OUR MISSION

Sisters Academy of Baltimore, a Catholic, community-centered middle school, educates girls of different races, ethnic groups, and religions, from families of limited economic means, particularly those in southwest Baltimore. The Academy empowers its students to become agents of transformation in their families, communities, and society.

Welcome Class of 2022

Each fall, after the new students have been in school for a few weeks, I visit the fifth grade to prepare them for the Blessing and Investiture of the new class. This ceremony has become a significant ritual as we begin each new school year. During my visit this year, we explored the meaning of “investiture” and discussed the many people who have invested in their education.

I asked the students questions and wanted to share some of their answers with you:

How are you investing in your own education?
By working hard, being focused, doing my best.

How are your parents investing in your education?
By bringing me to school, by encouraging me.

How are your teachers investing in your education?
By sharing their smarts with us.

And who else?
Our sponsors who give scholarships. And the Sisters.

This year, our 20 fifth grade students live in nine different zip codes and have entered from 15 different elementary schools. Fifteen are African American, one is Hispanic, and four are multiracial. In the school population of 72 students this year, 52 students are African American, 11 are Hispanic, 7 are multiracial, 1 is Asian, and 1 is Caucasian.

Within a few weeks, our new students came to realize that they are part of a larger community—a sisterhood with a common mission. They know that they are surrounded by the care and support of scholarship sponsors, annual donors, dedicated sisters, smart teachers, and committed families. Our sisterhood deepens each year as we add a new class and hear from our accomplished graduates.

I am pleased to share the good news that five SAB graduates received their college degrees in May 2018. They are: Morgan Bell, St. John’s University, NY; Destiny Cherry, Rider University, NJ; Rian Falcon, St. Lawrence University, NY; Destiny Logan, Frostburg State University, MD; and Deara Parker, Bowie State University, MD. Congratulations!

As faithful friends of Sisters Academy, you have provided the means for girls to grow into accomplished young women. With every contribution, you have deepened our sisterhood, extended our influence, and empowered our students. Thank you for being partners in the mission of transformation through education. Blessings!

— Sister Delia Dowling, SSND, President
Welcome Laura Minakowski

"I firmly believe in the power of education to transform. I am passionate about empowering and developing leadership in girls and young women."

Laura Minakowski became the Principal of Sisters Academy of Baltimore in July.

During the summer, the students attending our New Frontiers program were the first to meet and greet Mrs. Laura Minakowski, our new Principal. Laura comes to Sisters Academy with a deep dedication to our mission and twenty years of experience as an educator and leader in Catholic education. Prior to her arrival, Laura was the Assistant Principal at the School of Incarnation in Gambrills, MD. For ten years, Laura served at Mother Seton Academy in various capacities, from Director of After School Programs to Teacher, and later as Principal. She was a teacher and Campus Minister at St. Frances Academy for five years and volunteered with Mercy Volunteer Corps in Baltimore, serving in the Children’s Bereavement Program at Stella Maris Hospice.

We are excited and fortunate to welcome Laura into our Sisters Academy community. She brings direct knowledge, skill, and experience in faith-based schools that transform the lives of students in middle school. At the same time, Laura genuinely appreciates our students as middle school girls.

When asked why she considered coming to Sisters Academy, with a kind smile immediately across her face, she offers these comments, “When I first read the announcement, I felt an overwhelming call toward the position. The mission of Sisters Academy speaks to my heart. I firmly believe in the power of education to transform. I am passionate about empowering and developing leadership in girls and young women. I feel honored to serve as Principal of Sisters Academy. We provide a quality Catholic education to intelligent, bright, and faith-filled girls, who otherwise may not have this opportunity.

“In my short time at Sisters Academy, I have witnessed the mission alive within the school each day. I see the dedication and enthusiasm that every teacher brings to her classroom. I was so proud and impressed to see the 7th and 8th grade students educate the younger students about their commitment to the school’s Pledge of Non-Violence and I continue to be impressed daily by our students and staff alike. Our theme this year is ‘Shine Forth the Goodness of God,’ and truly, I see each student and staff member reflecting God’s light and love in our world. Sisters Academy is a special place and I am blessed to be here.”

