

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2022 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. Bridget Henderson  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name St. James Episcopal Day School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 445 Convention Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Baton Rouge State LA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 70802-5619

County East Baton Rouge

Telephone (225) 344-0805 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL https://stjameseds.org E-mail info@stjameseds.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\* Reverend Chris Duncan E-mail cduncan@stjamesbr.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana Tel. (504) 895-6634

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. Tyler Gray  
(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, leave .blank*

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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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 2021 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 2016 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
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

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Data should be provided for current school year (2021-2022) 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):
- Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - Middle/Junior high schools
  - High schools
  - K-12 schools
- 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, 2021 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 Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	21	21	42
K	10	16	26
1	12	21	33
2	10	15	25
3	11	11	22
4	11	8	19
5	10	19	29
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	85	111	196

\*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
  - 3 % Asian
  - 4 % Black or African American
  - 0 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 93 % White
  - 0 % 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 2020 - 2021 school year: 15%

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

The 15% mobility is rate is larger than usual due to the fact that St. James welcomed displaced students from Bishop Noland Episcopal School in Lake Charles after their community was ravaged and their school damaged by Hurricane Laura in the Fall of 2020. Once their school reopened later that year, all students returned to Lake Charles.

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, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	16
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	14
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	30
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	196
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.15
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	15

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

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %  
0 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 %  
 With an IEP or 504: 25 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. All students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>1</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>1</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>18</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>2</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>3</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2

10. 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.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher, CTE teacher.	14
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	11
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	2
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

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>	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2016	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	96%	97%	96%	96%	94%
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 2021.

<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  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2015

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

St. James Episcopal Day School is committed to developing each child's unique gifts by providing a strong foundation combining academic excellence and spiritual formation in a warm, loving Christian community.

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school’s nondiscrimination policy.

[www.stjameseds.org](http://www.stjameseds.org)

17. **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**

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St. James Episcopal Day School, founded in 1948, is one of the oldest private schools in Baton Rouge. The school has a seven-decade-long legacy of academic excellence focused on preparing students to meet 21st-century challenges. Located in the heart of Louisiana’s capital, St. James’ campus is housed in historic, architecturally significant buildings, and students have access to the state’s storied history and cultural legacy through walking field trips and excursions to a wide range of cultural and historic sites.

St. James offers students in PreK-3 through 5th grade a rich and challenging curriculum that balances traditional and innovative teaching methods designed to nurture the whole child. Students participate in experiential and service learning, cultivate their curiosity, and develop a lifelong love of learning. All St. James students experience an integrated and accelerated curriculum designed to exceed national and state standards, and the curriculum incorporates character development and spiritual education.

With a 7 to 1 student-to-faculty ratio, the level of individualized instruction is unparalleled in the Baton Rouge area, ensuring that students have the personalized support they need to grow academically, socially, and emotionally.

Teachers use a variety of innovative teaching practices to foster collaborative learning efforts such as project-based learning and authentic assessments. Through differentiated instruction, and with the help of enhancement teachers, the school takes a holistic approach to meeting all learners where they are and helping them reach their fullest potential.

A primary focus at St. James in the past few years has been curriculum. The addition of a curriculum specialist has facilitated the development of a vertically aligned program of studies. Using state and national standards as a guide, alignment has been accomplished through the collaborative efforts of teachers within and between grade levels. An examination of the physical plant led to relocating classrooms to create three learning zones: early childhood, lower elementary, and upper elementary. Creating Professional Learning Communities, fostering communication among vertical partners, sharing resources, and facilitating smoother transitions for students are just some of the positives that we have realized with the restructuring.

Social-emotional learning and character education are integrated throughout the entire St. James experience. St. James’ robust social-emotional programming, led by a nationally-certified counselor, gives students the tools needed to understand and manage their emotions at every age. Weekly guidance lessons teach students how to identify and name their emotions and develop the social and communication skills for success in middle school and beyond.

St. James espouses the Responsive Classroom philosophy which focuses on creating a positive classroom community through a student-centered, community-based approach to classroom management. Morning meetings and weekly chapel provide community-building, social-emotional learning, and character development for all students, and students enjoy a multitude of opportunities for service and leadership. Whether it is engaging in service work on campus, leading donation drives to put together “We Care Bags” for people in need, being a part of the student council, or leading chapel services, students practice civic responsibility and social engagement both in and out of the classroom, helping to prepare them to be future community leaders and citizens.

St. James fosters a strong sense of community, both on campus and in the downtown neighborhood. The school hosts community events such as weekly worship services, family picnics, an annual STEM night, a Thanksgiving feast, and curriculum-linked events specific to grade levels, such as Pioneer Day, Candy Elections, State Fair, and a special pinning ceremony for the graduating 5th graders.

