



La Salle Institute Newsletter

From the Principal

August 15, 2018

Dear La Salle Parents and Friends,

It is my sincere hope that your summer is going well and that you are enjoying some valuable family and friends time. There are many great things happening at La Salle Institute. However, before I get to that, I want to say a few things about this past year.

This past year's objectives were to develop an environment of hope, tranquility, and a sense of belonging for our staff, faculty, students, parents, and alumni. While we may not have been 100% successful, I believe that by the end of this coming year we will be closer than ever. Of all the things that I am proud of, I am most proud of our students, your sons.

Throughout the year, they have inspired me each and every day. I have been inspired not just by their performance in the classroom but also by their performance in athletics, extracurricular activities, support of school events and providing service to our community.

This year, our students raised approximately \$21,000 for hurricane relief, Cohoes fire victims, breast cancer research, and for a student who had a successful liver transplant and will be returning to La Salle in September. In addition, they raised another \$6,000 for Saint Mary's School, our sister school in Kenya.

Your sons not only raised money for the needy, they also contributed food and toys at Thanksgiving and Christmas. This year, we were able to provide over 100 Thanksgiving dinners to very grateful families and 400 toys to young boys and girls in our communities. These are gifts that would not have been possible if not for our students and our parents.

How about our most recent graduates, our class of 2018? They were all accepted to college or university with 389 offers of admission to over 144 different colleges and universities in 26 different states, with

340 offers of scholarship and honors totaling \$18.1 million over a 4 year period. That is an average of over \$260,000 per graduate. When someone asks you why their son should go to La Salle, this is one of the many excellent reasons.

Parents, I know that without your help and support, your sons would not have accomplished all that they have this past year. I thank you in the most sincere way because with your help, your sons are learning about the importance of hard work in academics, participation in extracurricular activities, and about helping others in a truly Lasallian manner.

This past year, with the support of the Board of Trustees, we embarked on a campaign to make it known to all that La Salle Institute is here for decades to come and that our future is brighter than ever. To make this campaign most effective, we decided to improve our overall athletic facilities by building a new turf field and track, and a new strength and conditioning center. I am happy to say that both projects are near completion and when your son returns to school in September, he will be most pleased. These facilities will be open to all students, not just those participating in sports. You are invited to our ribbon cutting ceremony for the athletic field on Friday, September 7th starting at approximately 6:15 p.m. prior to the La Salle/Columbia Football game.

We also took a new approach to our admissions program this year by taking advantage of some very talented individuals and developing the basics for making our enrollment grow. I am happy to say that at this time, our new student enrollment is 15% higher than it was last year. We are confident that before school starts, we will be 20% higher.

I can also tell you that we have taken new steps in reaching out to our alumni and friends to increase our annual giving. We have increased our contact lists, our frequency of communicating with our supporters, and

our means of expressing our appreciation to all those that donate. This has resulted in a 24% increase in our annual giving compared to last year. We are also in the initial stages of planning a capital campaign, I will provide more information and details as our planning continues.

This summer we had four teachers and two staff members leave our school in pursuit of other challenges. They include Miss Theresa Reid, Mr. Scott Gordon, Mr. Michael Bevevino, Mr. Daniel Doran, Mr. Shane Hendry and Mrs. Kim Bissonette. We wish them all the very best.

The good news is that we have hired six new teachers, all with advanced degrees and all very eager to help develop academic distinctiveness and excellence. The new teachers include: Mr. Joshua Wyan (Math), Ms. Debra Schildt (Math), Mr. Norman McAfee (History), Ms. Nicole Connelly (English), Mr. Michael Gerrety (Religion) and Mrs. Mary Beth Ribet (Technology). We are very excited to welcome them to our faculty. With these new teachers, our student to teacher ratio is 12-1. It does not get any better than that.

We also added two new members to our staff. Ms. Kate LaFerriere is working in our development office, helping to plan and coordinate our alumni and parents' club events, and Ms. Lynne Landrigan is working in our finance office. We are also very excited about the great contributions that they will make to our school.

Now I want to share with you our plans for this year and for the future of La Salle Institute. It is our intent to develop a five year strategic plan that will focus on growth and overall improvements. The strategic plan, at a minimum, will address the following:

- **Lasallian and Catholic heritage and tradition:** We will continue to embrace the teachings and charism of St. La Salle and the Catholic Church while welcoming all students, of all faiths and religions, recognizing and appreciating their beliefs.
- **Developing our academic distinctiveness and excellence:** We intend to conduct a thorough examination of our curriculum and the needs of our students in this ever changing world. We will work in consultation with local colleges and universities to ensure that our students have the opportunity to graduate with as many transferable college

experiences and credits as possible while nurturing our Lasallian identity.