Laura earned her bachelor’s degree in English/Writing and her master’s degree in Education Administration and Supervision from Loyola University Maryland. She lives with her husband Adam in Annapolis, Maryland.

News Notes

Ravens Honor Rows Celebrates SAB
On September 17, the Governor’s Office on Service and Volunteerism, M&T Bank, and the Baltimore Ravens announced the recipients of the 19th Annual Honor Rows Program. Sisters Academy of Baltimore was named among the 14 youth groups and organizations throughout Maryland to be honored for providing extraordinary volunteer service to their communities.

Sisters Academy was nominated for this award by Paul’s Place, an organization that provides programs, services and support for individuals and families living in Southwest Baltimore. For the past ten years, 7th grade students have served at Paul’s Place each month. As stated in the beautiful recommendation from Jayna Powell, Volunteer Coordinator, “Monthly we watch these students being agents of transformation. When they hop off the school’s bus, everyone notices because these are girls from their neighborhood. The guests know them. But the girls do not come to be served. They serve food, clean tables, help as personal shoppers, welcome guests, and more! Never idle, these leaders make it happen when they come to Paul’s Place!” Will Thomas, staff member at Paul’s Place, observed, “Their enthusiasm and spirit fills the building and we all look forward to their return.”

In recognition of the Honor Rows Award, Sisters Academy will receive tickets to attend the Baltimore Ravens home game at M&T Bank Stadium on November 18. Our students will receive special Honor Rows t-shirts, have an on-field pre-game photo, and be featured on the RAVENSVISION video screen at the stadium. Sisters Academy will also be included in a WBAL-TV story featuring the Honor Rows recipients during the 5:00 p.m. news hour on Thursday, November 15.

Bon Secours Community Day
Sisters Academy participated in the Bon Secours Community Day held at the Hospital on Saturday, September 8. The day featured health screenings, music, dancing in the street, and community resources. Fifth grade parents, Tomika Rogers and Taneisha Johnson, and their daughters Jayla and Kenya, joined Sister Delia in staffing a table for the day. Many neighbors stopped by to inquire about the school for their daughters, granddaughters, neighbors, and friends.

New Uniforms
Students returned to school in new uniforms this year. The uniform consists of a white shirt, red v-neck sweater, and charcoal gray box-pleated skirt. The new standard footwear is the saddle shoe. Our uniform upgrade was funded in part by the Good Samaritan Fund of St. Joseph Parish, Cockeysville, MD, and the Knott Foundation.

New Board Members
Joining our new Board of Directors are Donna Fortson, Director of Revenue Cycle Services at Bon Secours Health System; Douglas Groves, Consultant, experienced CEO and Executive Coach; Laurie A. Jones, Consultant, experienced CEO and Executive Coach; Laura Minakowski, retired Director of Housing Services for Associated Catholic Charities of Baltimore.
Blessing Investiture Welcomes Our New Students

On Thursday, September 14, the Sisters Academy community welcomed our newest students, the Class of 2022, during a spirited ceremony attended by students, teachers, parents, grandparents, volunteers, friends, and graduates. Uneeke Ferguson, Class of 2009, was the graduate keynote speaker. Now a college graduate working as a second grade teacher in Baltimore City, Uneeke reflected that her Sisters Academy education helped her to succeed in high school, college, and in her work.

In Uneeke’s words, “There is a reason for homework, being in school until 5:00 p.m., learning about different religions, finding a place in your heart for God, going to school in the summer, participating in community service, getting to have a big sister, and even going on a field trip to Washington, DC to visit museums. What you take away from Sisters Academy is the preparation to take on the next chapter of your life. Sisters Academy will always be a voice inside of me, encouraging me to continue to learn, seek wisdom, and be humble.”

In keeping with tradition, the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade classes presented positive messages, dances, and songs as they welcomed their little sisters into the school community. After the presentations, the Principal, Ms. Laura Minakowski, called each new student by name to receive her class stole, a symbol of our sisterhood, surrounding each student with our blessing and love.

With the stoles joyfully received, new students Kenya Johnson and Tyler Brandford provided their responses for the Class of 2022. In closing, the congregation asked God to bless the new students. “May we grow together in peace and respect, and always widen our circle to include all those in need.”