Additionally, St. James has implemented culturally responsive teaching practices based on the following core characteristics of responsive teaching: (1) that teachers are empathetic and caring; (2) that they are reflective about their beliefs about people from other cultures; (3) that they are reflective about their own cultural frames of reference; and (4) that they are knowledgeable about other cultures.

COVID-19 presented St. James with many of the same challenges that schools across the country faced, but as a small institution with small class sizes, the school was better positioned than some schools to adapt to teaching and learning during a global pandemic. St. James moved to distance learning in March 2020. During that time, the school hired a technology consultant to train the faculty in online instruction and to facilitate the adoption of distance learning platforms.

Under the guidance of a Covid Taskforce, St. James was able to reopen campus for in-person learning in August of 2020 by putting into place targeted mitigation measures, including converting physical spaces to maximize social distancing (for example, our STEM lab became a dining space) and implementing voluntary weekly testing for students and faculty. The school hired additional personnel to assist with lunch so students were able to safely eat on campus, added handwashing stations and water bottle fillers, strictly adhered to a cohort model for students, engaged in contact tracing and quarantines, hired a nurse to monitor student health and safety, and performed temperature checks daily.

In the aftermath, students have thrived. Returning to in-person instruction so quickly by implementing stringent health and safety protocols means that students did not regress, and they enjoyed all of the benefits of in-person learning and socialization during an otherwise difficult time.

St. James has twice been honored to receive a Blue Ribbon Award in 2009 and again in 2015. The recognition has helped distinguish St. James as a top-performing school in the community and indicates the high level of academic excellence that the school has consistently achieved. It has boosted admissions and enrollment, helped with the recruitment of faculty and students, and positioned St. James as a leader in the Baton Rouge and Episcopal school communities, setting the standard for excellence. It has also fostered self-reflection and continual growth among leadership and faculty to strive to meet the expectation of the School Board and the Vestry to maintain Blue Ribbon status.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

#### **1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas:**

Students in PreK-3 through 5th grade at St. James experience an integrated and accelerated curriculum designed to exceed national and state standards. Classes incorporate experiential and service-learning as well as character development and social-emotional growth.

St. James offers a rich curriculum that builds the necessary literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills students will need for success in middle school and beyond. From fostering strong independent readers and skilled writers to teaching analytical and creative thinking in social studies to using hands-on, inquiry-based learning methods to cultivate a lifelong love of discovery, innovation, and experimentation, teachers use a variety of methods to guide students to become strategic, independent, and creative thinkers.

Four years ago, teachers and school leadership collaborated to create quarterly learning guides based on state and national standards for the core content areas. Teachers work collaboratively to develop curriculum using a backward-design approach. Student data provides the foundation for making decisions about curricular approaches and for evaluating student success. Curricular approaches and materials are evaluated regularly based on teacher observation, learning standards, and assessment data. Teachers utilize formative and summative assessments to inform and evaluate student learning. Writing samples, reading level assessments, and standardized test data are also used to identify areas of strength or target growth areas.

Meeting students where they are is a cornerstone of St. James' instructional approach, and one way the school achieves that goal is through differentiated instruction focused on offering authentic assessments designed to include open-ended tasks so that students can engage with the content at their own level of development and at their own pace. The curriculum features project-based learning with assessments that include performances, exhibitions and demonstrations, observations and experiments, and portfolios.

Technology is integrated into the classroom to foster creative and innovative learning opportunities. At each grade level, students develop age-appropriate, 21st-century digital literacy and technology skills in a safe and educational environment. An Innovation Framework was created to allow for intentional, thoughtful, and structured use of technology in the classroom that maximizes its ability to provide innovative learning experiences for students. Using the Innovation Framework has made curriculum design more fluid and more personalized to the St. James community. The framework takes into account the following areas believed to facilitate innovative learning opportunities: creativity, engagement, assessment/feedback, collaboration, differentiation, critical thinking, and communication. All the while, the St. James philosophy of integrating technology helps support these six areas throughout the learning experience. Through this framework, the school moves students from consumers of technology to creators and innovators.

#### **1b. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

In the primary grades, teachers use a flexible, guided-reading approach to ELA instruction where students develop strong reading skills using a variety of leveled fiction and non-fiction texts to become strategic, independent readers. Through a Writer's Workshop approach, the writing curriculum emphasizes writing across genres and disciplines. Daily, individualized writing conferences are an integral part of the writing program. ELA skills identified by state standards are taught to support the development of effective readers and writers.

