

CATALYST

ST. MARCUS SCHOOL MAGAZINE • SPRING 2025

Rising
Above
p. 7





Dear Friends,

“Are there any solutions to the problems?” That was the question posed - and partially answered - by Alan Borsuk in a significant article in the Fall 2024 edition of the Marquette Lawyer

magazine. Borsuk is a Milwaukee treasure who has spent decades researching and reporting on the educational landscape in Milwaukee. Borsuk’s excellent article is bolstered by responses from six other urban education experts, like Dr. Howard Fuller and Mike Gousha.

For the last year, the St. Marcus team has been doing a deep dive to understand how the best educational minds in Milwaukee and beyond are thinking about addressing the educational crisis in our country. We agree with Albert Einstein, who once said, “If I had an hour to solve a problem, I’d spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions.” **Are you willing and able to join us in thinking more about the problems?**

Today, we are in desperate need of thought partners. We need people who have dedicated the time to understand the issues and engage in dialogue and action that will lead to substantive educational change over the next 5, 10, and 20 years.

Therefore, I invite you to read Borsuk’s article and the responses and to engage in a dialogue about what’s next for St. Marcus and what’s next for Milwaukee. To intrigue you, let me share a few points from the articles.

Borsuk has several main conclusions. First, top-down reforms, like the federal law “No Child Left Behind” generally have little impact. Secondly, the main levers for improving educational outcomes are improving the quality and rigor of interactions between students and teachers and addressing barriers to success in school that stem from a student’s home life, particularly in the ages of birth to five.

Mike Gousha’s powerful piece, “The Problem is Us,” claims that any set of school reforms are likely to fail

when society at large is seemingly so unconcerned about the problems and disengaged from working towards solutions. He writes, “Meaningful change in addressing our biggest educational challenges will be hard to accomplish if large numbers of citizens are unmoved by society’s educational disparities or are simply uninterested or distracted. We can blame the educrats and politicians all we want, but perhaps the problem is us.”

Finally, in his predictably compelling response, “The Body Politic Writ Large Does Not Care,” Dr. Howard Fuller shares his fundamental belief that, “Unfortunately, more has not been done and will not be done because there is no real urgency in this country’s body politic writ large to seriously attack the problems on both sides of the equation - in school and outside of school.” More optimistically, Fuller concludes with the hopeful statement, **“We need small groups of dedicated, committed, and relentless people who will refuse to accept the situation now existing.”**

And that’s where you come in! **You are a critical part of the “dedicated, committed, and relentless people” who have made St. Marcus School the success story it is today and the catalyst for change throughout our city.**

Let me share one example of what “dedicated, committed, and relentless” looks like. The morning of January 21 was bitterly cold. To my knowledge, every school in the city of Milwaukee - and several universities - closed that day. But St. Marcus was open, and over 500 scholars walked through our doors and had an exceptional day of learning. Together, we are relentlessly committed to doing whatever it takes to enable our scholars to achieve remarkable outcomes.

Please continue to partner with us in a ridiculously relentless and dedicated way to fight for St. Marcus kids and every child in our city so that every single one finds safety, hope, and a purpose in their school. Together, we can solve these problems.

Thank you, and God Bless,

Henry Tyson, Superintendent

PS. If you feel compelled, please consider one or more of the action steps on the following page. 1

ACTION STEPS



Read the Borsuk Article >
Hard copy available by request from sara.roemer@stmarcus.org



Actively participate in the critical upcoming WI election on April 1st



Advocate with your elected officials for fair funding for K-8 private schools in the WI state budget process



Attend an upcoming “Educational Action Luncheon” hosted by St. Marcus
Stay tuned for more details!



