As a global citizen, when we are faced with injustices or simply things that could be better, we can’t just normalize and accept them, we have to act to fix them.” This is the response from seventh grader Amelia to the year-long essential question in her humanities class “What are our rights and responsibilities as global citizens?”

As Our Sisters’ School finished a successful ninth year and enters its milestone 10th anniversary, we celebrate the remarkable achievements of our faculty, staff, volunteers, graduates and students like Amelia. Our community has worked enthusiastically and tirelessly, and we are happy to report, it shows!

We undertook three main projects in 2016-17 with great zeal. We began the AISNE (Association of Independent Schools in New England) accreditation process—a robust and intensive self-evaluation of all aspects of our school: what we teach, how we teach, and how we function as an organization to provide our students with a meaningful education. Our strategic plan, “Empowering Girls,” was developed with thoughtful reflection and generative thinking. We re-committed to improving a robust educational program through maintaining best practices and high standards, while seeking to be innovative and attentive to the needs of each student. In celebration of our 10th year, we embark on our campaign People, Program and Place to focus on the enhancement of our programming and professional development. We are excited to introduce the concept of “Community as Campus” where we partner with local organizations to provide enriched experiences for our students while investing in our very own community.

A parent joined our students and staff in September at our traditional off-site leadership program to kick off the new school year. She summarized her experience, “I thought I had an idea of what OSS was about UNTIL I experienced it this weekend…this is not just a school… the students will experience things other schools and even us as parents can’t give them… I will be a big part of OSS because not only do I think this COMMUNITY is amazing for my daughter, but it is also so pure and good for my soul.”

Our OSS community of staff, volunteers and parents all work with passion and joy to provide our students with a comprehensive and excellent educational experience. We thank you, our generous supporters, for partnering with us as we continue on this extraordinary journey.
OSS transcends the typical middle school environment. You can feel its heartbeat simply by walking the halls of the School—halls that are lined with art, inspirational quotes and exceptional work from student projects. You can see it in the excited faces of our students, whose energy and spirit underlie every class, every activity, and every learning moment. The School’s core values of Excellence, Citizenship, Community and Leadership are exemplified in our people, and these are some of our stories.

EXCELLENCE
Alejandro ’18
With passion and dedication, Alejandro exemplifies in our people, and these are some of our stories.

ALEXANDRA
I told you Alejandro what her favorite subject is she’ll say “all of them” because she wants to “learn about everything.” She is bright and curious, and reads to expand her knowledge of the world. She listens to music because she elaborate enjoys singing with chorus leader Dr. Zhou. OSS is a powerful learning environment for Alejandro because it nurtures her curiosity and provides her with the academic and social-emotional tools she’ll need to be a successful lifelong learner. She consistently achieves high honors and is a model OSS community member. A common theme shared among all of our students is how grateful they are for what they have—both at OSS and in their daily lives. Alejandro is no exception. She credits her family, friends, school and music for shaping who she is and providing her with the support she needs. “At OSS, I feel safe and empowered to make a difference in the community, using the skills that have been built into our daily lives. Our teachers try their hardest to get to know us, not just academically, but also as a person. They open our minds to things happening around us, and how we can use our knowledge and voice to be the change we want to see in the world. OSS helps me figure out who I am and how to improve myself by using a growth mindset.”

Rabiet Dasher ’11
UMass Dartmouth ’19
After graduating from OSS and New Bedford Voc-Tech, Rabiet is now taking pre-med courses at UMass Dartmouth on full scholarship and making time to volunteer at OSS every week.

Rabiet shares what inspired her to pursue a pre-med path: “Growing up, I found myself intrigued by the knowledge required to become a doctor, an astronaut or even a medical laboratory scientist. It is important to me to have a career that helps others in a way that improves their lives. My love for science developed while I was at OSS—science was the most interesting, yet challenging, subject for me. I also remember Tavis Roy, a motivational speaker who spoke to us at OSS. He told us of his life-changing injury as a professional hockey player which led to his paralysis, and of stem cell research that could potentially change his life and the lives of others. I remember wanting to enter that field and help him walk again one day.” How the OSS experience has shaped Rabiet: “I believe that attending an all-girls school was really important in helping me choose my educational path. It was essential for me to be in a comfortable setting to express myself and explore learning. OSS has an enriching environment, and I engaged in advanced studies that students in public schools probably do not experience. I learned that if something is difficult, it’s not a sign to give up, but to try harder. Trial and error is the best way to learn because experience is sometimes the greatest teacher.”

