



Summer 2025

# JesuitStrong

St. Francis Xavier

| Jesuit Elementary School

| Preschool-8th Grade







# principalnews

**Belong**(verb) – to be rightly placed in a specified position or environment; to fit in or be a part of something.

**Belonging**(noun) – the feeling of being accepted, included, and valued within a group or community.

There's something powerful about the word **belong**. It's more than just being present; it's about being seen, known, and embraced for who you are. In our SFX community, we've taken this theme to heart. **Belonging** isn't a passive state — it is something we actively build every day. It shows up in the way we greet each other, the way we listen, the way we create space for every voice at the table.

Belonging means no one stands on the sidelines. It means our differences aren't just accepted but celebrated. We understand that a true community doesn't ask anyone to shrink, it invites each person to bring their full, authentic self. Whether it's in classrooms, meetings, during prayer, or casual hallway conversations, we strive to reflect God's love by making sure every individual feels they matter.

This year especially, we've seen belonging come to life in the little things — a student helping a new classmate find their way, a colleague reaching out just to check in, a group rallying around someone going through a tough time. These are the moments that stitch us together, the evidence that we aren't just coexisting... we're connected through God and our faith.



To belong is to know: you're home here. And as we continue to grow, we stay committed to being a place where all feel rooted and welcomed. Because when people truly belong, they don't just thrive, they help others feel that same spark of connection. And that's what transforms a group into a family.

● Ryan Watson | Principal





## To Know a Place for the First Time

Author | Fr. Mike Moynahan, SJ

T. S. Eliot, in his Four Quartets, writes:

*The end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*

I am a Phoenician — born and raised in the heart of Phoenix. My earliest memories are tied to a modest home at 8 East Medlock Drive and the close-knit community of St. Francis Xavier Parish. Before the towering structure of what we came to call the BNC — the Big New Church — was even imagined, we worshiped in simpler spaces and learned in humbler classrooms.

I attended St. Francis Xavier School from Kindergarten through the fourth grade. Back then, there was no Uptown Plaza, only a wide, dusty vacant lot where imagination could run wild. The school itself was a scattering of single-story buildings, each filled with the voices of children and the steady presence of the BVM sisters who taught us. They were the heart of the school—women of deep faith and gentle strength. A few lay teachers joined the sisters, I still remember Mrs. Donnelly in second grade and Mrs. Durocher in fourth. The Jesuits mostly appeared on special occasions — celebrating the Mass of the Holy Spirit or blessing our Eighth Grade Graduation.

After many years away, I found myself returning to the parish and school that helped shape me.



And what I found was both familiar and transformed.

Gone are the modest buildings of my childhood. In their place stands a vibrant and growing campus—now with a preschool and a curriculum rich with new ideas and experiences. The sisters may no longer walk the halls, but in their place is a faculty deeply committed to the same Ignatian values: faith, service, reflection, and academic excellence.

Each morning begins with Pledge and Prayer. The fourth grade, led by Mrs. O'Malley, explores the depth and power of kindness. The seventh and eighth graders take on the Arrupe Project, learning what it means to be “kids for others.” Weekly liturgies, shared reflections, and a spirit of service continue to weave through every grade.

I look around and see a school that is not only growing but flourishing—evolving with the times while staying true to its roots. St. John Henry Newman once said, “To change is to grow. And to have changed often is to grow holy.” It's a reminder that transformation, when rooted in love and purpose, is a sacred gift.

And so, to the parents and grandparents who entrust their children to St. Francis Xavier School: what a gift you're giving. For all that has been — **THANKYOU! And for all that is yet to come — YES!**





# Strategic Plan

*“Our vision is not simply a goal for tomorrow but a call to action today.”*

— Mr. Ryan Watson

During the school year, a dedicated team of parents, teachers, and administrators came together to craft a mission and vision that will guide St. Francis for the next five years. We are deeply grateful for their unwavering commitment and heartfelt love for our school. Thanks to their efforts, we are now ready to advance our mission in meaningful, impactful, and relevant ways, ensuring that both current and future students will thrive as a result of this strategic plan. We look forward to implementing the following goals with your help and support.