Support St. Marcus’ Early Childhood Literacy Initiative
Contact cecilia.davis@stmarcus.org to learn more

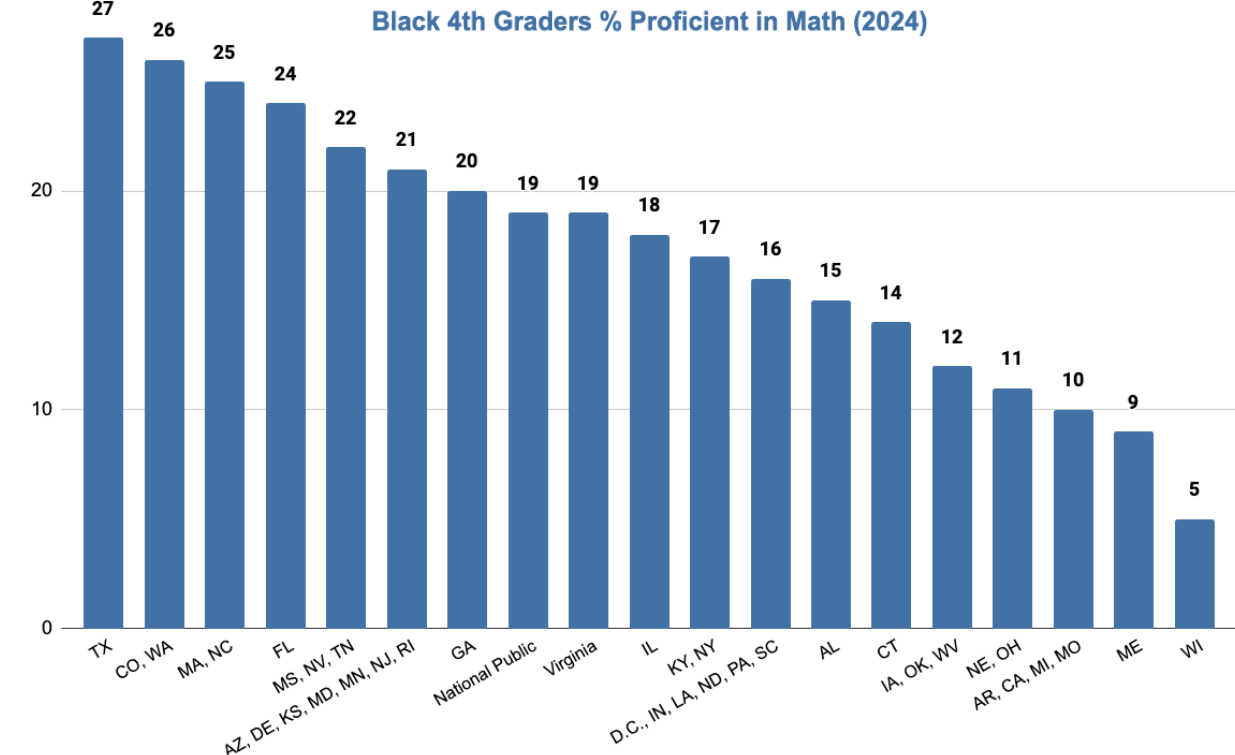


Take a tour of St. Marcus if you haven’t done so already
Contact cecilia.davis@stmarcus.org



St. Marcus’ new Early Childhood Literacy Initiative is an intensive effort to improve student literacy by age 5. It will equip parents to be their child’s #1 educator and to more effectively support their child’s success in school. The initiative will provide students aged 3-5 with intensive reading interventions to ensure they are fully at grade level proficiency by age 5.

In late January, NAEP, the nation’s report card, produced its 2024 report, demonstrating the urgent need to address our educational crisis.



- Wisconsin still has the largest black-white achievement gap in the nation
- MPS (Milwaukee Public Schools) academic outcomes are the worst in the nation
On behalf of all children, **the time to act is now!**

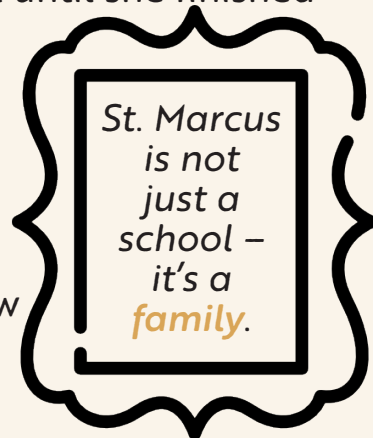
CREATING CHRIST-CENTERED LEGACIES

At St. Marcus, we love welcoming scholars whose siblings, parents – and even grandparents! – have walked through our halls. Diana, both a parent and grandparent to current St. Marcus scholars DJ and Karter, has seen firsthand the transformational effects of a St. Marcus education.

