



# **st. croix** preparatory academy

Annual Report

2018-2019

## Introduction

The purpose of this report is to summarize the progress and achievements of St. Croix Preparatory Academy (The School) in its 15th year of operation. This study includes information on the 2018-2019 school year, such as student demographics, governance, and finances. The report also includes additional data needed to provide a comprehensive description of The School and its educational programs and practices.

This annual educational audit serves to meet the requirement of reporting progress towards the academic and non-academic goals outlined in the charter application approved by the Minnesota Department of Education. This evaluation meets Minnesota's Department of Education requirement for reporting as defined in Minnesota Statutes Section 124E.12 and E16.

During its 15th year of operation, the School received support from its authorizer, Friends of Education. In addition, the combined efforts and support of the faculty, administration, students, families, and community members were instrumental in implementing and developing a strong, supportive community and a strong academic program.

### 1. School Vision, Mission Statement, and Educational Philosophy

#### A. Vision

St. Croix Preparatory Academy envisions a learning environment centered on an integrated, rigorous, standards-based, classical curriculum that encourages students to think logically and critically, to communicate effectively and to embrace life-long learning as demonstrated by their successful pursuit of post-secondary education. The School will offer a small school community and a rigorous academic environment to area families.

#### B. Profile

We are the first public school in the eastern suburbs specifically dedicated to offering a demanding classical, liberal arts curriculum with an additional emphasis on development of each student's personal character, and leadership qualities. St. Croix Preparatory Academy will provide a learning opportunity that, until now, has only been available at select private schools.

The School was founded by parents, educators, and business people who wanted a more challenging education for their students. They wanted a school that demanded an education that challenges students to achieve to their highest potential as well as put forth their best in behavior, attitude, and effort. The School is creating a college prep educational program based on true inquiry, intellect, and character. By focusing on students' character and leadership qualities, in addition to developing their academic potential, The School is committed to developing young adults who are prepared to lead abundant and responsible lives as contributing members of our society.

### C. Mission Statement

St. Croix Preparatory Academy will develop each student's academic potential, personal character, and leadership qualities through an academically rigorous and content-rich educational program grounded in the classical tradition.

### D. Educational Philosophy

The School is based on a classical model of education. A classical model focuses on providing students with the life-long educational tools to learn and think for themselves. The classical tradition is grounded in the time-tested methodology of learning called the "Trivium", which recognizes that critical learning skills must precede critical thinking skills. The Trivium methodology is organized into the following three stages corresponding to the general stages of a student's cognitive development:

- **Grammar.** The first phase of the Trivium is Grammar (grade level K - 4). Grammar emphasizes the facts and rules of each subject that later learning is built upon. This stage focuses on the accumulation of knowledge and the rules related to each particular subject. This mirrors the stage of development where children love to mimic, recite, chant, and memorize. The objective of this phase is to provide each student with a strong foundation of subject matter KNOWLEDGE.
- **Logic.** The second phase is Logic (grade level 5 - 8). Logic focuses on a students' ability to analyze and interact with the knowledge acquired in the Grammar stage. The Logic stage is the phase where understanding is grasped. This corresponds with the student's curiosity and desire to ask questions. The objective of the Logic phase is UNDERSTANDING.
- **Rhetoric.** The final phase is Rhetoric (grade level 9 - 12). Rhetoric teaches a student how to express and discuss a subject. Rhetoric is the communication stage, where students defend and refute opinions based on their understanding and knowledge of subject matter. This fits nicely with the students' affinity for contradiction and argumentation. The objective of the Rhetoric phase is COMMUNICATION.

GRAMMAR				LOGIC				RHETORIC			
K/1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>
KNOWLEDGE				UNDERSTANDING				COMMUNICATION			
Knowledge - Comprehension				Application - Analysis				Synthesis - Evaluation			

## 2. School Governance

Since its inception, St. Croix Preparatory Academy has followed the Carver governance model. This model is designed to empower a board of directors to fulfill their obligations of accountability for the School. The model enables the board to focus on the larger issues, delegate with clarity, to control management's job without meddling, to rigorously evaluate the accomplishment of the organization.

