

U.S. Department of Education
2009 No Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon Schools Program

Type of School: (Check all that apply) Elementary Middle High K-12 (k-8th)
 Charter Title I Magnet Choice

Name of Principal: Mr. Merle Stanley Simonson

Official School Name: St Mary's Academy Charter

School Mailing Address:
507 North Filmore
Beeville, TX 78102-5000

County: Bee State School Code Number*: 013801101

Telephone: (361) 358-5601 Fax: (361) 358-5704

Web site/URL: www.smacs.net E-mail: ssimonson@smacs.net

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent*: Mr. Merle Stanley Simonson

District Name: St Mary's Academy Charter School Tel: (361) 358-5601

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Reverend Patrick Donohoe

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date _____

**Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Original signed cover sheet only should be mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as USPS Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, NCLB-Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, US Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2008-2009 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take the course.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2003.
6. The nominated school has not received the No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, or 2008.
7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
8. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
9. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
10. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district: _____ Elementary schools
 _____ Middle schools
 _____ Junior high schools
 _____ High schools
 _____ 1 Other
 _____ **1 TOTAL**
2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: 7317
 Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: 9388

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
 Urban or large central city
 Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
 Suburban
 Small city or town in a rural area
 Rural
4. 8 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.
 _____ If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?
5. Number of students as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school only:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total	Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK			0	7	0	0	0
K	25	18	43	8	0	0	0
1	24	28	52	9			0
2	22	24	46	10			0
3	22	27	49	11			0
4	19	29	48	12			0
5	21	21	42	Other			0
6	11	28	39				
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL							319

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
2 % Asian
4 % Black or African American
77 % Hispanic or Latino
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
17 % White
0 % Two or more races
100 % Total

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 13 %

This rate is calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	21
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	19
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	40
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1.	299
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.134
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	13.378

8. Limited English proficient students in the school: 1 %

Total number limited English proficient 2

Number of languages represented: 2
Specify languages:

Tagala, Spanish

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 78 %

Total number students who qualify: 248

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-price school meals program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: 10 %

Total Number of Students Served: 32

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>2</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>1</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>11</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>11</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>8</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff	
	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>18</u>	<u>2</u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>15</u>	<u>1</u>
Support staff	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>
Total number	<u>38</u>	<u>7</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 16 :1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates. Briefly explain in the Notes section any attendance rates under 95%, teacher turnover rates over 12%, or student dropout rates over 5%.

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
Daily teacher attendance	98%	99%	98%	98%	98%
Teacher turnover rate	10%	0%	5%	5%	5%
Student dropout rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Please provide all explanations below.

14. For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools).

Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2008 are doing as of the Fall 2008.

Graduating class size	0	
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	<u>0</u>	%
Enrolled in a community college	<u>0</u>	%
Enrolled in vocational training	<u>0</u>	%
Found employment	<u>0</u>	%
Military service	<u>0</u>	%
Other (travel, staying home, etc.)	<u>0</u>	%
Unknown	<u>0</u>	%
Total	<u>100</u>	%

PART III - SUMMARY

First as a private school and now as a public charter school, St. Mary's has a 113 year tradition of providing the residents of Beeville with access to a high quality educational program emphasizing traditional values, community service and individual growth. St. Mary's was the first school opened in Beeville, Texas. St. Mary's converted to a charter school in 2001 at the urging of community members who believed Beeville students would benefit from the individualized attention St. Mary's was known to provide.

Beeville is located in rural South Texas and has experienced long-term economic adversity. The Beeville oil field collapsed. The agricultural industry has suffered years of devastating droughts. In the early 1990's Beeville lost its largest employer, Chase Field Naval Air Station. The Air Station was replaced by five area prisons. The community demographics have shifted. The community has become less well educated as a whole between the 1990 and 2000 census with fewer college graduates and fewer high school graduates as a percentage of the population. The prisons have attracted new people to the community including families of prison guards and inmates. The unique stresses and demands prisons place on the prison staff, the inmates and their families are mirrored in every aspect of the community.

In the year it converted, St. Mary's enrollment doubled. The students transferring to St. Mary's were and are those most disenfranchised by the existing public school system. Students entering St. Mary's during its first year were 3 or more years below grade level on the ITBS administered in September. Transfer students continue to be below grade level.

