

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2017 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[ ] Public or [X] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Anne W. Knapke M.Ed.

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Gwynedd-Mercy Academy Elementary

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 816 Norristown Road PO Box 241

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Spring House      State PA      Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 19477-0241

County Montgomery

Telephone (215) 646-4916      Fax (215) 646-7250

Web site/URL http://www.gmaelem.org      E-mail aknapke@gmaelem.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.

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Mrs. Anne Knapke      E-mail aknapke@gmaelem.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Montgomery County School District      Tel. N/A

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.

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mr. Albert Chiaradonna  
(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.

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

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, write N/A in the space.*

## PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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1. 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. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. 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 and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 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.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2011 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
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.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

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

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
  - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
  - Suburban
  - Small city or town in a rural area
  - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	21	13	34
1	14	24	38
2	14	19	33
3	22	19	41
4	21	34	55
5	19	23	42
6	23	25	48
7	16	31	47
8	20	33	53
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	170	221	391

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 3 % Asian
  - 4 % Black or African American
  - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 83 % White
  - 8 % 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 2015 – 2016 school year: 1%

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	2
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	2
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	4
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	411
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.010
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

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

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1%  
4 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 0%  
Total number students who qualify: 0

8. Students receiving special education services: 13%  
50 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>2</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>20</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>17</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>14</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>2</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	11
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	27
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	12
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. 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 14:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

<b>Required Information</b>	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	96%	98%	97%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **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 2016.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
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%

14. 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. 2007

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

GMAE, built on Mercy and rooted in Gospel values, empowers students through enriched educational experiences, inspiring them to service and leadership in the global community.

## PART III – SUMMARY

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Gwynedd-Mercy Academy Elementary (GMAE) is a private, Catholic, co-educational academy committed to providing a high-quality education integrated with Gospel values. Founded in 1861 and sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, GMAE combines 155 years of academic excellence and innovative teaching methodologies with a mission of Mercy to serve others locally and globally. GMAE embodies a rich tradition steeped in Mercy that encourages a sense of humility and compassion for humanity, furthering our commitment to educating the whole child. Our student-centered approach fosters an unsurpassed passion for learning, and prepares students for leadership roles that will leave an indelible mark on our diverse, global society.

Central to GMAE's identity are the values instilled by the Sisters of Mercy. Catherine McAuley founded the Congregation of the Religious Sisters of Mercy in Dublin, Ireland, on December 12, 1831. The Sisters dedicated themselves to the service of the poor, the sick, and the uneducated, namely teaching young women and children the skills they would need to support themselves in life. Education and service to others are the two building blocks upon which the Sisters of Mercy were built.

GMAE's commitment to academic excellence is exemplified in our faculty's unwavering dedication to their profession, as they embrace and utilize innovative learning strategies founded in current educational research. Their passion for teaching is instilled in our students whose unparalleled enthusiasm for learning is evidenced by our 97% attendance rate over the past five years. At GMAE, each student is seen as an individual with talents and interests that are celebrated daily. This personalized approach is the key to our student-centered environment, as students are recognized for their achievements and given the confidence to actualize their goals. Students are active participants in the learning process, therefore teachers' roles have shifted from being the leaders of the instruction to being the facilitators of the instruction. As the facilitators, teachers have a clear objective in mind and serve as guides to help students independently or collaboratively reach the desired outcome. In addition, teachers utilize a cross-curricular approach to deliver high-quality instruction that deepens students' understanding of concepts. Students are challenged to make unlikely connections between content areas to drive their creativity and critical thinking skills. Furthermore, teachers integrate technology into their lessons on a daily basis to create meaningful instruction and enhance the academic experience for their students. Our commitment to academic excellence radiates throughout the walls of GMAE and enriches students beyond measure.