In grades 3-5, the instructional focus in reading shifts to the development and application of foundational reading skills and strategies taught through a combination of whole class, small group, and independent reading lessons using novels, short fictional pieces, poems, informative articles, and historical texts. Students at the upper elementary level are taught to read, analyze, and compare multiple texts on the same

topic. The school's curriculum integrates reading and writing with social studies, science, and math content, and students write in all genres, including producing narrative, opinion, and informative writing across content areas.

Vertical alignment in the ELA curriculum ensures that skills development is scaffolded across grade levels through setting clear learning standards and goals. Ongoing collaboration between grade-level teachers ensures standards-based rubrics clearly outline the necessary reading and writing skills students need at each grade level and that those skills appropriately build upon one another. Qualitative and quantitative data in the form of sample student work, ELA scores, and assessment rubrics provide the basis for making decisions about changes to the progression of the curriculum.

At St. James, an interdisciplinary approach to writing across the curriculum integrates ELA skills across all areas of study. For example, 4th grade students practice persuasive writing skills in a project-based learning social studies unit that asks students to take on the role of a realtor, learn about a U.S. state, and craft a compelling argument about why the state is a desirable place to live.

Information hubs such as classroom libraries, the school library, and digital texts provided in partnership with the East Baton Rouge Public Library support this interdisciplinary approach to ELA by providing students with a host of choices to explore their world and develop their digital literacy skills. The library is the information center of St. James and the hub of the language arts and literacy program. Students build essential informational and digital literacy skills, helping them become informed and balanced members of the school and the community. The librarian teams with classroom and enrichment teachers to facilitate research projects, instruct students on library resources and research tools, and help students navigate these resources successfully.

St. James also partners with our parents to provide support to emerging readers at home by training parents on how to best support emerging readers through lunch-and-learns and other forms of parent-faculty collaboration.

### **1c. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

A strong foundation in math and science is essential for 21st-century learners. After two years of extensive research and the purposeful garnering of faculty buy-in, St. James adopted the think!Mathematics curriculum this academic year. The decision to adopt the new curriculum for students in kindergarten through 5th grade occurred as St. James moved from a standards-based approach to a fully integrated math curriculum that provided for more consistency in math terminology and methodology across teachers and grade levels and created a common math language for all. Based on the Singapore math philosophy, this new curriculum uses the Concrete-Pictorial-Abstract approach to guide students in the transition from a pictorial to a symbolic understanding of math concepts. Teachers help students acquire new math skills and concepts through structured, hands-on learning activities where students apply their math knowledge to problem-solving situations. Students at all grade levels are encouraged to use mental math techniques, along with calculation skills, to demonstrate their math proficiency. One critical focus in the math curriculum is communication, with groups of students working together to navigate — and then emerge from — the struggle collaboratively. With a focus on both the math content standards and the mathematical practice standards, the think!Mathematics program focuses not only on what students learn but on how students learn mathematics.

Teachers help their students become mathematically proficient by encouraging them to engage in the math practices of explaining their math reasoning, attending to precision, using mathematical models and drawings, and persevering with problem-solving attempts. 5th graders, for example, use modeling technology in the STEM studio to explore and model logical thinking and computational fluency to solve real-life math problems.

The assessment component of this program provides teachers with formative and summative assessments, which can be differentiated and tailor made to meet the unique needs of students. Assessment data is also tracked through the use of rubrics which can be used to assess students' mathematical writing and progress

toward fact fluency. All assessments within this program provide opportunities for students to apply math skills and concepts to novel problems.

Recognizing the value of extensive professional development on the successful implementation of a new program, St. James has invested heavily in securing the expertise of one of the program's authors to provide training for the math teachers. This includes five days of professional development, two of which provide time for teachers to work alongside the program developer in their own classrooms. Teachers also participate in monthly informational webinars and roundtable discussions and have access to videos of sample lessons and classroom instruction. This high level of professional support has ensured that teachers feel confident about their ability to implement the new curriculum successfully in their classrooms.

This approach to the math curriculum reveals a deeper emphasis at St. James on educating the whole child. The school continually works to improve instruction and deepen student learning to ensure that students are not simply learning math but are also building important social-emotional, interpersonal, and critical thinking skills that will serve them in middle school and throughout their lives. By actively seeking out and adopting a curriculum that would better help students develop independent thinking, problem-solving abilities, and social-emotional skills such as resilience and grit, the deliberate and thoughtful decision-making process about the math curriculum reflects how St. James' larger commitment to nurturing the whole child animates everything the school does.

#### **1d. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Children are naturally deeply curious about the world around them and eager to investigate. Based on state and national science curriculum standards, the early elementary science program encourages students to ask questions, observe, reflect, collaborate, and think expansively about their world and their place within it. Through classroom inquiry and project-based learning, students explore science topics using a hands-on, inquiry-based learning model designed to cultivate a lifelong love of discovery, innovation, and experimentation, all essential to science education.