We are committed to providing the resources and tools that parents need to be able to supplement their children's educational and personal growth. For Diana, a big part of her love for St. Marcus started when staff went out of their way to care for her children after school until she finished her work shifts. To her, St. Marcus is not just a school – it's a family.

While watching her five children grow throughout their journey here, Diana saw not only their academics flourish, but also their faith. She is grateful that our Christ-centered education allows scholars to build and prioritize their relationship with God.

St. Marcus is a place where scholars and parents know they can always ask for, and find, the help that they need. Diana says that this has a huge impact on scholars long after they graduate: *"My children have built relationships with staff and other students that have lasted into adulthood. My oldest son has best friends from K4 that he still visits and spends time with regularly."*



Karter,
K4

DJ,
8th



"St. Marcus has been a part of our family and helped me raise my children and I'll forever be grateful."

Diana continues to advocate for St. Marcus in her community. In conversations with her friends and neighbors about the school, she highlights the visible dedication that staff shows towards scholars and the open communication channels that parents can utilize with principals, deans, teachers, and other staff.

We are humbled that Diana has continued to trust St. Marcus with both her children's and grandchildren's education.

Thanks to you, other families like Diana's can keep their St. Marcus legacy going strong, through a community of faith and academic excellence. We hope to see future generations of Diana's family, but for now, we're excited to watch DJ and Karter grow into the young, successful men that God created them to be.

generational
LEGACY





With every passing year, we experience the incredible impact of the annual gala. St. Marcus friends gather in support of one common goal: to secure and advance the future of Milwaukee’s youth. With you, we’ve been able to build a community and a home away from home – an environment in which scholars thrive with determination while they work tirelessly toward academic excellence.



Because of generous individuals and organizations, the 2024 Gala raised a total of **\$1,606,035!** Of that total, **\$1,018,702** was raised through the Fund-a-Need, which included a **\$500,000 matching challenge that was met!** All funds raised through the Fund-a-Need directly support K3-K5 scholars. Providing access to a high-quality curriculum, early literacy emphasis and intervention, and special education. Thanks to generous friends like you, we are able to fully equip classrooms with both lead and support teachers, which enriches our scholars’ learning experiences both in and out of the classroom and allows teachers to focus on building up scholars’ faith journeys, beginning as early as age 3.

The evening’s festivities opened with leadership scholars, taking the mic, to emcee and welcome guests. The St. Marcus drumline and step team shared an energetic performance, providing a vitalizing opening. It was clear that energy pulsed through the room as the steppers chanted “M-HOUSE” and drummers set the steady tempo.

After dinner, the live auction commenced! Gala attendees had the opportunity to bid on luxurious, once-in-a-lifetime experiences, donated by St. Marcus friends. This year, auction items included international trips to Cortana, Italy, and Turks & Caicos, local experiences like Lake Michigan fireboat and yacht rides, and even a private dinner and show featuring one of St. Marcus’ own, Cecilia Davis, who is a talented trained opera singer!



We were incredibly thankful for the overwhelming support that was shown throughout the entire evening. It was a memorable night!

Your dedication to our mission has allowed us to grow into a thriving, successful K3-8 school. Thank you for your continued commitment to our journey in setting up Milwaukee’s youth for a bright, prosperous future! **YOU inspire what is next.**

VIEW EVENT PHOTOS



VIEW EVENT VIDEOS



RISE ABOVE

A St. Marcus Parent's Journey to Financial Stability

St. Marcus life coach, Moe Lawrenz, hosts RISE dinners for St. Marcus parents who have expressed interest in improving their financial situations. The event inspires parents who are beginning their journeys towards financial stability and celebrates those who have made significant financial achievements. The evening features parents who have overcome barriers and achieved their goals by participating in St. Marcus financial literacy classes, engaging in 1-on-1 life coaching sessions, and more. We also partner with several local organizations to enhance the financial empowerment program, including ACTS Housing, Housing Resources Inc., The Equitable Bank, Great Midwest Bank, and Habitat for Humanity.