St. Mary's students are more likely to have additional problems:

- One grade level that has matriculated had 50% of the students identified as special education;
- In one year 50% of the identified special education students were classified as emotionally disturbed ;
- Up to 6% of the students live in foster care; an even larger percentage does not live with a relative;
- Between 10-15% of the families have been evaluated by Child Protective Services;
- Between 11-12% of the children have been victims of sexual abuse;
- Families report that 25% of the students have family members who are or have been in prison.

To meet the challenges faced by its students, St. Mary's developed a comprehensive wrap-around support program. The wrap-around services include: Counseling, tutorials, after school enrichment, extended day/ extended year service, classroom interventionist, extensive staff development and family outreach. St. Mary's provides real therapy going beyond the limited counseling provided in most schools. The school has 4 certified school counselors on staff. Three work as teachers and 1 as the school counselor. A 5th LPC counselor, certified in play therapy, provides 30 hours per week of individual and group counseling. A school psychologist oversees the program and works with the children as needed.

St. Mary's staffs the school with extra math and reading intervention teachers. These teachers work directly with the classroom teachers to identify children who would benefit from intensive individual and small group instruction. The 3 reading interventionists work with grades k-3. Two math interventionists work with k-3 and 4th through 8th.

To provide the extra time on task needed by students and to serve the needs of the parents St. Mary's developed the SMART(Science Math fine and performing Arts Reading and Technology) program. St. Mary's SMART program is an after school and extended year program that wraps-around the traditional 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. two semester school program. The SMART program offers supervision and activities for an additional 3 hours. The extended year program runs Saturdays, intersession days, and summers for an average of 60 additional "school" days per year. The SMART program focuses on enriching and reinforcing the core

subjects of Science, Math, and Reading/Language Arts. The program incorporates fine/performing arts and technology.

St. Mary's holistic approach has paid off in remarkable test gains in all areas. Each year St. Mary's takes stock of itself and uses a strategic planning process to target and increase student success. The school has been Recognized 4 out of 5 years. It was within one point in one subcategory of receiving an Exemplary rating for the past two years. The longer a child stays with the school, the better he/she performs. Students who enter St. Mary's below grade level quickly move toward grade level performances. St. Mary's is truly a remarkable school that produces long-term, meaningful change in the lives of children each day.

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results:

The data tables demonstrate St. Mary's is achieving academic excellence with an economically disadvantaged, largely minority population. In a region and a community characterized by declining enrollment, the data tables evidence a school that is growing. As a school of choice, St. Mary's has attracted large numbers of applicants in all grade levels. From 2004 to 2008 enrollment has gone from 196 to 319. The waiting list is extensive. The seventh and eighth grades had zero enrollment during 2008 awaiting the construction of additional classroom space. (The school has started a new long term construction plan that will be adding 3 classrooms this year and 8 classrooms over time)

As a Texas public school St. Mary's is committed to providing each student with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS –state mandated curriculum) and utilizes the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS – state mandated testing) to assess student mastery of the TEKS. The TAKS Test is administered in the spring of each year and the preliminary results are available in May. The State assessment has two levels for individual student performance: Met Standard and Commended Performance. Information on the AEIS data can be found at the TEA website at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis/2008/index.html>

St. Mary's was nominated for demonstrating dramatic gains in student achievement to high levels. The data tables confirm that St. Mary's is continually improving and achieving at high levels. The school has had near perfect reading scores on the state mandated TEKS tests in several grades (3 through 8th) for the last 3 years. The math scores in the middle school grades are outstanding and demonstrate continuous improvement. Most of our 8th grade students take Algebra and all who take it pass the Algebra end of course exam for high school credit.

What the data tables do not as clearly communicate is the individual student success. As a charter school/school of choice St. Mary's has grown each year. Our 18 fourth graders in 04 were our 28 fifth graders in 05. The students who transfer tend to not be new to the service area but rather are disenfranchised by the school where they were failing. So the drop from 93% pass in 04 to 86% in 05 does not immediately register as the success it was. By 06 all of those students who are now sixth graders are at 100% met standard and the commended status is rising.

What the data tables do not reveal is the 10 new students who came to St. Mary's were behind and the majority had not passed the previous year's assessment at their sending school. The state has an individual accounting system that compares each student's year to year gain. St. Mary's actually had a very positive assessment result based on the individual student year to year scores on the 4 students who did not meet the standard. Frequently students entering St. Mary's are below grade level. It often takes a few years to scaffold and fill gaps in knowledge to have children achieve met standard status and even longer to reach commended status. The data tables do underscore an important fact. The longer a student attends St. Mary's the better he/she does.

