

# OVERBROOK SCHOOL

January 28, 2022

Dear Overbrook Community,

A blessed 2022 to you and your family! As we prepare for Catholic Schools Week, how grateful we are for the gift of Catholic education that has such power to transform the lives of children and their families. As one of the Church's documents on Catholic education states, "In a Catholic school, everyone should be aware of the living presence of Jesus the 'Master' who, today as always, is with us in our journey through life as the one genuine 'Teacher,' the perfect man in whom all human values find their fullest perfection."

Overbrook School is certainly a place where these authentic human values grow and blossom. The students at Overbrook are doing great things this year. For example, in math, the sixth-grade team is ranked first in the nation in the Catholic Math League. Our Forensics team members have secured multiple first-place wins in recent tournaments, and our new 4-H program took top honors in a recent county-wide public speaking contest, with one student moving to the sub-regional competition. The third- to fifth-grade boys' cross-country team finished third in the state. This year we deepened our commitment to service by introducing a school-wide service project where students collected food items to provide 3,848 meals for families in need around the holidays. A new STEM director has been hired to oversee the Beyond the Brook Farm and our integrated science initiatives.

As announced earlier in the school year, Overbrook, owned and operated by the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia since 1936, will soon become Nashville's only PreK to 6th-grade Catholic School. As we continue to plan and implement this transition to a PreK-6th model, we want to keep you abreast of the school's exciting progress.

Over the last several months, implementation teams have been examining our current academic program with an eye to sharpening Overbrook's focus on what it does best – offering an outstanding academic preparation where students are educated in truth and charity in the context of a nurturing community marked by grace, friendship, freedom, and confidence. This is the Dominican Difference.

The move to a PreK-6th model provides Overbrook students in fifth and sixth grades an opportunity unique among area Catholic schools. The focus of these grades will be an intentional academic, spiritual, and human formation aimed at leadership development rooted in a Dominican emphasis on the virtues. This foundation is more important than ever as our students prepare for the critical years of junior high and high school. Faculty and staff have been working on various elements of a special sixth-grade capstone year that will provide a fitting crescendo to their time at Overbrook. Not only will the sixth-grade program include the exceptional academic preparation for which Overbrook is known, but it will also include some distinctive new features:

## Student Life

- Leadership emphasis with a beginning-of-school-year retreat, increased weekly leadership opportunities within the school as well as in Overbrook traditions like Commissioning Mass, Light of Leadership, Advent Tableau, and May Crowning
- A special culminating year-end class trip

- A virtue formation course, which will include life skills, digital citizenship, technology skills, servant leadership, public speaking, and social-emotional learning
- Before graduation, a sixth-grade capstone project where students reflect on what it means to be a Christian leader and lessons learned during their Overbrook journey

### Academic Program

- The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (a Montessori-inspired approach to teaching the faith that currently serves PreK to grade 5) will expand to include sixth-grade and focus especially on the Old Testament and salvation history
- For sixth-grade students, three levels of math will be offered (6th grade, 7th grade, and an accelerated 7th and 8th combined curriculum) to provide mastery of concepts and skills required for Algebra and higher-level math
- Science studies will ensure a fundamental understanding of Earth Science through labs utilizing the scientific and engineering design methods as well as integrating STEM lessons and the Beyond the Brook Farm
- Beginning in fifth grade, students will choose between language electives of Latin and Spanish
- Fifth-grade students will also choose a fine arts elective – either band or a combination class of handbells and choir

You may find more details about the program at: <https://www.overbrook.edu/pre-k-through-6>.

As the seventh and eighth grades move to St. Cecilia, Overbrook will gain some additional space in its facility to reconfigure. Due to strong interest among prospective families, I am excited to share that Overbrook will add a second preschool three-year-old class for the 2022-2023 school year. We will also relocate spaces for individual tutoring and our SOAR enrichment program, as well as provide easier access to the Beyond the Brook Farm. With the Farm's planned makeover being fully funded, we are working towards a new complex of an animal barn, outdoor learning space, and garden beds to greet students next August. Additionally, support for a shared Overbrook/St. Cecilia field house has been secured, with construction set to begin this spring.

Just before Christmas, we shared that an anonymous donor gave \$1 million to create the new St. Martin de Porres Scholarship. More recently, an alumnus gave \$100,000 to create another new scholarship endowment.

We are convinced that the Lord is at work. There is no other way to explain the remarkable events taking place and the beautiful friends who have come forward to support Overbrook.

We thank you for your prayers, support, and friendship and look forward to our next communication.

Sincerely in Christ,

*Sister Marie Blanchette, OP*

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