## Jesuit Mission & Catholic Identity

Create a Welcome Center to Enhance Community and Spiritual Identity

Integrate Jesuit and Catholic Imagery to Reflect Core Values

## Finance & Governance

Enhance Communication and Evaluation Processes

Attract and Retain Exceptional Educators

## Facilities & Advancement

Enhance Campus Spaces to Promote Health and Community Engagement

Establish a Scholars' Center for Comprehensive Academic Support

## Academics & Student Life

Evaluate and Align Extracurricular Programs with Jesuit Values

Foster Academic and Personal Growth through Goal-Setting and Reflection

Promote Responsible Digital Citizenship and Support Mental Health

Develop Emotional Intelligence Through Education and Formation









Introducing our  
New **MISSION** Statement

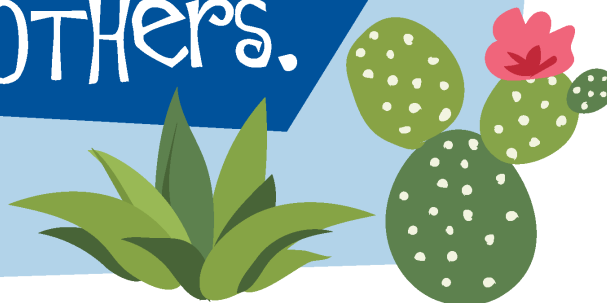
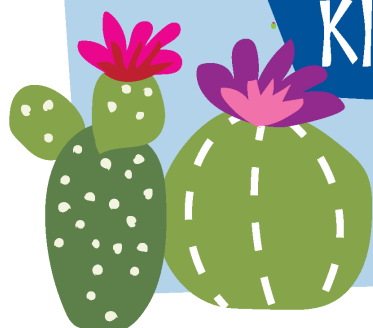


SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER  
CATHOLIC JESUIT SCHOOL  
IS A WELCOMING COMMUNITY  
DEDICATED TO PURSUING  
EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE,



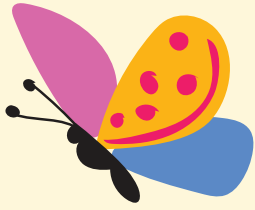
LIVING OUR FAITH  
THROUGH ACTION, AND  
NURTURING COMPASSIONATE  
DIFFERENCE-MAKERS  
WHILE FORMING

**KIDS FOR OTHERS.**





Introducing our  
**VISION** Statement



IN THE SPIRIT OF  
ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA,  
WE COMMIT TO SERVING  
as a BEACON THAT  
TRANSFORMS LIVES AND  
EXPANDS INNOVATIVE LEARNING  
OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND  
THE CLASSROOM, CULTIVATING  
a FUTURE WHERE EVERY  
CHILD THRIVES IN a DYNAMIC  
AND INTERCONNECTED WORLD.







## The 2024-2025 school year was an **Accreditation Year** for our school.

### What is Accreditation?

Author | Amanda Jemsek | Vice Principal

Accreditation is a rigorous process that ensures our Catholic school meets high standards of excellence in academics, faith formation, and organizational integrity. Through self-study, reflection, and external review, accreditation affirms that we are providing students with a quality education rooted in Gospel values. It also encourages continuous improvement, helping us grow as a community of faith and learning. ***At St. Francis Xavier, accreditation is not just a requirement — it's a commitment to excellence in all we do.***

The **WCEA** accreditation process starts 12–18 months ahead, involving leadership teams, data collection, and a self-study focused on Catholic identity, academic effectiveness, and schoolwide improvement. Teachers analyzed benchmark standards and gathered evidence — student work, photos, surveys, and meeting notes — for each standard. This documentation was compiled and shared with the visiting team before their 3-day campus visit.

During the visit, the team immersed themselves in SFX life—attending Mass, visiting classrooms, and speaking with students, parents, staff, and our pastor.

On the final day of the visit, the team spent time celebrating the hard work and spirit of SFX. In a special presentation to our staff, they highlighted the many strengths of our school community and affirmed that we are truly living our mission each day. Their words were a powerful reminder of the vibrant faith, dedication, and care that define St. Francis Xavier. The team also provided us with thoughtful goals to guide our continued growth, encouraging us to remain open to new possibilities while staying rooted in our identity as men, women, and kids for others.





## GOALS FROM ACCREDITATION

### Catholic Identity

St. Francis Xavier School is committed to enhancing its Catholic identity by creating a cohesive strategy that formalizes mission engagement and integrates Catholic Social Teachings throughout the curriculum.

