



Head of School Search
St. Anne School
Laguna Niguel, California
July 1, 2020



OVERVIEW

St. Anne School, located in Laguna Niguel, CA, is an independent Catholic school serving 680 children from ages 2 through 14 in a PK through 8th grade. Founded in 1992, St. Anne School has grown rapidly in its 28-year history, sustaining its reputation as a warm and welcoming community, with engaged and motivated families. Teachers deliver a strong academic program and instill deeply held values that serve St. Anne graduates long after they matriculate from the school.

The school is honored as a National Blue Ribbon School, with accreditations from the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS), the Western Catholic Educational Association (WCEA), the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), and the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).



MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY

"St. Anne is an independent Roman Catholic school that educates, challenges, and nurtures the whole child in a Christ-centered atmosphere of support and close personal attention.

Guided by the teachings of the Catholic Church, we work in partnership with inspirational teachers and committed parents to cultivate the faith, intellect, and character of our students."

The school strives to *"develop future generations of creative thinkers, innovative problem solvers, effective communicators and emerging leaders, guided by the Catholic faith, to influence our local and global communities for the greater good."*

Evidence of the school's adherence to its values is omnipresent. Inspirational quotes, initiatives, guidelines, and programs fill the halls and classrooms of the school, and the embrace of these values by all constituencies—alumni, board members, teachers, staff, administrators, parents and students—stands out as a singular strength of the school community.



CAMPUS AND LOCATION

The suburban city of Laguna Niguel is a thriving community of approximately 65,800 residents. As a predominately residential city, Laguna Niguel serves as a bedroom community for the job centers of northern and central Orange County. It boasts a mild coastal climate and numerous parks and public trails.

The St. Anne campus is purpose-built and spacious. Light-filled classrooms are well-designed, beautifully furnished and developmentally appropriate; science labs, arts facilities, offices, a library and gymnasium are augmented with outstanding outdoor playgrounds, safe carpool drop-off and pick-up lanes and expansive after-school facilities. The halls are wide and welcoming, beautifully decorated with student writing and art, as well as plentiful evidence of the school's academic programs for parents and visitors.

STUDENTS

"Walk through the halls of St. Anne School and you'll see students holding doors open for guests, collaborating on projects and high-fiving teachers and administrators." (Laguna Niguel "Lifestyle" Magazine, October 2019)

Indeed, students at St. Anne enjoy close and loving relationships with their teachers and fellow students; they are known, nurtured and described as "happy, respectful and engaged learners who are ready to discover what kind of great they want to be." Students hail from a variety of faith backgrounds; approximately 50% of St. Anne students are Catholic. All are gently guided to develop their spirituality as they participate in weekly Mass, and community outreach. The program develops well-rounded students through an engaging academic program, rich arts offerings, joyful play and team athletics, along with plentiful opportunities to explore their individual interests and affinities, whether athletic, artistic or scientific.

FACULTY

The faculty at St. Anne School is a deeply dedicated group of 74 professionals. They are clearly beloved by their students. While teachers have endured some stress from the administrative turnover and change, they look forward to returning to a state of calm professionalism, and are optimistic about the future of the school. All spoke positively of collaborative efforts and recent professional development such as the two-year consultancy of Dr. Richard Cash, who has shepherded the team to identify trends in student learning and develop further strategies for teaching to the range of learners at the school. Teachers enjoy working together, and there are countless examples of initiatives that were launched by teachers eager to build engaging opportunities for their students; examples range from a computer-based study of aeronautics to a show choir that performed for the Pope in Rome, or a state-of-the-art playground for the youngest pupils at St. Anne School. Recent fundraising efforts have produced increases in the Professional Development budget, which have been welcomed by a faculty eager to learn about student-supportive research and initiatives.



ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

The administrative team has been re-shaped in recent years, in part to reflect the increased use of technology to address challenges (such as re-enrollment) that formerly required more staff and also to respond to student attrition, which has reduced revenues. Currently there is a Director of Advancement, who supervises the Admissions team (2 people) and a marketing/communications professional. The Interim Director of Operations supervises security, technology and finance. There is an Early Childhood Director, Lower School Head, Middle School Head and Head of School, who all work together (along with the learning support team and the school counselor) to attend to student needs.





