



**Mount Aviat Academy**  
**Long Range Plan**  
June 2012

# **MOUNT AVIAT ACADEMY**

## **Long Range Plan**

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## **Statement of Purpose**

Long-range planning is the process of developing goals and objectives, assessing the internal and external environment, and establishing priorities to accomplish a shared vision of the future. The Board of Trustees of Mount Aviat Academy (“The Board”) appointed a Long-Range Planning Committee (“The Committee”) and charged it with carrying out three primary tasks to help ensure a secure future for the school:

- To oversee an assessment of the school’s current status, short- and long-term needs
- To formulate this assessment into a long-range plan with goals that address current issues and enable accomplishment of future objectives
- To evaluate progress periodically as the plan is implemented, making suggestions for improvements when appropriate

As a result of these efforts, an initial long-range plan was adopted in June of 2006. In 2011, The Board considered the need for an updated long-range plan and accordingly charged The Committee with carrying out the task of updating the plan.

## **Overview**

Mount Aviat Academy is a private Catholic elementary school in the Diocese of Wilmington, under the direction of the Oblate Sisters of Saint Francis de Sales. The school serves the educational needs of children of varying intellectual abilities from preschool through the eighth grade. Mount Aviat Academy is dedicated to the instruction of children in the message of Christ as taught by the Catholic Church and enriched by the spirituality of Saint Francis de Sales. The school partners with parents in the task of educating their children, while striving to instill the principles of scholarship, citizenship and service into the minds and hearts of its students.

The school originally opened as a kindergarten in September 1954. In 1960, the name Mount Aviat Academy was born with the establishment of a high school for girls that graduated 9 classes. Before phasing out the high school due to changing needs in the area, the kindergarten expanded to receive 16 eager first graders in 1969. Today, Mount Aviat Academy operates at capacity serving students in preschool through 8th grade. Over the years, Mount Aviat Academy has proven itself academically and has gained a reputation for its outstanding learning environment. Both the academic achievement of the students and the laudatory comments of parents attest to its success. The school is very proud that it is now entrusted with the children of some of its early graduates.

Over the past 52 years, Mount Aviat Academy and the Oblate Sisters while faced with many challenges, have remained true to three core goals:

- To educate the students as Christians for now and for eternity by character formation, value education, and religious instruction in the Salesian spirit
- To educate the students as responsible citizens by developing their intellects in knowledge and critical thinking; fostering patriotism, respect for authority, and individual responsibility
- To educate the students for success at the next level of instruction by developing the skills and principles of scholarship, citizenship and service through instruction and activities designed for this end.

Now in its sixth decade, Mount Aviat Academy remains uniquely poised to continue to meet these goals. But new challenges continue to arise. While the Sisters remain determined to keep the school affordable to ensure a balanced student population, operational costs continue to increase significantly each year. The most important causes of the spiraling expenses are given below.

The school is located on the site of the former Cecil County Almshouse and is enhanced by trees and fields that provide picturesque surroundings and a retreat-like atmosphere. Both parents and students value this aspect of the campus. As local development advances, the need to preserve sufficient land immediately adjacent to the school and to provide for future growth is a necessity. The financial means must be provided in a timely manner for this to occur.

With the growing population comes an increasing demand for excellent schools. Mount Aviat remains unique, but area residents now have more educational options than they had just 10 years ago, so competition for students continues to increase. Maintaining a well-rounded educational program in the Oblate tradition requires regular updating to meet the changing needs of students.

Undeniably, the Oblate Sisters are the heart and soul of the school, preserving the characteristics that families have come to cherish. Nevertheless, like Catholic schools across the nations, fewer Sisters are available to staff and administer the academy. As the number of lay faculty increases, so do salary expenses.

To facilitate the long-range planning process, The Committee was organized to manage a strategic process that examined budgetary, constituent, staffing and external development issues in the following key areas:

1. Facilities
2. Curriculum
3. Professional staffing
4. Technology
5. Advancement

Over the past several months, interviews have been conducted with both individuals associated with the school, and some who are independent of the school. The following long-range plan is the product of this effort.

## **Methodology**

The Board initially considered the need for a new long-range plan when it met in the spring of 2011.

