Dear Friends,

We are excited to share our third edition of our Gesu School Spotlight! These pages provide a glimpse into our Gesu classrooms and the principles that make a Gesu education so invaluable and unique in today’s educational landscape.

This year, we are celebrating Gesu’s 25th Anniversary as an independent Catholic school. We continue to serve and evolve as a national model of transformative inner-city education. As such, we recently adapted our mission statement to reaffirm our commitment to holistic education and civic engagement, while encompassing the tenets of our Jesuit and IHM roots. After deep discussions with our Board of Directors, faculty and staff, and families, we are pleased to share this new iteration:

Inspired by the Jesuit and IHM traditions of social justice, faith, creative hope, and love, Gesu School helps students to transcend all forms of poverty by providing a comprehensive, innovative education. We empower our students to develop their strengths, overcome challenges, and become positive, engaged members of the community and the world.

Thank you for being part of the Gesu School community. We hope you enjoy the pages that follow, which bring our mission statement to life.

Peace and blessings,

Bryan H. Carter
President and CEO

Sr. Ellen Convey, IHM
Principal

Cover photo: The Gesu Gospel Choir shares their joyful voices at the annual Christmas concert in the Church of the Gesu.
Collaborating as Prayer Partners & Class Buddies

To celebrate Catholic School’s Week, Gesu School prayer partners and class buddies enjoyed special activities. Middle school students helped Kindergartners and 1st graders with their Black History Month hero projects on figures like Sojourner Truth and Barack Obama. These role models read stories to their younger buddies and demonstrated how to get an early start with online research.

“It has been an uplifting experience to watch the 8th grade boys work with their buddies. Their time together brings out the best from both classes. The 8th grade boys demonstrate how kind and responsible they can be, and the Kindergartners are attentive and engaged.”

—Kevin Price, Grade 8 Boys Teacher

“I like working with younger people. I want to be a middle school math teacher, so it’s great to get that audience and think about what kinds of classes I want to teach. When I’m working with our buddies, I show a good example of how someone older can be. I find it cool that they can remember, ‘Adrian did that project with me.’”

—Adrian, Grade 8

“I like that I can help our buddies learn about things they might not know and that we already know. I can help them if they have any questions. It’s fun. And they are funny.”

—Destiny, Grade 7
Building Self-Empowerment

Gesu’s 5th grade girls take one period a week to focus on self-worth. After discussing positive body image and an individual’s uniqueness, each student completed a profile on what makes her beautiful, including five qualities or adjectives about her substance and gifts.

“I believe it is essential for this age level to have the liberty to express themselves and become comfortable in the bodies they were blessed with. While there are negative factors in social media and on TV, I want to show the girls there is uniqueness in each of us. We do not have to limit ourselves to look like a celebrity or famous actress.”

— Mariah Casillas, Grade 5 Girls Teacher and ACESJU Volunteer

“One of many points of differentiation for Gesu School is single-gender classrooms from grades 3-8, in place since 1994. Girls are taught by a female teacher-leader and boys by a male teacher-leader. The children benefit from an increased focus in the classroom. The girls find their voices sooner. The boys excel by creating a competitive spirit in the classroom.”

— Bryan Carter, President and CEO
At Gesu School, we educate the whole child, from academics to character development. To help students confront challenges and strive for success, Gesu intentionally integrates soft skills into our curriculum. In each grade, students embrace the MAGIS of Gesu.

**JAVON, GRADE 7**

*Future Scientist*

"I would try to get a job focusing on science. I LIKE SCIENCE BECAUSE IT REQUIRES QUICK THINKING AND HARD WORK TO FIND OUT FORMULAS AND EQUATIONS. Math is also helpful for formulas and cures. With this, I could make devices to help people."

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**Sharing Why We Love Gesu School**

**REFLECTIONS DURING CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK**

- **Commitment to Learning**
- **Ability to be a problem solver**
- **Strong work ethic**
- **Faith**
- **Empathy**

"One characteristic of a Catholic school is love because they care for all of the students."

—Khalil, Grade 8

"The best thing is the teachers."

—Laila, Grade 4

"Commitment to learning, ability to be a problem solver, strong work ethic, faith, empathy"

—Kayla, Grade 5

"A Catholic school is a righteous and holy place. I am thankful that they really care about our learning."

—Talan, Grade 6
Learning Civic Engagement

To celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Gesu School participated in the One King Day, One King Book project, sponsored by Global Citizen. Kindergarten students read Andrea Pinkney's *Sit In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down*. The project challenged students to consider this question: What can you learn from the story about courage and taking action? Led by teacher Kathy Asta, students discussed the history of silent protests at lunch counters. They embraced the story’s theme and selected an issue important to them.

“I felt the children were aware, and some had attended protests, such as Black Lives Matter and the Women’s March. I felt it was important to encourage and teach non-violent action. Children decided that recess was too short, so they wrote letters to administration pleading our case: fresh air and physical exercise. Then, we made signs and held a silent sit-in outside the offices. We were granted five extra minutes of recess.”

—Kathy Asta, Kindergarten Teacher
Exploring “Math & Science Alive”

In November, students in Kappa Delta Pi, the education honor society of Saint Joseph’s University, led interactive STEM exhibits for Gesu’s 6th–8th graders and their families, bringing a fun evening of learning to North Philadelphia. Students and families experimented with skills ranging from buoyancy to estimation. They built architectural models from marshmallows and toothpicks. Students especially enjoyed an experiment making candy fly—calculating the trajectory and velocity of Skittles. Gesu is grateful to partner with Philadelphia’s Jesuit University to advance our students’ growth in STEM.

“I believe these are effective activities. Math and Science Alive refreshes students’ memory. It can be a review and a learning experience for parents on how to work with their students, too.”

—JoAnne Young, Grade 7 Girls Teacher

“Working alongside the Gesu students during Math and Science night is equivalent to staring at what the future holds. Every kid’s input and skills will continue to allow the world to spin in a positive direction.”

—Rodney Barber, Gesu 8th Grade Parent

“The night was amazing. It’s great to see education and fun come together. Thank you, Gesu and Saint Joseph’s University, for this opportunity.”

—Chiana Conway, Gesu 7th Grade Parent
Poem by Ahzir, Grade 8
Backe Advanced Writing Program
Based on Emily Dickinson’s “Hope is the thing with feathers”

Courage is the thing with teeth
It lays dormant in a cave
It roars a mighty roar
And never stops shining

And mightiest in the land it’s heard
And fearful must be the doubtful
That could dispel it
That kept so many cheerful

I’ve heard it in the pride lands
And on the luscious grass
Yet never in anger
It asked meat from me

It pounces upon the hopelessness
The enemy of fear
The champion of hope
It will always be near

Leader of the believers
That still see peace in our world
Inspiration to those who have little left
And vanquishes evil

Courage is the sun
It shines like a lamp
Courage is the moon in darkness
It smites like a sword