PARENTS

Several teachers and staff members at the school came originally as parents, becoming reliable parent volunteers and then morphing into various roles at the school. One remarked "This community is like a family. The community is so loving, so kind, you just want to be here." The school has long-standing traditions that rely on parent volunteers, ranging from holiday celebrations to a deeply cherished graduation tradition, and such volunteer-run events as the annual "Festival of Knights" fundraiser and field trips with young children. Parents are supported by the parent-education efforts of the academic leaders, who seek to guide parents in their understanding of the expectations of the teachers, and help them understand the appropriate developmental guidelines that govern their child's social and emotional health.

BOARD

St. Anne School is a non-profit, independent Catholic school governed by a group of 15 leaders comprised of parents, alumni parents, and Catholic clergy, 60% of whom are Catholic. The Board meets monthly and retreats annually. The Board has multiple committees and is reviewing its use of meeting time in order to spend more time on substantive issues and less time on regular committee reports. On-going efforts of the Board's Executive Committee will strive to ensure that the Board remains in a strategic and generative level of involvement, leaving the operational work to the administration and staff, while upholding and supporting School leadership and attending to the financial stewardship of the school.



PROGRAM

St. Anne School offers a well-rounded program. The balance and breadth of exposure to a range of disciplines helps ensure that St. Anne graduates are resourceful, curious, and skilled students. The curriculum is well documented and mapped, and teachers report appreciating both autonomy and strong collaborative spirit that infuses their professional work.

The school educates children in academics, arts, athletics and all dimensions of social, spiritual and emotional health. Citizenship is encouraged through both formal and informal programs such as weekly Mass, service-learning initiatives, and student leadership.

The Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC) program is a gem. Serving approximately 102 children and supported by licensed and seasoned professionals, the curriculum is joyous and play-based, with carefully constructed learning goals through The Creative Curriculum for Pre-school program. Exceptional classrooms, thoughtfully chosen technology, and expansive outdoor spaces support the physical and social development of young children.

The Lower School program (serving 278 students in Kindergarten through Grade 5) encourages skills-building with a pedagogical approach that encourages and builds inquiry, critical thinking, and academic tenacity. Students also experience

rich programs in science, information literacy, integrated technology, social studies, art, music and physical education. Chosen learning programs include Pearson My World for grade K-4 history study, Superkids (K-2) and McGraw Wonders, iXL grammar for 3-5 Humanities, as well as McGraw My Math and McGraw California Science. Students study Spanish starting in Kindergarten, and have specialists in library, music, science lab, technology, art and PE. Religion is daily and classroom based.

Middle School students (300, in Grades 6 through 8) are encouraged to explore, inquire, and develop confidence. Core academic subjects are enhanced with electives, activities, athletics, student travel and student leadership opportunities. The language arts and history program use McGraw Impact, and selected novels such as *Graveyard*, *Chinese Cinderella*, and *Of Mice and Men*.

The math offerings include algebra and geometry and honors math (independently tracked) beginning in grade 5. The Science sequence is earth science in 6th grade, life science in 7th grade and physical science in 8th grade. All science instruction is hands-on and aligned with the newly adopted Next Generation State Standards (NGSS) and STEM initiatives that engage students in innovating, problem solving and experimenting.





A robust assortment of electives, ranging from “Lego League” to orchestra, show choir, advanced literature, garage rock band, and robotics are available starting in grade 6. The Navigating Our World (NOW) program meets students twice a week to discuss a range of contemporary issues (political, social, economic, religious and cultural) from around the world. Students have an opportunity to correspond with peers in other countries and develop their global citizenship skills. The NOW program also includes essential technology skills and media literacy.

In all three divisions, there is excellent technology integration, with “mini-labs” in the pre-K, 1:1 iPads in Kindergarten through 2nd Grade, 1:1 Chromebooks in 3rd and 4th Grades, and 1:1 MacBooks in 5th through 8th. Smartboards and desktops are available in all classrooms. The library is managed by a full-time librarian, features a story-telling area for the pre-school children, and an excellent collection for the elementary and middle school children.

FINANCE AND FUNDRAISING

“The pursuit of excellence is central to everything that we do. We set high standards for our students and provide them with superior teachers, facilities and state-of-the-art technology necessary to meet them. We operate with the fiscal discipline and control that enable us to continually improve and ensure the future of our school.”