**Planning Session 1 (11/13/11):** The Committee reviewed and affirmed Mount Aviat Academy's mission, reviewed the 2006 long-range plan, identified sub-committee needs and generally assessed needs and challenges to future planning, and established the process for involving more people with specific expertise to participate in an external review of the goals and objectives.

**Subcommittee Meetings:** External reviews for each key area were conducted between November 2011 and March 2012.

**Planning Session 2 (03/13/12):** Leaders of the key subcommittees presented the external review results and the draft reports.

**Board Meeting (04/19/12):** The draft long-range plan was presented to The Board for consideration and comment.

**Planning Session 3 (05/3/12):** The draft long-range plan was presented to The Committee and invited guests for consideration and comment.

# **Facilities**

## **Overview**

Mount Aviat Academy provides learning environments for students in preschool through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Mount Aviat operates out of four buildings located on 25 acres in picturesque Cecil County, Maryland. The preschool is in a building purchased and renovated for that purpose in 2003. The kindergarten is in an historical building which dates back to the 1800s, and which was completely renovated in 1988. Grades 1 through 8 are located in the main building, which was dedicated in 1965 and had a major addition completed in 1993. The main building was made more accessible with the completion of the elevator project in 2009. A gymnasium was constructed in 1979, with an addition completed in 2005. After the recent completion of the elevator project, the future of the facilities has shifted to maintenance and sustainability.

The focus moving forward is to continue to provide grounds, buildings, and facilities that are safe, well maintained, and offer students a positive learning environment that supports effective instruction.

## **Goal 1**

To improve security and traffic safety in and around buildings and the grounds.

## **Goal 2**

To create sustainable programs to improve facility maintenance and improve efficiency of all buildings.

## **Goal 3**

To continue to evaluate school safety programs to ensure maximum protection of students and staff.

# Curriculum

## Overview

Mount Aviat Academy follows a course of studies established in compliance with the State of Maryland Department of Education. The curriculum guidelines of the Diocese of Wilmington are the basis for the traditional core classes, which include Religion, Math, Reading, Language Arts, Science and Social Studies. In addition to core curriculum areas, Mount Aviat offers enrichment classes to all students, which include French, Physical Education, Art, Music, Computers, Library, Speech and Life Skills.

Religion is not simply a subject to be taught, but the foundation of Mount Aviat Academy. “Live Jesus” exemplifies the school’s primary goal: transmitting the message of the Gospel and inviting Christ into each action of our day. Instruction in Religion includes catechesis, faith formation, and prayer.

Students are grouped heterogeneously within the class. When needed, students may be divided into smaller flexible groups and provided with additional assistance to meet their individual needs and learning styles. Annual standardized tests report that Mount Aviat students continue to excel in all subject areas assessed.

Individual and small-group instruction is currently provided for academically challenged students through the Reading Resource Program available to students in grades 1 to 6. An accelerated mathematics program in conjunction with an innovative mathematics curriculum is available for academically advanced students in grades 5 to 8. Students in grades 5 to 8 needing assistance with organizational skills and positive attitudes toward school are offered support in the Headed For Success Program.

As a result of the national focus on science and technology and Mount Aviat Academy’s commitment to further enriching these areas, the science program has recently been enhanced to provide students with a strong emphasis in hands-on laboratory learning to assure that students are prepared to excel in science in high school and beyond.

As we continue the transition of meeting the challenges of a 21<sup>st</sup> century school, it is important to meet the needs of the school’s population. Mount Aviat acknowledges the need to offer an educational program to a broader population and to accommodate diversified learning styles to a greater degree.

## Goal 1

To explore and implement a program that provides services to those students who are more academically challenged by offering extended individual and small group instruction in reading and math.

## Goal 2

To further develop and enhance the Guidance Program to accommodate the needs of students who require accommodations in the classroom in order to be successful and to assist in the personal development of students to encourage successful social development.

**Goal 3**

To expand the Music Program to allow exposure to different instruments and explore opportunities for more students to actively participate in music.

# **Professional Staffing**

## **Overview**

One of the greatest assets of Mount Aviat Academy is the faculty and staff who guide the daily growth and learning of the students. These dedicated men and women are not only committed to being fine educators, but also they understand the unique role of Catholic education.

A commitment to professional development is crucial to providing effective instruction in the various content areas. The staff is equally sensitive to their role as model and mentor. Genuine concern for the education of the whole child is demonstrated in the willingness of staff to go beyond what is required in order to help children be successful and to establish a collaborative environment with parents.

