

The Rev. Scott J. Brown  
Head of School, TMI Episcopal  
Presentation to 117th Annual Council of the Diocese of West Texas (2020)

Good afternoon, Diocese of West Texas!

I stand before you today as a part of one the largest ministries in the Episcopal church, that is, Episcopal Schools.

I also humbly stand before you today as a part of one of the largest ministries in our entire diocese, YOUR diocesan school, TMI Episcopal.

The ministry of YOUR diocesan school is one that we as a church, should be really proud of.

Our ministry is engaging 7 days a week, a **majority** of the people we minister to are non-Episcopalians, and those who are impacted by our ministry will serve our communities, our churches, our globe **for generations into the future.**

For a relatively small denomination, we have a tremendous footprint in the area of high-quality independent schools.

There are...

- 1,138 Episcopal day schools nationwide
- In a given year, there are **160,000** students enrolled in Episcopal schools in this country
- **Texas** has 121 schools and early childhood education programs in our six dioceses – the most of any U.S. state.

Here in our diocese, we have 26 schools,

- Preschools
- Elementary schools
- Middle-schools
- And one diocesan school, TMI, that welcomes middle *and* high-schoolers

In OUR 26 DIOCESAN schools, over 725 faculty and staff serve almost 4,000 students each day.... That's 4,725 people who are learning how to be models of God's love and grace, focusing justice and peace, and learning what it means to walk in the way of Jesus, the way of love.

That's 4,725 hearts enlightened every single day in Episcopal Schools in the DWTX!

**There are more children and teachers and parents and guests in the sanctuaries of our 26 schools M-F than there are total worshippers in all of our 85 sanctuaries on Sunday mornings.**

I know I'm biased but the ministry of Episcopal Schools in this diocese is the greatest witness we have of the Jesus movement. What a cool privilege! What a mission field! What a ministry!

600 people worship in TMI's chapel each and every school day.

TMI Episcopal is the OUR diocesan school, the only high school in our diocese and the only Episcopal school in the country that offers an optional JROTC program, our leadership laboratory where servant leaders are formed.

Today we are 484 students, grades 6-12, the largest enrollment in school history.

We believe that the ideals of Episcopal education are all expressed in our core values of Wisdom, Integrity, Service, Excellence, and Reverence.

TMI remains committed to strong academics as well as balance and wellness. One does not come at the expense of the other. We can and will do both.

We believe there must be even more to an excellent education.

We say our intent is to "challenge and cherish" every student.

To do that, we challenge ourselves to stay mindful of...

**The Five Tenets of the Whole Child Approach...**keeping our students

- Healthy
- Safe
- Engaged
- Supported
- and Challenged.

We believe we are **preparing students not just for college, but for life...**a better, happier, more satisfying and more useful life.

We want our students to graduate with the skills and tools they need to be fully engaged in the next chapter of their lives...and beyond.

Besides being known for our academic rigor, spirituality, leadership and athletics, TMI is poised to become known for growing and developing successful global citizens.

In order to make sure our students are challenged AND cherished, we have complemented our amazing faculty with a new Dean of Community and Wellness, Tracy Carter.

She's a parent of two TMI graduates, who holds a master's degree in counseling.

Anxiety is a huge problem for students in the age group we serve – much larger than it was when we were their age. It's the leading mental-health issue among American youths, and it is rising

- 59 percent of teens say balancing all their activities causes stress

- 40 percent say they're irritable because of stress
- 37 percent said they feel overwhelmed
- Nearly a third will experience an anxiety disorder during their lifetime

Here's the most shocking statistic:

**80% of Middle School and High School students believe their parents love them more if they make better grades.**

So parents, grandparents, let's agree on something:

Instead of saying to your children, "what was your grade?", ask them "what they learned?"  
Instead of asking them "what colleges are you applying to?", ask them "what subject fires you up?"

Agree?