The GMAE community fulfills the mission of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy who came to Philadelphia in 1861, uniting to promote systemic change and be advocates of social justice. From kindergarten through eighth grade, students are called to be introspective, reflecting and analyzing how their education, experiences, and actions have an impact on the world around them. Through experiential learning opportunities and service learning initiatives, students are engaged in community efforts to better the world and are inspired to make a difference. The Community of Caring program is a school-wide initiative that teaches about the pillars of character development including respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, citizenship, fairness, and caring. Most recently, students participated in a "Look for the Good" gratitude campaign. This ongoing cross-curricular project promoted gratefulness through art projects, writing activities, and a large wall filled with notes of gratitude. Students also used this opportunity to increase their civic engagement by recognizing "hometown heroes" in the local community. Students hosted a school-wide assembly sharing letters, speeches, songs, and a student-made video to show their outpouring of appreciation. Other school-wide service projects include a collection for Dollars for Peru to support Mercy missions in South America, Coats for Kids which provides warm coats for the homeless, and the St. Vincent's Project where students stock the pantry of the parish at Thanksgiving and shop for Christmas gifts for less fortunate families. Being exposed to multicultural communities fosters a sense of inclusion that is the hallmark of a Mercy school. Our students realize how the value of service for others makes the world a better place.

The recognition as a 2007 National Blue Ribbon School gave us the platform to showcase GMAE's commitment to academic excellence. Completing the National Blue Ribbon School application process, coupled with our Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools reaccreditation in 2010, enabled us to

recognize the necessity to meet the diverse learning needs of all students, resulting in the addition of a school counseling program and the creation of the McAuley Learning Center. Both programs have allowed us to offer a Mercy education to a greater number of students with diverse learning needs, while holding true to our core Mercy values and philosophy of fostering leadership skills within each of our students. Having been recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School makes us proud as well as humbled, realizing that the work of Mercy is never a completed task, but a way of life.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

GMAE provides a high-quality education through a comprehensive, integrated curriculum aligned with national and Archdiocesan standards. GMAE's commitment to excellence ensures that our students will be college and career ready, as we prepare them to be responsible, active citizens in a global community. Therefore, emphasis on the 21st century learning skills of communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking are essential as we equip our students with an education that prepares them for their future. The obligation to build 21st century competencies throughout the core curriculum is critical to advancing academic achievement, promoting and expanding civic opportunities, and creating a well-rounded, academic experience.

The teachers at GMAE have a shared vision for academic excellence that is student-centered and committed to the teaching of the whole child. As teachers guide students through the learning process, they encourage student-driven exploration and authenticate each student's educational experience with problem- or project-based learning. Teachers deliberately cultivate a learning environment where student choice and student voice are paramount, reinforcing the importance of civic literacy and democratic engagement in our elementary school environment.

The reading/English language arts curriculum utilizes an integrated approach to promote the development of fluent readers, articulate writers and speakers, discerning listeners, and thorough researchers. A balance of fiction and nonfiction selections support students as they read and write across all genres. In the primary grades, guided reading and literature circles develop the early literacy skills of phonemic awareness, decoding, oral reading fluency, word study, and comprehension. Students participate in Writer's Workshop as they learn the proper conventions in grammar, usage, and mechanics. As critical readers and writers, they learn strategies to analyze and interpret various genres of literature, literary elements, and figurative language. Through purposeful planning, teachers create ways for students to dig deeper, making connections that are text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world. Students participate in the Reading Olympics, Language Arts Olympiads, Forensics competitions, and numerous essay competitions.

The mathematics program uses a systematic and sequential approach centered around the development and application of mathematics skills. This is achieved through instruction that builds on students' prior knowledge and experiences, and focuses on problem-solving and reasoning strategies that allow students to demonstrate their mathematical understanding. Algebraic concepts are deconstructed as students engage in mathematical discourse supporting or defending their findings. Most recently, students in the Honors Math program used these skills to coordinate the dimensions for a school-wide, pink human breast cancer ribbon in honor of a faculty member. Their creativity and efforts were recognized nationally by several news outlets and reached more than 1.5 million viewers on social media around the world. In addition, students participate in the Continental Math League and Mathletes.

Students participate in an integrated STEM curriculum, applying scientific principles to solve real-world problems. Students are challenged to think analytically, critically, and creatively while engaging in scientific, hands-on explorations and investigations. One of this year's student-driven STEM projects focuses on sustainability with the construction of a geodesic dome greenhouse. Students are investigating and analyzing ways to create an optimal outdoor environment for plant growth. Students participate in experiences beyond the traditional classroom setting, including the National Science Teachers Association's Exploravision competition, the National Science Olympiads, Science Fair, Engineering Club, MakerSpace, and Genius Hour. Our STEM curriculum is all-encompassing and embraces the concept of trial and error, encouraging students to focus on the process as the vehicle for success, rather than the product.