COMMUNITY
Victoria Wood and Katelyn Rapoza, math teachers
Vicky grew up in nearby Acushnet and volunteered at OSS while she was an Endeavor Scholar at UMass Dartmouth. She spent approximately 600 hours over three years at OSS and upon graduation, she committed to a two-year term as an AmeriCorps teacher. She knew early on that the School aligned perfectly with her career and life goals, and that she wanted to stay on longer. Now a second-year full-time professional teacher, her empathetic and kind nature ensures that her students are getting the patient, individualized attention they need to succeed. Vicky loves to learn and improve herself through instructional coaching. She is able to leverage that coaching and other professional development opportunities to better her teaching skills.

Katelyn, a Westport native, completed two years at OSS as an AmeriCorps volunteer, and has now been teaching full-time at the School since 2013. It is easy to get caught up in Katelyn’s enthusiasm when she talks about OSS. She thrives on the fact that our students are excited about learning and are appreciative of the opportunities they are given—this motivates her in turn to do her best for them.

Katelyn is drawn to OSS because it is so rooted in community service; it appeals to her personal belief in the importance of giving back. She points out that this commitment to service has provided an opportunity for the students to feel empowered to make a difference in their own community, and in the world. “I feel so lucky to teach at a school where I have access to so many professional development opportunities and where, year after year, a commitment to obtaining more resources and cutting-edge tools helps me be a better teacher.”

The heart of OSS is the people who devote each and every day to ensuring our students experience an inspired and positive learning environment that is safe and nurturing. The teachers, staff and volunteers bring a deep and unwavering commitment to our students.

LEADERSHIP
Toby Baker: A Driving Force
Since its beginning, OSS has been fortunate to be guided by a dedicated Board of Trustees. Such commitment indicates passion and devotion, and also signals that the work—offering young girls an opportunity to thrive—is meaningful and rewarding.

The School is particularly grateful as Toby was instrumental in its founding, and has remained deeply involved ever since. He is a retired teacher and an avid sailor, passionate about motivating and equipping young people to succeed in their academic and personal endeavors.

After graduating from Harvard, Toby spent two years in the Navy prior to entering the teaching field at The Fen School. He then spent 18 years teaching math, coaching football, soccer, hockey, track, and sailing at The Taft School. Toby joined Tabor Academy in 1978, continuing to inspire his students in both instructional and competitive programs. His sailing teams achieved multiple championships and he led half a dozen trips to sail at schools in Europe. In 1990, the Interscholastic Sailing Association named the National Team Racing Championship The Toby Baker Trophy. He retired in 2000, and in 2016 was named to the inaugural Tabor Athletic Hall of Fame.

Toby’s real legacy is putting particular emphasis on teaching sportsmanship and respect for others. He values fostering growth in character, becoming a better person, learning life lessons, and pushing oneself to reach his or her full potential. Many of Toby’s students continue to look to him for advice and counsel long after they leave for college and begin careers of their own.
People, Program and Place

OSS embarks on its milestone 10th anniversary in the 2017-18 school year. The School continues to build on its mission of providing a transformative educational experience for the young girls of New Bedford by focusing resources on People, Program and Place. OSS is deepening program offerings, improving facilities, and providing even more professional development opportunities for our dedicated teachers. The “Community as Campus” program enriches the learning experiences of our hard-working and motivated students by further engaging them with their own city, New Bedford.

People

There is an art and a craft to both teaching and learning. Our dedicated faculty strives to create a student-centered and rigorous educational program that encourages deep learning. The best education takes place in an environment where the teachers, students, parents, volunteers and trustees—our PEOPLE—work together to pursue common goals. OSS fosters an environment of ideas and ideals to bring the community closer together. Our faculty is committed to personal growth for themselves and their STUDENTS, as they transform lives in our laboratory of learning. They work collaboratively and empower our girls to embrace the OSS core values of Excellence, Community, Citizenship and Leadership.

OSS continues to invest in professional development, and the hiring and retention of outstanding teachers who embrace the School’s innovative curriculum and the importance of social and emotional learning. The School will expand learning opportunities and more-competitively compensate our staff members for their time, skills, enthusiasm, compassion and devotion that nurture and inspire our students and graduates to grow and flourish. In the last 10 years, we have significantly increased the quality of instruction by transitioning from a teaching staff of AmeriCorps volunteers to a professional team that includes master teachers.

Program

Our educational PROGRAM has a strong interdisciplinary focus where students gain a substantial body of knowledge, along with the ability to discover connections in different areas of learning. Teachers apply multiple approaches to content and outcomes to develop a solid foundation that supports and challenges our girls to achieve their greatest possible potential. Our profound dedication to excellence in academic programming will continue in all of our curricular expansion, as we maintain high standards while innovating and attending to the needs of each and every individual student. OSS will enhance programs in the humanities, foreign language, math, arts, science, wellness and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) so that students can experience authentic learning in a joyous environment.