In contrast to typical board leadership, policy governance separates issues of organizational purposes from all other organizational issues. St. Croix Prep's Board demands accomplishment of purpose and only limits the staff's operational decisions to those which do not violate the board's pre-stated standards of prudence and ethics.

The Board's own purposes are defined in accordance with the roles of the board, its members, the chair and other officers, and any committees the board may need to help it accomplish its job. This includes the necessity to "speak with one voice". Dissent is expressed during the discussion preceding a vote. Once taken, the board's decisions may subsequently be changed, but are never to be undermined. The board's expectations for itself also set out self-imposed rules regarding the delegation of authority to the staff and the method by which board-stated criteria will be used for evaluation. The Board delegates with care. There is no confusion about who is responsible to the board or for what board expectations they are

responsible. The Board utilizes an Executive Director; and the Board is able to hold this one position exclusively accountable.

A list of the Board members is provided below. Board members attend over 80% of the meetings; and all board members have fulfilled the board training requirements noted in state statute.

Name	Board Position	Group Affiliation	Date Seated	Term Expiration	Phone Number	Email Address
Nicole Donnay		Teacher	03/25/2014	08/18/2020	651-395-5900	<a href="mailto:ndonnay@stcroixprep.org">ndonnay@stcroixprep.org</a>
Kristen Denzer		Parent	08/21/2018	08/17/2021	651-353-2085	<a href="mailto:denz0018@umn.edu">denz0018@umn.edu</a>
Jake Gottschalk		Teacher	08/21/2018	08/17/2021	651-395-5900	<a href="mailto:jgottschalk@stcroixprep.org">jgottschalk@stcroixprep.org</a>
Bob Hajlo	Vice Chair	Parent	09/20/2016	08/23/2022	952-500-0751	<a href="mailto:Robert.hajlo@gmail.com">Robert.hajlo@gmail.com</a>
Deb Keyes		Teacher	03/20/2012	08/23/2022	651-395-5900	<a href="mailto:dkeyes@stcroixprep.org">dkeyes@stcroixprep.org</a>
Jim Markoe		Community	03/30/2015	08/23/2022	651-429-4627	<a href="mailto:manitouisland@comcast.net">manitouisland@comcast.net</a>
Shane Mueller	Chair	Parent	08/18/2015	08/18/2021	612-309-6237	<a href="mailto:shane.mueller@comcast.net">shane.mueller@comcast.net</a>
Angie Schumacher		Teacher	09/20/2016	08/18/2020	651-395-5900	<a href="mailto:aschumacher@stcroixprep.org">aschumacher@stcroixprep.org</a>
Kim Pleticha		Parent	04/17/2018	08/22/2019	612-242-0613	<a href="mailto:kimpleticha@gmail.com">kimpleticha@gmail.com</a>

Board members serve a three year term and elections are held during the last week in May of each school year. As of June 30, 2019 one teacher (Deb Keyes), one community member (Jim Markoe), and one parent board member (Bob Hajlo) have been elected to the board. All of the re-elected board members complete their board training (Board Training Policy adopted by the St. Croix Prep Board) they will continue in their service. Angie Schumacher tendered her resignation on May 21, 2019; her vacancy will be filled via appointment. During the current year, the board members, aside from the state statute requirements, received training which included but was not limited to the following:

- Governance Training and Governance Manual Composition/Release.
- Succession Planning and Development Plan design for identified successors
- Legislative Awareness. Identification and discussion of key legislative initiatives impacting charter schools.

### 3. School Management and Administration.

The administration licensure information is included as an appendix to this report.

### 4. Teaching Faculty Information

The faculty licensure information is included as an appendix to this report.

### 5. School Admissions and Enrollment

Enrollment is one of the keys to viability in the first years of a charter school's operations. St. Croix Prep's enrollment (1,157 students) and long waiting list (over 700) ensured that classes operated at capacity. Very few students left St. Croix Prep during the school year, and when students did leave, the available spots were quickly filled.