The data tables confirm a steadily improving math program. Students in K-3rd are assessed in 3rd grade. The students in 3rd grade have achieved mastery/met the standard in math. There are fewer commended performance in the third grade math. Fourth grade math is a transitional year statewide from basic concepts to primarily word problems and has shown a dip in performance statewide. St. Mary's results also reflect a fourth grade dip in math scores. By 5th through 8th grade, a sharp steady improvement in math performance may be observed. The level of Commended performance also increases. St. Mary's was recognized by the Texas Business and Education Coalition for its performance. This prestigious award was earned for the outstanding test scores and a three year average of high commended performance compared to the state.

It is apparent from the data tables that St. Mary's is achieving remarkable results with the subcategories of economically disadvantaged and Hispanic. Each subcategory is scoring close to proportionally with the school as a whole. The enrollment of other categories is too small to make meaningful comparison in any grade because there are generally 1 or fewer students in the category.

2. Using Assessment Results:

St. Mary's uses the assessment data gathered from the various benchmarks, tests and progress monitoring tools to improve the quality and success of St. Mary's instruction by identifying on a school level, grade level, class level and individual student level areas of strength and weakness, patterns of deficient performance, areas requiring adjustment or additional emphasis, and students requiring targeted intervention. The data is used to inform and guide decision making regarding all aspects of the educational program including the focus of staff development, the emphasis of educational support provided in the extended day and Saturday School programs, the mix of teaching strategies and the selection of educational programs.

The best example of comprehensive, systematic use of assessment to guide the decision making process is the Reading First program that serves k-3 Reading. Reading First is a reading program based on the Three Tiered Reading Model that ties assessment, instruction and staff development closely together. Classroom teachers, reading interventionists and a reading coach all work together to use assessment to guide instructional practices designed to get students reading on grade level by the third grade.

The three tiered model has 90 minutes of classroom instruction as its base. Through benchmarking and progress monitoring assessments students are evaluated. Struggling readers are assigned to Tier 2 reading which uses small group differentiated instruction for 30 minutes of additional instruction each day. Continuous monitoring and adjustment using benchmarks and progress monitoring tools are more frequently applied to Tier 2 readers. Failure to return to Tier 1 only or to make adequate progress will move a child to Tier 3 Reading which gives the individual child 30 more minutes of individualizes instruction daily.

St. Mary's recognizes the importance of an ongoing review/evaluation process to maintain quality performance and to allow timely adjustments and corrections to be made. St. Mary's uses a variety of assessments throughout the year including: TPRI, standardized pre and post testing, benchmark exams, computer exams and state mandated testing.

3. Communicating Assessment Results:

St. Mary's provides overall assessment results to the Board of Directors as preliminary and final data become available (late spring and early fall.) St. Mary's has a parent meeting the week before school starts to provide the official TAKS school results in a "School Report Card." A press release is sent to the local newspapers for dissemination with the area school results. The school purchases a sign designating its campus rating for posting above the front door.

St. Mary's communicates assessment results to students and parents routinely. At the end of the year, preliminary TAKS results for individual children are sent home with the final report card. Parent conferences are scheduled to discuss individual results as needed. As part of teacher parent conferences, St. Mary's uses state assessment and benchmark data to identify strengths and weaknesses. Teachers working with the interventionist, math, reading and science coaches aggregate and disaggregate student test results to monitor and adjust student instruction.

Students are shown age appropriate summary or actual assessment results so they can understand their individual needs. Students learn how assessment is used to guide instruction. The school has benchmarks every six weeks and does progress monitoring assessment every two weeks.

St. Mary's releases information on its performance and activities to the press regularly. As a result St. Mary's has received recognition from the local media many times, including a front page article.

4. Sharing Success:

St. Mary's has been actively involved in helping other schools achieve academic excellence. St. Mary's sponsored two non-related entities to develop charter schools and helped them write their charter documents. St. Mary's has been actively involved in the charter school movement in Texas. St. Mary's has had a staff member sit on the Board of the ACE (Association of Charter School Educators) for five years. St. Mary's is now actively involved in the new statewide charter school organization. St. Mary's CEO/Principal has been invited to testify before the state legislature many times on educational issues.