Historically, Mount Aviat Academy has been challenged with regard to offering competitive salaries. As a private school, there is no outside funding available for this purpose. The Board has made a commitment to improving staff salaries over the last five years, and significant strides have been made in recent years; however, the school recognizes the need to continue to increase the salary scale.

A second area of focus is to expand the present staff to better meet the needs of children in today's classroom. In particular, Mount Aviat needs the guidance counselor, reading resource teacher, and Advancement Director on staff more hours per week. The ever-increasing duties required for the administration of the school will require that an assistant administrator be added in the near future. This person will cooperate with the principal in areas of supervision, program development, state regulations and providing general leadership in the building. A math resource teacher may also be needed in the future.

## **Goal 1**

To maintain a highly competent faculty and staff that is dedicated to Catholic education through a competitive salary structure and a combination of benefits that is sensitive to their needs.

## **Objectives**

- 1a. Fund the salary scale, to remain competitive within the Diocese of Wilmington.
- 1b. Add to the faculty and staff to meet the needs of the students.

# **Technology**

## **Overview**

In the late 1970s, Mount Aviat Academy recognized the role technology would play in education and established its first computer lab in a small room that housed eight Atari computers. Over the years, the school undertook a plan that introduced a full-size computer lab, expanded the implementation of administrative software, weaved technology across the curriculum, and carried out a professional development effort to assure that educators and staff members possessed the necessary skills and competency.

Embracing a commitment to technology, classroom teachers have laptops for their exclusive use. In addition, each classroom is equipped with an interactive white board and a cart of laptops is available for use in the classroom. School data is managed by a web-based school information system that provides access to parents, and wireless connectivity is available in all learning areas.

In anticipation of an ongoing commitment to technology, the administration and technology committee recognize the need for a clearly defined technology plan that supports the educational program and prepares students to be successful in the highly technological world in which they will learn and work. The focus moving forward will be to design, implement, and provide ongoing support for a technology plan that strengthens the educational program of the school with attention to appropriate use of technology.

## **Goal 1**

To design a plan and install necessary technology to support the educational programs and administration of the school.

## **Goal 2**

To provide more comprehensive technology support.

## **Goal 3**

To provide professional development of faculty and staff.

## **Advancement**

### **Overview**

In its mission of “educating students to be no more and no less than their best,” Mount Aviat Academy is well-positioned and highly regarded among its school families. These stakeholders have an established relationship with the school and understand and fully appreciate the school’s unique offerings as a Catholic school. Overall, Mount Aviat Academy has earned a strong reputation among the school community that it serves. Mount Aviat’s strengths are robust and differentiated compared to surrounding education choices. The unique and positive attributes of Mount Aviat include the following:

- charisma of the Oblate Sisters who administer the school
- school’s Christ-centered education
- strong shared values within its community
- intimate school size
- integration of technology into classroom teaching.

A solid foundation is in place at Mount Aviat, but external dynamics (including the volatility of the economy) since the initial long-range plan was developed in 2006 have presented a need to update the school’s Advancement priorities. There is a clear and present opportunity for Mount Aviat Academy to build on its stellar foundation. Specifically, the Committee recognizes additional focus and attention should be directed toward addressing:

- the macro-trend of declining enrollment in Catholic schools
- securing additional funding to combat escalating resource costs that further advance and differentiate the school
- branding and articulating the value of a Mount Aviat Academy education
- continuing to foster the unique Mount Aviat community spirit by engaging parents, grandparents, volunteers, friends and other supporters of the school
- implementing several other key initiatives, which are noted below.

The emerging opportunities are integrated under the one umbrella of Advancement (including enrollment, development and communications) to help ensure a sustainable future for Mount Aviat Academy.

The recommendations that follow are both supplementary and complementary to the guidelines and recommendations that were included in the initial long-range plan from 2006.

### **Enrollment**

For decades, families who wanted to enroll their children in Mount Aviat Academy were often placed on a waiting list. The high demand reflected the strong reputation of the school. Today, with a declining student population base in Cecil County and more regional education choices, there is continuing pressure on enrollment at Mount Aviat. Rising operational costs coupled with enrollment pressures make it very challenging for Mount Aviat Academy to provide an affordable education. In addition, there is an inaccurate perception in the community that Mount Aviat Academy does not have enrollment openings. Finally, the admissions process has evolved into a critical component of the overall enrollment effort, so better engagement with potential school families will be a priority.