The cycle of inquiry underpins the school's approach to science education. From PreK-3 through 5th grade, students learn how to explore scientific concepts through conducting an investigation, collecting evidence from a variety of sources, developing an explanation from the data, and communicating and defending their conclusions in age-appropriate ways.

In PreK-3 through 2nd grade, teachers begin by providing rich experiences for the students to develop their interests and curiosities about science-related topics and concepts and then support them in developing questions and ideas for scientific investigations. In 3rd through 5th grade, students work on designing more sophisticated scientific experiments, such as through controlling variables and engaging in fair testing, as well as increasing their ability to communicate and explain their results and defend their thinking and conclusions. This learning model produces confident students ready and eager to move into the middle school science curriculum with the tools and skills they need to be successful scientists, thinkers, and problem solvers.

For example, at the conclusion of a unit on energy transfer, 4th grade students work in groups to design a Rube Goldberg machine using found objects from home and school. After completing the design process, students build their machines, videotape the chain reaction that occurs, and use voice-over technology to explain the energy transfer each step of the way. This engaging project incorporates technology in an innovative way, provides authentic assessment data for teachers, and offers students a creative way to apply their knowledge.

A state-of-the-art STEM lab allows students in PreK-3 through 5th grade to explore science, math, and engineering using project-based learning and to use technology to innovate, problem-find, and problem-solve. From coding and robotics to virtual reality Mobile Immersion Labs, St. James integrates leading-edge technology into the classroom to enhance learning and empower students to explore, examine, and create, preparing them to be problem solvers at school and throughout their lives.

## **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

In grades Pre-K 3 through 5th, the social studies curriculum, based on state and national standards, is primarily concerned with developing each student's awareness of self and his or her place in our ever-changing world. Content is drawn from the basic social science disciplines of history, geography, economics, government/civics, and sociology and integrated into other curricular areas through project-based and hands-on learning. St. James encourages students to learn not just the facts of our society, cultures, and history but to think deeply about the meaning of the topics explored and investigated and to examine the impact of those events, persons, and societal elements on our collective cultural identity.

Each unit culminates in a learning experience or project, where students, for example, explore the relationship between art and history by creating an Abraham Lincoln portrait in the 1st grades' "America and Its People" unit or discover their complex relationship to their world during the "Me on the Map" geography project. In the Famous Americans project, students identify and research a famous American who has significantly impacted our society. Students develop critical thinking skills by exploring questions such as what contributions did the individual make to our society and culture? What impacts on our lives today can the students identify? What would our lives and our society be like if the person had not existed? To culminate the project, students dress up as their famous Americans, with choices ranging from recent inauguration poet Amanda Gorman to Thurgood Marshall to Katherine Johnson, and present a living wax museum complete with ChatterPix digital drawings that serve as narrators for their wax figures.

The unit, like many of the project-based learning activities, integrates learning across the curriculum by combining our social studies concepts and skills with other curricular areas, such as communication and presentation skills, English Language Arts, visual arts, and technology.

## **1f. For secondary schools:**

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

The PreK program at St. James is specifically designed to focus on developmental milestones and pre-academic skills appropriate for children ages 3 to 4 years old. Teachers encourage students' curiosity, nurture the whole child, and ensure graduates of our PreK program are fully prepared to enter kindergarten.

Project-based, whole-curriculum learning experiences play an especially important role in the PreK program at St. James. Thematic units open opportunities for young students to develop a host of age-appropriate skills, including social-emotional, self-care, and cognitive skills. For example, in the Pre-K3 class, students explore clothing in a project-based learning environment where washing clothes is used to help them develop the small muscles in their hands, acquire self-care skills, engage in sensory play, and learn about the chemical process behind soap all at the same time. Sorting and organizing clothes teaches them about color recognition, counting, and sets and classification, while exploring clothing choices and free play with clothing items encourages self-expression and understanding the building blocks of identity.

Vertical alignment is critical in assuring the readiness of students in the early childhood years as they matriculate from the preschool program to the Day School. The school is able to track student progress through assessments, evaluations, observations, and data collection. Through bi-weekly meetings with the Assistant Head of School, the PreK-3 and PreK-4 teachers work collaboratively to evaluate student progress toward benchmarks and plan classroom instruction to meet the needs of the students.

To ensure close curricular alignment between our PreK-3 program and PreK-4 and Kindergarten programs, PreK-3 was moved from the Early Childhood Education Center to the Day School area of our campus, allowing for more collaboration between the faculty in those programs and greater integration of the PreK-3 students into the larger school environment.

