



MERION MERCY ACADEMY
MERION STATION, PENNSYLVANIA
HEAD OF SCHOOL
START DATE: JULY 1, 2019
MERION-MERCY.COM



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES



MERION MERCY ACADEMY

Educating Young Women to Live Mercy and Seek Justice

Mission

Merion Mercy Academy, an independent, Catholic, college preparatory school sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, offers a holistic education which encourages academic and personal excellence. Its curriculum stresses mercy spirituality, global awareness, and social responsibility. Within a nurturing community, Merion Mercy Academy educates leaders: young women who live mercy and seek justice.

Core Values

We live and stand by the following six Mercy Core Values that are put into action every day...

- Educational Excellence
- Spiritual Growth and Development
- Compassion and Service
- Concern for Women and Women's Issues
- Collaboration with Others
- Global Vision and Responsibility

OVERVIEW

Founded in 1884 by the Religious Sisters of Mercy, Merion Mercy Academy (MMA) is an all-girls independent Catholic secondary school that has grown from a small village school to a premier, transformative educational institution rooted in Catholic values. Located on a magnificent verdant campus in the upscale Main Line area of Philadelphia, the school has played a high-profile role in the community for more than 130 years. The school is positioned for further growth and prominence and seeks a dynamic new Head of School whose character and leadership traits align with Mercy Catholic values and who possesses significant entrepreneurial skills and leadership accomplishments.

The Merion Mercy culture is welcoming and inclusive, enrolling 440 students from diverse geographic areas and socio-economic groups. There is a place for everyone, from engineers to artists, athletes to thespians, and there are students from over 100 feeder schools who form the school community. There is an intentional emphasis upon educating all students to "Live Mercy and Seek Justice," and a true sense of sisterhood among the students that transcends the classroom. The rigorous academic program challenges each student to prepare for college and a lifetime of service, thus developing competent and compassionate women for the future. One hundred percent of graduates attend four-year colleges, including some of the most selective schools in the country.

Sister Christine McCann, RSM was appointed Interim Head of School in May 2018 following the departure of the former head who resigned for personal reasons. The Board is aware that this leadership transition is likely to result in the appointment of the school's first lay Head of School, and it welcomes candidates from various career platforms who meet the practicing Catholic standard while also delivering bold, visionary leadership. Passion for mission will be a strong prerequisite along with the ability to lead, inspire, and create demand for the wonderful gifts of a Mercy Catholic education.

This is an exceptional opportunity to lead a high-performing all-girls Catholic secondary school with deep ties to its community and an unwavering commitment to its mission.





SCHOOL HISTORY

Merion Mercy Academy has grown from a small village school established in 1884 to a premier, transformative educational institution rooted in Catholic values. Between 1892 and 1906, the present Motherhouse was built for the Sisters of Mercy and to accommodate growth in school enrollment for day students and boarders. The beautiful convent chapel is still enjoyed today as the school community celebrates liturgies together. For the next 60 years, Mater Misericordiae Academy, as it was known then, continued to grow exponentially and transitioned to a day student only school. In 1954, a new school building was opened for girls in grades K through 12. The convent space was then devoted entirely to a residence for the Sisters of Mercy and administrative offices of the Community.

In 1968, the school's name was changed to Merion Mercy Academy to reflect its contemporary position. As a result, MMA garnered greater name recognition throughout the Philadelphia region. A decision was made in 1986 to merge girls in grades K through 8 with boys from Waldron Academy forming Waldron Mercy Academy, which has operated as a separate entity from Merion Mercy for many years. Merion Mercy Academy concentrated on the secondary education of girls, in grades 9-12, as it does today.



THE SCHOOL

Merion Mercy Academy is located on a 12-acre campus in a residential suburb of Philadelphia. Well-situated in Montgomery County, Merion's 440 students come from over 100 different feeder schools. Approximately 52% of its students commute from the suburbs, 31% are from economically diverse neighborhoods in the city of Philadelphia, 12% are from New Jersey, and 5% are international students from China, Egypt, Korea, and Vietnam. Eighty percent of students are Catholic. The school's footprint reaches wider than other private schools and continues to grow and expand, thanks, in part, to available transportation and financial aid.

