



**A Strong
History**

**A Bright
Future**



2013-2014 Gesu School
Annual Report



From the President

Dear Friends of Gesu School,

As I write this letter, the lives and futures of many Philadelphia children hang in the balance. Funding challenges and political disagreement threaten to delay the opening of the public schools for the academic year, or to diminish resources available to students and teachers.

Such a situation is a travesty—especially with so many of the affected students already behind academically or otherwise disadvantaged in their pursuit of a quality education.

But thanks to you, the 450 students in our care at Gesu School looked forward with certainty to the first day of school.

Thanks to you, our parents were confident that their children would have the appropriate number of classmates in the desks around them.

Thanks to you, our students could be assured they would have the caring attention of teachers who have access to the resources they need to reach their students.

But most importantly, thanks to you, students like Satchel '14 (front cover) can anticipate a bright future with hope and joy.



With your ongoing support, we will continue to welcome students of all ability levels to our classrooms and to provide them with the academic, social and spiritual resources they need to maximize their own gifts and talents.

Thank you for the part you've played in our strong history of success. Please join me as we continue the hard work that assures Gesu School—and our children—of a bright future.

Peace and blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryan".

Bryan Carter
President and CEO

*Front cover: Satchel '14 beams at graduation as he anticipates his freshman year at Mercy Vocational. Gesu's counseling staff strives to help each student find a placement at the high school that best matches his or her interests, demeanor and abilities.
Photo / Andrea Kellner*

Artwork by Jayla '17



A scholar. An athlete. An inspiration.

Meet Garrison—another Gesu alum bound for college, thanks to your help!

Sitting across from Garrison '10 on a visit to the elementary school he once called home, one can't help but be impressed.

What will this bright young man do with his future? Become an international lawyer? That's his latest dream. Or an economist? His strategy to strengthen the U.S. dollar that he laid out in conversation was certainly impressive. Maybe president? Actually, he had just been thinking about that the week before.

One thing that's certain is his next step: the University of North Carolina Charlotte, where he'll major in political science and run Division I track.

In June, Garrison graduated from Saint Andrew's School, a selective boarding school in Delaware, where he successfully balanced academics

with competitive athletics.

Thanks to the solid foundation you helped provide, Garrison felt prepared for the academic rigors of Saint Andrew's. "Mr. Myers and Ms. Bright [his 3rd grade teachers] specifically were the people who made me curious to learn and made me realize the world is much bigger," he reflects.

Now Garrison's goal is to see as much of that bigger world as possible. Last summer he traveled to South Africa for three weeks on a service trip—an eye-opening experience. One day he hopes to make his home in Australia, a dream originally inspired by the movie *Finding Nemo*.

When you meet Garrison, the first thing that strikes you is how incredibly articulate he is. Compliment him on it, and he

responds, "I actually learned that here [at Gesu]. Dr. Erwin is another teacher that took me to a different level," he notes, adding Gesu's advanced writing teacher to the group of influential people who set him on his path to success. He goes on to add that Ms. Bright, too, played a role in developing his nascent public speaking skills.

"For me, Gesu stretched my mind. It made me uncomfortable with learning a lot of times, and through that I learned more. The teachers taught me not just book skills, but taught me life skills—things that college professors won't teach you..."



To list all of Garrison's impressive qualities—and the Gesu teachers he credits with nurturing them—would take volumes. But Garrison nicely sums up his Gesu experience in this way: "For me, Gesu stretched my mind. It made me uncomfortable with learning a lot of times, and through that I learned more. The teachers taught me not just book skills, but taught me life skills—things that college professors won't teach you..."

Garrison is the epitome of what a kid from North Philadelphia can do and be when given the opportunity to seize his future. Thank you for giving him his chance.

Diploma in hand, Garrison '10 celebrates a successful high school career at Saint Andrew's School in Delaware. His next stop is the University of North Carolina Charlotte. Thank you for giving Garrison the tools he needed to forge his path toward a bright future. Photo / Karen Gowen

Youngest Scholars probe depths of the rainforest... and their own potential.

Your support keeps our brightest students from becoming statistics.

Between 1st and 5th grade, 44% of the highest achieving low-income students will drop out of the top ranks in reading, a sobering study by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation and Civic Enterprises reveals.

“From the very beginning of their formal education, high achieving lower-income students fall behind their higher-income peers,” the report’s authors conclude. They believe these students fall victim to what they call the “Achievement Trap”—a phenomenon in which gifted low-income students’ talents receive insufficient nurturing because attention is laser-focused on the students who are behind.¹

Prompted by the study’s findings, Gesu advisory trustee Dr. John DiIulio, who coauthored the report, and his wife Rosalee DiIulio pioneered efforts to tackle the issue. In 2007, they piloted the Youngest Scholars program at Gesu School.

