

The Rev. Scott J. Brown  
Head of School, TMI Episcopal  
Presentation to 116th Annual Council of the Diocese of West Texas (2019)

Good afternoon beautiful people!

Let's see who paid attention last year....

Raise your hand if you have a school associated with your congregation?

WELL DONE!

My name is Scott Brown and it's my honor to update you on our Diocesan School, TMI Episcopal.

It's been exactly 125 years since Bishop James Steptoe Johnston founded TMI with 3 goals in mind: provide a great academic experience, while building character, in a Christ-centered community. I'm pleased to report that 125 years later, we're still living Bishop Johnston's dream.

It is an exciting and WONDERFUL time to be a TMI Panther!

Today we're 465 students strong, 6-12 grade, on over 80 acres in NW San Antonio. Our core values are Wisdom, Integrity, Service, Excellence, Reverence. Our optional Corps of Cadets JROTC program remains our keepers of tradition, having just been named an Honor Unit with Distinction for the 25th consecutive year.

Our soccer team plays tomorrow in the State Championship in Waco as they seek to win the title for the 2nd time in 3 years. Our 9:1 student to teacher ratio allows us to know every students' name and help them develop THEIR full potential.

Milestone anniversaries like ours are a great time for setting goals to ensure we continue to live our mission for at least another 125 years.

During my first two years as Head of School, I've asked one question over and over and over again. Why? Why do we do it this way? Why are we building this building? Why do we do what we do? Why is usually the toughest and always the most important question we can ask.

So last March, our Board of Governors and our Leadership Team began strategic planning to make sure that what we do every day is connected to a deeper understanding of why we do it.

We have already taken some major steps in that direction:

Last year, to emphasize our Episcopal identity, we changed our common name to TMI Episcopal. We have created Strategic Planning committees with over 60 faculty and staff volunteering their time to serve on these committees; we have streamlined and repurposed some administrators' roles; and have recently completed a SWOT analysis taking a deep and difficult look at our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats).

Most important, we have set ourselves five strategic goals, with a system of assessment to track our progress. These goals are centered around creating a diverse student body; building a strong community; supporting an excellent faculty and staff; and enhancing our academic program, Corps of Cadets and athletics while maintaining our commitment to Episcopal identity.

We have identified the following key objectives:

1. Recruit and retain a talented and diverse student body of sufficient size for financial stability.
2. Establish and nurture a campus community that inspires lifelong learning and develops skills in servant leadership.
3. Recruit and retain a competent and inspired faculty and staff.
4. Develop a superb and innovative academic program, competitive athletics and a distinguished JROTC program within a faith-based community.
5. Manage TMI with fiscal discipline to sustain its long-term financial health and provide resources for future opportunities.

Students, Culture, Faculty, Balance, Stewardship – That's the foundation of our WHY.

Here are a few example of some initiatives we are currently working on to accomplish those strategic goals:

We are in the process of updating our financial aid policies and creating a 5 year enrollment plan to ensure that our student body is diverse in many ways, including socioeconomically.

We have created a new position for next year called "Dean of Community and Wellness" who will support our parents and our students in taking care of themselves, body, mind, and spirit.

We are analyzing and evaluating our current daily schedule, our graduation requirements, and our extracurricular expectations to make sure don't fall into the BIRTHDAY PARTY trap.

(Birthday parties used to be pin the tail on the donkey and an HEB cake for the neighborhood kids. Now you have to rent out Fiesta Texas and send personalized invites). We want to make sure the TMI party isn't getting out of hand for the wrong reasons.

In addition to those initiatives that require little to no funding to complete, one of the opportunities we're excited about now is, once again, a new building, but this time, we know exactly why we need it – to help us accomplish those strategic goals.

Our Board and Leadership Team is in the process of exploring the very real possibility of a new building that would add much needed classroom space, including maker spaces and labs to support the exciting field of Innovation and Design.

TMI is already a regional leader in the teaching of Innovation and Design and Design Thinking – a human-centered approach to problem-solving and the discovery of new ways to serve humanity's needs. We aren't hoping to build a building and then develop programs to go inside it.

We are already leading the way in Robotics and STEAM related courses (that's the Science Technology Engineering ARTS and Mathematics) starting in the 6th grade.

As we strive to create 21st century thinkers and leaders and prepare them for a world that is changing faster than many of us can keep up with, TMI Episcopal continues to teach our students HOW to learn and problem solve rather than how to memorize or take a test, so that no matter what career path they choose to follow, the lifelong skills they learned on our campus will serve them well.

As exciting as all these advances are, they're not the whole story of TMI. As an Episcopal school, we are proud to offer not only academic rigor but a focus on the whole child. It is part of our educational philosophy to "Challenge AND cherish."

Last month, we partnered with the DWTX, the Bishop's Happening Movement, and St. George Episcopal Church and School to present the film, "Angst," a documentary designed to raise awareness around anxiety among teens and young adults. We presented it with a panel discussion moderated by one of the producers, and it was a thoughtful consideration of the causes and effects of too much stress and even social fear – and how we can help our young people handle this common mental-health challenge.

Let me share with you a staggering statistic I read recently. 80% of MS students believe their parents love them more if they make better grades.....and that number climbs to 90% in the US.

Through parent education programs like Angst and through student-centered advisory, daily chapel led by the amazing Father Nate Bostian, and through relationships with our students, we are committed to challenging AND cherishing our students.

Our students will do very well in the college admissions process. Last year's Senior class averaged 1290 on the SAT, they're enrolled in amazing top tier colleges all over the world, and that is important. But what is equally important is that they are great human beings, serving their communities, committed to giving back, knowing that they are loved.

Challenge AND cherish. We can do both, in fact, we must do both.

To kick off this school year, our faculty retreated to Camp Capers for an overnight in-service. As an aside this event was about 12 hours after the summer season at Camp concluded and the staff at Capers did what they do best, they rolled out the red carpet.

We began this year in my favorite place on planet earth, St. Francis Chapel at Camp Capers. I reminded our community of something you know. Camp Capers is an outreach of the Diocese of West Texas and is a place that is CRAZY about kids, CURIOS about their lives, and built on a culture of LOVE.

But you know who is also an outreach of the Diocese of West Texas, TMI Episcopal. And I stand before you today, just as I stood before our faculty in August, and I am proud to say that in our 125th year of raising servant leaders, YOUR diocesan school is CRAZY about kids, CURIOS about their lives, and built on a culture of LOVE.

As fun as it's been to celebrate 125 years, I'm confident that the work we're doing today will bear fruit for 125 more years.

Come and see us at our booth, ask us about how to use our facilities for your church's needs. Ask us about how to enroll your son or daughter, grandson or granddaughter. Come and see YOUR school. Come and see what WE'RE doing.

We belong to each other, we're committing to respecting the dignity of every human being, and we appreciate your interest and your support.

Thank you and GO PANTHERS!