The school's 47 devoted faculty, administrators, and counselors are forward-thinking teachers, mentors, and advisors who know students by name thanks to a 9:1 student/teacher ratio and an average class size of 17. Educators are focused on the process of learning, rather than on just covering content, as well as on differentiated instruction which addresses the fact that all students do not learn in the same way. They are experts in their fields, with 69% of faculty possessing advanced degrees and an average tenure of 16.1 years. Eight religious are part of the faculty/staff body, and three additional serve the school as volunteers.

Merion Mercy is fully accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. It is also an active member of the Association of Delaware Valley Independent Schools, Independent School Management, National Association for College Admission Counseling, Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools, National Association for College Admission Counseling, National Catholic Education Association, Mercy Education System of the Americas, and Pennsylvania Association for College Admission Counseling.



GOVERNANCE

Merion Mercy is incorporated as a non-profit in the State of Pennsylvania as a Membership corporation. Mercy Education System of the Americas (MESA) is its sole member which holds certain reserved authorities for the Merion Mercy Academy corporation related to mission and canon law requirements. Please [click here](#) to review the MESA website.

With 18 members, the Board of Trustees of Merion Mercy is the governing body of the academy and holds fiduciary responsibility for all matters relating to the school. Through its annual nomination process, the Board nominates persons for the Board and the Board approves those nominations. The Board recommends the approved candidates to the MESA Board for appointment. The Head of School is an ex-officio voting member of the Board, the Executive Committee and all Board Committees. The Head of School is the President and CEO of the corporation and oversees the business of Merion Mercy and reports to the Board the affairs of the school.

ACADEMICS

As one of its main core values, Merion Mercy provides a college-preparatory curriculum that promotes self-confidence and challenges students to reach their potential, while instilling a love of learning. The school understands how girls learn and provides an environment where girls thrive and grow in mind, body, and spirit. Students from Merion Mercy learn how to write effectively, eloquently, and persuasively and to develop critical thinking, strategic analysis, and problem-solving skills through a rigorous curriculum that includes STEAM initiatives and 13 Advanced Placement (AP) courses (an additional four are offered online through outside organizations). Students may also take AP or other courses not offered at Merion Mercy through a variety of online schools at an additional cost.

College Acceptances

The following is a selection of the colleges and universities to which members of the Classes of 2017 and 2018 were selected, among others:

American University
Assumption College
Bard College
Boston College
Boston University
Bucknell University
Clark Atlanta University
Columbia University
Cornell University
Dickinson College
Elon University
Fordham University
Georgetown University
Harvard University
Hofstra University
Ithaca College
Lafayette College
Loyola Marymount University
Maryland Institute College of Art
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Mount Holyoke College
Old Dominion University
Pace University
Pennsylvania State University
Providence College
Saint Joseph's University
Saint Louis University
Seton Hall University
Syracuse University
The Catholic University of America
The George Washington University
University of California, Davis
University of Connecticut
University of Miami
University of North Carolina
University of Notre Dame
University of Pennsylvania
University of San Francisco
University of Virginia
Villanova University
Wellesley College
Xavier University



Students are required to fulfill core courses in theology, English, math, science, social studies, foreign language (Latin, French, Spanish, or Mandarin [online only]), writing, health and physical education, and electives. More than 50 electives are offered that allow girls to pursue topics and subjects of interest or to explore new passions. Coursework is challenging; each girl's progress and growth are evaluated every year, and adjustments and recommendations as to appropriate course selection and level are made by teachers as well as the Assistant Head of School for Academic Affairs, in order to ensure that she is on her own path for success.

The school enjoys a reputation as one of the leading college-preparatory institutions in the Delaware Valley. Graduates are well prepared for college, confident in their unique abilities, and ready to make a difference through their contributions to society. Upon graduation, they are sought after by the nation's finest colleges and universities. Graduates from 2018 earned over \$20 million in college merit scholarships. The College Counseling Office guides juniors and seniors through the college process to ensure they apply to schools that match their individual interests and abilities.