St. Mary's shares its staff development with area public and private schools. It hosts a Texas A&M University Masters of Science in Reading program on its campus free of charge to the University and pays tuition and fees for all St. Mary's teachers and staff taking courses.

St. Mary's has devoted substantial effort to improving the educational resources available to St. Mary's graduates and other area students. In 2008 in cooperation with area school districts, St. Mary's and Coastal Bend College developed a Summer Bridge program that starts rising freshman through seniors off in College. Each student can earn up to 10 hours of college credit while learning how college life works. During the school year, students are eligible to take additional college level dual enrollment courses. In the second year summer session students are eligible to take up to 10 more hours of College courses.

This year St. Mary's Middle School students will be taking college classes for continuing education credit through the fine and performing arts program at Coastal Bend College. College professors will be teaching 2&3d fine art; and a design class that utilizes hands on math and science. College professors will be teaching theater and performing arts that apply language arts. The program will be housed on the college campus and will afford access to all the facilities.

St. Mary's has partnered with area school districts and Coastal Bend College to open an Early College High School Campus on the college campus. St. Mary's students will be eligible to attend the ECHS or the local regular district campus.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

The school follows the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) Curriculum, which is the Texas State mandated curriculum for K-12. The self-contained K-3 curriculum is built around the Reading First Program. Reading First uses a basal series and a three tiered reading model that utilizes frequent progress monitoring and intervention. Ninety minutes of uninterrupted reading is scheduled daily. During this time teachers, interventionists and the reading coach provide instruction using a variety of teaching techniques and multisensory approaches. Students requiring tier 2 and tier 3 instruction receive 30 to 60 minutes of additional differentiated small group and individual instruction daily. Extended day/extended year reading instruction is available to all students.

SMACS reading program for k-3rd uses the five key pillars - phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension to build each student's reading skills. Examples of how St. Mary's closes the achievement gap include: incorporating appropriate reading materials, fostering productive home and school connections and promoting a strong student desire to learn to read and write. By fostering and capitalizing on the good habits of great readers St. Mary's continues to build a community of readers.

Evaluation of existing data from multiple sources informs the decision making process. For example, boy students in 4th and 5th grade were not achieving their Accelerated Reader points in sufficient quantity and quality. Inquiring of the students and a review of the reading material available made purchasing books that boys between 8-12 found interesting a priority. The result of the increase in high interest books closed the achievement gap between fourth and fifth grade boys and girls. In addition to regular library acquisitions, the library obtains 50 new titles every month through a literacy project. The current emphasis is on expository reading material due to benchmark results that indicate students struggle more with expository text than any other kind. Expository reading materials will improve student success in all core areas: Math, science, social studies and reading.

St. Mary's has been focusing staff development on improving performance in core areas. The science program obtained a science coach several years ago who works with k-8. Since 2004 science scores have gone from 16% passing at standard to 95% passing at standard with over ½ of the children in 2008 being commended. The science coach prepares and co-teaches all the science labs with the K-6 teachers. Science teachers have been receiving training in a series of Summer Science Institutes. Science curriculum instruction has increased the use of multisensory instruction that helps at risk students thrive. Building on the success of the Coach/interventionist model, St. Mary's has added a math coach/math interventionist. In all subjects the coaches work to assist staff to address instructional gaps and develop additional multisensory instructional strategies to serve all learners. The interventionists address specific gaps in knowledge with students to scaffold and bring them up to level. The interventionists rely on a variety of differentiated teaching strategies to address the needs of the learners.

The fourth through eighth grades rotate classes through ELA, math, science, social studies and fine arts. In 8th grade students are eligible for high school credit for Algebra. Foreign language is offered to all children in 7th and 8th grade. During the 2008 school year the school has zero enrollment in seventh and eighth due to a lack of classroom space. In years when the school has had 7th and 8th grade classes, all mainstreamed students in 7th and 8th took Spanish. A plan to expand Spanish to make it work for High School credit is underway when the new 7th and 8th grade classrooms become available.

Music has been a pullout program at St. Mary's and part of the after school programming. Fine arts are taught as part of an integrated social studies curriculum in grades k-3. Fine arts instruction is given to the 4-8th as

part of their course rotation. A summer program on the college campus for middle school students provides fine arts, performing arts and music.

