

**ST. MARY'S SCHOOL OF SAGADA**  
**TEN-YEAR MASTER STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**2024-2034**

**I. VISION AND RATIONALE**

St. Mary's School of Sagada has undergone at least three five-year strategic plans since its incorporation in 2004. Since then, the strategic objectives have been reasonably met, although specific details had to be adapted and at times deprioritized or discarded, due to the volatility of the school's financial conditions, significant turnovers in leadership and staff, major changes in the national curriculum, diminishing enrollment, and lack of long-term vision and focus. The 2020 pandemic caused a major upheaval on instruction and student learning, as the school struggled to keep up with its financial obligations while student enrollment was reduced by half; secondly, the addition of the senior high program, though financially beneficial for the school, set the focus away from solidifying the curriculum and instructional practices in the junior high level; finally, low salaries have caused many veteran teachers and administrators to seek employment in the public schools, replaced by newly licensed teachers who only stay in our school for a year or two in order to qualify for government service which pays almost double the salary offered by private schools.

Yet the school has survived, as it has done so during its turbulent past in the 1980s and 1990s when the school almost closed in 2003. Since its incorporation in 2004, college admissions and the achievements of our alumni attest to the excellent academic preparation of our students for college. Student achievement in sports and other competitive activities has been significant. The school can now boast of having one the best facilities and resources in the area. The school has become a premier training ground for rookie teachers who then excel in other institutions. While teacher salaries are still disparately lower compared to their colleagues in the public-school sector, teachers are content to stay at SMS because they continue to hone their craft without the bureaucracy and the lack of academic freedom imposed on them by government. Despite the crab mentality of vociferous members within the Sagada community who do not send their children to our school, enrollment has begun to increase, almost back to its original size before the pandemic.

It is now time for the school to focus on development – working towards nurturance instead of aiming on mere survival, stability versus unpredictability, and proactive plans of action as opposed to reactive damage control – a daunting task particularly given the difficult social environment that is Sagada's. Why do we design a strategic plan for ten years? The answer is simple. The school needs to effect changes in its community, instead of the community changing the school to conform to its traditional image of "the glory days of the past." And it will take ten years or longer to change the culture of the society.

**II. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

In view of the school's mission and vision towards educational excellence,

- A. the school shall embrace and apply the philosophy of student-centeredness in all facets – ranging from allowing curricular flexibility to formulating alternative strategies in instructional practice and assessment; from designing disciplinary strategies to inculcating nurturance of individuals and celebrating individual differences; from making financial decisions and policies to allocating of funds and resources based on student needs; and planning for future infrastructure development primarily to support the

school's endeavors aimed towards the enhancement of student life, lifelong skills, and Christian character.

- B. the school and its campus shall become the center of student life;
- C. the school shall achieve financial self-sufficiency in ten years, whereby operational budgets shall be supported entirely by enrollment income, government subsidies, and scholarships assigned for financial support of needy, deserving students. Capital expenditure shall be supported through solicitations for specified purposes.

### **III. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

#### **a. Student-Centered Education**

##### **i. Educational Philosophy**

The philosophy of student centeredness is based on the principle that all learners are diverse and different, valued as individuals, and recognized for achievements based on individual potential. Too often, learners are categorized as gifted, average, or slow, following a standardization process dictated by the government. An example of the common traditional educational system is identifying a class valedictorian and only acknowledging the top 10% of the student population at the end of the school year. Teachers, in fear of their jobs and in quest of promotion, resort to exerting their efforts in supporting primarily the best and the brightest, consequently neglecting the rest of the class which consists of the average, the unmotivated, the slow learners, and even the behavioral problems. In 2005, St. Mary's School of Sagada has pioneered changes away from the traditional practices to focus on all students by eliminating class ranking, giving recognition to the proficient, and strategizing to move the unmotivated and the slow learners towards proficiency. By focusing on the underachievers, SMS has pulled up the school academic average and ranked first consecutively in the 2009 and 2010 National Achievement Test in the province. Interestingly, a few years later, government schools followed suit by eliminating class ranking altogether.

In the 1990s, brain researchers had concluded that that people's brains were individually different (e.g. left brain, right brain, whole brain) and further proposed that individuals learn differently (multiple intelligence, auditory, visual, kinesthetic, etc.) and surmised that teachers must vary and adapt their teaching methods to be effective. Since then, it has been a tug-of-war between traditional schools (like the public and most parochial schools) and progressive institutions like Ateneo, Montessori and most international schools. The fight regarding standardization of student learning came to a head when the Philippine educational system found itself at the bottom of the list when compared to schools in other countries, in spite of innovations in curriculum (mother tongue education, K-12 program, and specialized programs (like STEM, HUMMS, ABM, Arts, Sports, and TVE, Makabayan, Matatag etc.), and in instructional methodologies (understanding by design renamed "student friendly," and the literal application of the concept of "no one left behind," meaning automatic wholesale educational promotion of all students and a ban on student failures and retention). Again, all these changes can only result in confusion and chaos when they are applied to student learning.