Netta & her family

"It's important to put parents in our community who have achieved financial stability in front of those who are struggling, so they see that they can achieve those goals, too," Moe says. One of the recently featured speakers was Netta, a 28-year-old St. Marcus parent who recently achieved her goal of home ownership through a partnership with Habitat for Humanity.

"Reset, restart, refocus as many times as you need to, but just don't quit."

This is a phrase Netta constantly returned to during her journey towards home ownership. Netta, along with her two children, went through several stages of housing insecurity, from being homeless to finding temporary housing, to renting.



Through St. Marcus' financial empowerment program, Netta was able to work with Habitat for Humanity to build a brand new home for her and her children! Netta overcame so many financial barriers in order to qualify for habitat housing.

Throughout her journey, she accomplished many feats and was able to raise her credit score, build up her savings, and pay off outstanding debt. In her testimony to fellow RISE attendees, this past December, she said, *"God has blessed me and taught me so many foundational lessons that will stay with me on this life journey."*

Once Netta completes her sweat equity hours through Habitat for Humanity, her family will be able to move into their home. **Congratulations on your huge achievement, Netta!**

Netta was recently featured in an article written by Habitat for Humanity. To read the full article, scan the QR code below.



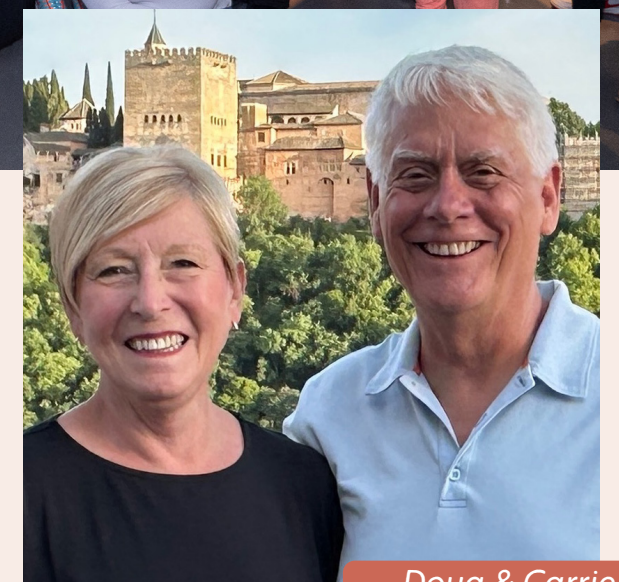
Moe & RISE event
St. Marcus parent presenters



RISE event attendees

Doug and Carrie Woods, long-time, St. Marcus friends & supporters, who attended the recent RISE event, shared their experience.

"This past December, at the RISE event we supported and celebrated the victories of St. Marcus School families working to gain financial independence. It was humbling to hear their stories. Stories of teenage pregnancy, homelessness, and mountains of debt. Yet, through faith and self-reliance, parents overcame what surely seemed impossible. The support and encouragement the attendees gave to each other was palpable. We applaud St. Marcus for their outreach to the community and support of scholar's families."



Doug & Carrie



Netta's son, Gabe,
5th grade scholar



**Christ
First**



**Biblical
Discipleship**



**Sacrificial
Love**



**Radical
Expectations**



DISCOVER AMERICA

ONE STEP AT A TIME

One of the most impactful programs we offer through our curriculum is Discover America. In this unique program, scholars in 5th-8th grades spend time in the classroom learning about different places, historical events, and cultures in the United States. At the end of the school year, they go on teacher-led, experiential excursions throughout the country!