The social studies curriculum encompasses four specific strands: history, geography, citizenship, and ethics. Students examine primary source materials, analyze maps, and interpret graphs to acquire knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a responsible citizen in a multicultural, interdependent world. In the primary grades, students' roles within a democratic society are identified through an understanding of their

school, family, and community, as well as their local, state, and national government. In fifth and sixth grade, the emphasis is on the Western and Eastern hemispheres, its history, culture, and regions to expand the horizons of our students. Throughout seventh and eighth grade, students are given a firm grounding in American history. Field trips to Philadelphia, New York City, the State Capitol, and Washington D.C. further civic learning and authentic engagement. Additionally, students establish classroom constitutions, host Ellis Island's Immigration Day, create a living history museum, compete in Social Studies Olympiads, conduct school elections, participate in service learning, complete current event projects, and commemorate historical events or accomplishments of American heroes.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

GMAE's fine arts program includes weekly instruction in art, music, and dance. The visual arts curriculum introduces children to the history of art, focusing on a wide variety of media. A strong emphasis is placed on cultivating students' natural curiosity of the world around them by supporting creativity, critical thinking skills, and individuality. As students grow, the art curriculum expands and matures with them. Students are challenged to see the extraordinary within the ordinary, and to incorporate interdisciplinary skills and knowledge to enhance their creative process. The in-depth study of Renaissance Art, Impressionism, African Art, as well as Modern Art help to directly integrate the social studies curriculum into the study of art. All students in kindergarten through eighth grade participate in a general music class each week. The music classroom affords all students an enjoyable, active learning environment where individuality is praised and cultivated, creativity is fostered and developed, and success can be achieved through multiple pathways. Students use a variety of media including singing, speech, movement, instruments, and technology. This expands their knowledge of music theory, history, and general music concepts; while enhancing their confidence, critical thinking skills, and leadership skills. Students may also participate in band, choir, or private lessons for voice or piano. Throughout each grade level, formal dance classes such as ballet, tap, jazz, and acrobatics are integrated into the physical education program to help develop body awareness and gross motor skills. Students are given the opportunity to share their musical and artistic talents through Liturgical services, recitals, performances, and an annual musical production.

Physical education is a weekly class that emphasizes physical fitness, skill development, and movement. The program in kindergarten through second grade focuses on self-spatial awareness, body management, and safety, while performing various fundamental movement activities. In third through fifth grade, students build upon skill themes that provide the foundation necessary to excel in various team, individual, and cooperative sports. Group activities in sixth through eighth grade emphasize physical fitness, skill development, rules interpretation, and spontaneity through lead-up games, as well as other group and competitive activities. Health classes are offered weekly to all students focusing on nutrition, systems of the body, physical and mental health, drug and alcohol awareness, and personal health concepts.

GMAE is in explicit compliance with the U.S. Department of Education's foreign language requirements and exceeds the minimum hours of instruction. The foreign language program offers both French and Spanish to all students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Kindergarten through fifth grade students attend world language classes multiple times per week, with one semester in French and the other in Spanish. Emphasis in the elementary grade levels is primarily on conversational skills, both speaking and listening. Middle school students in sixth grade choose French or Spanish, which they continue to study exclusively through eighth grade. The focus is on communication and comprehension in the target language, as well as an appreciation of the culture. The goals of this program are to foster global awareness and to encourage students to use their language skills in real life settings.

Technology has become the cornerstone between curriculum and the development of 21st century competencies as we prepare students for the digital age. Students in kindergarten through eighth grade are exposed to a variety of technology resources that support the core curriculum. Every classroom is equipped with an interactive whiteboard. Students in kindergarten through third grade have iPads in their classrooms, while our fourth through eighth grade students are 1:1 with tablets. Science and math teachers also utilize document cameras to further enhance their instruction. In addition to this everyday technology, students in kindergarten through eighth grade also attend a technology class in our computer lab once a week that focuses on keyboarding skills, technological literacy, digital citizenship, coding, and most recently the use

of two 3-D printers. Students also utilize various digital platforms to complete cross-curricular activities derived from the core curriculum.