### **Development**

Mount Aviat Academy and the Oblate Sisters are deeply loved and appreciated by those who are and have been associated with them. This provides a fertile environment within which a properly structured and supported development program can thrive. Mount Aviat took a number of steps five years ago to strengthen its development program—including the birth of its endowment program called the Aviat Foundation. The overall efforts included hiring a part-time Development Director and the initiation of a long-term planning process to better understand the short-term and long-term needs of Mount Aviat Academy. Development continues to be a critical component in order for Mount Aviat Academy to proceed as an affordable education choice.

## **Communications**

As part of the long-range plan, the communications strategic framework and goals have been crafted to be integrative and supportive of enrollment, development and other key efforts identified in the long-range plan. The plan will ensure communications initiatives are strategic, targeted and purposeful. In addition, the plan will further the core mission of raising awareness of Mount Aviat Academy's unique attributes that differentiate it from other education options among targeted key audiences using a full communications mix to attain long-range goals. In particular, communications should be directed and targeted to support all Advancement priorities (primarily enrollment and development).

### **Goal 1**

To increase the number of prospects that visit Mount Aviat Academy by increasing the visibility of the school.

### **Goal 2**

To convert prospects to Mount Aviat students and families.

### **Goal 3**

To foster a sustainable network of Mount Aviat Ambassadors to promote the school by word of mouth marketing.

### **Goal 4**

To build upon Development programs for sustained effort going forward.

### **Goal 5**

To communicate fundraising events to the public and ensure minimal overlap in timing.

# APPENDIX

## FACILITIES

Goal 1 To improve security and traffic safety in and around buildings and the grounds.

### *Objectives*

- 1a. Improve outdoor lighting in the back parking lot.
- 1b. Investigate installation of safety flashers on Childs Road near school entrance.
- 1c. Review student and staff training for emergency situations and expand “drills” as needed.
- 1d. Evaluate communications systems (phone, PA, etc.) for future upgrade.

Goal 2 To create sustainable programs to improve facility maintenance and improve efficiency of all buildings.

### *Objectives*

- 2a. Review system maintenance programs (heating, AC, water, waste) to include record review and archive and establish regular maintenance intervals and programs.
- 2b. Complete solar array project to supply energy to all facilities in the future. Continue to monitor and evaluate solar energy production.
- 2c. Evaluate the following additional sustainable programs:
  1. Efficient lighting solutions
  2. Additional solar energy options
  3. Water conservation
  4. Waste reduction/recycling (source reduction, grass roots efforts, class projects)

Goal 3 To continue to evaluate school safety programs to ensure maximum protection of students and staff.

## **CURRICULUM**

Goal 1 To explore and implement a program that provides services to those students who are more academically challenged by offering extended individual and small group instruction in reading and math.

### *Objectives*

1a. Obtain data from common assessments, standardized tests and teacher input to determine the number of students who would benefit from individual and/or small-group instruction in reading and math.

1b. Explore the possibility of acquiring a full-time resource teacher to provide extended individual and/or small-group instruction in reading and math and to support regular education teachers with techniques to address accommodations within the classroom.

1c. Expand services for students who are more academically challenged by offering extended individual and small-group instruction provided by support teacher.

Goal 2 To further develop and enhance the Guidance Program to accommodate the needs of students who require accommodations in the classroom in order to be successful and to assist in the personal development of students to encourage successful social development.

### *Objectives*

2a. Explore providing academic/behavioral support for students in need and to include those students currently receiving support on a 504 Plan.

2b. Expand the Guidance Program to provide additional opportunities for personal development and appropriate age-level social skills.

Goal 3 To expand the Music Program to allow exposure to different instruments and explore opportunities for more students to actively participate in music.

### *Objectives*

3a. Explore the possibility of expanding the current Music Program to allow exposure to a variety of instruments.

3b. Explore opportunities for students to be involved in music in regular classes and innovative opportunities.