The school’s finances are in excellent shape; the school has no debt and healthy financial reserves. While there is no endowment, the facilities have been well-maintained and the Board has committed to the analysis of their facility’s depreciation, along with the plans for replacements and upgrades as needed. The 2019-20 overall budget is approximately 11 million dollars. The Board has maintained a long tradition of keeping tuition relatively low in its market. As attrition has lowered enrollment, the financial stewards of the school will have to continue following a disciplined process in determining salaries, tuition increases, financial aid, program and capital expenses. Roughly 94% of budget comes from tuition, with 6% from fundraising and auxiliary programs. Long-term plans for salaries and benefits, benchmarks with area schools, and understanding the school’s overall fundraising capacity are strategic initiatives that lie ahead.

Each year the Festival of Knights is a community fundraiser that through a silent auction, live auction, and various other opportunities raises between \$175,000 and \$200,000 to support innovation for St. Anne students. There is agreement that the school has tremendous unrealized potential in its advancement initiatives; purchased property across from the existing campus and various expansions and upgrades can be envisioned when enrollment and fund-raising efforts are fully capitalized. The school’s next leader will help shape the vision and help the school’s finances and fundraising reach the next level.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The school has experienced significant turnover of key leaders in the last several years. As a result, some faculty members have departed the school, and others have retreated into their classrooms; all are united in seeking a strong, fair-minded, open-hearted, and clearly communicative leader. The first order of business for the school's next leader is to re-establish stability and trust and to effectively communicate with all constituencies. There is energy and optimism expressed by those close to the school who see opportunities for its healthy growth and development.

The Head of School will be responsible for supporting and strengthening the administrative team, forming close relationships and clear responsibilities for division heads and other key leaders. The Head of School will have the privilege of working with excellent teachers who are eager for a leader who is visible and active in the life of the school, and who is "strong-natured and calm-hearted." Both teachers and trustees of the school expressed their interest in a leader who has a strong backbone, confidence and openness, and who is transparent and even-handed in their treatment of students, parents and faculty. St. Anne has a spirited and warm community and will appreciate a leader who embraces and lives the values of the school, and enthusiastically joins the traditions that have long held the community together.

The Board understands the vital importance of its partnership with the Head of School and seeks a leader who will see to the smooth day-to-day operation of the school, while keeping a laser-focus on strategic initiatives and the long-term health and vitality of St. Anne's. In recent years, Board members have reached into several aspects of the operation of the school and are eager to develop a positive and trusting partnership with the school's administration and entrust staffing and all day-to-day operations to the leadership team. In the search for stability, which has been missing for the last several years, all are focused on finding balance, trust, and a positive forward momentum.

The next Head of School at St. Anne will:

- Build trust, stability and excellence in the administrative team, faculty and staff. St. Anne School seeks a leader who has proven team building skills and is able to delegate responsibility and authority with accountability;
- Embrace the school's Catholic values and assure that they are cherished and lived throughout the school; the bylaws require that the Head of School is a practicing Catholic;
- Serve as an impassioned communicator, able to articulate the strengths of the school's academic program and values to all constituencies, both internal and external;
- Work in close partnership with the Board to assure that the school maintains and develops its strategic focus;
- Clarify the administrative structure;
- Build enrollment, which has declined from a high of 740 to the current 680 (including a large 8th grade graduating class); and define the pace of growth, and work together with the board and the St. Anne admin and staff to create a strategic and achievable rate of (re)growth.



APPLICATION PROCESS

Deadline for Application is April 10, 2020

Interested candidates may apply online at <https://rg175.com/candidate/signup>

The application includes:

- Cover letter explaining interest in St. Anne School
- A fully updated Resume/CV
- A writing sample that may be a personal statement, an article for a school publication, a recent speech or a submitted scholarly article— whatever can help inform the Search Committee of expertise, interests, academic focus and/or experience.
- Five current references

Please do not hesitate to call or e-mail Catherine Hunter at 510-504-8036 (cshunter33@gmail.com) or Doreen Oleson at 626-676-5203 (doreenoleson@gmail.com) with questions. We are grateful for your interest in St. Anne School and look forward to learning more about your background and experience.