Eighth grader Robin was one of the first students to participate in the Youngest Scholars summer program, a key component of the effort expertly crafted by veteran teacher Colleen Comey. The five-week summer session for roughly 30 rising 3rd, 4th and 5th graders offers an in-depth, theme-based approach to learning that heavily emphasizes research, writing and critical thinking skills.

In Robin’s first summer in Youngest Scholars, she and her peers explored a different topic each week, investigating things like ancient civilizations. “It showed me there are other parts of the world besides this neighborhood that I haven’t seen—and it’s amazing,” Robin attests.

Seven years later, the program is a critical aspect of Gesu’s efforts to give our brightest students a boost. And while Robin is too old to participate in the summer portion of the program, she has been developing a new set of skills as a Youngest Scholars junior counselor—skills like patience, understanding and cooperation.

Being on the other side of the desk is “way different” Robin says. “I can actually see the work that’s put into the program.” It’s also stretched her imagination and creativity as she’s seen first-hand what you can do with just one room.

To understand what she means, travel with us to a distant place, laden with foreign vegetation, creatures and sounds—a classroom on the 3rd floor of Gesu School. This summer Comey, along with teachers Kathy Asta, Tammi Crummy, and Amy Brignola, helped the Youngest Scholars transform the room into a rainforest—complete with key layers like the canopy and the understory.

During the intense five weeks (which even included homework!) the students built terraria, completed reports on the products, people, and creatures of the rainforest, wrote advocacy postcards to Senator Casey, and read novels about life in the rainforest.

All of the summer Youngest Scholars are invited to participate in a weekly after-school session with Comey throughout the school year. A subset of the group will meet weekly with Rosalee DiIulio during school hours to focus more intensely on independent reading, critical thinking, oral presentations and book discussions.

To expand upon the foundation built in the younger grades, DiIulio’s groups continue to meet after 5th grade, and this year will include students through 8th grade. Robin and her cohort were assigned *The Hobbit* over the summer in preparation for tackling the entire *Lord of the Rings* trilogy this academic year!

While programs like remedial reading and math will continue to be important areas of emphasis at Gesu, initiatives like Youngest Scholars ensure that no child’s gifts are left untended. Thank you for extending the hope of a bright future to all of our students!

Eighth grader Robin, an aspiring architect, stands surrounded by the rainforest she helped the Youngest Scholars explore this summer. Robin was among the first students to go through the program designed to keep talented students from losing interest in school and falling through the cracks.



You provide teachers to reach them— Every. Single. One.

Thanks to you, young men in North Philadelphia find a mentor and role model in Chris Osborne, “guide” and teacher to the 5th grade boys in Gesu’s single gender program.

At 7th grader Jordan’s Eagle Scout ceremony, friends and family gathered to honor the admirable young man, who at the age of 13 had become the youngest member in his troop’s history to earn the Boy Scouts’ highest achievement.

But when the scoutmaster announced that Jordan had chosen his 5th grade teacher Chris Osborne to say a few words, one member of the audience was caught by surprise—Osborne himself!

“It was easy to talk about Jordan because he’s *such* a good kid,” says Osborne, reflecting on his off-the-cuff Eagle Scout tribute that night. But honestly, Osborne could likely provide an off-the-cuff tribute for any one of his boys—whether a model student or a more challenging one. Osborne’s effort to get to know and treat each of his students as unique individuals is one of the qualities that led his peers to nominate him as this year’s Knetzger Teaching Prize winner.

Each September, Osborne scraps his lesson plans from the previous year and starts fresh, tailoring his approach to the unique personality of his newest class. He spends time eating lunch with the boys, exploring their interests and meeting with their parents to discover what makes them tick.

“I think it’s really important to get to know each student as an individual... and to get to know what each student has on his plate,” Osborne says.

Students respond to Osborne’s efforts. According to Jordan, our



Teacher Chris Osborne examines slides under the microscope in the science lab with his 5th grade boys. On a daily basis he looks just as closely at the individual motivations and aspirations of the students in his care.

new Eagle Scout, Osborne is one of his role models at Gesu. “He always gave you 100% respect from the beginning,” Jordan asserts. “I didn’t take that respect for granted.”

Osborne rises to the challenge of Gesu’s urban environment and the obstacles his students face. In his approach, Osborne accounts for the fact that some students have more outside issues to cope with than others. “When they succeed, that’s so much more magnified,” says Osborne. “These are the kids that are my favorite to work with.”

Oftentimes, the true work is convincing the students that their futures and their community are worth putting effort into.

“I don’t want them to be ashamed of where they come from,” Osborne explains. “But they are just as aware as we are of the negative things about where they are from. I try to help them have pride in their neighborhood and be part of

the community while finding ways to distance themselves from the negative influences.”

This year Osborne responded to the students’ request to launch a baseball team. With support from the administration, St. Joseph’s Prep’s JV team, and donors like you, Coach Osborne led the team through its debut season this spring.

Now in his 4th year teaching at Gesu, Osborne comes from a family of educators. He earned his B.A. in English from Saint Joseph’s University, where he will soon complete his M.Ed. as well. Thank you for bringing him and teachers like him into the lives of our children!

