modeling, small group work, independent practice, and student-led discussion. Kindergarten morning check-ins evolve into stated learning intentions, higher order thinking questions, and clear success criteria in the upper grades. Students develop interactive notebooks when learning and are offered a variety of choices in how to present the information they have absorbed, whether through writing, drawing, or verbal presentation. Individualized study and organizational skills are emphasized beginning in kindergarten, and a variety of assessments are utilized to ensure all students are finding success.

Assessment folders establish learning needs and track growth beginning in kindergarten, while older students engage in pretests to assess and determine prior knowledge. Regular thumb checks and exit slips provide teachers with an instant snapshot of overall lesson effectiveness. Students are given ample opportunities to correct their work individually and together; quizzes are considered practice for tests, and corrections help students identify where they need to concentrate their effort. Students are provided increasingly detailed rubrics, and individualized conferencing is an essential tool in making certain each student is supported.

Students are encouraged to grow academically, but also socially as aware, capable, and contributing members of a greater community. Through Saint Families and other grade-arcing partnerships including 2nd/6th grade reading buddies, K/8th grade STEM and Mass partners, and school wide community building activities, students learn how to support one another individually and as a community. Students know they are seen at SMS, and the constant presence of school leadership ensures they know where to go when they need guidance. SMS students graduate not only with the academic prerequisites for a successful high school and college career but also with a strong sense of self and understanding of community.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

SMS's student-centered approach is fully supported by staff and teachers and is also communicated to and embraced by parents. Parents are kept informed via weekly eNewsletters, augmented with social media updates on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Teachers at all grade levels communicate weekly via a combination of emails, newsletters, homework sheets, web page updates, and homeroom apps such as Class Dojo.

The school year begins with kindergarten and new student summer socials, and students and parents in grades K-3 visit the school before the year begins to meet their teachers and see the classrooms. A class curriculum night occurs the second week of school and face-to-face conferences in mid-October. Teachers are available via email, phone call, and additional conferences throughout the year as needed, ensuring students' academic, social, and emotional needs are being adequately met.

There exists many opportunities for parent volunteers in and around the school, and parents and siblings are

welcome at weekly all-school Masses and student assemblies. Parents at SMS are invested in their students' school activities, with the athletics program run completely by parent board members and coaches, who also take charge of after-school programs including Girl and Boy Scouts, Lego Club, Girls on the Run, an annual Family Art Night, campus beautification projects, and playground improvements. There exist 17 different parent-run committees, offering multiple and varied chances to support the school—resulting in over 80% of families volunteering.

As a Catholic school and with a well-supported student population, community involvement at SMS is often more outward-looking, with the school identifying ways to be of service to others rather than how they can help the school. Community service plays an enormous role at SMS, as the school partners with a local underserved Catholic School and a nursing home, runs coat and pantry drives for St Vincent DePaul Society, and coordinates bimonthly family breakfast provision at a local homeless shelter.

SMS students also regularly reach out to local businesses and the fire station, providing flowers and soup deliveries annually. SMS opens its doors to the community multiple times throughout the year, celebrating all service members at an annual Veterans' Day ceremony, inviting preschoolers to enjoy a Thanksgiving Songfest, 4th and 5th graders to "Bring a Friend to School", and new and prospective students to visit during the January Catholic Schools' Week open house. Parish members are also welcome to join school Masses and other special events, including the student art fair and a recent Christmas concert for the senior citizens' group.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

SMS teachers enter their profession as a calling; they know they can receive more pay and better benefits at the many other public and private schools in the area, but feel strongly about their work at SMS. The administration and parents recognize the sacrifices the teachers make and fully support their professional growth and mental wellbeing.

The SMS PTO has long supported teachers' needs, raising funds for classroom preparation, reimbursing teachers for their license fees, volunteering to help wherever needed, organizing and stocking a supply counter, hosting breakfasts; lunches; and dinners, and maintaining an annual holiday gift fund. The appreciation expressed by families creates an environment where teachers feel valued, and these efforts were redoubled during the pandemic as teachers were called on more than ever to support students' academic progress and social wellbeing while under significant constraints.

The flexibility and support required to help students and teachers manage in-school instruction during the pandemic led to changes in the overall educational approach as described throughout this application. To support this shift, SMS has moved to place a stronger emphasis on teacher professional development, supported financially by the PTO.

An EANS grant from the state of Ohio allowed SMS to hire an outside curriculum coach, and her analysis of the educational model has introduced new ideas and encouraged teachers to think even more creatively and collaboratively. Simultaneously, in 2022, SMS completed an extensive planning process to renew the accreditation with the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. The process required a thorough analysis of quantitative and qualitative data and resulted in a new five-year strategic plan.