St. Mary's is a partner with several school districts planning an Early College High School. St. Mary's former students were in the first class to receive up to 10 college credits the summer before they entered high school. The Early College High School will allow all of St. Mary's students who choose to attend to earn an Associates at the same time they earn their high school diploma.

2a. (Elementary Schools) Reading:

The K-3 grades have participated in the Reading First program for the five years under study. Reading First is based on the Three Tiered Reading Model. The Three Tiered Reading Model has at its heart 90 minutes of uninterrupted instruction. St. Mary's chose this program based on the needs of the students and the research that demonstrated it to be effective.

The program is built on a research based effective basal reader series. The model calls for frequent progress monitoring of: Phonemic Awareness, Graphophonemic Knowledge; Listening Comprehension; Word Reading, Comprehension and Fluency. Every child is monitored on a regular basis. Students who do not meet benchmarks are given small group/ individual instruction for an additional 30 minutes daily in Tier 2. Tier 2 students are monitored more frequently. Failure to make adequate progress in Tier 2 will move a child into a more individualized instructional program for 30 additional minutes daily in Tier 3.

St. Mary's buys new books and reading material each six weeks and has 2 libraries on campus. It is the school's philosophy that if students are to become proficient readers, they must have access to a wide variety of engaging reading material, both expository and narrative, on appropriate levels. There must also be an abundance of leveled, decodable text that allows students to practice the reading skills they are learning. Each selection must be chosen to support the comprehensive instruction and intervention program.

St. Mary's students participate in the Accelerated Reader program at all grade levels. Last year students made the school goal of 42,000 points early in the spring semester and new more challenging goals had to be established. The school has a It Takes Two parent/child reading program, where students are able to check out two copies of one title where students and parents can read books together.

By the end of third grade, students are mastering Reading at the 100 percent level and have been continuously gaining in Commended performance. Fourth and Fifth grade students receive 2 -3 hours of ELA instruction daily. The reading program builds on the strengths of the K-3rd reading program. Teachers use diverse teaching strategies to engage students in reading and language arts projects. The ELA program in the 4th-8th grades integrates 2 and 3d fine arts programs to help students reach critical thinking levels. Art activities tend to build the higher order thinking skills of Application, Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation. For example, consider the verbs used to describe art activities: **Application:** apply, demonstrate, dramatize, illustrate, interpret, sketch, solve, use, write; **Analysis:** analyze, appraise, categorize, compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine; **Synthesis:** arrange, assemble, collect, compose, construct, create, design, develop, organize, plan, prepare, propose, write; **Evaluation:** appraise, assess, choose, compare, estimate, judge, select, value, evaluate.

The school offers coursework to obtain a Masters in Reading from Texas A&M free of charge to all teachers on the school campus. As a result every teacher is a reading teacher in addition to their core field. This focus on literacy has been the cornerstone of St. Mary's program.

2b. (Secondary Schools) English:

St. Mary's builds on the strength of its Reading First Program by having a strong English Language Arts department serving the 4th through 8th grades. Students who attend St. Mary's in K-3 are on grade level in reading by the third grade and tend to stay on grade level throughout their careers at St. Mary's. Transfer students to St. Mary's tend to enter significantly below grade level in English Language Arts. Transfer students are the bulk of students below grade level in any subject and a large proportion of them enter after 3rd grade.

In order to address this issue, St. Mary's works with the parents to explain the importance of improving the child's performance and to obtain a commitment that the child will attend the additional instructional programs offered by St. Mary's. Students are encouraged to attend tutorials/enrichment (1-3 hours daily) , Saturday school (25 days), intersession school (School days held during the Thanksgiving, Christmas and Spring Break Holidays) - (13 days) and summer school(20 - 30 days). Parents are eager to see their child achieve and are usually willing to commit to this. Parents who are less responsive usually end up agreeing because their children want to attend!

The additional 50 - 65 days of instruction each year are characterized by differentiated instruction targeting assessed needs of individual children. Teachers work with smaller groups of students or individuals utilizing a variety of instructional techniques. Student may spend some time on Computer Aided Instruction, peer tutoring, individual/ small group; teacher directed instruction; discovery learning projects, hands on active learning programs or one of many specialized programs available to the school. St. Mary's has achieved close to 100% writing scores for all 5 years under study.