The Knetzger Teaching Prize, endowed by a gift from Jay and Kathy Sherrerd in memory of Gesu trustee Edwin Knetzger, is presented annually to that faculty member demonstrating the highest quality of teaching ability and commitment.

Shining Moments

2013-2014

September We begin the new school year with **20 years of experience under our belts!** Bishop Timothy Senior joins us for the Mass of the Holy Spirit to kick off the year's festivities. Happy 20th anniversary to everyone who brought us to this milestone!

November At the **16th Annual Symposium on Transforming Inner-City Education** we explore the importance of **character development in education.** Visit www.gesuschool.org/symposium for more information about this year's event on November 7th.

January The *Philadelphia Business Journal* names Board Chairman **Gordon Cooney** one of the city's **ten best directors.** We give thanks for the strong leadership guiding our school into a bright future.

February Gesu honors the leaders who made our first **20 years as an independent school possible.** At a dinner celebration we inducted leadership donors into the new Loyola and Maxis Societies for lifetime giving, recognized members of the Magis Society for including Gesu in their estate plans, and established an emeritus board.

April Gesu School's new baseball team debuts with **Coach Chris Osborne at the helm.** Students took the initiative to make this new after-school option available.

May The **20th Anniversary Gala at the Kimmel Center honors Gesu Spirit Medal recipients Rev. Neil Ver'Schneider, S.J., and Mrs. J. Maxwell Moran.** Under the leadership of co-chairs Marie & Pat McCormick, Jenn & Carter Sims, and Lindsey & Mark Wolfington, as well as the gala committee, the celebration raised over \$311,000 for Gesu's children and brought new friends to Gesu. We thank our presenting sponsors The 25th Century Foundation / The Buck and Rogers Families, an anonymous donor and Mrs. J. Maxwell Moran.

June **Dr. Keith Leaphart, President and CEO of Replica Global, LLC, addresses Gesu's Class of 2014 at graduation.** Dr. Leaphart reminded the students, "Gesu has equipped you with all the tools you need to be successful. The question is, will you use them? The emphasis placed on academic excellence, character formation, religious faith and leadership have made your success in life not optional, but expected." **See the list of high schools our 2014 graduates are off to at www.gesuschool.org/classof2014.**



Kindergartners in Ms. Asta's class enjoy a hands-on science experience planting a garden behind the school building. Thank you for bringing quality early childhood education to North Philadelphia!



Students in Mr. Asta's advanced math class puzzle out the Drexel University Math Forum problem of the week. Graduates report that the advanced math option at Gesu prepared them for the math curricula at elite high schools.

Financials

At Gesu School, we strive to steward your gifts wisely so as to have the greatest impact for our students. We invite you to view our audited financial statements and Form 990 on our website at www.gesuschool.org/financials.

07408
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At the 20th Anniversary Gala, the Gesu Gospel Choir (above), as well as the Grammy Award-winning ensemble Sweet Honey in The Rock with Gesu alum Carol Maillard, entertained guests with a heartfelt performance.

Pre-kindergartener Brianna (below) and her classmates enjoyed receiving their very own library cards in Ms. Weir's room. Thank you for helping us develop book lovers from an early age!



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Gesu School recognizes our leadership level donors who have made gifts of \$50,000 and above with membership in the Pierre Toussaint Society. Venerable Pierre Toussaint, the society's namesake, is a hero from our Catholic heritage. Born into slavery in Haiti in the early 19th century, Pierre Toussaint was brought to New York City, where he became a successful hairdresser. He used his earnings to free many slaves and finally himself. Once a free man, he performed many acts of charity, including the establishment of an orphanage and a school for black children. When most fled the city during a yellow fever epidemic, he stayed to nurse the sick. His dedication to the well-being and education of the poor makes Pierre Toussaint a fitting patron for Gesu and our donors.



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Villanova Faith & Life Community



Members of the class of 2014 are headed to outstanding high schools, thanks to the solid foundation you helped give them. Pictured here are Rhyan (String Theory), Vaughn (St. Joseph's Prep), Mya (Little Flower), Franklin (Roman Catholic), Kharon (The Haverford School) and Saliah (Cristo Rey).



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The Mission:

Inspired by the Jesuit and IHM traditions of social justice, faith, hope, and love, Gesu School strives, without selective admissions, to provide a quality, innovative education for its neighbor children to empower them to break the cycle of poverty and violence.

The Results:

In a city where only 64% of students graduate from high school on time, over 90% of Gesu alumni complete high school in four years, going on to become nurses, accountants, teachers and more.

Pre-K students learn their letters in Ms. Moore's class. Thank you for giving all of our children a safe place to grow!



A Strong History. A Bright Future.

To all who make Gesu School possible, whether through your prayers, time, talent or treasure—thank you! Because of you, we have a strong history to celebrate and 450 bright futures to anticipate.