Scholars visit museums, national and state parks, college campuses, and historical landmarks as they can see up close the materials they've spent so much time learning about from a distance. This program is made possible thanks to support from St. Marcus friends who believe in the importance of hands-on learning experiences.

"I WANT MORE KIDS MY AGE TO EXPERIENCE DISCOVER AMERICA BECAUSE IT IS LIFE-CHANGING."

Legaci and Keri, scholars at Center Street Campus and now in 8th grade, experienced the Discover America program last spring as 7th graders. They trekked southwest to Arizona with their classmates and teachers, hiked the Grand Canyon, visited historical museums, and even got to go horseback riding! We asked Legaci and Keri to tell us more about their experience.

Q: Did Discover America change your worldview?

LEGACI: I always get excited to tell people about how I overcame things I thought would be barriers.

I remember telling my best friend that I was scared to hike the Grand Canyon because it would be so hot, but when we did the hike, I enjoyed it! It showed me I can do things I thought I couldn't.

KERI: It opened my eyes to things that I don't get to see in Milwaukee. I now view many things differently, such as my ability to control myself and enter places respectfully, no matter the conditions. The experience taught me that there is so much to do in this world, and I'm glad I received this opportunity. I want more kids my age to experience it because it is life-changing.

 **EXPLORE**
 **DREAM**
 **DISCOVER**



LEGACI

Q: What was your favorite part of the experience?

LEGACI: I loved the Grand Canyon, my first experience on an airplane, and riding a horse!

KERI: How kind-hearted all the scholars were to each other and how they treated everyone with respect and appreciation. I've learned how to embrace cultural differences and embrace fear.

You can help make these experiences possible! Watch your mail in April for ways you can support Discover America.



KERI

"I'VE LEARNED HOW TO EMBRACE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND EMBRACE FEAR."



SCIENCE AT ST. MARCUS

Scholars Lead the Way!



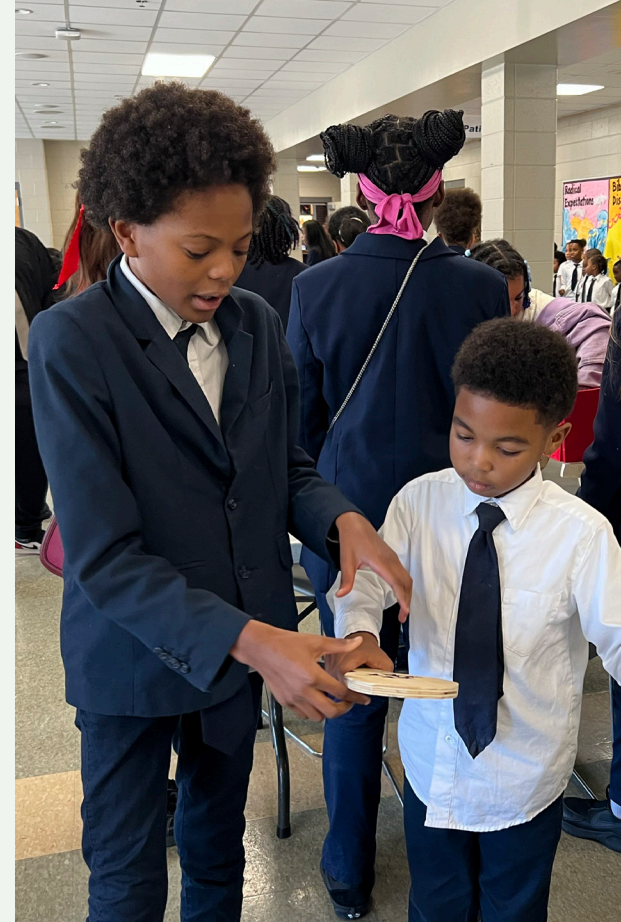
In the past few issues, we've featured the arts at St. Marcus – music, theater, and visual art programs driven by dedicated individuals who believe in the transformational power of the arts.

Now, we're excited to give you a little look into our science program!

To provide a well-rounded science curriculum, St. Marcus partners with an organization called Project Lead the Way (PLTW). This national nonprofit partners with schools to provide STEM programs and real-world, hands-on learning experiences that empower students to gain the skills they need to thrive in high school, college, their career, and beyond.