ARTS AND ATHLETICS

At Merion Mercy, students are encouraged to find their own creative voices. Through a myriad of artistic outlets, they can have fun and learn more about themselves and the world through creative discovery. In the visual arts program, a variety of art processes, techniques, forms, and art tools are explored. The newly constructed Art & Design Gallery further supports the school's commitment to the study of art with working studios, reference areas, and galleries. Through the performing arts, students cultivate important skills and get to share their unique talents with the school community during music, dance, orchestra, and musical and drama theater performances. Additionally, if art or music is a true passion or career pursuit, the school offers majors in both areas starting sophomore year.

Following the school's approach to an education that fosters the development of the whole person, athletics at Merion Mercy offers a vital growth area for students to learn the balance of academics with physical sports activities. The importance of teamwork, loyalty, respect, and leadership are lifelong values that coaches and staff impart to student athletes. The school competes in the Athletic Association of Catholic Academies (AACA) and belongs to the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association, meaning that teams can go beyond the local level to district and state competitions, which they often do. Sports are offered all three school seasons and include crew, cross country, field hockey, golf, soccer, tennis, volleyball, basketball, swimming, lacrosse, softball, and track.



SCHOOL LIFE

Student life at Merion Mercy involves much more than academics. Experiential learning takes place outside the classroom, which underscores the school's commitment to community-building, character-development, and growth in mind, body, and soul. The school offers opportunities for students to pursue their interests through spiritual programs, clubs, service activities, and leadership opportunities. It is through the extracurriculars (63 to be exact), liturgies, field trips, holiday celebrations, traditions, and assemblies that talents are discovered, friendships are made, and holistic education is achieved.

As a Catholic community rooted in Gospel values, Campus Ministry is an integral part of the school. Students are invited to participate on the Ministry Team. The Ministry Team, in collaboration with the campus ministers, organizes many liturgies, services, and religious events throughout the year so that students, faculty, staff, and school families can share faith-filled experiences and traditions together. Student leadership and participation within the prayerful Mercy community is encouraged. All members of the school community participate in annual retreat days and seniors participate in the overnight Kairos retreat.

Although not required, service is an integral part of daily life at Merion. Whether it's taking part in the annual day of service, helping locally through the Community Service Corps (CSC), involvement in the Mercy Volunteer Program (MVP) that plans and takes part in immersion trips that serve impoverished areas, or raising funds for groups or organizations, girls put mercy in action every day. A global sense of mercy is developed through the Mercy Girl Effect Project, a collaborative project of Mercy schools throughout the world. Also, Merion Mercy was one of the first high schools to partner with Catholic Relief Services in the global high school project – a partnership that continues today.



CAMPUS

Merion Mercy Academy's 12-acre campus sits within a larger property of 33 acres that houses other ministries and residences of the Sisters of Mercy Mid-Atlantic Community. Roads and some facilities are shared.

In 2003, Merion built a 27,000-foot addition that included a school chapel, additional classrooms, administrative offices, student center, indoor track, dance studio, and athletic training facilities. Significant renovations were also completed in the library/media center and music room.

In July 2016, the school began a 15-month re-build project known as the Upward & Onward Campaign. The new spaces opened in fall of 2017. The renovations include the Frances M. Maguire '53 Art & Design Gallery, the Connelly Lyceum, a Student Activities and Athletics Center, an energy-efficient Kitchen and Dining Commons, a Counseling Center, and Collaborative Learning Spaces.

MERION STATION, PENNSYLVANIA

Home to the second-oldest Quaker meeting house in Pennsylvania, Merion Station is a predominantly residential community graced with many handsome, early-20th-century stone homes on lots of varying sizes along with some newer homes. Its distinctive appearance—it is the only community in Lower Merion Township where all the utilities are underground, giving the community a park-like feel—is the work of the Merion Civic Association, founded in 1913 by Curtis Publishing magnate Edward W. Bok.

Philadelphia skyline



Merion Station is situated along the Main Line of Philadelphia, an informally delineated historical and social region of suburban western Philadelphia. Lying along the former Pennsylvania Railroad's once prestigious Main Line, it runs northwest from Center City Philadelphia. Today, the Main Line is served by numerous different modes of transportation, including three commuter rail lines. The main commercial area of Merion Station is officially known as the Merion-Cynwyd Commercial District. It includes restaurants, gift shops and other stores, and local landmarks more than a half century old whose reputations extend well beyond Merion Station's limits.