## **PROFESSIONAL STAFFING: STAFF SURVEY**

All full-time staff members were surveyed concerning salary and benefits. Every staff member who works for Mount Aviat Academy chooses to do so because of the working environment. A majority of staff members indicated that the salary was not competitive. Nevertheless, they remain at Mount Aviat Academy because the working environment is more important than salary. A summary of the staff survey follows:

**Work Environment:** Of those responding to the survey, staff ranked the work environment at Mount Aviat as the single most important factor.

**Salary:** The survey results indicate that staff feel that the salary could be more competitive with other area schools, both Catholic and parochial. Overall, most respondents ranked salary as the most important benefit.

**Health Care:** Interestingly, health care was the least important benefit, after ranking as second only to salary five years ago. This appears to reflect both a general satisfaction with the significant changes made to the benefits, but also a decreasing reliance on Mount Aviat for benefits. Most staff indicated that they received benefits through their spouse.

**Other Benefits:** Flexibility, Leave, Tuition Assistance and Professional Development were all evaluated about the same, with no clear priority among them except that they trailed salary by a significant margin. Consistent with the last time the survey was administered, the majority of staff feels that benefits are adequate.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

Goal 1 To design a plan and install necessary technology to support the educational programs and administration of the school.

*Objectives*

- 1a. Explore technologies that increase students' hands-on use of technology in the classroom.
- 1b. Develop and implement a schedule to upgrade hardware for both learning and the administration of the school.
- 1c. Implement the Acceptable Use Policy adopted by the Diocese of Wilmington and expand education in using social media and in dealing with cyber bullying.

Goal 2 To provide more comprehensive technology support.

*Objectives*

- 2a. Develop a job description for a technology position to support learning and the funding necessary for a part-time position by 2013 – 2014.
- 2b. Expand the use of contracted support for the administration of hardware and networks.
- 2c. Evaluate web-filtering services and implement a more robust solution.

Goal 3 To provide professional development of faculty and staff.

*Objectives*

- 3a. Provide a diversity of professional development opportunities to teachers and annually dedicate a professional day to using various forms of technology.
- 3b. Provide in-service to office staff to increase efficiency and expand skills in the use of productivity software and data management.

## ADVANCEMENT

### ENROLLMENT

Goal 1 To increase the number of prospects that visit Mount Aviat Academy by increasing visibility of school.

#### *Objectives*

1a. Designate annual Marketing budget as part of overall school budget. Administered by the Advancement Director.

1. Set up booth advertising school at community events (Newark Day, attendance of 10,000).

2. Increase online advertising (Catholic sites like The Dialog and local popular sites like MetroKids.com).

3. Increase mailings to local daycares.

a. Determine if mailings would be appropriate for area gymnastics, dance, karate, and similar clubs.

1b. Increase communications with prospective parents.

1. Send out mailings to prospective parents who attend Open House

2. Send out mailings to prospective parents whose names have been obtained through the Family Referral Program.

1c. Target middle school students.

Goal 2 To convert prospects to Mount Aviat students and families.

#### *Objectives*

2a. Personalize the admissions process.

1. Send letters to parents acknowledging receipt of applications.

2. Add prospective parents to mailing list for The Aviat Link.

3. Invite prospective parents to Open House.

2b. Update admissions process.

1. Maintain all application information in Day School.

2. Create interactive PDF of application for website.

3. Maintain consistency in look of forms.

Goal 3 To foster a sustainable network of Mount Aviat Ambassadors to promote the school by word of mouth marketing.

#### *Objectives*

3a. Fully activate Mount Aviat Parent Referral program.

3b. Use Parent Ambassadors to make personal connections with new families at events when appropriate.

3c. Revive Alumni Association

1. Develop a group of alumni to lead Association.

2. Plan annual Alumni event.

3. Gather more e-mail addresses for alumni for e-blasts.

4. Use Alumni Association to initiate and maintain Facebook presence.

3d. Recognize the work of volunteers.

## DEVELOPMENT

Goal 4 To build upon Development programs for sustained effort going forward.

### *Objectives*

- 4a. Launch 2<sup>nd</sup> Endowment Campaign.
- 4b. Identify alternative funding grants.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Goal 5 To communicate fundraising events to the public and ensure minimal overlap in timing.

### *Objectives*

- 5a. Continue to serve as the sole source of press releases for all school fundraising events.
- 5b. Assess the timing of current fundraising events to determine if events are adequately spaced out on the school calendar.