Project 55

Thesis Class of 2022

Episcopal High School
3200 Woodland Ridge Blvd
Baton Rouge, LA 70816

Mission Statement

Our mission is to tell Episcopal's story through the lenses of multiple narratives, while continuously remaining respectful but authentic about the culture of Episcopal and how it has progressed over the past fifty-five years. This project is needed not only to shed light on certain situations that have occurred at Episcopal, but to help us progress as a community by discussing what the culture of our school was, is, and can be. **Project 55** aims to do this through exploring 5 unique inquiries crafted by the 11 members of the Thesis Program Class of 2022. These inquiries consist of purposeful and impactful questions that can spark a multitude of conversations and discoveries, all relating to Episcopal and its 55 year lifetime. And with that, welcome to **Project 55**!

Inquiry One:

What does it mean to be a member of the Episcopal community?

Principles: What Do We Want to Get Out of This?

Project 55 seeks to look inward to understand what it truly means to be a part of the Episcopal community, and how all of these unique identities interact together to paint the picture of Episcopal. Through asking these questions we hope to gain a better understanding of how individualism plays a role in the community, and to see if it's easily identified or not. We all have our own individual identities, but once those are entered into a larger community they become harder to notice.

The questions asked in this inquiry are specifically targeted to current community members who come to campus everyday, and are actively involved in the classroom and various areas of Episcopal. We would like to interview these current members to get a better understanding of the current pulse and thought pattern of the school.

Questions:

How do you think your personal identity plays a role in the Episcopal community?

Each person is unique and has something to add to the greater community. With that being, said this question is targeted to ask students, staff, and faculty what they think they bring to the community. We want to have them naturally pull out what they think makes them distinct and how that interacts with the Episcopal community.

How do you view the Episcopal community?

Episcopal is a unique place that is a school and workplace for many different people. No one of these people see Episcopal the same, and gain and benefit from different aspects of it. This question is targeted to see how several people apart of the community see Episcopal. We hope we receive different responses to further show Episcopal is a special place in which many different identities and viewpoints interact cohesively.

Has the Episcopal community changed your identity?

We want to know if the Episcopal community has changed how people see or think of themselves. These can be positive and negative, but most importantly we want to see if there are commonalities, and even if Episcopal has shifted people's identities at all. This question could lend to really substantive responses and add a bit of a personal touch to the project.

Do you think there are outside factors that affect the Episcopal community?

An example of an outside factor is the ever common stereotype of all community members being preppy and elitist. The greater question should be asked if the perception is self-imposed? Do people really think that or are we, as a community, just assuming? We want to know if this has made students potentially feel guilty for being associated with this stereotype, or if they even know about it at all. Many students also feel the guilt that comes from socioeconomic privilege. Does this lead to students

downplaying and oftentimes feeling timid when asked questions like where do you go to school? Has the unfair immediate judgement made students feel discredited and miscatogorized? This question could add a sense of discomfort which can lead to some really reverent and poignant responses.

Do you think there are inside factors that affect the Episcopal community?

We want to know if some inside factors potentially affect the community. These can be things such as extracurriculars, sports, clubs, and course rigor. These factors can all affect the type of student one is, how they perceive themselves, and how they interact with other community members at Episcopal. This question could also reveal that certain involvements affect the community much more than previously perceived.

Inquiry Two:

What changes have happened that have altered education/the curriculum at Episcopal?

Principles: What Do We Want to Get Out of This?

Through project 55, we seek to learn more about the curriculum in place at Episcopal and how it has progressed throughout the years. We specifically want to look at how Religion, Learning Difference, and Technology have affected the school throughout its history. By diving into Episcopal's history, we can effectively learn more about how Episcopal compares to other schools. This will help us to better understand Episcopal's overall place in the community of Baton Rouge. Because we are presenting this information to the school, other students can learn more about Episcopal's history, hopefully giving people a sense of pride in Episcopal and all the school has gone through.

Questions:

Religious Education

How is Episcopal's religious affiliation related to the formation of the school curriculum and the religious identity of its students?

This question is targeted to learn more about how religious beliefs affected the foundation of the school. We want to look into if the religious beliefs at Episcopal affected how the curriculum was created. At other schools in the Baton Rouge community, some parts of the curriculum are left out due to the school's religious beliefs. For example, Dunham leaves out evolution because it goes against their religious beliefs. We want to look into if this ever happened at Episcopal.

How has Episcopal become more inclusive of all faiths over time?

We want to see how the school's religious affiliation affected the student body as a whole, as well as how (potential) changes in the school's beliefs lent to changes in functionality and operations. Did religion determine if some students were not accepted into the school admissions? How do the religious beliefs at Episcopal affect the student body?