The surrounding communities of the Main Line cover about 200 square miles and became known by the railroad station names, including Overbrook, Strafford, Narberth, Wynnewood, Ardmore, Haverford, Bryn Mawr, Rosemont, Villanova, Radnor, St. Davids, Wayne, Strafford, Devon, Berwyn, Daylesford, and Paoli. Populations of Main Line communities range from nearly 6,000 to upwards of 30,000.

The Main Line communities are renowned for their education systems, including numerous nationally-ranked public schools and some of the most famous and exclusive private schools in the country such as Malvern Preparatory School, The Haverford School, Agnes Irwin School, Baldwin School, Woodlynde School, and The Shipley School, among others. Colleges and universities along the Main Line include Bryn Mawr College, Haverford College, Saint Joseph's University, and Villanova University.

Recreation and attractions along the Main Line are varied and expansive. Highlights include the Appleford Estate in Villanova, an arboretum and bird sanctuary; the Bryn Mawr Film Institute, which offers showings of classic movies, opera, film courses, and discussions; the Devon Horse Show, the oldest and largest multi-breed horse show in the U.S.; the King of Prussia Mall; and many country clubs and golf courses, including Merion Golf Club, ranked America's seventh-best course. Merion Botanical Park is located between Merion Road and the railroad tracks and City Line Ave and Civic Center Drive.



OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

As mentioned earlier in this document, the Board is aware that this leadership transition is likely to result in the appointment of the school's first lay leader. While the community is understanding and accepting of this likelihood, qualified candidates will be expected to provide humble and faith-filled servant leadership and model in your daily practice all the fine qualities inherent in Mercy Catholic values.

From a leadership perspective, this is a classic "take it to the next level" opportunity. Merion is proud of its deep sense of community, sisterhood, and respect for all persons. This is a rock-solid, high performing institution ready to embrace an entrepreneurial leader who shares these values. The school enjoys an enviable market presence and history in the community and is poised for its next period of service and excellence. Enrollments have been relatively stable but could be improved with additional focus and creative leadership. The school is also well-capitalized and enjoys an excellent financial position, including a positive income statement and modest debt service. That said, the opportunity exists for exceptional leadership to seize the momentum and build on this solid institutional platform. A comprehensive marketing plan is in place and will require the urgent attention of the next HOS to achieve its ambitions. The school is positioned to initiate a new strategic plan under the leadership of a new Head of School.

And, finally, the Merion community is genuinely committed to its ideals of equity and inclusion but realizes this passion for a diverse community requires further attention in order to achieve its true promise. The next leader will be expected to work earnestly with faculty, staff, parents, and students in making these ideals a warm and welcoming reality for all within the Merion community.

DESIRED QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

Merion operates in the traditional independent school leadership model with the Head of School overseeing a deep bench of talented, mission-inspired direct reports. The Board sees this transition as a timely opportunity to consider qualified candidates from educational and other career platforms and skill sets, including non-traditional candidates who meet the faith standard and deliver transformational leadership. Candidates from other independent and Catholic schools are welcomed, as are candidates from other mission-critical venues such as higher education, non-profit foundations, associations, charities, and the like. The leadership team is collaborative and accountable and will align seamlessly around the talents and energies of the new Head of School.

In addition to the practicing Catholic requirement, the Board strongly prefers candidates who are “Institution Builders” and generative by nature with outstanding communication and relational skills. The HOS will serve as the high-profile face of the school to the wider community and will be expected to function internally as an effective coalition builder and team builder, engaging with all constituents in a joyful and mutually respectful manner.

Taking this fine school to the next level cannot be done alone but will require extraordinary leadership and persistence on the part of the new Head of School.

TO APPLY

Interested and qualified candidates should submit electronically in one email and as separate documents (preferably PDFs) the following materials:

- A cover letter expressing your interest in this outstanding opportunity and aligning your skills, experiences, and values with the leadership needs of the school as you understand them;
- A current résumé with all appropriate dates and chronology;
- A brief statement of educational or leadership philosophy and practice;
- A list of five professional references with name, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted until a serious mutual interest is established and not without the candidate’s permission).

All inquiries, nominations, and expressions of interest will be treated confidentially.

Please send your materials to:

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