- Focus on humanities
- Deepen critical thinking skills
- Emphasis on emotional and social learning
- Expand health and fitness program

Place

We believe in the power of community. We strive to inspire each student to participate in her community, and develop a sense of pride in our city and its people. Our program and location provide us with valuable opportunities to further collaborate with area organizations and nonprofits, thereby making learning all the more relevant. Experiential education in the New Bedford area adds critical depth to our commitment to the idea of “Community as Campus.”

While we are achieving extraordinary results in our classrooms, we look to improve our facilities so that we can offer a more robust curriculum. With measured and creative thinking, we have identified spaces to enhance and support our students’ almost-11-hour program for learning and exploring.

Looking ahead, we will continue to improve our space, broaden community partnerships so to expand our students’ access to new experiences and engage in service learning. We are IN New Bedford…we are OF New Bedford.

- Create flexible new physical education space
- Enlarge classrooms and STEAM Lab
- Enhance Outdoor Classroom learning for whole-person development
Deep thanks to our wonderful volunteers for all your valuable time.

Thank You
to everyone for supporting our students, our school, our community and our mission.

July 1, 2016–June 30, 2017

NEW AND FAMILIAR FACES IN 2017-18

Former OSS teacher Margaret McGsweeney returns as Volunteer Coordinator and Advancement Associate. Jessica Terry joins OSS from Shady Hill School’s Graduate Teacher Training Course.
OSS SUMMER 2017

- 54 girls participated
- 17 programs
- 8 day camps/programs
- 29 girls at 9 sleepaway programs
- 115 nights away
- 54 at OSS camps
- 25 at other day camps
- 50 days of programming

• 8 day camps/program• 17 programs
• 33 at OSS camps• 54 girls participated
• 154 nights away• 29 girls at 9 sleepaway programs
• 54 at OSS camps• 25 at other day camps
• 50 days of programming

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OSS believes that every gift, small or large, is important.
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Creative & Visual
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Eugenio received the
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These gifts are made in memory of Libby, daughter of former trustee Laurie Barrett and her husband David.

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accurate names. Please accept
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any errors at 508-991-1290 or email:
ggoulding@oursistersschool.org

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Schools with whom we actively partner:

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Vocational Technical High School
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New Bedford Public Schools
Tabor Academy
UMass Dartmouth
OSS students participate in internships, service and enrichment opportunities with:

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Buzzards Bay Coalition
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Immigrants’ Assistance Center
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Massachusetts Service Alliance
Points of Light
United Way of Greater New Bedford

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10
FISCAL YEAR 2017
FINANCIAL SUMMARY

We send our deepest gratitude to all of our generous supporters. As a single-sex school, OSS is not eligible for state funding and we rely on the support of our friends, which is critical to our operations. We continue to focus on investing in our people and programs, and ensuring the future security of our beloved school.

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Operating Income

Total $1,416,000

- Donations and Grants
- In-kind Services & Goods*
- Other

Operating Expenses

Total $1,310,430

- Programs & Activites*
- Administration & General
- Fundraising*

Gifts

Total $1,629,000

- Up to $499
- $500-999
- $1,000-2,499
- $2,500-4,999
- $5,000-9,999
- $10,000-24,999
- $25,000+

* Includes volunteer services valued at $162,951
** Gifts to Capital and Sustainability Fund $955,000

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(Not pictured: Alice Flint, Helena DaSilva Hughes, Per Lothrop and Faith Morningstar)

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Support The OSS Fund & 10th Anniversary Campaign
Our future will be built on a shared vision of success for our people, our program and our place. We will continue to empower our girls and stay true to our core values of Excellence, Community, Citizenship and Leadership. Thank you for joining us in transforming the lives of OSS students. Please contact Georgie Goulding, Director of Advancement, at 508.994.1255 or ggoulding@oursistersschool.org to discuss how you can help OSS.

Why Our Sisters?
During New Bedford’s storied past, it was uncommon for women to go on extended whaling voyages. These “Sister Sailors” were seeking precisely what our brave young “sisters” of New Bedford are seeking today in the classrooms: to sail beyond familiar horizons, and to explore unknown oceans of adventure for growth, learning and accomplishment.

“OSS has taught me some very important lessons. The one that stuck with me the most is to always step out of your comfort zone, and never let others set limiting boundaries for you. Boundaries don’t let you grow, and growth is one of the most important parts about learning, and becoming the person you aspire to be.”

– Isabella Fonseca ’17
Loomis Chaffee School ’21

Many thanks to Cala Hobbs for designing this report, and Virginia Sutherland and OSS staff for providing the photography.

Our Sisters’ School, Inc. admits girls as students to the School regardless of their race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, creed, or sexual orientation. The School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, creed, or sexual orientation in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship programs, athletic and other school administered programs.

Our Sisters’ School, Inc. employs personnel of any race, color, national or ethnic origin, gender, gender identity, religion, creed, and sexual orientation to all the rights, privileges and activities generally accorded or made available to personnel at the School.