The philosophy of student-centeredness, which has helped SMS to develop its unique identity for the past two decades, needs to be further enhanced and inculcated in everyone – teachers, administration, parents, alumni, and of course, students. All endeavors and decisions must be made towards the development of the individual student – from his/her initial admission to the school all the way to college and career placement, from what we choose to teach and the style in which we teach to assessing his/her achievement based on individual potential -- not on school and national statistics and averages, but rather on individual improvement. Similarly, the environment in which the student spends most of his/her life must be supported by the school –

whether it be recreational, individual and team building, leadership skills, artistic and aesthetic endeavors, proper conduct, and, most important of all, Christian values and character.

- b. Student-Centered Curriculum**
- c. Instructional Methodologies and Strategies**
- d. Assessment Practices**
- e. Recognition of Student Achievement**
- f. Christian Education**

**Plans of Action to be developed by the Education Committee:**

1. Review the curriculum prescribed by the government, including time allotments for academic subjects, Christian values education and homeroom. Allow for additional time for enhancement/remedials in spoken and written English and basic Math, using teachers and advanced students as mentors.
2. Review instructional practices, discarding non-effective methods and replacing them with student-centered approaches, including individualized educational plans (IEPs) for those that need them. Work plans and tests towards understanding, and application, rather than focusing solely on content and cognitive skills.
3. Review assessment practices and the reporting of student achievement and develop plans for recognizing improvement.
4. Review the Christian education curriculum, focusing on behavioral formation of Christian character and practical application of philosophical concepts of responsibility, respect, integrity, compassion and tolerance, and service to others, rather than superficial “do’s and don’t’s or inculcation of dogmas without proper reflection. Plan age-appropriate activities accordingly.
5. After the reviews of curriculum are done, assess the viability of the timeline and determine resources (and cost) needed to support the recommendations of the committee.

**Suggested Education Committee Members:**

**Susan Lopez (as committee chair), Maritess Guron, Nellie Balliola, Diane Fiar-od, Nemia Lite, Raquel Killi, selected members of the faculty, a member of the Education Department from MPSU, Louie Paraan.**

**IV. FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES**

- a. Faculty Training in Student Centered Methodology**
- b. Faculty Peer Observation, Coaching, and Team Teaching**
- c. The Role of Administrative Evaluations**

**To be formulated by the Principal and the Faculty and Staff of SMS**

**V. STUDENT DEVELOPMENT**

**Suggested Student Development Committee Members:**

**Wanda Capuyan (as committee chair), Atty. Likigan, Laison Ambasing, Heidi, Randy, Jobel etc.**

- a. **Making the Campus as the Center of Student Life**
- b. **Instructional Activities**
  - i. **Leadership Training**
  - ii. **Co-Curricular Program**
    - 1. **Remedial and Advanced Science and Math**
    - 2. **Remedial English and English Proficiency**
    - 3. **Journalism, Creative Writing**
- c. **Recreational Activities**
  - i. **Sports and Sportsmanship**
  - ii. **Academic Competitions (Debate, Research Presentations)**
  - iii. **Arts Program (Music, Art, Dance, Theater)**
  - iv. **Technology and Livelihood Practical Training**
    - 1. **Computer Literacy and Advanced Computer Studies**
    - 2. **Cooking, Baking, and Culinary Aesthetics**
    - 3. **Gardening, Landscaping, and Environmental Studies**
  - v.

## **VI. THE SCHOOL AND THE PARENT COMMUNITY**

### **Suggested Community Relations Committee Members:**

**Wanay Pagadian (as committee chair), PTA Officers and Zone Reps, Maritess Guron, Diane Fiar-od.**

- a. Communications with the parent community
- b. Sectoral visits and meetings
- c. Recruitment and public relations
- d. Involvement of parents in support for student development projects

## **VII. ALUMNI RELATIONS**

### **Suggested Alumni Relations Committee Members:**

**Alma Bagano (as committee chair), Alumni Association Board, Alumni Chapter Heads, Kim Ledesma**

- a. Systematic Tracking of SMS Alumni and Development of Alumni Database
- b. Maintenance of a school-based website separate from the Alumni website
- c. Public Relations Management with alumni in tandem with alumni donations towards scholarships and financial assistance, and school development projects

## **VIII. THE SCHOOL AND THE CHURCH**

### **Suggested Church Relations Committee:**

**Padi Marites Guron (as committee chair), Bishop Benny Langakan, Rector Longatan, Members of the Sagada Deanery, SMS Christian Education Faculty**

- a. Articulation of Church expectations and the Role of the School
- b. Articulation of the SMV Parish expectations regarding the role of the school

- c. Articulation of the role of the school, students, and staff regarding their support of other parishes
- d. Planning, coordinating, and implementing outreach programs with sister schools

#### **IX. CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

##### **Suggested Development Committee Members:**

**Dennis Faustino (as committee chair), Virgilio Bucat, Grandii Abarico, Paul Sagayo, Rufino Bomasang**

- e. Identification and Prioritization of capital development projects in the next ten years
- f. Costing and Identification of Funding Sources
- g. Overseeing Implementation

#### **X. FINANCIAL STABILITY**

##### **Suggested Finance Committee Members:**

**Chiqui Say-awen (as committee chair), Joan Padalla Tauli, Carole Cofulan, Junia Tulipa, Bookkeeper**

##### **Suggested Scholarship and Financial Assistance Members:**

**Nellie Pit-og (as committee chair), Alma Bagano, Judge Gayman, Nellie Balliola**