

## Our Mission to Franciscan Catholic Education

You work hard to give your children the “best” ..... and you want to give them the **best choice** in a high school because that’s why you’re looking at OA. All of us at OA believe that we are indeed the *best choice for what matters most*. Simply put, we are “So worth it”! Our extraordinary faculty and staff, rigorous curriculum, collegiate style campus, and multi-faceted co-curricular, athletic and fine/performing arts programs are second to none. Plus – and actually most importantly – we offer this premier educational experience in a vibrant, faith-filled environment where they become equipped with the values and beliefs so essential in this confusing and competitive world.

The teenage years are full of choices and challenges. It’s a time when they begin to act independently and make choices that can impact the rest of their lives. When they think of the future, they are often filled with hope and excitement along with a fair amount of anxiety. They have questions about who they are and what they are called to be. Popular culture – especially as delivered through the media – attempts to answer these questions, usually by promoting wealth, status, image, physical appearance and possessions as the means to happiness and success. Very little credence is given to values of fidelity, social responsibility, abstinence, respect, empathy and forgiveness.

Luckily, our students at OA spend 4 years immersed in a culture that can be described as “counter-cultural”. Our mission statement and guiding principles that are outlined in your folder focuses and frames all that we do at OA. Our motto of “virtue, honor, and education” is not just inscribed on our letterhead and buildings; it is the code we live by, day in and day out. Our students know it and proudly talk about how important it is for them to live in alignment with this motto and continue the proud tradition that is Oldenburg Academy.

### **Let me give you some specific examples how this happens at OA:**

All students take 4 full years of religion. These classes are steeped in the rich tradition of our Catholic identity and enlivened by the Franciscan intellectual tradition. They read sacred Scripture, study the lives of significant Church figures, discover anew the power of the Sacraments, understand the moral implications of Catholic social teaching, and grow in their awareness of the sacredness of all life and of creation.

The classroom experience is enhanced by a four-year retreat program that is developed to match their maturing consciousness and developmental and discernment needs. For instance, the Sophomores spend most of the day experiencing the value of service learning; our Seniors focus on the important life choices they will face in the coming years. Speaking of service, all students participate in a comprehensive service program over their four years. It is flexible, adaptive, and grounded in Jesus’ reminder that in serving others, we are in fact, serving Him.

As a school community we also gather to celebrate the Eucharist on all major holy days and feasts, and most often we are joined by many of the retired and semi-retired Sisters who live here. “Adopt A Sister” is another wonderful opportunity we have to spend time with these amazing women who have dedicated their lives to loving and serving God. Students meet in small groups every other week for lunch with their special Sister. They exchange stories, share ideas, and grow in their faith while forming a deep and often long-lasting friendship. Ask Mr. Knueven – he stills visits with his adopted Sister! And of course, we welcome students of all faith traditions. Our

small, personalized approach to education enables everyone to find a home and explore their own journey.

Recent studies suggest that strong character development may correlate more directly to later life success than the traditional measures of GPA or standardized test scores. The New York Times bestseller “How Children Succeed” describes research that confirms what we in Catholic schools have known all along – that an emphasis on perseverance, responsibility, rigor, and high expectations is the best preparation for success in college and career as well as the ability to meet all the challenges that await them later in life. Our alums repeatedly tell us that they find the transition to college less daunting than many of their peers. They are confident, independent, focused learners. While other students struggle to write papers, do hours of homework, and balance involvement in clubs or sports while keeping up with their studies, OA grads have been doing this for 4 years – it is now second nature to them.

Our society often uses money as an indicator of “gains” and “losses”. While all of us at OA believe that the “ROI” of sending your son or daughter to the Academy is undeniable, it is impossible to put a price tag on the experience that awaits your sons and daughters at OA. Any of us would be happy to discuss with you the amount of college scholarship dollars awarded to our graduates OR the amount of money our graduates (their parents?) save in college because of our dual credit program/ not having to take remedial courses in college OR how much more lifetime income college grads earn compared to those with high school diplomas, etc. But, we measure success one faith-filled, responsible, compassionate, ethical, resourceful, independent grad at a time. And if you entrust us with your sons and daughters, I am confident you too will say “OA is so worth it!”

And finally, I strongly believe that the future of Catholic education and ultimately, the spiritual soul and ethical character of our communities, relies upon the strengthening of a **Catholic K - 12 expectation** for our faithful and faith-filled families. We sometimes hear parents say, “our family is strong enough to provide all that our children need.” We firmly support the clear responsibility of parents to be the primary and ultimate providers of the faith to their children. Faith must first be taught and modeled at home. No doubt. But we are so much stronger together and the difference we can make as the united Body of Christ is aspirational but also achievable. It is an honor and a privilege we take very, very seriously as we offer ourselves as your “partner” in this most important developmental journey of your sons and daughters.