Both processes reinforced the need to support teachers' professional development, so they are equipped to serve students' academic and social-emotional needs. SMS introduced a monthly early dismissal, allowing teachers to meet as a Professional Learning Community (PLC). This time to plan and collaborate across grade levels is essential to the vertical and horizontal curricular integration, which is now the school's trademark. In addition, primary and intermediate teams have begun to follow the lead of the junior high team, meeting frequently to ensure further coordination of curricular objectives. As the world of education opens back up, SMS teachers are attending more professional development classes, workshops, and conferences, and the PLC meetings provide opportunities for teachers to share with one another what they have learned.

In effect, SMS teachers, like students, are supported in their own professional goals as well as social-emotional needs and are encouraged to find new ways to grow— creating a true academic community and modeling what it means to be a life-long learner.

4. School Leadership:

The newest iteration of the student-centered philosophy has been led by the current principal, who has worked in Catholic education for 25 years and served SMS for 14 years as one of two kindergarten teachers. This shift in leadership came about at the beginning of the pandemic, at a time when expediency, ingenuity, and familiarity with the school was of essence. The previous spring, SMS students, alongside most worldwide, had transitioned to remote learning for the balance of the school year, and the entire education system was in crisis. The new principal, assisted by her vice principal and administrative staff, supported by parish pastors, took the helm with grit and tenacity. Together, they worked tirelessly to reopen the doors in September to all students— masked, in restricted classroom cohorts, with teachers behind plexiglass partitions built by parent volunteers. That summer, SMS was forever changed.

Since that time, the primary focus of everyone— parents, teachers, staff— has remained squarely on the wellbeing of students. Fortunately, as a small private school, SMS had the freedom to enact its own pandemic protocols, and leadership worked ceaselessly to make certain students' health, social-emotional, and spiritual needs were met, trusting academic achievement would follow. The leadership staff continues to design and redesign the school on a monthly, weekly, and even daily basis to instill students with a sense of normalcy in this ever-evolving world and ensure students and teachers continue to thrive regardless of outside circumstances.

The development of a parent-led Mission Effectiveness Committee was another important outcome of the Covid pandemic. During the early days of the pandemic, concerned parents came together to support the administration as it navigated through the crisis, a group that evolved into its current iteration: a board of parents, representing families of all ages and needs, who provide the principal and staff with honest feedback and constructive criticism of school policies.

Finally, the new ASA position was created in 2022, appointing a long-time junior high teacher as an important conduit for assessing and meeting student needs. As an SMS alumni and a parent of three SMS students, the ASA is uniquely qualified to serve in this role. The ASA's charge is to work with leadership to foster a positive, engaging, and caring environment and a healthy school community. He strengthens school administration by supporting teacher-parent communication, enforcing school disciplinary policies, and mentoring students in need of additional support. The new ASA position keeps students' emotional and mental wellbeing at the forefront of the school's awareness.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

As a Catholic institution, SMS is devoted to ensuring equity, cultural awareness, and respect for any individual who enters its doors. This commitment is explicitly outlined in a newly reworked mission statement: "To educate, inspire and energize children, with an emphasis on Catholic faith, academic excellence, commitment to serve and lead, and the acceptance of others".

At SMS, each student is seen as uniquely individual, possessing a variety of personalities and talents, none without personal struggles and challenges. The support of our principals, pastors, teachers, school psychologist, intervention specialist, and ASA ensures every student is afforded personal attention in a variety of safe places. SMS works with the Council of Child Abuse (COCA) to provide all students, staff, and parents access to an outside source of support, including the implementation of an annual anti-bullying program so each student is treated with the respect he/she deserves.

Throughout the school year, grade levels, and curriculum, SMS students are encouraged to look outward and understand their place in a much larger world. As part of the language arts and social studies curricula, SMS students are invited into the experiences of people who are vastly different from themselves, ranging from a study of Native American cultures in first grade to a cross-comparison of the familiar Adam & Eve narrative

with the Buddha's journey to enlightenment in junior high. The celebration of Black History Month, the study of famous Latin Americans in Spanish classes, and the inclusion of required reading such as the Sanskrit epic The Ramayana; Markus Zusak's The Book Thief; and Linda Sue Park's A Long Walk to Water further push students outside of their own experiences to understand that of others throughout history and in the here and now. The community service offerings mentioned throughout this application provide additional, tangible ways for students to become acquainted with, respect, and seek equity with other cultures.