GMAE's Catholic identity is rich in tradition and woven throughout the entire curriculum. Religious instruction is taught daily at each grade level, and is centered on spiritual and faith development to enable children to learn and live their faith. As children study about God, prayers, sacraments and service to others, they learn how to integrate Mercy values and attitudes into their daily lives. The Community of Caring program supports the curriculum through class meeting discussions that center on acceptance and appreciation of differences.

### **3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:**

GMAE's commitment to excellence includes meeting the diverse needs of all students: academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. This is accomplished through multiple levels of individualization and differentiation of instruction for every student. GMAE's tiered model of support consists of increasing levels of differentiation based on the varying needs of the students, and is implemented by GMAE's Learning Support Team. The team, comprised of the Principal, Vice Principal, Director of Curriculum, McAuley Learning Center teacher, and school counselor, meet weekly to discuss students' needs or areas of concern in the general student population. These meetings are the foundation of individualized support for each child.

Small class sizes, passionate educators, curriculum resources, a full-time guidance counselor, and several highly-qualified classroom assistants contribute to the minimum level of support offered to every student in the school. This level of differentiated instruction encompasses opportunities for remediation and enrichment in all areas of the curriculum. The reading series includes materials to support and enrich various learning needs. Teachers in the primary grades individualize reading instruction with Fountas and Pinnell's Leveled Readers to develop students' decoding skills, oral fluency, and comprehension abilities. Teachers in the intermediate and middle school grades practice literature circles and small-group instruction, promoting student choice through varied assignments. Differentiation in mathematics is achieved through small, homogeneous groups, and includes opportunities for support and enrichment of all concepts. Teachers reinforce math skills weekly using interactive online programs that track student progress. Kindergarten through third grade students participate in Creative Thinking Skills and MakerSpaces, allowing for exploration of complex, high-level concepts. In fourth through eighth grade, students discover areas of interest through allotted time called Genius Hour. Study skills are taught weekly to all students. Additionally, the school counselor creates classroom lessons focusing on empathy, bullying awareness, goal-setting, and student safety. Individual students may consult the counselor at any time.

Students at the secondary level of support are those who have not made adequate progress at the minimal level of differentiation. To further support these students, a teacher from the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit offers remediation in both reading and mathematics. A school-based, pre-referral intervention plan may suggest classroom-based interventions. In addition, the counselor may have more regular involvement with these students, offering formal observation or weekly engagement to focus on explicit skill development. Students who have been identified as struggling with articulation or language issues receive speech therapy on a weekly basis.

Students at the tertiary level of support are those that have not experienced classroom success with a moderate level of intervention. At this level, students have had a formal psychoeducational evaluation and received an accommodation checklist. The accommodation checklist provides teachers with classroom-based interventions, as well as pull-out support with a full-time, certified, special education teacher in the McAuley Learning Center. Various supports are individualized based on student need, including push-in and pull-out support, Wilson and Orton-Gillingham instruction in reading, and differentiated assessments such as oral testing or modified spelling lists.

The Accelerated Challenge Center program is available for students in fourth through eighth grade who require more intensive differentiation because of a combination of high intelligence and outstanding classroom performance. Students encounter a challenging curriculum based around project- and problem-

based learning. Honors mathematics classes are offered as well for high performing students in fourth through eighth grade. Students may also be recommended for the John Hopkins' Center for Talented Youth Program.

Norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessments are critical in ensuring that each child's needs are appropriately met. Every student in kindergarten through fifth grade takes the Diagnostic Reading Assessment and/or Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills assessment to identify areas for growth. Also, the TerraNova assessment is given to students in second through seventh grade to track student progress each year and inform instructional practices. Test data is reviewed to identify patterns in performance and outliers. Most recently, students in eighth grade participated in the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Administration reviews every assessment that is given to students to monitor progress, with recommendations made regarding reteaching skills where applicable. Assessments are used to implement early intervention strategies and reinforce explicit instruction.