A historical review of The School's enrollment growth is summarized below:

- In 2004 opened with 200 students in grades K-7 (waiting list of 169)
- In 2005 enrolled 252 students in grades K-8 (waiting list of 279)
- In 2006 enrolled 342 students in grades K-9 (waiting list of 306)
- In 2007 enrolled 444 students in grades K-10 (waiting list of 549)
- In 2008 enrolled 743 students in grades K-11 (waiting list of over 450)
- In 2009 enrolled 881 students in grades K-12 (waiting list of over 500)
- In 2010 enrolled 958 students in grades K-12 (waiting list of over 500)

- In 2011 enrolled 1,010 students in grades K-12 (waiting list of over 500)
- In 2012 enrolled 1,056 students in grades K-12 (waiting list of nearly 500)
- In 2013 enrolled 1,119 students in grades K-12 (waiting list of nearly 500)
- In 2014, enrolled 1,150 students in grades K-12 (waiting list of nearly 500)
- In 2015, enrolled 1,163 students in grades K-12 (waiting list of nearly 600)
- In 2016, enrolled 1,155 students in grades K-12 (waiting list of over 700)
- In 2017, enrolled 1,164 students in grades K-12 (waiting list of over 700)
- In 2018, enrolled 1,157 students in grades K-12 (waiting list of over 700)

St. Croix Prep's Open Enrollment period normally runs from the last week in August to the first week in January. Families desire to know the placement of their Kindergarten students so the end of the School's enrollment period coincides with the Kindergarten registration in the local district. St. Croix Prep's school demographics mirror the local district. At St. Croix Prep, 11% of the students are Special Education students; approximately 82% of the students are Caucasian, the remaining 18% consist of Latino, Asian, African American, and students of two or more races.

In accordance with MN Statute 124E.17 Subd. 1, the School disseminates school information in the form of flyers to local organizations that provide services to low-income families, students of color, and students who are at risk. This information includes appropriate contact information, informational meeting dates, etc. Flyers were distributed to the following locations: Stillwater – Goodwill, Family Means, Trinity Lutheran Church Family Resource Center, and Valley Outreach; Woodbury -- Family Achievement Center, Goodwill, Savers, Christian Cupboard Food Shelf; White Bear Lake – Solid Ground, White Bear Lake Food Shelf; Mahtomedi -- St. Andrew's Community Resource Center.

The history of enrollment and comments related to this are noted below:

School Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total	Attrition Rate
2007-08	50	50	50	50	50	50	30	30	30	27	27			444	7%
2008-09	84	84	84	84	84	70	60	60	55	30	20	28	0	743	5%
2009-10	84	84	84	84	84	84	84	84	73	60	30	18	28	881	2%
2010-11	87	87	87	87	87	87	87	84	80	80	60	30	15	958	4%
2011-12	87	87	87	87	87	87	87	84	80	72	84	60	21	1,010	6%
2012-13	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	82	77	83	65	72	57	1,056	4%
2013-14	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	93	80	84	85	74	73	1,119	5%
2014-15	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	91	93	85	82	90	75	1,146	6%
2015-16	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	93	90	85	86	87	92	1,163	5%
2016-17	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	1,170	5%
2017-18	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	1,170	6%
2018-19	90	90	90	90	90	92	92	90	92	95	96	83	67	1,157	5%

Full enrollment at St. Croix Prep is approximately 1,200 students. Anticipated 2019-2020 enrollment is 1,178 students.