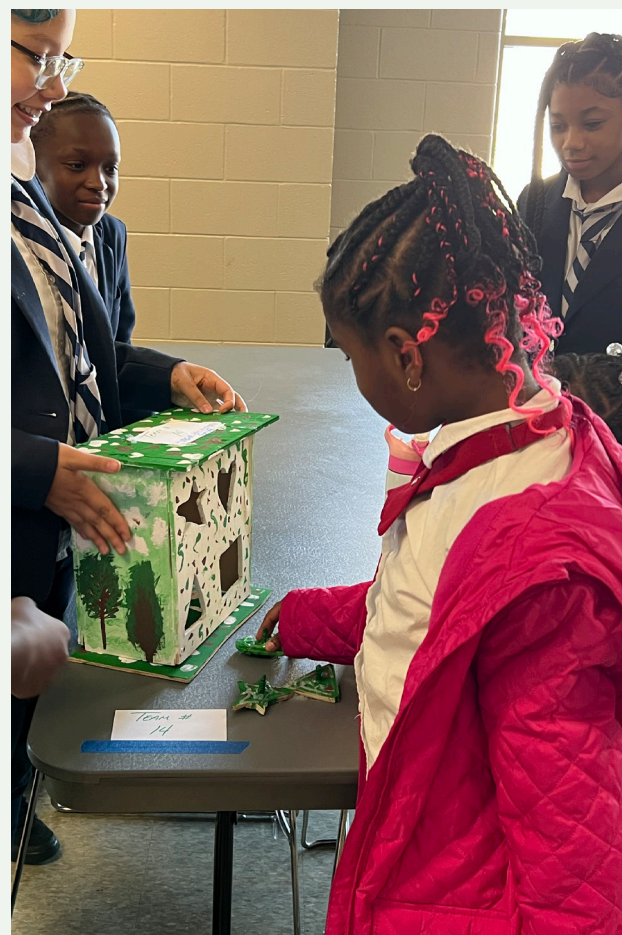
Our partnership with PLTW has been invaluable. Scholars have learned and refined essential skills that have long-term benefits, like problem-solving, critical and creative thinking, collaboration, and communication.

St. Marcus science teachers use a variety of PLTW curricula, like computer programming, to build a mobile app. Most recently, 7th-8th grade science teacher Geoff Loper utilized a PLTW Design & Modeling Unit, where scholars learned about engineering design processes. The unit culminated in a final project in which scholars collaborated to build an occupational therapy toy.



PLTW

The impacts of real-world, hands-on experiences like this reach beyond the classroom.



The class worked together to identify and address the needs of a child with Cerebral Palsy, whose needs were based on specific, yet fictitious, patient data. The toy was designed to help the patient work through the specific physical and developmental issues associated with Cerebral Palsy. Scholars learned how to analyze problems, brainstorm solutions, and work collaboratively on designing and building a prototype, which younger scholars then tested in grades 1-3!

The impacts of real-world, hands-on experiences like this reach beyond the classroom. Mr. Loper says, "Projects like this really help to build a deeper understanding and empathy for those we see who have to live with and work through physical disabilities, but also gives some deeper understanding for the instances where those disabilities are not readily visible."

This project is just one example of how you enable our scholars to learn more and further their academic and personal growth daily. Your support for programs like Project Lead the Way opens doors for our scholars to start making important decisions and thinking about possible careers, educational interests, and more – that will impact them for the rest of their lives.

Programs like this are only possible because of friends like you. Thank you for your commitment to expanding our scholars' minds and dreams.



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Address Service Requested



St. Marcus is a Christian, high-expectations choice school serving students from grades K3 to 8th.

Using a proven urban education model, St. Marcus seeks to instigate change and provide a community of learning where children and families live, grow, and thrive.

St. Marcus' driving vision is that every family has access to excellent education in the city of Milwaukee.



STMARCUS.ORG/SCHOOL