GMAE's multiple levels of support, individualization, differentiation, and varied assessments support high-quality instruction, and meet a variety of learning needs. GMAE is dedicated to using these best practices to further expand each tier of support to maximize student achievement.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

GMAE celebrates its mission by nurturing students in an atmosphere of respect, high expectations, responsibility, and trust. Students feel safe within their learning environment and are encouraged to reach the highest standards of excellence with support from dedicated faculty and committed parents. Challenging academic curricula, an extensive fine arts program, team-building athletic programs and clubs, and numerous service opportunities enliven each student's gifts, as well as promote success and leadership. Through active, hands-on instruction, students are engaged in the learning process and motivated to contribute their talents and gifts within and beyond the school setting.

Supportive and nurturing student-teacher relationships are developed in the Advisory Program, Student Council, Junior National Honor Society, National History Day, Mathletes, Continental Math League, Reading Olympics, Student Broadcast Team, Forensics, Fine Arts programs, and other enrichment activities. Through a wide and varying range of opportunities, students observe and develop leadership skills, furthering their commitment to stewarding the Mercy charism.

Developing the faith life of the school community is paramount. Daily religion classes, participation in liturgies, sacraments, retreats, and weekly Community Gathering provide experiences for prayer, reflection, and social and emotional growth. A Mercy education is distinguished by service. GMAE's community participates in numerous local and global outreach activities. These impactful experiences strengthen the students' awareness of their Mercy commitment and civic duty to those in need.

Our collaborative culture supports the needs of both students and teachers. Teachers' opinions are sought out and valued during formal and informal meetings and discussions. In a recent survey, teachers noted ways in which they felt supported as professionals at GMAE. The hard work of our teachers is truly appreciated and recognized by students, parents, and the administration.

GMAE is proud of the significant longevity among its faculty, with 86% of the teaching staff having more than five years' experience at GMAE. Teachers also have the benefit of substantial funding for continuing education and professional development. GMAE has ongoing access to curriculum resources and state-of-the-art technology to enhance instruction and increase student achievement. This provides the ideal combination of professional experience and expertise, tempered with outstanding insight into the newest trends and practices in education and learning.

During a recent retreat at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Mercy, faculty expressed how teaching at GMAE is a vocation. The presence of such a calling enables our educators to go above and beyond to maximize students' learning experiences and successes. GMAE is an exceptional school made up of extraordinary individuals. The support of a committed faculty, the strong academic and religious programs, diverse extra-curricular activities, and numerous leadership opportunities create a solid foundation for each student and educator to develop, learn and achieve.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

One of the primary beliefs of Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, is "to whom much is given, much is required." Students, parents, faculty, and staff at GMAE are blessed to be part of a strong school community, built on Mercy, rooted in Gospel Values, and committed to excellence.

Our weekly Community Gathering exemplifies community engagement at GMAE. During this school-wide event, students, faculty, and staff gather to pray, recite the Pledge of Allegiance, and share classroom activities and achievements. Recently, the seventh grade shared their unique vocabulary projects using online design tools, and a third grade student presented her fundraiser for the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia which raised over \$2,000. Our Community Gathering, often attended by parents and guests, is an integral part of the mission of Mercy at GMAE.

To further the success of each child, it is essential to enlist each parent as engaged partners in our school community. Parent partnership at GMAE exists in many ways: a thriving Parents' Organization, Development Council, guest speakers in class, lunch and recess volunteers, and mystery readers. Social activities foster growth and further the mission of the school. Fundraising thrives through our parent-led school auction, and parents grow and learn together through continuing education and parent training programs.

Through the communication of student achievements and educational programs and initiatives, we strive to keep all stakeholders informed and committed to the excellence that is the hallmark of a Mercy education. This is accomplished through consistent contact with parents, weekly e-newsletters, student communication folders, social media posts, and an electronic parent portal, to name a few.

We see the significance of student engagement through student leadership at GMAE. Student leadership opportunities begin in the primary grades as students are encouraged to participate in and initiate service projects. Students at all levels are encouraged to take ownership in group projects and present their work. Student Council elected representation begins in sixth grade. In eighth grade, students are elected representatives for the whole school.

There is a direct correlation between student achievement and the involvement and engagement of all members of the GMAE community, demonstrated by the success of our graduates each year. After years of growing and learning in our unique community, our graduates are accepted into competitive college-prep high schools where they are capable, prepared scholars and leaders.