## 6. Academic Program/Performance.

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA). The State of Minnesota uses the MCA test results to determine proficiency. This year St. Croix Preparatory Academy students took the MCA III tests. The historical scores (with comparison to the MN state average) for The School are noted below:

	MN Average	St. Croix Prep
<b>MATH</b>		
2018-2019	56%	<b>86%</b>
2017-2018	58%	<b>85%</b>
2016-2017	59%	<b>83%</b>
2015-2016	59%	<b>85%</b>
2014-2015	60%	<b>83%</b>
2013-2014	61%	<b>80%</b>
2012-2013	61%	<b>77%</b>

2011-2012	62%	78%
2010-2011	56%	72%
2009-2010	66%	84%
2008-2009	62%	79%
2007-2008	62%	81%
2006-2007	61%	85%
2005-2006	58%	83%
<b>READING</b>		
2018-2019	60%	90%
2017-2018	60%	89%
2016-2017	60%	89%
2015-2016	60%	87%
2014-2015	59%	87%
2013-2014	59%	85%
2012-2013	58%	81%
2011-2012	76%	96%
2010-2011	74%	92%
2009-2010	72%	90%
2008-2009	72%	88%
2007-2008	71%	86%
2006-2007	69%	90%
2005-2006	72%	88%
<b>SCIENCE</b>		
2018-2019	51%	86%
2017-2018	53%	86%
2016-2017	54%	83%
2015-2016	55%	80%
2014-2015	53%	86%
2013-2014	53%	79%
2012-2013	53%	69%
2011-2012	51%	75%
2010-2011	48%	70%
2009-2010	49%	71%
2008-2009	46%	69%
2007-2008	39%	57%
Prior Years	n/a	n/a

The scores posted by St. Croix Prep's students continue to be among the highest in the state of Minnesota.

St. Croix Preparatory Academy's Lower School and Middle School have once again been recognized by the Minnesota Department of Education as Reward Schools. This award recognizes the accomplishments and hard work of Title I schools across the state. The Lower School has received this award for the past three consecutive years (three in total); the Middle School has received this award for the past seven years in a row.

In addition, consistent with previous years, the School has been recognized by various media sources such as SchoolDigger (ranked the #1 district in MN for the past three years), The Washington Post (Minnesota's Most Challenging High School), ECM Media Group (Best Public School in the East Metro), Niche (#10 High School in Minnesota), etc. These sources have ranked St. Croix Preparatory Academy as one of the nation's best (and state's best) schools as it relates to rigor, college preparation, ACT scores, percentage of students taking Advanced Placement classes, graduation rates, etc.

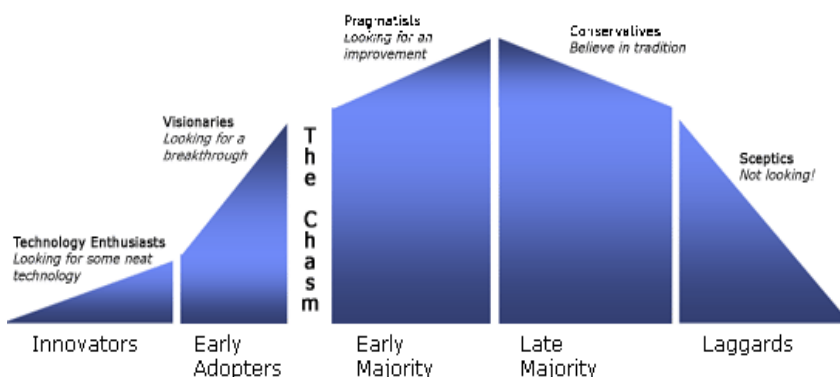
Apart from the core academic classes, St. Croix Preparatory Academy offers Art, Music, and Physical Education, for all students beginning in Kindergarten. The school also offers Latin and Music Performance electives (Band, Orchestra, Choir, Jazz Band) for students in grades 5-12. In addition, educational opportunities outside of the traditional classroom include field trips and service projects. St. Croix Prep offers educational travel opportunities, with 8<sup>th</sup> Grade students traveling to Washington D.C. Juniors and seniors have international educational travel opportunities; the 2018-2019 class spent 12 days in Italy. The School also offers a Marine Biology educational travel opportunity to the Cayman Islands and a service

travel opportunity to Guatemala. In addition to the academic programming, St. Croix Prep offers its students a full range of extracurricular activities. These include but are not limited to:

- Academic activities – Student Council, National Honor Society, National Art Honor Society, National English Honor Society, Quiz Bowl, Battle of the Books, Continental Math League, Upper School Math League, Lego League, School Newspaper,
- Athletic activities – MSHSL athletics which include football, cross country, volleyball, archery, basketball, soccer, baseball, hockey, softball, girls lacrosse, girls tennis, track, golf, dance team, alpine skiing, and ski club.
- Performing arts activities – Chamber choir, Concert choir, Jazz band, Pep Band, Show Choir, Honors Choir, Lower School Theater, Middle School Theater, Upper School Theater, Speech, and Debate.