3. Additional Curriculum Area:

Science is a showpiece at St. Mary's with over 50% of last year's class being commended and a 95% pass rate that is the envy of the state. St. Mary's reworked its curriculum and instruction in science several years ago by creating a science coach position. The science coach was sent to a year long science teacher training provided by the State Education Service Centers. The coach attended several additional workshops and trainings to improve his/her own teaching strategies. The coach was then paired with a master science teacher for one year as he/she and the k-8th teachers reworked the science curriculum. Two summer science institutes were held for classroom teachers. The science coach works closely with the classroom teachers and develops and co-teaches the labs in grades k-8th. The students' level of interest in science has steadily risen along with the test scores.

A new addition to the science program this past year was a Robotics and Technology component. Several 4th – 8th staff members attended the University of Texas Cochran School of Engineering Lego's Mindstorm training. The Teachers initially brought that training back and worked at the local community college, Coastal Bend College, to provide a robotics session with area high school students during the summer of 08. The school now has a competitive Robotics team who entered the state competition. The school will send additional staff from the k-3rd to the training in order to spark the interest of even more children.

This year St. Mary's students in middle school are off to College to take fine and performing Arts classes with college faculty. Through a grant and an ongoing Partnership with Coastal Bend College, St. Mary's middle school students will be allowed to take 3 classes this summer on the college campus. The fine arts department, the drafting design /Architect department and the performing arts department are using their creative mediums to demonstrate the higher order uses of math and science in art and create critical thinkers in reading through drama. The goal of the Art courses is to study connections between mathematics and art and architecture. Students will see how mathematics is not just about formulas and logic, but about patterns, symmetry, structure, shape and beauty. Students will study topics like color, measurement, ratio/proportion, tilings, polyhedra and perspective.

4. Instructional Methods:

St. Mary's utilizes a unique flexible scheduling system in grades 4th through 8th that permits students to concentrate on mastery of core skills. Students are grouped in academic teams that shares the same core teachers. Flexible scheduling allows students to spend large blocks of time with various core teachers to address specific needs.

The students are grouped and regrouped throughout the year. After benchmarks are completed, staff will adjust schedules to ensure that individual students are best served. This strategy requires a significant level of effort on the part of teachers and administration. The students respond well to the grouping and regrouping strategy.

As discussed in an earlier section, St. Mary's has a fragile student population. Several of the faculty are trained counselors. The faculty members have received additional training on working with at risk populations such as: Giftedness in Poverty, Capturing Kids Hearts, Strength Quest and There Are No Shortcuts. A focus on serving the whole child and their families is at the core of St. Mary's program. The staffs are encouraged to identify students' strengths and to build on those strengths.

St. Mary's teachers are encouraged to use a wide range of instructional methods to promote and reinforce student learning. St. Mary's teachers use a variety of instructional methods including: Direct instruction; small group instruction; inquiry based learning; computer aided instruction and others. St. Mary's individualizes instruction for each child. Teachers, administrators, interventionists and coaches routinely work together to develop instructional strategies to meet the needs of individual children. An example of modification or supplementation is the Brainchild program. Brainchild is a computerized handheld instructional game that differentiates instruction for student. Teachers will use multidimensional instructional strategies to target different learning styles. An example is the kinesthetic times tables where students act out the times tables. More strategies include peer tutoring, mentoring by high school tutors, computer aided instruction, video, auditory and hands on activities.

5. Professional Development:

St. Mary's administration recognizes that its staff is its single biggest asset. St. Mary's administration has used professional development as a key to achieving academic success. Every employee in the school has access to funds to cover the costs of tuition, books and fees to attend college and/or the university. A Masters in Science in Reading program from Texas A&M-CC is offered on campus. All teachers in any subject are eligible and encouraged to take part in the classes. A Phd in reading is on campus each week monitoring the student results and consulting with the classroom teachers.

As a Reading First campus, St. Mary's has a Reading Coach who is a Master Reading Teacher. Every week for the past five years a weekly training/planning session has been held with the teachers.

To improve the math program St. Mary's has spent two summers hosting a Summer Math and Science institute for Teachers, which all teachers were eligible and paid to attend. The program focused on making science and math more relevant and engaging. Teachers were introduced to instructional strategies to serve diverse learners.

A new initiative in Cooperation with University of Texas Cochran School of Engineering is Robotics instruction at St. Mary's. Two of the teaching staff went to a training and have started robotics and engineering in the middle school. More staff will be attending the engineering science institute this summer from the elementary grades. The Robotics program is a favorite of the students and provides hands on experience to students in utilizing technology to perform work and solve problems.

