



**St. Croix Preparatory Academy  
Annual Report  
2009-2010**



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## **Annual Report for St. Croix Preparatory Academy 2009 – 2010 School Year**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to summarize the progress and achievements of St. Croix Preparatory Academy (The School) in its sixth year of operation. This study includes information on the 2009-2010 school year, such as student demographics, governance, and finances. The report also includes additional data needed to provide a comprehensive description of The School and its educational programs and practices.

This annual educational audit serves to meet the requirement of reporting progress towards the academic and non-academic goals outlined in the charter application approved by the Minnesota Department of Education. This evaluation meets Minnesota's Department of Education requirement for reporting adequate yearly progress.

During its sixth year of operation, the School received support from its authorizer, Friends of Education. In addition, the combined efforts and support of the faculty, administration, students, families, and community members were instrumental in implementing and developing a strong, supportive community and a strong academic program.

### **1. School Vision, Mission Statement, and Educational Philosophy**

#### **A. Vision**

St. Croix Preparatory Academy envisions a learning environment centered on an integrated, rigorous, standards-based, classical curriculum that encourages students to think logically and critically, to communicate effectively and to embrace life-long learning as demonstrated by their successful pursuit of post-secondary education. The School will offer a small school community and a rigorous academic environment to area families.

#### **B. Profile**

We are the first public school in the eastern suburbs specifically dedicated to offering a demanding classical, liberal arts curriculum with an additional emphasis on development of each student's personal character, and leadership qualities. St. Croix Preparatory Academy will provide a learning opportunity that, until now, has only been available at select private schools.

The School was founded by parents, educators, and business people who wanted a more challenging education for their students. They wanted a school that demanded an education that challenges students to achieve to their highest potential as well as put forth their best in behavior, attitude, and effort. The School is creating a college prep educational program based on true inquiry, intellect, and character. By focusing on students' character and leadership qualities, in addition to developing their academic potential, The School is committed to developing young adults who are prepared to lead abundant and responsible lives as contributing members of our society.

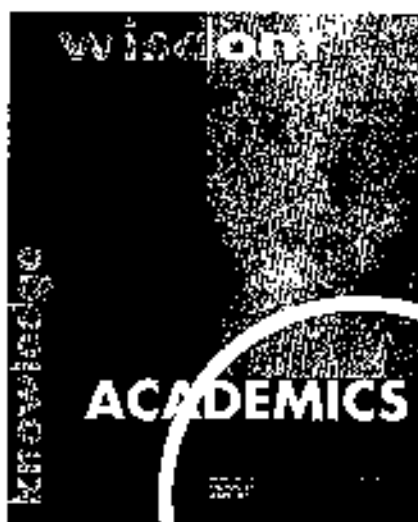
### C. Mission Statement

St. Croix Preparatory Academy will develop each student's academic potential, personal character, and leadership qualities through an academically rigorous and content-rich educational program grounded in the classical tradition.

### D. Educational Philosophy

The School is based on a classical model of education. A classical model focuses on providing students with the life long educational tools to learn and think for themselves. The classical tradition is grounded in the time-tested methodology of learning called the "Trivium", which recognizes that critical learning skills must precede critical thinking skills. The Trivium methodology is organized into the following three stages corresponding to the general stages of a student's cognitive development:

- **Grammar.** The first phase of the Trivium is Grammar (grade level K - 4). Grammar emphasizes the facts and rules of each subject that later learning is built upon. This stage focuses on the accumulation of knowledge and the rules related to each particular subject. This mirrors the stage of development where children love to mimic, recite, chant, and memorize. The objective of this phase is to provide each student with a strong foundation of subject matter **KNOWLEDGE**.
- **Logic.** The second phase is Logic (grade level 5 - 8). Logic focuses on a student's ability to analyze and interact with the knowledge acquired in the Grammar stage. The Logic stage is the phase where understanding is grasped. This corresponds with the student's curiosity and desire to ask questions. The objective of the Logic phase is **UNDERSTANDING**.
- **Rhetoric.** The final phase is Rhetoric (grade level 9 - 12). Rhetoric teaches a student how to express and discuss a subject. Rhetoric is the communication stage, where students defend and refute opinions based on their understanding and knowledge of subject matter. This fits nicely with the student's affinity for contradiction and argumentation. The objective of the Rhetoric phase is **COMMUNICATION**.