Meet the School Sisters of Notre Dame

It was 1847 when Mother Theresa Gerhardinger and five sisters came to America from Bavaria and settled in Baltimore. Today, the Atlantic-Midwest Province of the School Sisters of Notre Dame sponsors and co-sponsors thirteen educational ministries where the sisters and their lay collaborators “educate with the conviction that the world can be changed through the transformation of persons” (SSND Constitution). Established in 2004, Sisters Academy of Baltimore is the youngest of all SSND ministries in the province.

The joint values of the four sponsoring congregations – Liberation, Transformation, and Influence – mirror the SSND mission, vision, and values in many ways, illustrated in three examples:

Proclaiming the Good News: Sisters Academy offers a faith-based education marked by high academic standards and personal expectations. This allows for the intellectual, social, spiritual and physical growth of the girl, liberating her to view herself as a person with dignity. As a student, she glimpses endless possibilities, discovering her gifts and developing herself in order to live a purposeful life. Her life itself proclaims good news to her family and into the community.

The World Can be Changed Through the Transformation of Persons: At Sisters Academy, the educational program is designed to be transformative. The administration, faculty, and staff create a climate and a culture which is sensitive to the needs of the students and supportive of their growth and transformation. Small class sizes allow for close and nurturing relationships among the students, faculty, and staff. This creates a place of both safety and accountability and allows each girl to grow towards becoming a responsible citizen, contributing to changing the world in positive and grace-filled ways.

We Risk Innovative Responses as Educators: Sisters Academy is an innovative response to the educational needs of children and youth in Baltimore City. The key elements of the educational program include personal discipline, character formation, deepening of spirituality, respect for the earth and all of creation, esteem for truth, and appreciation for beauty in all its forms. Through the key elements of the program, Sisters Academy brings hope, envisioning students as influencers, innovators, and educators for a better world.

—Yvonne DeBruin, Director, Ministry Services, SSND Atlantic-Midwest Province, Baltimore
Spotlight on Our Board Chair

Andrea Giampetro-Meyer, Sisters Academy’s Board Chair, first heard of the school from Father Tim Brown, S.J. Andrea and Father Brown both serve as law professors in the Sellinger School of Business at Loyola University Maryland. Father Brown suggested that Andrea might want to get involved with Sisters Academy because he thought the school’s mission would interest her. In 2011, Sister Delia contacted Andrea and the two started a conversation. By 2013, Andrea had gathered a Loyola-based sponsorship group and, by 2014, she became an active member of the SAB Board of Directors.

Sister Delia commented, “Andrea has been a close friend and has given outstanding service to Sisters Academy. As Chair of the Board, she has provided thoughtful, fearless, and committed leadership. She has thoroughly engaged the Board in planning for the school’s future. Her leadership as Chair will make a difference for years to come.”

When asked how SAB’s mission resonates with her, Andrea stated, “From childhood, I have observed the power of girls and women to become agents of transformation in their families, communities, and society. As I became a young woman, a middle-aged woman, and now a near-senior woman, I have become an agent of transformation and a mentor to younger women who share my desire to inspire change. When girls and women are guided by faith, they have tremendous potential to become leaders who make a difference. Sisters Academy is a top-notch school. I am delighted to contribute to its success.”

Charitable Giving

Fall marks the time for many organizations to hold charitable giving campaigns in the workplace. Please remember Sisters Academy of Baltimore as you make your pledges for the coming year.

- **United Way**—Sisters Academy of Baltimore is a write-in designee.
- **Combined Federal Campaign**—#46817
- **Maryland Charity Campaign**—#341975939
- **Combined Charity Campaign for Baltimore City**—#2746
- **Giant Food** is continuing its A+ School Rewards program. New supporters need to register your GIANT card and designate Sisters Academy of Baltimore (School ID #04638). Register online at www.giantfood.com/aplus or call 1-877-275-2758.
- **Harris Teeter** offers a similar program “Together in Education.” To enroll, simply tell the cashier at checkout that you want your VIC card linked to Sisters Academy of Baltimore’s account number (1837).
- Don’t forget to save and send in your “Box Tops for Education.”
- **Amazon Smile**—Start your holiday shopping at www.amazonsmile.com and designate Sisters Academy as your beneficiary at no cost to you.