### Governance and Leadership

SFX will strengthen the school's governance practices by enhancing strategic planning, fostering mission fidelity, and empowering leadership through formation and professional learning opportunities. Focus on developing a plan that encourages, recognizes, and rewards teachers' commitment to professional learning as part of operational vitality.

### Operational Vitality

St. Francis Xavier School will cultivate trust and engagement within the community by enhancing financial transparency and ensuring equitable compensation for staff.

### Academic Excellence

St. Francis Xavier School will develop and implement a sustainable, data-driven framework that equips all teachers with the knowledge, tools, and strategies to effectively support exceptional learners, ensuring equitable access to learning and measurable student growth.





JesuitStrong | Summer 2025

# SAVE THE DATE

Come Celebrate  
our **90th Year** of  
St. Francis Xavier School



**All Class Reunion!**

Thursday | February 19, 2026 | 6:00 P.M.

In The Sullivan Courtyard  
Our New Brick Patio will be Blessed



# Leave Your Mark



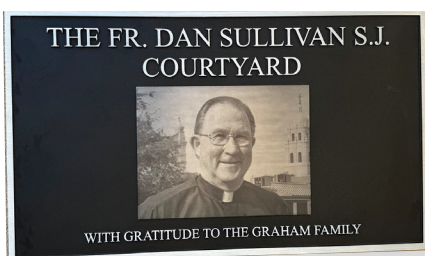
A **Brick Border** will be installed this summer,  
and we want your name included!

Have a family member you'd like to remember?

A new kindergartener? A favorite teacher?

A recent grad? A brick is a great way to keep your  
connection to the SFX community alive in our courtyard,  
The Sullivan – named for our beloved Fr. Dan Sullivan.

**Scan this QR code to purchase a brick.**



**Miss the deadline? No problem.**

Engraved bricks will be installed periodically  
over the next few years.





## Finding God in All Things

I see God in the classroom light,  
In the way those kids' eyes shine,  
They're asking questions, searching for right,  
God's spirit's in the curious mind.

Well, I had a sandwich the other day,  
Nothing fancy, just bread and meat,  
But in that bite, I found my way,  
With a hunger no feast can beat.

Every morning, Camelback calls,  
A mountain rising to greet the sun,  
The shadows shift, the light it falls,  
God's work is never done.

There was a red-tailed hawk just the other week,  
Perched on campus, keeping still,  
In its gaze, I saw what I seek,  
God's hand on every hill.

From the laughter of kids to the mountain high,  
From a simple meal to a bird's still eye,  
I see God in the world around,  
In the noise, in the quiet, in every sound.

Author | Sean Foudy | 4th Grade Teacher





## The Saint Francis Xavier Community

Author | Emma Kinsey | 8th Grade Student

Saint Francis Xavier is a place like no other, and I feel so lucky to be part of it. I could not be more grateful for every person who makes this community feel like family. From the very beginning, I've felt welcomed and cared for by everyone — students, teachers, and staff. One of the things I love most about our school is how everyone is included. No matter who you are, your unique gifts are noticed and celebrated.



The teachers go above and beyond to make sure we feel seen and heard. They care about us not just as students, but as people. Officer Eddie and the staff know our names, check in with us, and make sure we're okay. That kind of care really matters.

What makes our school even more special is how kind and supportive the students are. It's not just about helping our friends — we're there for anyone who needs it, no matter what grade they're in. That kind of kindness is hard to find, and I don't take it for granted.

Saint Francis is truly an inclusive school. I have four siblings, and two of them are adopted. The community here made them feel welcome right away and supported our whole family during the adoption process. Now, all of us feel like we belong here.

Our faith-based community helps me grow closer to Christ, but it also respects students of other faiths, which I think is really important. I'm deeply thankful for how open, kind, and welcoming this school has been. Growing up here has changed me and shaped who I am, and I'll always be grateful for that.





# Volunteer Spotlight

Author | Colleen Chester | Parents' Association President

I have been blessed to have deep roots within the St. Francis Xavier community all of my life. My parents were married at St. Francis Xavier church in 1963. I was baptized at St. Francis and went to St. Francis Xavier School from kindergarten through 8th grade. My mom, the beloved Mrs. Hassett, taught 2B for 30 years and has been a parishioner for 52 years!