GRAMMAR	LOGIC	RHETORIC
K/1 <sup>st</sup> 2 <sup>nd</sup> 3 <sup>rd</sup> 4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup> 6 <sup>th</sup> 7 <sup>th</sup> 8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup> 10 <sup>th</sup> 11 <sup>th</sup> 12 <sup>th</sup>
KNOWLEDGE	UNDERSTANDING	COMMUNICATION
Knowledge - Comprehension	Application - Analysis	Synthesis - Evaluation

## **2. Program Successes and Best Practices**

An overall observation by the Board, administration, and faculty is that St. Croix Prep seems to be experiencing successes and challenges normally experienced by schools that have been in existence much longer than six years. The sixth year at St. Croix Preparatory Academy had many program successes. These are noted below:

### **A. Enrollment**

Enrollment is one of the keys to viability in the first years of a charter school's operations. St. Croix Prep's full enrollment (881 students) and long waiting list (over 500) ensured that classes operated at capacity. Very few students left St. Croix Prep during the school year (approximately 2 percent) and when students did leave, the available spots were quickly filled.

A historical review of The School's enrollment growth is summarized below:

- In 2004 opened with 200 students in grades K-7 (waiting list of 169)
- In 2005 enrolled 252 students in grades K-8 (waiting list of 279)
- In 2006 enrolled 342 students in grades K-10 (waiting list of 306)
- In 2007 enrolled 444 students in grades K-10 (waiting list of 549)
- In 2008 enrolled 743 students in grades K-11 (waiting list of over 450)
- In 2009 enrolled 881 students in grades K-12 (waiting list of over 500)

### **B. Parent Involvement/Satisfaction**

St. Croix Prep experienced significant parental involvement from pre-opening to the final days of the sixth year of classes. Parent satisfaction over the School's six year existence is over 92%.

### **C. Test Results**

The test results of St. Croix Prep students yielded impressive results. St. Croix Prep administered NWEA MAP and the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment II tests. As noted above, the assessment results were exceptional; and rank St. Croix Prep as one of the state's highest performing schools.

### **D. Finances**

During its first six years of operation The School continues to show fiscal responsibility in its operations by adding to its fund balance during each fiscal year. This is being accomplished even while making strategic investments for the future growth of the School. In addition, The School has received a "clean" audit for the previous three years. In addition, the School has received the MDF Finance Award both years it has applied for this award. The School has a 10% fund balance and has plans to increase this to 20%.

### **E. Programming**

Apart from the core academic classes, St. Croix Preparatory Academy offers Art, Music, Physical Education, and Spanish for all students beginning in Kindergarten. The school also offers Latin and Music Performance electives (Band, Orchestra, Choir) for students in grades 5-12. In addition, educational opportunities outside of the traditional classroom include field trips and service projects. St. Croix Prep offers educational travel opportunities, with 9<sup>th</sup> Grade students traveling to Washington D.C. Juniors and seniors have international educational travel opportunities; the 2009-2010 class spent 10 days in Switzerland and Italy. In addition to the academic programming, St. Croix Prep offers its students a full range of extracurricular activities. These include but are not limited to:

- Academic activities – Student Council, National Honor Society, National Art Honor Society, Latin Club, Spanish Club, Yearbook, School Newspaper, Lego League.
- Athletic activities – MSHSL athletics which include football, cross country, volleyball, archery, basketball, soccer, and golf. There are also various sports clubs.
- Arts activities – Chamber choir, Concert choir, Cantilena (girl's choir), Cantemus (boy's choir), Jazz band, Drama club, One-Act play, Speech, and Drama Club.