Individual teachers are free to find beneficial conferences and training to attend. Each year the school sends several teachers to summer training programs for which they are paid. The school leadership believes that there is always room for improvement in staff. At St. Mary's teachers make between \$10,000 and \$15,000 less than they would at area schools for their equivalent years of experience. The staff stays because the work is rewarding and there is significant room for professional growth at the classroom level.

6. School Leadership:

The administrative leaders of the school lead by example and work closely with other members of the staff. The principal is the lead teacher of the school and he is in the classroom 1/2 the time daily teaching science. He also is the superintendent of the district. The assistant principal/ assistant director works a full load as a reading teacher for middle school children. Both participate actively in the extended day/ extended year programming and work closely with teachers and parents in determining how best to meet the needs of the students. Both know each child and family personally and talk to each by name.

The school is frugal and prudent with its resources ensuring that every dime possible is spent directly on serving students and improving classroom performance. There is only one full time administrator at St. Mary's and that is the district Business Office Director. Other administrative functions are staffed by part-time employees from the local community college and former school district employees. The use of flex scheduling and benefits paid to any employee working 10 or more hours per week allows St. Mary's to attract a large number of uniquely qualified staff. The school has 2 CPA's, 2 doctoral candidates in educational leadership (one in finance, one in curriculum and design) a diagnostician, and the retired college director of maintenance, to name a few.

School administrators actively encourage the teaching staff to improve their skills by participating in advanced degree programs and quality professional development programs paid for by St. Mary's. As a result 9 teachers are currently enrolled in advanced degree programs. Four teachers have completed masters degrees while working at St. Mary's. All paraprofessional staff have attended college level courses at the local community college.

St. Mary's believes that a critical predictor of student success is the quality and commitment of the teaching staff. The school leadership leads by example in giving St. Mary's their best professional efforts and by encouraging the teaching staff to do likewise.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 3

Test: TAKs

Edition/Publication Year: 2004-2008

Publisher: TEA

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	76	79	100	90	93
Commended	20	26	43	26	5
Number of students tested	48	43	23	23	18
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	4	4		3	2
Percent of students alternatively assessed	8	9		10	13
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	70	78	100	87	90
Commended	15	28	42	13	0
Number of students tested	31	28	17	16	12
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Met Standard	78	80	100	89	90
Commended	20	28	35	13	11
Number of students tested	33	18	19	15	11
3. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

The math scores in third grade are an area that is currently being addressed through staff development and new curriculum series. We have adopted the Saxon math program for all grades to obtain better curriculum alignment and added a math interventionist in the k-3rd grade.

Subject: Reading
Edition/Publication Year: 2004-2008

Grade: 3 Test: TAKS
Publisher: Pierson

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	100	100	100	100	100
Commended	52	29	40	38	53
Number of students tested	48	43	23	23	18
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	3			2
Percent of students alternatively assessed	2	6			13
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	100	100	100	100	100
Commended	50	30	36	28	40
Number of students tested	32	27	15	16	11
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Met Standard	100	100	100	100	100
Commended	53	30	33	41	45
Number of students tested	38	27	14	7	11
3. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Mathematics
Edition/Publication Year: 2004-2008

Grade: 4 Test: Mathematics
Publisher: Pierson

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	91	79	80	47	73
Commended	32	13	15	10	0
Number of students tested	46	25	22	21	20
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	97	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	3			3	3
Percent of students alternatively assessed	7			14	15
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	90	72	79	33	67
Commended	34	11	0	0	0
Number of students tested	31	18	14	0	12
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Met Standard	89	71	73	40	70
Commended	33	0	7	0	0
Number of students tested	29	17	15	0	12
3. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Reading
Edition/Publication Year: 2003-2008

Grade: 4 Test: TAKS
Publisher: Pierson

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	92	88	90	87	93
Commended	8	29	40	0	17
Number of students tested	42	25	22	18	18
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	3	1	0	0	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	7	4	0	0	7
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	92	83	93	83	89
Commended	8	22	36	0	13
Number of students tested	38	18	14	10	10
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Met Standard	90	88	87	83	90
Commended	10	18	36	0	8
Number of students tested	29	17	15	9	9
3. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Mathematics
Edition/Publication Year: 2003-2008