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

St. James students participate in a range of enrichment programs and curriculum areas, including art, music, Spanish, STEM, technology, and Christian education, to ensure students have the opportunity to explore the full range of areas of study and disciplines. Whether students are learning portrait photography from a famed local photographer, creating a weekly news show and honing their public speaking skills in the Broadcast Studio, serving as acolytes in our chapel, or participating in our annual all-school music and art show, the St. James curriculum stimulates curiosity and a lifelong love of learning through exposure to a wide range of arts and learning experiences.

Students develop an understanding of STEM concepts through observation, inquiry, research, and experimentation. A state-of-the-art STEM lab allows students in PreK-3 through 5th grade to explore science, math, and engineering using project-based learning. St. James also integrates leading-edge technology, such as coding and robotics, into the classroom to enhance learning and empower students to explore, examine and create. The teachers are committed to helping young students use technology responsibly and creatively, preparing them for citizenship in today's world. Hands-on and pen-to-paper academic work remains critical for student success. But teachers also use research and up-to-date training and professional development to inform the philosophy of integrating technology in students' learning. At different grade levels, students develop 21st-century skills while utilizing technology in a safe and educational environment.

The arts at St. James provide opportunities for each child to observe, record, and interpret the world in which they live. From designing digital art to creating their own version of the famous Blue Dog painting by Louisiana artist George Rodrigue, students use project-based learning to create, connect, and explore the arts and develop their creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration skills. Community art is also an important part of the art program at St. James. For example, students exhibit their artwork in locations throughout the larger community such as our nearby downtown library branch. Through music, students discover the joy and satisfaction of music-making through singing, creating, moving, listening, and performing, thus supplying the foundation for lifelong musical understanding and appreciation.

Social-emotional learning and character education are integrated throughout the entire St. James experience. The school provides a strong social-emotionally supportive learning community steeped in the Episcopal faith that reinforces the dignity and individuality of each child as expressed through the Anglican tradition. Spiritual education at St. James includes weekly religion classes for each grade, twice-weekly chapel services, and spiritual and social-emotional education and support from our school chaplain. Students take an active role in leading chapel service by reading lessons, writing and leading prayers, serving as ushers and acolytes, and performing music.

The St. James first-class Broadcast Studio gives students the opportunity to use video production as a tool for classroom learning. Equipped with studio lighting, a green screen, video camera, teleprompter, microphones, and an extensive costume collection, students are provided the space and tools to tell their story in a more powerful way. From a 2nd grade economics unit where students make commercials to interviewing student council candidates for the weekly news show, the Broadcast Studio provides a stimulating place for students to write, direct, hone their interview skills, edit, perform, and create.

The study of language at St. James reflects the school's mission to develop an appreciation for cultural differences and to challenge students to expand their communication abilities and their understanding of different cultures using an immersive but individualized approach to language instruction. The Spanish curriculum gives students the opportunity to practice Spanish speaking and writing skills in a real-world environment. For example, fifth-grade students engage in a project-based learning unit that asks them to write, cast, direct, and perform a play in the target language that is then recorded and broadcast to the entire school.

A strategically designed physical education program that adheres to national standards encourages a lifelong love of fitness with a focus on building active and healthy bodies. The physical education program at St. James provides students an opportunity for skill improvement in a developmentally appropriate environment through physical activities that build movement skills, fitness, fundamental sports skills, and rhythms. Cooperative games allow students to build social-emotional skills, such as cooperation, teamwork, and

communication. Because movement is so critical to learning, St. James increased the frequency of physical education from two days each week to three. The school also offers after-school enrichments designed to give learners additional outlets for physical activity, such as karate, tumbling, and soccer. The school also connects physical education with community-based physical activities, such as participating in local 5K fun runs, Jump Rope for the Heart, and the Louisiana Marathon.

### **3. Academic Supports**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level:**

Less than 10% of St. James students, across all grade levels, perform below grade level. This strong record of student performance can be attributed to early identification and assessment strategies, a focus on differentiated instruction, and the targeted instructional supports in place.

Differentiated instruction that focuses on offering authentic assessments designed to include open-ended tasks helps support students performing below grade level by allowing those students to engage with the curriculum and learn at their own level of development and at their own pace. For example, writing instruction is individualized for students through regular, personalized conferences targeting students' specific abilities and assessed through writing portfolios that allow students to demonstrate growth and teachers to track and monitor student progress toward writing benchmarks. This type of assessment model allows teachers to meet students where they are and tailor instruction to their specific learning needs.

Classes include an academic enhancement teacher who offers personalized support through one-on-one or small group instruction designed to meet each student's individual needs, whether that means providing additional learning support to meet academic benchmarks or reteaching class material.