#### F. Best Practices – Operational Philosophy centered on Diffusion of Innovation Theory

The School has always evaluated its purpose, growth model, marketing, and operations in terms of diffusions of innovation theory (developed by Everett Rogers in 1962) as presented by Geoffrey Moore in his books *Crossing the Chasm* and *Inside the Tornado*. Marketing the school, positioning/differentiating it within its market, development of a whole product and operations (e.g., hiring, governance models, policy development, recruiting, and programming) all take into consideration the five segments of classification typically described in technology adoption (e.g., innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards). This impacts our hiring practices, governance model, policy development, recruiting practices, etc. This best practice was adopted by the leading technology companies in the 1990s and continues to be one of the standards for entrepreneurial leadership.

#### G. Facilities

St. Croix Preparatory Academy moved into a new facility in August of 2009. Up until this time, the programming and community were significantly impacted by space. The entire school community experienced a wonderful first year in the new building.

### 3. Program Challenges

The operations at St. Croix Prep went very smoothly considering it was in its sixth year and had added nearly 150 students to its population. With that said, there were still many challenges encountered during the sixth year of operations. St. Croix Prep's challenges relate to the following four interrelated items:

- Training & Development of Faculty
- Integration of New Students/Families
- Developing Extracurricular Programming essential for a High School
- Operational Efficiency and Community Building

#### Maintaining Quality during Growth of 2010-2011

The growth (2.A) and transition to a new facility still presents the following challenges:

- Training & Development of Faculty. The hiring and training of faculty needs to ensure continuity in The School's emphasis on mission (1.c), educational philosophy (1.d), and operational philosophy (2.F).
- Integration of New Students/Families. Practical methods of integrating students and families will have to emphasize the School's mission (1.b), educational philosophy (1.d), and operational philosophy (2.F), while at the same time grow the close community that has become a trait of the School.
- Remediation of New Students. During the 2009-2010 school year, The School added nearly 150 additional students in grades K-8. Many of the students were significantly deficient in reading and math skills. The School proactively developed aggressive remediation strategies to address students requiring this assistance. The MCA II test

scores validated the School's approach to this situation. St. Croix Prep will need to continue this strategy as it continues to develop each student's academic potential.

- **Developing Extracurricular Programming** essential for a High School. Today's high school students not only desire strong academic programs, but they place just as much emphasis on extra curricular activities, athletic programs, performing arts, social activities, college counseling and placement services, etc. The School has already developed many additional activities and events (around academics, arts, and athletics) that represent a full high school experience. St. Croix Prep hired a full time Activities Director who will continue to develop these necessary programs.
- **Operational Efficiency and Community Building.** The 2009-2010 school year was the first time (since 2004) all of the students, families, and faculty have been in the same location. The processes and procedures that worked in previous years were adapted to scale to accommodate one building, all faculty, all students and families. The School with this larger scale building and its operations began implementing strategies to develop the close community its parents now expect. The challenge of improving operational efficiency and community intimacy align with the diffusions of innovation theory (2.1) and continues to be the School's most significant challenge.

#### 4. 2009-2010 Academic Accountability Data

##### MCA-II Results

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires that all students reach proficiency on state standards by 2013-2014. The State of Minnesota uses the MCA test results to determine proficiency. This year St. Croix Preparatory Academy students took the MCA II tests. The four year historical scores (with comparison to the MN state average) for The School are noted below:

	MN Average	St. Croix Prep
<b>MATH</b>		
2009-2010	66%	
2008-2009	62%	
2007-2008	62%	
2006-2007	61%	
2005-2006	58%	
<b>READING</b>		
2009-2010	72%	
2008-2009	72%	
2007-2008	71%	
2006-2007	69%	
2005-2006	72%	
<b>SCIENCE</b>		
2009-2010	49%	
2008-2009	46%	
2007-2008	39%	
Prior Years	n/a	n/a

A breakdown of proficiency percentages by grade level for the 2009-2010 school year is noted below:

MCA-II	Reading		Math	
	2009-2010		2009-2010	
Grade	MN %	SCPA %	MN %	SCPA %
3	76%		83%	
4	73%		77%	
5	76%		69%	
6	72%		69%	
7	66%		64%	
8	68%		60%	
10	75%		n/a	
11	n/a		43%	

In the spring of 2009, The School administered the MCA-II Science exam. The School's students significantly outperformed their peers from around Minnesota on the state's new standardized science test.