St. Francis has always been a second home to me, so when it came time to send our children to school it was a no brainer! My husband and I knew we wanted our children to have a Jesuit education. We toured the school and it brought back so many fond memories of my childhood... I wanted our children to have a similar experience.

I also knew I wanted to be more involved in the school, but was not sure how to start. I went to Coffee Connect and signed up for lunch duty. I signed up for Literature Circle and Decision Making, which gave me a wonderful opportunity to get to know my daughter's classmates. I helped with the Auction, Fun Fest, field trips and class parties. I chaired the Glory Days auction and it was an amazing experience where I made friendships that will last a lifetime. Together we threw a great party for the parents, while benefiting the school at the same time.

***That's a win win in my book!!***

I became involved in the Parents' Association in 2024 where I served as Vice President and now I am currently serving as President. Working in collaboration with the parents and teachers, along with Mr. Watson, has been a very rewarding experience. Listening to the views of each member and working together as a team to come up with solutions in a constructive and respectful environment has been impressive to say the least.

As we continue to be parents for others, raising kids for others, my advice is to jump in and volunteer when you can. St. Francis Xavier offers a variety of volunteer opportunities. If you have hours to give or minutes, there's something for you. We are all on this wild ride of parenthood and it is more fun to do it together!

The St. Francis Xavier community is unique and hard to put into words. Whether you or your child are having the best day, the worst day or something in-between, the St. Francis community will be there for you in ways you did not know you needed.





25  
YEARS



## Celebrating 25 Years of Service

Author | Sue Klein | St. Francis Xavier Parish

**Deborah Westerfield** has been a cherished presence at St. Francis for many years, serving in numerous roles—as a teacher, parent, campus minister, and parishioner. We have had the privilege of knowing her in each of these capacities.

When our daughters attended St. Francis, Deborah was their math teacher. Since then, we have worked alongside her as she served as campus minister, guiding students and families through the sacraments. We've had the joy of partnering with her in many baptisms, and we've witnessed firsthand her deep commitment to making every family feel welcomed and included in the life of the Church. Her dedication and warmth have touched countless lives, including ours. We will truly miss collaborating with her in supporting families through these meaningful moments.

Most recently, we had the incredible opportunity to travel with Deborah, Fr. Bob, fellow school families, and friends on a pilgrimage to Barcelona. Together, we visited sites significant to the life of St. Ignatius, from the awe-inspiring Sagrada Família to the humble cave where he lived for 11 months and laid the foundations of the Society of Jesus. This unforgettable journey came together because of Deborah's vision and effort. Each day offered us Mass, reflection, and joyful connection — and a shared bond was formed that will last a lifetime.

We are so grateful for everything Deborah has done and the spirit she brought to our community. As she embarks on this new and exciting chapter, we wish her and her every blessing and happiness.







# IN MEMORIAM



Few lay women have spent more time at St. Francis Xavier Church and School than **Sally Auther**. She arrived at SFX in 1958, just a year after the church was built. All eight of her children attended the school, followed by nine of her grandchildren ~ and, so far, nine great-grandchildren. Her son, Fr. John Auther, also served as a beloved parish priest at St. Francis for many years.

Sally and her husband, John, played a vital role in the campaign to build the new school. Though Fr. Sullivan often sought to publicly recognize their many contributions, they were far too humble to accept the spotlight.

A devoted daily Mass-goer, Sally once said, "Once I entered SFX Church and could pray to Mary, everything would be better in my life." Even into her late 80s, she made every effort to attend school Masses, delighting in hearing the children read. When asked to support a fundraising effort, she and John responded immediately: "Can it be for the playground?" As the mother of six boys, she knew the value of letting children run and play; for their energy and her sanity.

***Sally's love for St. Francis was lifelong, deep, and joyfully lived.***



**Martin Calfee** passed away on July 23, 2024, surrounded by family in his Phoenix home. Though not Catholic, Martin was deeply involved in the St. Francis Xavier community. His wife of 60 years, Monnie, graduated from SFX in 1954, and three of their five daughters and several grandchildren also attended. Martin coached girls' softball, supported school activities, and was a strong advocate for the school's rebuilding campaign.

Born April 2, 1937, in Coral Gables, Florida, Martin was raised in Aurora, Ohio, and proudly served in the U.S. Army. In 1972, he founded Copper State Bolt & Nut Company, which now employs over 600 people. He was also active in local philanthropy, including The Thunderbirds and support for ASU and SFX.