St. James also offers a range of academic support services designed to meet the needs of neurodiverse students. The certified Reading Recovery teacher provides specialized reading support for readers whose literacy skills fall below their grade level to help ensure reading success and master the fundamentals of reading, such as phonological awareness and decoding skills.

St. James also provides in-house speech and language development screening, partners with a local school that focuses on dyslexia to inform our instructional practices for students with dyslexia-related learning differences, and works with outside therapists and psychologists to provide guidance and support for student accommodations. Cross-grade/cross-class groupings allow students to work at their own pace and with others of varying abilities, interests, ages, and learning backgrounds, providing more flexibility in our curriculum offerings for students at all skill levels and abilities.

#### **3b. Students performing above grade level:**

The certified gifted teacher works with students who exceed academic benchmarks and who need additional enhanced learning opportunities to ensure that their learning needs are being addressed. Often sitting in on part of an academic lesson, the gifted teacher then works with a small group of students who have been identified as performing above grade level to engage in what they term "brain workout" activities designed to help them stretch their cognitive and critical thinking abilities. Academic enhancement teachers also offer tailored, personalized support in one-on-one or small group instruction designed to meet the needs of students performing above grade level by offering enhanced academic experiences for students who are excelling.

Differentiated instruction and authentic assessments also support students performing above grade level. Open-ended assessment tasks allow those students to engage with the curriculum and learn at their own level of development and at an accelerated pace. For example, regular, individual writing conferences can help identify students writing above grade level and provide differentiated learning opportunities designed to meet their specific abilities and academic needs.

#### **3c. Special education:**

While St. James does not offer special education services through an IEP, the school has programs and resources in place to provide support to students with identified learning differences. An example includes the specialized microphones and headsets that are worn by a hearing-impaired kindergarten student and her teacher. Special consideration has been given to the class placement of Downs Syndrome child. In order to respect the wishes of her parents who would like for her to remain in class with neurotypical students as long as possible, St. James has committed to allowing her to experience a dual grade placement. She will remain in PreK-4 for the academic part of the day and join her current peer group in kindergarten for enrichment classes, recess, and other non-academic times. St. James opens the campus to a multitude of outside therapists to serve students during the school day. These include speech/language therapists, occupational therapists, adaptive physical education instructors, physical therapists, and behavior intervention specialists for students identified with autism spectrum disorders. In addition, St. James has formed a partnership with a local school who specializes in dyslexia to assist in identifying students whose reading difficulties extend beyond the scope of service provided by the Reading Recovery teacher and academic support teachers.

**3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:**

**3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant, homeless), if a special program or intervention is offered:**

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

St. James is a small, close-knit school community that cultivates curiosity, exploration, and a lifelong love of learning in the students in a safe and supportive environment. The school focuses on the development of the whole child through providing students the safety and support they need to learn, grow and thrive with a number of supports in place to attend to each student's health and well-being — academically, physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

St. James works to fulfill the students' social-emotional needs while fostering independent thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration. The school focuses on establishing a trusting partnership with students and parents ensuring they feel emotionally and psychologically safe and comfortable in the learning environment.

St. James' robust social-emotional programming, led by a nationally-certified counselor, gives students the tools needed to understand and manage their emotions at every age. Weekly guidance lessons teach students how to identify and name their emotions, how to cope with big feelings, and how to develop effective social and communication skills for success in later years.

The counselor also provides individual and small group counseling as well as whole class lessons for Upper Elementary students. Serving as a liaison between the school and outside counselors and therapists, the counselor works directly with families whose children receive additional support services.

Students leave St. James prepared academically, socially, and emotionally for middle school and beyond.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Building a strong learning community is at the core of a St. James education. Because this is a neighborhood school, many of the parents live and work near campus. That allows a high degree of parent involvement, which is encouraged. Parents are viewed as partners in their student's education. From lunch-and-learns where parents are invited to learn about a range of topics such as the new math curriculum, to opportunities to volunteer for special events, parents are a critical part of the fabric of St. James. Parent-teacher conferences invite parents to meet with their child's teacher to set goals for their learner, celebrate student success, and brainstorm strategies for learning engagement at school and in the home.

The school engages in regular communication with parents and the larger school community through the weekly school-wide newsletter the "Scoop", grade-level newsletters, and a robust social media presence.

The community extends beyond our campus, though. St. James has built relationships and collaborations with a range of community organizations to provide opportunities for service and civic engagement for the students and to foster civic responsibilities and 21st-century citizenship. From partnerships with local low-income schools to partnering with the local nonprofit "One BReath" to host school-wide drives for expectant mothers in need, St. James students have a multitude of opportunities to give and to serve the larger community. The school also enjoys a strong alliance with the other Episcopal schools in Baton Rouge.