MCA-II	Science	
	2009-2010	
Grade	MN %	SCPA %
5	46%	
8	48%	

In the spring of 2009, 9<sup>th</sup> Grade students also took the GRAD (Graduation Required Assessment for Diploma) writing test. The writing test is designed to measure the writing skills a Minnesota student should have in order to graduate. 90% of MN students passed this test; 100% of the St. Croix Prep students passed this test.

In the spring of 2009, 10<sup>th</sup> Grade students also took the GRAD (Graduation-Required Assessment for Diploma) reading test. The reading test is designed to measure the reading skills a Minnesota student should have in order to graduate. 75% of MN students passed this test; 79% of the St. Croix Prep students passed this test.

In the spring of 2009, 11<sup>th</sup> Grade students also took the GRAD (Graduation-Required Assessment for Diploma) math test. The math test is designed to measure the math skills a Minnesota student should have in order to graduate. 43% of MN students passed this test; 53% of the St. Croix Prep students passed this test.

#### **NWEA MAP Results**

During the 2009-2010 school year St. Croix Prep also administered the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) assessment. Math and Reading



assessments were administered in the fall and spring to determine each student's annual incremental grade growth. Over 95% of the students achieved a growth of 1.1 years in the math and reading tests, thus achieving the objectives and goals stated in its charter. The School does not recognize NWEA results as the definitive measure of "grade level", but utilizes the assessment tool to ensure adequate growth, determine placement in the differentiated classroom instruction, identify students qualifying for potential remediation, and assessing the progress of students receiving remediation services. It appears that The School will need to determine additional assessment tools to evaluate higher performing students since they are testing beyond the normal measurements of NWEA.

## 5. 2009-2010 Other Accountability Measures

We have put the following strategies in place to improve and increase parent involvement:

### A. Parent Commitment

We emphasize that parents sign are integral contributors to the achievement of St. Croix Prep's mission and goals. We ask parents to:

- Support their child's education;
- Attend Parent/Teacher conferences;
- Communicate when they have questions about the school or their child's progress;
- Make best efforts to volunteer between 20 and 40 hours a year;
- Support the mission of St. Croix Prep, along with the core virtues of respect, honesty, compassion and service.

Volunteer service hours are not mandatory. It is simply our way to involve parents and reassure them they are a vital part of St. Croix Prep's success.

### B. Parent Participation in Classroom

Parents are welcome in the classrooms of St. Croix Prep. Regular volunteer opportunities are available in Lower School, grades K-4. In the Middle School, grades 5-8, we will assign Classroom Parents, who assist teachers with a variety of projects, tasks, and events.

### C. Parent Group

The St. Croix Prep Parent Group is a Board committee consisting of St. Croix Prep parents. The Parent Group's mission is to support the administration and faculty in the execution of the mission of St. Croix Prep; offer educational opportunities to St. Croix Prep parents; and build community among the growing number of families attending the school. This group will begin to investigate ways of creating closer community within a K-12 school of nearly 1000 students.

### D. Regular Parent Communication



St. Croix Prep communicates with its parent community via board meetings (monthly), informational meetings (monthly), classroom newsletters (weekly for K-4 students), school newsletters (monthly for K-4, 5-8), and weekly news information from the Executive Director. This communication informs parents of school events, curriculum, testing schedules, recent publicity, school holidays, program changes, etc. For those parents that do not have email (only about 3%), these notices are hand delivered. In addition, parents have access to St. Croix Prep's student information system for access to school wide announcements, calendars and the assignment/test grades for their child's classes.