- **Increase and stabilize enrollment:** We will continue to work with our feeder schools and local communities to increase our overall enrollment. To implement new and fresh ideas, we will further develop our enrollment committee, we will make our student ambassador program more effective, and we will work with you to get more parents involved in admissions. With Josh House, class of 2008, as our new Director of Admissions, I am very confident that we will reach our future enrollment goals.
- **Ensure financial stability:** As we all know, many of the students attending our school are in need of financial aid. It is our intent to develop a plan to ensure that any student who meets our academic and behavioral standards will have the opportunity to attend and be successful at La Salle. Part of our capital campaign will include growing our endowment so that we can meet all of our financial goals and continue to hire well qualified teachers.
- **Leadership:** We intend to ensure that our overall leadership program continues to grow with more emphasis on individual leadership values and principles. We intend to provide the opportunity and environment where young men can develop and grow, consistent with our Lasallian heritage. We will instill pride in our students along with an understanding that being a good and competent person and leader is a virtue that ensures future success.
- **Facilities:** Although we still refer to our school as the "new school" compared to the one in South Troy, it is over 50 years old and things need to be replaced and upgraded. It is our intent to develop a plan to ensure that our building is as safe as possible, that our classrooms, especially the science rooms, meet the needs of our students, that we are technologically sound, and that we are as secure as possible.
- **Athletics and extracurricular activities:** With the new athletic field and track and the strength and conditioning center, we have a great start to this portion of the plan. There is more to be done. We need to look at our gym lockers, revitalize our upper

gym, and get more students involved in athletics and extracurricular activities.

While we are developing our strategic plan this year, we will continue to work on a number of new and in-process initiatives. Some of these include:

- Technology improvement (Blackbaud Suite): This will be completed in two phases. Phase one (in progress) includes admissions and fundraising. Phase two will start in January and will include a new website, grading and reporting system, scheduling program and communication systems. This will greatly improve our overall capabilities in these areas.
- Updating our cafeteria service lines to include a hot and cold food line (deli style): This will provide students more choices, easier access and less time in line, meaning more time to eat their lunch.
- Continue school grounds improvement that we initiated last year: If you have not noticed, our school is overgrown with trees and bushes and is hidden from Williams Road. It is our intent to make our school more visible to the public by raising the canopy on the trees and removing dead branches and trees.
- Hallway and common area improvements: Although we have been around for 168 years, you don't see that story in our hallways and common areas. We want to tell that story by posting pictures, plaques, and motivational signs throughout our common areas and halls. We have a long list of projects and I will keep you posted on our progress.

Last August I informed you that it was my intent to improve communications between teachers and parents. I also told you that a teacher must ensure that a parent is never surprised when their son earns a failing grade on a marking period report card and that a parent should not have to wait beyond the following school day for a teacher to return a phone call or email. I am aware of the fact that we continue to struggle with this and for that reason, we will be implementing new plans to help our teachers in this area. However, we can only improve if I or one of our administrators know what is happening with you and your son. Please, if you are not satisfied, do not hesitate to contact me via email or phone call.

I also informed you that I expect our faculty to accomplish our Mission on a daily basis: To educate our students, your sons, in a loving, caring, and supportive environment, to inspire them to become moral, responsible, and productive members of their communities with a commitment to "Truth, Honor, and Duty". I also expect them to treat your son with respect, dignity, and compassion. I expect that your son will treat each member of the staff and faculty with respect, dignity, and compassion. Mutual respect results in positive relationships and those relationships result in success. Again, if this is not happening, I need to know the details and I need to know them immediately.

As your son gets ready to start another school year, I would like for him to think about his future. Where does he want to be a year from now or three to five years from now? What does he need to do to reach his goals? And importantly, what help, besides academics, does he need from his teachers? I would like for your son to develop or continue to develop positive relationships with other students and with his teachers based on mutual respect. I would like for your son to be positive about our school and to spread that positive attitude throughout our communities.

As I have said in the past, throughout my military career I have always found that dedicated people, working together, supporting each other, and believing in a common goal cannot fail at being successful and bringing success to an organization and those that are part of that organization. We are all part of La Salle Institute, and working together in a supportive manner will result in your son being successful and in our school being successful.

I wish you a very pleasant few weeks as you prepare to send your sons back to school. If there is anything that I can do for you or your son, please let me know at [jracczkowski@lasalleinstitute.org](mailto:jraczkowski@lasalleinstitute.org). I would sincerely appreciate hearing from you throughout the year and learning about how things are going for your son and how you feel about La Salle Institute.

Sincerely,

Joseph B. Raczkowski '72
Principal