

Toward a New Understanding of Civic Responsibility: Some Background on the Session

St. Mark's Civic Responsibility Program emerged after the school's very thorough self-study undertaken as part of the National Association of Independent Schools reaccreditation process. From this focused reflection, the school produced Goals IV, the school's fourth statement of strategic goals. The document was the result of an eighteen-month process that included the contributions of the entire community: students, faculty, administration, alumni, parents, and the Board. Succinct in its wording and yet far-reaching in its implications, Goals IV will guide school policy and aspirations. The document identifies six broad goals and areas on which to focus: Students and Learning; Faculty and Teaching; Enrollment, Access, and Affordability; Campus Resources; Institutional Stewardship, and Civic Responsibility. Goals IV was formally adopted by the Board in 2017.

As we began to flesh out our approach to realizing Goal Six of this document (Civic Responsibility), three areas of focus seemed most promising: 1) developing a broad community engagement strategy; 2) developing curriculum for students to broaden their understanding of civic engagement and leadership; 3) exploring further opportunities to share our school's resources with public schools and others in the Dallas community. Supplementing this three-pronged strategy are types of awareness and dispositions that have proven important to our school culture over time and which our Leadership and Character Development work has also emphasized.

- The Awareness of Community through Time
 - The school community is not merely those bodies on campus during the school day but also alumni, retirees, benefactors, and future students....
 - The statue at the center of campus strives to be a daily reminder of the interwoven nature of generations. We will strive to create learning and service opportunities that include as many of the above mentioned constituencies as is possible and age appropriate.
 - This sense of community through time is relevant not merely to the St. Mark's community, but also to national and world communities.
- The Awareness of the Importance of Stewardship
 - Not one generation or individual is responsible for all we benefit from on campus. It is the commitment of generations, and we are beneficiaries of their vision and sacrifice.
 - Sustainability is a reliable touchstone for ethical action. We define sustainability as the creation and preservation of the conditions that allow an individual or institution to continue existing and thriving

In seeking to affirm these values, we strive to help students realize that school, local, state, national, and international communities are interwoven, and their futures are inextricably bound together. We will design units and field trips to reinforce this idea, integrating lessons into appropriate local civic rhythms, as well.