**E. Community Involvement Strategy**

St. Croix Preparatory Academy's acceptance by the community is gaining momentum primarily because of the programmatic success, parent satisfaction, and publicity regarding new facility construction. The School and its leadership have had the opportunity to present St. Croix Preparatory Academy to various governmental boards and councils. We offer school tours, have done interviews for various newspapers and magazines, and continually host informational meetings and open houses for those interested in learning more about St. Croix Preparatory Academy. In addition, the School is making a more focused effort on providing service to the community. For example, our students have done service work at the local nursing home, the library, and the police/fire station. The School has also participated in the summer celebration known as Lumberjack Days; the School sponsored a 5k walk, hosted an archery tent, and marched in the community parade.

**6. Current Academic goals for 2009-2010**

St. Croix Preparatory Academy has the following academic goals for 2009-2010.

**A. Student Academic Outcome – Math Achievement**

Academic Goal. At least eighty percent (80%) of St. Croix Preparatory Academy students who are enrolled for a full year will show at least 1.1 year's growth in mathematics as demonstrated by a value-added analysis of student achievement data provided by the MAP (computerized version of the Northwest Evaluation Association).

Result in 2009-2010. St. Croix Prep has met this Academic Outcome. Approximately 95% of St. Croix Prep students have attained this goal.

**B. Student Academic Outcome – Reading and Language**

Academic Goal. At least eighty percent (80%) of St. Croix Preparatory Academy students who are enrolled for a full year will show at least 1.1 year's growth in reading and language as demonstrated by a value-added analysis of student achievement data provided by the MAP (computerized version of the Northwest Evaluation Association).

Result in 2009-2010. St. Croix Prep has met this Academic Outcome. Approximately 95% of St. Croix Prep students have attained this goal. Details of the test data are included at the end of this report.

**C. Student Academic Outcome – Academic Proficiency**

Academic Goal. At least eighty percent (80%) of St. Croix Preparatory Academy students in appropriate grades will show a mastery of a year's subject matter in key subjects as demonstrated

by standardized testing exams and other assessment materials provided by the Core Knowledge Foundation.

Result in 2009-2010. St. Croix Prep believes it has met this Academic Outcome. Results from the MCA II indicate that St. Croix Prep has met this Academic Outcome.

## 7. Other Student/School goals for the 2009-2010 school year

St. Croix Preparatory Academy has the following non-academic goals for 2009-2010.

### A. Student Non-Academic Outcome - Attendance

Non-Academic Goal. At least 90% of students enrolled at least one year at St. Croix Preparatory Academy will be on time and present for school, as measured by school enrollment and attendance data tabulated in May of each year.

Result in 2009-2010. St. Croix Prep has met this goal with approximately 95% of St. Croix Prep students having attained this goal.

### B. Student Non-Academic Outcome – Satisfaction Ratings

Non-Academic Goal. At least 80% of parents will indicate a "satisfied" rating or above on a school survey administered annually in regards to both the St. Croix Preparatory Academy educational program and the school climate and culture. Survey data will be reported in the annual report and distributed to all families and the larger community.

Result. St. Croix Prep has met this goal. Approximately 90% of the parents responding to the survey indicated they were satisfied with St. Croix Prep. Details of the survey are included as an enclosure.

## 8. Authorizer Information

Authorizer:	Friends of Education
Authorizer Contact:	Beth Topoluk
Authorizer Address:	Friends of Education 200 East Lake Street FX0-01-A Wayzata, MN 55391
Sixth Year of Operation:	2009-2010
Authorizer Duration:	The Sponsor contract extends through June 30, 2015.
Accountability Initiatives:	See Friends of Education Oversight Program discussion below.

### Friends of Education Oversight Program

Friends of Education ("Friends") monitors the three critical areas of charter school operations: academic performance, finance, and reporting and legal compliance. The monitoring program is described below.

1. Academic Performance. Monitoring academic performance occurs through three basic avenues: testing, site visits, and review of annual reports.