Martin is remembered for his humor, generosity, and commitment to excellence. He is survived by Monnie, his sister Sarah, five daughters, and nine grandchildren. ***His legacy at St. Francis and beyond lives on.***



# Go Green for God!

*“Rivers do not drink their own water; trees do not eat their own fruit; the sun does not shine on itself and flowers do not spread their own fragrance for themselves. Living for others is a rule of nature. We are all born to help each other. No matter how difficult it is...Life is good when you are happy; but much better when others are happy because of you.”*

— Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter, 2015

In his encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'* (Care for Our Common Home), Pope Francis challenged us with the responsibility to care for our common home; this beautiful planet we live on that was gifted to us by God for all living creatures. St. Francis Xavier School has made it our mission to do just that with our “Go Green for God” initiative.

There are many ways we can strive for a greener and cleaner way of living without taking drastic measures. The purpose of **“Go Green for God”** at SFX is to think of new ways to create a smaller carbon footprint each year. Here are some amazing ways our community has worked together so far!

## Composting & Gardening

During lunch, students have learned how to sort their trash into recycle, landfill and compost bins. SFX partnered with Recycle City, a sustainable composting business in Phoenix, to make sure all of our food waste goes back into the Earth.

Our school gardens are also flourishing with vegetables that students and staff have worked together to cultivate, grow and harvest. First graders used their classroom compost and worms in their garden to grow food for the Hungry Wolf Cafe. Our middle schoolers also enjoyed the gardens by sampling from their “snack gardens” during the day.

## Recycling & Reusing

Our National Junior Honors Society students created a recycling program in each of our classrooms. Every week, NJHS students collected recycled paper from the classroom’s “recycled paper only” box to make sure paper stays out of the trash. We’re happy to report we have saved over **1,500 POUNDS** of paper from the landfill this year.

Another great way SFX keeps items out of the trash is by bringing reusable water bottles to school. Our water stations make it easy to refill and stay hydrated all day long. The stations even add up the plastic we have saved with each refill, so our students can see how they’re making an impact.

We will continue to work hard to think of new, innovative ways to Go Green within our St. Francis community. **What is the next step you can take at home in order to care for our common home?**



Author | Brittany Hansen  
1st Grade Teacher



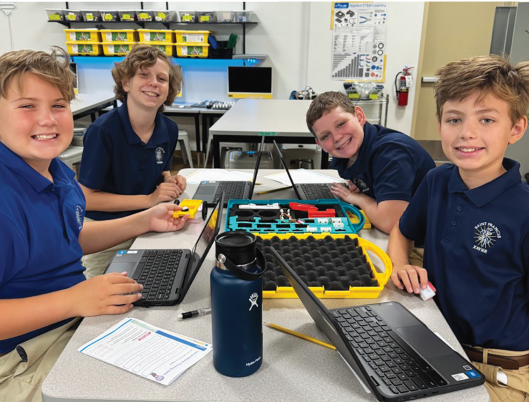




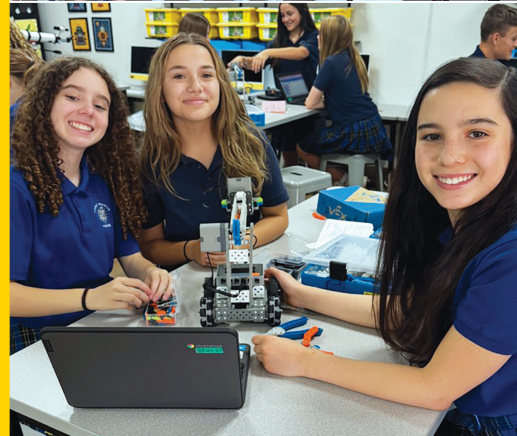
# SFX Highlights







HAPPY RETIREMENT  
MRS. KATZIN!







**St. Francis Xavier**  
**Jesuit Elementary School**  
**Preschool-8th Grade**

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photography

## Discover the possibilities...

From preschool to 8th Grade, we provide opportunities  
for our students to cultivate excellence in mind, body and spirit.



**ST. FRANCIS XAVIER**  
*A Jesuit school forming Kids for Others*  
Preschool - 8th Grade