### **3. Professional Development:**

Professional Development at GMAE is continuous. Faculty and staff establish annual professional goals that provide the framework for ongoing professional development. All of our educators are committed to staying current with best practices in education and realize the importance of being lifelong learners. The time and effort spent to enhance their teaching instruction is evident in every classroom every day. The faculty and staff at GMAE pursue enrichment in ways that will benefit them professionally, as well as their classrooms and the entire school community.

As a mission-based organization, faculty and staff are challenged to establish a nurturing environment that is centered around the whole child, preparing them to become leaders in a global society. To fulfill this mission, GMAE uses a blend of differentiated instruction, flipped learning, cross-curricular lessons, creative thinking skills, and technology integration, all of which are teacher-driven and supported by ongoing professional development. Professional development opportunities are targeted to specifically enhance student achievement and school improvement. Teachers are then asked to share newfound knowledge and skills with their colleagues. For example, an innovation conference at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology resulted in the integration of MakerSpaces and Genius Hour into the curriculum. Additionally, a Google symposium led to the implementation of the Google Drive platform used to bridge the home-school connection and ease the access of storing and sharing information.

Professional development comes in many forms: graduate studies, workshops, conferences, classroom visits both within and outside our school, and through professional learning communities. All of these offerings provide educators with the opportunity to learn from their peers and from experts in related fields. The administration at GMAE encourages its faculty and staff to share their professional development experiences in the form of in-service presentations, grade level meetings, and in some cases, as speakers at educational conferences. In addition to aligning professional development with academic standards, all opportunities must be approved by the administration to ensure there will be a benefit to both the teacher as an individual and to the school community as a whole.

#### **4. School Leadership:**

GMAE is sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic Community of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. Governance is shared with a Board of Trustees whose members are committed to the mission of Mercy education. The role of the board is delineated in the by-laws established by the Mid-Atlantic Community. The board members' areas of expertise provide support to the administration in matters of environment, finances, institutional advancement, and mission integration/board affairs.

The Principal provides the vision and leadership to ensure that the school community works collaboratively to foster the mission of the school. The administrative staff, all leaders with unique backgrounds and skills, report directly to and work collaboratively with the Principal. This leadership team oversees specific areas of responsibility that create and sustain a learning community devoted to academic excellence, leadership, and Mercy values.

As the leadership team is made up of members who have been at GMAE for many years and those who are relatively new to the school, team building activities have been and will continue to be essential to ensure a unified, well-functioning leadership model. Such recent activities include attending the 2016 Mercy Education Leadership Academy in Manchester, NH this past July, as well as brainstorming activities related to best instructional practices, parent communication, and school safety procedures.

Just as the administrative leadership team works collaboratively with each other, it is also critical that the team fosters a collaborative culture whereby faculty members are respected as teacher leaders. Teachers' opinions are sought out and valued when making decisions that best meet the academic, developmental, and spiritual needs of the students. Recently, teachers and administration have worked together to improve student learning and parent communication. Such efforts include enhancing course offerings to ensure they are vertically aligned with surrounding high schools, creating new schedules for Back-to-School Parent Night and Parent-Teacher Conferences, and revising report cards and progress reports.

Parental leadership and partnerships are essential for student achievement and school success. GMAE is most fortunate to partner with parent leaders in all aspects of the school community. This integral partnership between parents and faculty creates, sustains, and enhances the unique educational experience for each student. Parents serve in leadership capacities within the Parents' Organization and Development Council. In addition, parents continue to be critical stakeholders in facilitating enriched student learning opportunities; serving as homeroom parents; mentoring club and service projects; and coaching for athletic, forensic, and Reading Olympics teams.

## PART VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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GMAE inspires each student to fulfill his or her potential through a comprehensive and challenging curriculum. The primary practice that has been most influential in determining the school's success is providing a high-quality education through individualized instruction for every student. Individualized instruction emphasizes the uniqueness of each learner by identifying their academic needs and individual interests. By providing instruction accordingly, students are actively engaged in the learning process and challenged to apply higher-order thinking skills as they compose, create, experiment, and discover.