(a) **Testing.** Friends requires regular testing to measure student performance, and student performance results must meet or exceed the results required by non-chartered public school students. The testing required by Friends is set forth in its charter contract with its schools. Generally, however, testing data is reviewed each semester to ensure that the goals of the schools are being met, both in terms of individual student performance and for the school as a whole. Testing data is compared with other schools to measure performance.

(b) **Site Visits.** Friends engages in both unannounced and scheduled site visits. In addition to general observation and classroom visits, site visits may include interviews with the school leader, business manager, selected school teachers, students, and available parents and board members. Friends site visits also include an analysis as to whether the facility, school climate, and learning program constitute an effective learning environment promoting the academic goals. Friends provides feedback following each site visit; feedback may be oral and/or written.

(c) **Annual Reports.** Friends requires that the school prepare an annual report which details the school's evaluation of meeting each its academic performance goals.

To assist with its sponsoring responsibilities with respect to academic performance, Friends has contracted with the Minnesota Humanities Commission. The Commission's staff has assisted in the implementation of academic programs at over thirty schools in Minnesota over the past ten years. Through its contract with the Minnesota Humanities Commission, the Commission assists with monitoring the implementation of the academic program at each school. Friends has also implemented a support network for the schools it is sponsoring to engage in mutual support and problem solving.

2. **Finance.** Friends' oversight of financial affairs is accomplished primarily through a review of financial statements and the independent audit.

(a) **Financial Statements.** Prior to the July 1<sup>st</sup> before school opening, the school must submit to Friends an annual budget adopted by the School Board.

The school must also submit monthly financial statements to Friends as well as cash flow projections when requested by Friends. The financial statements must contain budget and actual expenses and contain explanations for all items exceeding budget and the manner in which the excess items will be resolved. Friends strongly encourages that its sponsored schools utilize a recognized provider of accounting services for charter schools in the initial years of operation.

(b) **Independent Audit.** By the date specified in its charter contract, the school must submit to Friends its independent audit report along with any school management response.

As a secondary mechanism to monitor financial affairs, site visit interviews with the school business manager and board members may reveal financial concerns.

3. **Reporting and Legal Compliance.** Friends' oversight of reporting and general legal compliance is accomplished primarily through review of documentation, site visits, and communication with the Department of Education.

- (a) **Governance.** The school must submit board meeting minutes to Friends on a timely basis, generally prior to the next scheduled school board meeting. Friends may attend board meetings on either an announced or unannounced basis and is available to attend specific meetings upon request by the school.
- (b) **Annual Reports.** Friends requires each school to submit an annual report which details the school's evaluation of meeting State reporting requirements.
- (c) **Site Visits.** Friends engages in both unannounced and scheduled site visits. In addition to general observation and classroom visits, site visits may include interviews with the school leader, business manager, selected school teachers, students, and available parents and board members. Site visits may also include a review of pertinent files. General observation, interviews, and review of selected files during site visits facilitate determination by Friends of the school's general compliance, including compliance with the Minnesota Open Meetings Law, Public Employment Relations Act, teacher licensing requirements, student immunization compliance, Minnesota Human Rights Act, Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, Minnesota Public Schools Fee Law, special education requirements, financial controls, and open enrollment processes.

Friends has asked that the Minnesota Department of Education inform Friends if the school is not reporting properly and to share copies of all pertinent correspondence between the school and the MDE. Friends adopts a similar procedure regarding compliance with local, State and Federal laws.

Remediation. Should a sponsored school fall short of its agreed-upon academic standards, financial targets, or fail in any aspect of reporting and legal compliance, Friends engages in a range of possible interventions including:

- Friends notifies the school leader or board chair of areas of concern
- Friends formally notifies the school board of areas of concern
- Friends recommends that the school board develop an improvement plan
- Friends requires that the school board adopt a performance improvement plan agreed to by Friends
- Friends initiates a notice and action plan whereby it intends to revoke sponsorship