Grade: 5 Test: TAKS
Publisher: Pierson

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	100	96	94	86	61
Commended	44	57	25	14	11
Number of students tested	35	23	18	28	23
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	2	1	0	2
Percent of students alternatively assessed	3	9	7	0	9
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	100	100	91	76	45
Commended	27	53	18	0	0
Number of students tested	26	17	11	0	0
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Met Standard	100	94	100	74	60
Commended	21	59	22	0	14
Number of students tested	24	17	10	0	7
3. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Reading
Edition/Publication Year: 2003-2008

Grade: 5 Test: TAKS
Publisher: Pierson

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	100	100	94	70	67
Commended	34	41	13	15	6
Number of students tested	35	23	18	28	23
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	2	0	2	2
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	9	0	7	9
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	96	100	91	57	55
Commended	43	38	0	0	0
Number of students tested	27	17	11	0	0
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Met Standard	96	100	91	63	20
Commended	24	44	0	0	9
Number of students tested	26	17	11	0	12
3. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Mathematics
Edition/Publication Year: 2004-2008

Grade: 6 Test: TAKS
Publisher: Pierson

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	96	100	100	50	47
Commended	59	50	39	15	11
Number of students tested	27	26	25	26	25
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	74	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	1	2	2	2
Percent of students alternatively assessed	7	7	14	14	14
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	95	100	100	57	41
Commended	55	50	47	14	6
Number of students tested	20	6	15	14	19
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Met Standard	100	100	100	40	36
Commended	55	54	44	10	0
Number of students tested	20	13	18	10	11
3. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Reading
Edition/Publication Year: 2004-2008

Grade: 6 Test: TAKS
Publisher: Pierson

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	100	100	96	85	74
Commended	46	72	52	25	16
Number of students tested	27	26	25	26	25
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	75	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	1	2	2	2
Percent of students alternatively assessed	7	7	14	14	14
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	100	100	100	86	71
Commended	42	69	48	29	6
Number of students tested	19	13	15	14	17
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Met Standard	100	100	94	80	64
Commended	42	69	44	20	0
Number of students tested	19	13	18	10	11
3. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Mathematics
Edition/Publication Year: 2003-2008

Grade: 7 Test: TAKS
Publisher: Pierson

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	0	94	78	77	73
Commended	0	22	22	0	0
Number of students tested	0	20	20	18	15
Percent of total students tested	0	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	0	92	86	73	70
Commended	0	25	14	0	0
Number of students tested	0	12	7	12	11
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Met Standard	0	93	80	60	63
Commended	0	14	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	13	5	11	10
3. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Seventh grade had zero enrollment during 2007-2008 due to planned construction.

Subject: Reading
Edition/Publication Year: 2003-2008

Grade: 7 Test: TAKS
Publisher: Pierson

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	0	94	89	92	80
Commended	0	18	44	25	20
Number of students tested	0	20	20	18	15
Percent of total students tested	0	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	1	0	1	2
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	5	0	5	13
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	0	100	100	90	80
Commended	0	18	50	17	0
Number of students tested	0	12	7	12	11
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Met Standard	0	92	100	83	75
Commended	0	15	20	12	0
Number of students tested	0	13	5	11	10
3. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

During the 07/08 school year we had zero enrollment in the classes due to construction of a new building.

Subject: Mathematics
Edition/Publication Year: 2003-2008

Grade: 8 Test: TAKS
Publisher: Pierson

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	100	100	83	90	100
Commended	0	43	8	40	0
Number of students tested	0	13	17	12	14
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	4	2	2	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	31	11	16	7
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	100	100	82	89	100
Commended	0	40	9	35	0
Number of students tested	0	5	11	8	8
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Met Standard	100	100	100	80	100
Commended	0	40	0	29	0
Number of students tested	0	5	7	9	6
3. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Reading
Edition/Publication Year: 2003-2004

Grade: 8 Test: TAKS
Publisher: Pierson

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	0	100	100	89	100
Commended	0	50	27	44	0
Number of students tested	0	13	17	12	14
Percent of total students tested	0	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	5	1	1	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	38	6	8	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	0	100	100	89	100
Commended	0	40	30	36	0
Number of students tested	0	6	10	8	8
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Met Standard	0	100	71	80	100
Commended	0	43	0	30	0
Number of students tested	0	5	6	7	6
3. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

During 2007-2008 the 8th grade had zero enrollment due to construction.