This year alone we have taken the following steps to show that TMI cares about our students' mental wellness:

- We launched the "**I Care**" **app** that allows students to anonymously report what they're struggling with or share concerns about their friends.
- We rolled out the opportunity for students to take a **Wellness Day** each semester, an excused absence / mental health day they can take at their leisure, supporting their need to take a step back for whatever reason, no questions asked.
- We formed a **Community and Wellness Advisory Council**, a group of students chosen for their commitment to improving student life and creating a healthier community culture.
- And our next step, later this spring, will be to start our **Shadow a Student Day** program. A group of faculty, administrators and staff will follow a student for an entire day, from an early sports practice or cadet special-teams drill, through classes, lunch, socializing and after-school extracurriculars.

We believe that to help the whole child develop skills for life, we must make an honest attempt to walk in their shoes...to learn first-hand about the excitement, fears, stress and responsibilities our students face every day.

And because data is important to understanding how successful an initiative is, let me give you some cool stats: as we talk less about academic resumes and GPA, and more about balance and whole child, scores on standardized tests such as the SAT go up!

The Class of 2019 scored an AVERAGE of 1290 on the SAT. That's really impressive!

Lastly, as we prepare our students for college and for life, we also are passionate about making sure our graduates are not living in their parent's basement after they finish school. We want to raise great human beings, but we want them to be hireable as well.

We have learned that organizations and companies want to hire employees that are

- **Creative**
- **Collaborative**
- **Compassionate, competent problem solvers**

To help our students and faculty get even further along this road, we've hired Justin Kutscheousky as Director of Innovation. Justin formerly taught at All Saints Episcopal School in Tyler, Texas.

At TMI, he not only teaches courses in Innovation and Design, he's helping us to plan our new building, the Walker Innovation and Design Center...an 8,700-square-foot space that will maximize our students' opportunities to think outside the box and put their imaginations to work.

The architect for this beautiful building was Beaty Palmer, the same architect responsible for the amazing transformation at Camp Capers.

Named for a transformational gift by Deborah and Steve Walker – former executive chairman of our Board of Governors and a former TMI parent and grandparent, as well as a faithful Episcopalian and active member of the DWTX – the Center will be a flexible space for making, building, creating, dreaming, performing and communicating.

We broke ground last spring, and construction began a few months ago...on a state-of-the-art space with a **robotics laboratory, broadcast studio, fabrication lab, virtual reality studio** and **classrooms that can be reconfigured** to fit our students' project needs.

Let me tell you about some of the projects currently happening in our Innovation and Design Classes:

Zach Perkins – 12th Grader  
Day / Night Cycle for Algae tanks  
Coded with LED light and Arduino  
Mimics a day / night cycle to promote outside environment for algae

Community Project – 8th Grader (Jay Perry)  
Jay called Goodwill. Reached out.  
Justin K. and Jay met with Goodwill

Goodwill needs to hire more employees  
Expressed this to Jay  
Jay designed a new call center for Goodwill  
Shadow project manager  
Building a new call center for Goodwill  
300 jobs to SA

This is all happening in inadequate space on our campus.

When we open the new Walker Innovation Center next fall, the possibilities are literally endless.

Along with our students, we are always learning...about what we can do to do better, smarter, kinder. As an Episcopal school, we are created to be an embodiment of the Christian faith, a model of God's love and grace.

I'm proud of all our schools, of all those who serve the largest ministry in our diocese each day. I'm proud of the 26 Jesus loving Episcopal Schools in DWTX who challenge and cherish the future servant leaders of our churches, our communities, our world.

And I'm proud of OUR diocesan school, the 484 students and 110 faculty and staff who come to TMI each day.

I'm proud of TMI's 126 year history and tradition AND our commitment to grow in Wisdom, Integrity, Service, Excellence, and Reverence.

There are so many amazing ministries in the DWTX, places where the love of Christ and the hope of grace and the joy of life are witnessed in beautiful ways...

And among the most amazing of those amazing ministries is that of Episcopal schools and our Diocesan School, TMI Episcopal. Come visit our booths, come visit our schools, come and join the greatest outreach our Diocese has to offer.

I am proud to be part of the ministry of Episcopal education in the DWTX, a ministry that enlightens hearts daily, starting with the hearts of us who are beyond blessed to lead them.