## 7. Innovative Practices – Operational Philosophy centered on Diffusions of Innovation Theory

The School has always evaluated its purpose, growth model, marketing, and operations in terms of diffusions of innovation theory (developed by Everett Rogers in 1962) as presented by Geoffrey Moore in his books *Crossing the Chasm*, *Inside the Tornado* and *Escape Velocity*. Marketing the school, positioning/differentiating it within its market, development of a whole product and operations (e.g., hiring, governance models, policy development, recruiting, and programming) all take into consideration the five segments of classification typically described in technology adoption (e.g., innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards). This impacts the School’s hiring practices, governance model, policy development, recruiting practices, etc. This best practice was adopted by the leading technology companies in the 1990s and continues to be one of the standards for entrepreneurial leadership.



St. Croix Prep uses this theory for both an internal and external evaluation of the School. In accordance with the model, current goals are focused on operational excellence and customer intimacy (as opposed to prior years’ goals of growth and product leadership). Nearly every element of this report is discussed in terms of its alignment with the aforementioned theory.

## 8. Program Challenges

The operations at St. Croix Prep went very smoothly in its 15th year. With that said, there are still challenges that St. Croix Prep is addressing. St. Croix Prep’s challenges relate to the following five interrelated items:

- Training & Development of Faculty. The hiring and training of faculty needs to ensure continuity in The School’s emphasis on mission, educational philosophy, and operational philosophy. This is being accomplished through the implementation of our Q Comp initiatives which focuses on the School’s classical mission.
- Training & Development of Board and Board Responsibility. Training and development of the board needs to continue in order to ensure continuity in The School’s strategic leadership. This is being accomplished through the implementation of ongoing board training related to the history/mission of the school, role of board members, and the underlying business philosophy of the School.
- Integration of New Students/Families. Many families are relatively new to the School’s culture and environment. Due to the success and facilities of many families enroll in St. Croix Prep

with expectations that it is similar to other traditional districts. Orientations, informational meetings, and other communication is being used to emphasize the mission and values which make the SCPA unique. In addition, The Parent Group has been reestablished and highly successful in assisting with new family integration.

- Succession Planning. The Board and School are in the midst of succession planning to ensure the long term viability of the organization in accordance with the founders' vision, the mission, and the previous 14 years of successful operation.

## **9. Finances**

The School continues to show fiscal responsibility in its operations by adding to its fund balance during each fiscal year. This is being accomplished even while making strategic investments for the future growth of the School. The School has received a "clean" audit for the previous 13 years. In addition, the School has received the MDE Finance Award every year it has applied for this award (11 years in total). At June 30, 2019, the School had an unassigned fund balance of 25%. In addition, the School has maintains a line of credit (\$1M) to account for unforeseen cash flow shortages. The School has not drawn on the line of credit in over 84 months. A copy of the School's 2017-2018 Audit Report is on file with the State of Minnesota. The field work related to the 2018-2019 audit has been completed.

## **10. Future Plans**

The School's future plans consist of continued work in addressing the challenges noted in Section 8. In addition, The School has initiated the establishment of a separate 501c3 public charity - St. Croix Preparatory Academy Foundation. The purpose of this organization is to raise capital to improve the long term financial viability of the organization, issue scholarships, fund faculty leaves of absence, etc. The organization has been established. This includes legal filings, board formation, bylaws adopted and strategic planning sessions to form a plan to alleviate the funding gap that exists between traditional public schools and charter schools.