Through small class sizes, ongoing assessments of students' learning needs, and a commitment to current best practices in education, teachers maximize the opportunity for student growth. This optimal learning environment blends traditional teaching practices with the philosophy of differentiated instruction to expand learning possibilities for all. In addition to various classroom assessments, teachers review a comprehensive analysis of the annual standardized test results to further individualize the instruction for each student. The analysis and assessments are utilized to address individual student's needs and inform the way instruction is presented, including, but not limited to, visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic modes of instruction.

Opportunities for individuality abound in and out of the classroom as students explore and showcase their interests ranging from science, technology, and broadcasting, to school leadership, athletics, the arts, and community service. Students have numerous opportunities to share their talents in front of a wide variety of audiences during Community Gathering, special assemblies, and frequent grade-level or school-wide performances, creating poised and eloquent speakers. Through non-traditional projects, students are encouraged to not just think "outside the box," but to get rid of "the box" entirely. These opportunities enhance learning, allowing students to demonstrate their knowledge and creativity in a way that is meaningful to them, as well as affirm our teachers' commitment to 21st century learning. Most recently, students presented projects using cutting-edge technology to create stop-motion animation, virtual reality, and whiteboard animations.

Individualized instruction gives all of our students the means to overcome adversity, develop resiliency, and generate autonomy; paving the way for academic, social, and emotional success. Such instruction has prepared our eighth grade students for the academic rigor of competitive, college preparatory high schools, evidenced by the success rate of our graduates. Over the last ten years, nearly 20% of our eighth grade students have earned high school scholarships, including nearly \$500,000 awarded during this current school year.

## PART VII – NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION

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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?      \$12675  
(School budget divided by enrollment)

4. What is the average financial aid per student?      \$685

5. What percentage of the annual budget is devoted to scholarship assistance and/or tuition reduction?      5%

6. What percentage of the student body receives scholarship assistance, including tuition reduction?      38%

**PART VIII – ASSESSMENT RESULTS FOR NORM-REFERENCED TESTS**

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**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Math

**Test:** Terra Nova 3

**Grade:** 3

**Edition/Publication Year:** 2010

**Publisher:** CTB/McGraw-Hill, LLC

**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2015-2016
Testing month	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	642.9
Number of students tested	55
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Math  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2010

**Test:** Terra Nova 3  
**Publisher:** CTB/McGraw-Hill, LLC

**Grade:** 4  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2015-2016
Testing month	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	653.5
Number of students tested	45
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Math  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2010

**Test:** Terra Nova 3  
**Publisher:** CTB/McGraw-Hill, LLC

**Grade:** 5  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2015-2016
Testing month	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	678.9
Number of students tested	50
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Math  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2010

**Test:** Terra Nova 3  
**Publisher:** CTB/McGraw-Hill, LLC

**Grade:** 6  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2015-2016
Testing month	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	703.6
Number of students tested	47
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Math  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2010

**Test:** Terra Nova 3  
**Publisher:** CTB/McGraw-Hill, LLC

**Grade:** 7  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2015-2016
Testing month	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	722.6
Number of students tested	53
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Reading/ELA  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2010

**Test:** Terra Nova 3  
**Publisher:** CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC

**Grade:** 3  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2015-2016
Testing month	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	654.6
Number of students tested	54
Percent of total students tested	98.18
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:** One student became ill and could not complete the Reading section.

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Reading/ELA  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2010

**Test:** Terra Nova 3  
**Publisher:** CTB/McGraw-Hill, LLC

**Grade:** 4  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2015-2016
Testing month	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	668.8
Number of students tested	45
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Reading/ELA  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2010

**Test:** Terra Nova 3  
**Publisher:** CTB/McGraw-Hill, LLC

**Grade:** 5  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2015-2016
Testing month	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	676.3
Number of students tested	50
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Reading/ELA  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2010

**Test:** Terra Nova 3  
**Publisher:** CTB/McGraw-Hill, LLC

**Grade:** 6  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2015-2016
Testing month	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	693.3
Number of students tested	47
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Reading/ELA  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2010

**Test:** Terra Nova 3  
**Publisher:** CTB/McGraw-Hill, LLC

**Grade:** 7  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2015-2016
Testing month	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	704
Number of students tested	53
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**