Located in downtown Baton Rouge with over twenty cultural resources in walking distance, St. James' learning opportunities extend past the classroom walls. Students enjoy visits to the state capitol, walks along the Mississippi River, and experiential learning in the Louisiana Arts and Science Museum. The East Baton Rouge Library River Center Branch located just down the street is also a frequent field trip destination for students in all grades. This partnership with the public library provides students with a wealth of additional resources such as access to guest authors, special programming, and a place to display student art. Digital texts provided through this partnership with the East Baton Rouge Public Library provide students with a host of choices to explore their world and develop their digital literacy skills.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

St. James' approach to professional development relies on providing teachers the resources and support they need to feel valued and supported. Collaboration is a hallmark of the school's internal professional development processes. Grade level meetings, curriculum coaching, modeling, and collaborative examinations of student data help create a culture of professional development that focuses on improving student learning experiences and outcomes. For example, it was recently identified through grade-level discussions and collaboration that relocating part of the early childhood program to be closer in proximity to the lower elementary classrooms would help facilitate greater integration of the curriculum, foster more collaboration among the faculty, and create a more seamless transition for students academically and in terms of social-emotional development.

External professional development has included targeted training to implement newly adopted instructional strategies and curriculum, such as training in Responsive Classroom, think!Mathematics, and project-based learning with Duke's faculty. The faculty regularly attends webinars, seminars, conferences, and other professional development opportunities to stay up to date on the latest learning and instructional theories and approaches and to encourage innovative and responsive approaches to teaching.

In addition, St. James hired a technology coordinator to help faculty integrate technology in the classroom and use it as a way to facilitate deeper, more engaged learning for students. During the COVID-19 outbreak, the school also utilized additional staff to teach in-person learners and allow lead teachers to conduct synchronous distance learning.

Teachers themselves, though, remain the most critical part of the professional development program at St. James. Providing structured, regular opportunities for self-reflection and encouraging self-identification of professional development goals and objectives ensures teachers are invested in the professional growth process.

Last year, the Head of School and Assistant Head of School revamped the faculty evaluation process to set clear, consistent criteria for performance and evaluation. Half of the faculty will participate in a formal observation each year to identify, in collaboration with the observer, areas of strength and target areas for growth. The other half of the faculty will engage in self-evaluation to facilitate critical reflective practice in their own teaching, strengthen their responsibility and control over their work, and encourage ownership of their own professional development.

St. James has prioritized professional development through a commitment of time and resources, as evidenced by providing release time and stipends for faculty members. Funds are used to support individual areas of growth for certain faculty, such as the school librarian attending a national conference, while a larger portion of the funds are used to support school-wide initiatives, such as training in mindfulness, Responsive Classroom, think!Mathematics, and workshops in project-based learning through the Duke School.

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

The leadership philosophy that guides the school is the growth mindset concept of “Good to Great.” Similarly, the school continually strives for improvement and excellence.

St. James values input and service from all stakeholders—faculty, staff, parents, community members, and most importantly, the students themselves—and using that input to inform decision-making and goals for improvement. Thorough consideration is given to all feedback and options before making a decision. For example, 5th-grade students have an active student council that provides suggestions and feedback to administrators and teachers on a range of topics, and they play an important leadership role throughout the campus, planning and executing campus-wide special events, such as Field Day and Carnival.

The school also believes strongly in building leadership skills among the faculty team and inspiring others to lead and serve. This year faculty committees were formed, creating opportunities for faculty to be leaders in

targeted areas and develop an organizational structure that better serves the learners.

The Head of School also serves as the principal, and the Assistant Head of School's primary focus is on curriculum design and development and instructional and learning support. This leadership structure is relatively new for the school and based on a change in leadership in 2019, which revealed the necessity to shift the role of the curriculum coordinator to the current Assistant Head of School role. This change afforded the teachers more robust instructional support, so that they are better able to successfully differentiate instruction for diverse learners' needs and employ innovative teaching strategies in their classrooms. For example, in this new role, the Assistant Head of School facilitates the implementation of new instructional approaches or differentiated instructional methods by having teachers observe her teaching a lesson to students using the new method. Throughout the lesson, she explains to the teachers the steps taken and the thinking behind the approach. After the lesson, the Assistant Head of School conducts debriefings to discuss the new method and finally observes teachers implementing it in the classroom to provide feedback and further guidance.

St. James also elevated a staff role from the receptionist to Executive Assistant to the Head of School and reorganized some of the duties of the Director of Admissions and Director of Advancement to support communication functions, such as social media and newsletters. This has created an effective leadership team that allows each member to specialize in areas that provide the greatest support for student achievement.