Indeed, the new five-year strategic plan includes, as one of its two goals, the need to provide more such opportunities to participate in service activities and social justice, focusing on four of the Catholic Social Teachings, including the Life & Dignity of the Human Person, the Care for God's Creation, the Poor and Vulnerable, and the Call to Family, Community, and Participation. To that end, this spring SMS is welcoming the Archdiocese of Cincinnati's Director of African-American Catholic Ministries for a school community conversation on embracing the dignity of life for all peoples and cultures.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

SMS finds success because the school practices what it preaches— both in terms of its faith and commitment to creating lifelong learners. Every individual is seen as a child of God: special and unique, and deserving of the personal attention, which is going to help them to become thoughtful and service-oriented members of a larger society. The goal is to inspire and challenge students every single day and strive to do the same for the most valuable resource at SMS: the teachers.

SMS is a place of academic learning, of challenge and reinvention, of looking at problems as opportunities, and obstacles as a way to think more creatively. This is where success has been found in recent years, emphasizing the continued education of staff, so they are prepared to educate, support, and grow the whole child. In this way, teachers model the same growth perspective mindset expected of students.

At SMS, a true social and academic community exists, in which teachers and staff are open to experimenting with new ideas, assessing the results, and learning from their successes and mistakes alike. SMS is working with outside advisors to ensure the curriculum is vertically and horizontally aligned, developing its primary, intermediate, and junior high teaching teams, encouraging teachers to create comfortable and flexible learning environments, incentivizing teachers to attend continued learning classes and conferences, and providing space and time to share what they have learned with their colleagues.

It is important to note this commitment is one the teachers themselves have made: having endured the pandemic and all its challenges, these are men and women who have chosen not to leave the profession in search of more lucrative or less demanding opportunities, but who have made the decision to STAY and learn new methods for creating an evolutionary learning environment.

This schoolwide commitment to lifelong learning— from the principal, who made the leap from kindergarten teacher to school leader and has embraced her role with humility and inventiveness; to the administrative staff, who took on additional responsibilities; to the teachers, who mentor and guide and challenge one another; to the specialists and outside consultants who bring new perspectives; to the parents, who invest their time, talents, and treasures to fill in any gaps; to the students, who truly feel seen, respected, and challenged— is what makes SMS a place that is never complacent but always striving for excellence.

PART VII - NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION

1. Non-public school association(s): Catholic

Identify the religious or independent associations, if any, to which the school belongs. Select the primary association first.

2. Does the school have nonprofit, tax-exempt (501(c)(3)) status? Yes X No
3. What is the educational cost per student? \$6950
(School budget divided by enrollment)
4. What is the average financial aid per student? \$2050
5. What percentage of the annual budget is devoted to scholarship assistance and/or tuition reduction? 0%
6. What percentage of the student body receives scholarship assistance, including tuition reduction? 85%

PART VIII – NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL ASSESSMENT RESULTS

FOR NORM-REFERENCED TESTS

Non-public schools must report norm-referenced test (NRT) results in reading and mathematics for students tested in grades 3 and higher in the most recent administration of the test within the most recently completed school year (2021-2022)¹. Each school must obtain grade level summary reports from the test publisher for students tested in reading and mathematics for each of these grades.

These reports must include:

1. the number of students tested;
2. the average student scale score or the national percentile equivalent of the average scale score in reading and mathematics **for all students in each tested grade; and**
3. the average student scale score or the national percentile equivalent of the average scale score in reading and mathematics **for each sufficiently large subgroup² in each tested grade.**

Please make notations on these reports to explain results that represent fewer than 95 percent of the students enrolled at the time of testing (e.g., the number of students who took alternative assessments³).

A copy of these reports (in a PDF file) must be uploaded through the National Blue Ribbons Schools Portal.

Also, one hard copy of these reports must be submitted by mail to CAPE with two hard copies of this application.

¹ Because of school closings due to COVID-19, schools may use test results obtained in the fall or spring of 2019 or the fall of 2020.

² Possible subgroups are those identified in Items 4, 6, 7, and 8 in Part II of this application (racial/ethnic groups, ELL students, students eligible for free or reduced meals, and students receiving special education services). A sufficiently large subgroup is one that represents at least 10 percent of the school enrollment as reported in these items.

³ Alternate assessments are used to evaluate the performance of students who are unable to participate in a school's norm-referenced test (NRT) even with accommodations. These assessments are based on the grade-level content covered by the NRT, but at reduced depth, breadth, and complexity. (adapted from National Center on Educational Outcomes)