## **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

Culturally responsive teaching and learning are critical for 21st-century learners. This process begins with structured, regular self-reflection and evaluation of current policies and practices that promote inclusivity along with brainstorming and collaboration about ways to apply intentionality to culturally responsive teaching and learning. In practice, this looks like not simply teaching about race during Black History month, but ensuring that age-appropriate and curriculum-based learning about race and inclusivity happens as part of the daily curriculum and by examining library and classroom literature collections to ensure diversity. For example, because part of the goal of the Famous Americans project is to recognize and celebrate the wide range of individuals from diverse backgrounds that have contributed to the development and history of the country, teachers recently identified the project as lacking in Asian American representation, so first graders were tasked with researching and identifying diverse candidates who could be added to the list of suggested historical figures for the project.

Another ongoing initiative has focused on creating even more diversity and representation in our fiction and nonfiction offerings in the school and classroom libraries. This initiative includes conducting strategic planning sessions with the faculty to assess current library titles, identify areas of expansion to create a more representative collection, and brainstorm how current and new texts can be used to support culturally-responsive learning throughout our curriculum. This work will result in a curriculum plan implemented across all grade levels and subject areas. This type of intentional culturally responsive teaching and learning work involving teachers at the ground level has been shown to have real impacts in the classroom in fostering an inclusive learning environment for all students.

As a joint initiative of the Board and School, a Diversity and Inclusion Committee was established. Comprised of parents, school board members, administrators, and teachers, the goal of the committee is to ensure diversity along the many axes of diverse student populations—race, gender, religion, family structure, ability, and more—and to facilitate a welcoming, inclusive learning environment for all in our community, inside and out of the classroom. Out of this committee's work has come a redoubled effort to provide all students with an inspiring instructional experience and school culture that prepares students to navigate, collaborate, and lead in a diverse world. This includes allocating resources toward the intentional inclusion of diverse authors, artists, heroes, and other cultural and historical figures as a meaningful part of the curriculum throughout the year and embedded in every area of curriculum and instruction.

St. James is committed to supporting and welcoming students with a wide range of abilities that reflect the breadth and depth of learners—from neurodiverse learners to individuals with Downs Syndrome to students

who are hearing impaired, the academic and learning support services ensure that the school is able to meet each student where they are and to provide the accommodations and support they need to learn and thrive at St. James.

Parents are again an important partner in creating a culturally responsive learning environment. Parents are invited to share their cultural and religious traditions with the school community. For example, during Hanukkah, a Jewish family shares about the holiday and their traditions associated with it, and first grade students participate in a Diwali festival where they learn about Hinduism.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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St. James' commitment to learning across the disciplines has been instrumental to our institutional success. Many schools engage in cross-discipline collaboration, but at St. James, the curriculum is centered on creating project-based learning experiences that bring together the core disciplines and strong enrichment programs in STEM, the arts, and even physical education. This ensures that students explore concepts and topics in a real-world, holistic context and emerge from projects with a deeper, more complete understanding.

The integration of learning concepts across areas of instruction might lead to, for example, using a bowling unit in P.E. to help kindergarten students explore the science concepts of force and motion and practice math skills in a real-world environment. During a 2nd grade economics unit students create a product, manage a store, and promote their product, all while practicing writing and communication skills, learning the fundamentals of economics, employing math reasoning and computational thinking, and developing greenscreen, editing, and other video technology skills.

St. James' approach to interdisciplinary learning extends beyond curriculum design and projects. Assessments are also interdisciplinary, and grade level teachers across academic areas collaborate to create project assessments and rubrics that include standards for multiple content areas and then work together to evaluate and assess the project holistically. For example, students may work on a project that culminates in a written component assessed both by a science teacher using the lens of scientific writing and conventions and by an ELA teacher using the lens of writing conventions and ELA-based writing standards.

This level of integration and learning across the disciplines leads to a deeper, richer learning process for students than a more traditional approach to learning that often silos concepts and skills within specific academic areas can. This curricular philosophy also has the benefit of supporting those lifelong learning skills that are so critical to student success, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and research and communication skills, and builds real-world knowledge and abilities that will provide lifelong benefits to St. James students.

## PART VII - NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION

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

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?      \$13963  
(School budget divided by enrollment)

4. What is the average financial aid per student?      \$2316

5. What percentage of the annual budget is devoted to scholarship assistance and/or tuition reduction?      4%

6. What percentage of the student body receives scholarship assistance, including tuition reduction?      14%

## PART VIII – NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL ASSESSMENT RESULTS

### FOR NORM-REFERENCED TESTS

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*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 (2019-2020)<sup>1</sup>. 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 subgroup<sup>2</sup> 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 assessments<sup>3</sup>).

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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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)