How do the religious beliefs at Episcopal differ from the rest of the community?

In the Baton Rouge community, most of the independent schools have a religious affiliation. We want to look into how the religious affiliation at Episcopal compares to other schools in the area. For example: Is Episcopal more or less strict about enforcing their religious beliefs than other schools in Baton Rouge? By looking into this subquestion, we will learn more about Episcopal's place in Baton Rouge's overall community.

What are the current students' feelings on the religious beliefs at the school?

We want to learn more about how the student body at Episcopal feels about Episcopal religious affiliation. We could look into if students feel annoyed about going to chapel two times a week or if

they like it. We could look at how Episcopal students feel about having to have two religious credits to graduate. Do students think it is beneficial?

Learning Differences

When were provisions put into place to help students with learning disabilities at Episcopal?

We want to look at how Episcopal compares to other schools regarding learning disability provision and when they were instituted. We can look into when provisions for learning disabilities were instituted nationally, and if Epicoapal was ahead or behind the curve. By doing this, we can learn more about how progressive of a school Episcopal is? We can also look into when the first staff member hired or designated to lead the student support system. We can also look at what specific provisions were added and when.

How did the lack of provisions to help students with learning disabilities affect the student body?

We want to know how the lack of provisions for students with learning disabilities affected the students at Episcopal. Did it cause some students to struggle? For example, Emily's dad went to Episcopal when they did not have provisions in place for learning disabilities. There was also no way to ensure that students were properly diagnosed. This caused Emily's Dad to struggle a lot. We can also look into if there was any opposition from parents when provisions were added. We can also learn if people feel that those who were given these provisions had an unfair advantage.

Educational Technology

When was technology instituted into Episcopal?

We want to look into if Episcopal was ahead or behind the curve in terms of implementing tech into the curriculum. We also want to look into when specific pieces of technology were instituted into Episcopal. For example, when did Episcopal start giving out ipads to the middle school? When did Episcopal switch from chalkboards to smart boards? How sudden was the change? Was it a slow progression or a sudden shift? What year did we first switch to computers? By knowing this information, we can learn more about how Episcopal compares to other schools around the country.

How was Episcopal student body affected by the introduction of technology?

We want to know how the student body was affected by this shift to more technology. We can look into if this change in technology affected the classroom environment and how teachers taught. We can also look into how parents, students, and teachers respond to this change. By learning more about how the student body reacted to the change in technology, we can learn more about how technology affected Episcopal's identity.

Inquiry Three:
How does learning more about unknown facts about Episcopal help us better understand this school's origins?
(Unknown Facts about Episcopal (Buildings, Faculty, ect.))

Principles: What Do We Want to Get Out of This?

We need to find out more information about important landmarks around campus like class benches, fountains, and named buildings, and Project 55 will help us achieve this goal. Discovering more about buildings like Perkins Hall, Foster Hall, and Penniman Building will help us understand more about this school's history. We also need to learn more about the people in the framed pictures throughout the school. Their life and contributions to Episcopal should be highlighted and celebrated. Lastly, this Seminar class needs to find out more about any interesting stories from this school's past like the burning down of Penniman's first floor.

Questions/Inquiries:

Who are the people who have buildings named after them?

The act of naming a building/other school landmark after another person signifies a tremendous amount of respect for said person. Though customary, this is not standard for all buildings on campus; there are many buildings who are not named after anyone (the Visual and Performing Arts Center, the Middle School Building, etc.). This highlights that those who have buildings named after them are extremely important in the eyes of the administration of this school. Therefore, we would like to delve deeper into exactly why these people were given the honor of having a building named after them.

Who are the people whose pictures adorn the walls of Episcopal's campus?

Like naming a building after another person, hanging an image of someone signifies a great amount of respect for said person. In some instances, the people in these images are also the people who the building was named after like Anslee Phillips and G. Allen Penniman. But in other instances, they are not, and we feel it is important to learn more about these people as well.

Are there any important aspects of Episcopal's beginnings that are not well known among the current Episcopal community?

As Episcopal has existed for 55 years, there are likely many different aspects to it that the current community is not aware of. From interesting stories from this school's past to accomplished alumni, we would like to illuminate these parts of our school's history to perhaps better understand its present and future.

What impact did these people have on the Episcopal of today?

The Episcopal of today would not exist without contributions from important founding members. From major donations to teachers to other faculty members that left a mark on this school, we would like to determine exactly what impact these people have had on the current Episcopal.

Why are these people important to Episcopal's history?

The people whose names were chosen to remain on school landmarks for the rest of the foreseeable future are clearly very relevant and important to this school's history, and the same is true for the people whose pictures adorn the walls of campus. Obviously, if the school chose to highlight these people by naming buildings after them and/or displaying their images around the school, they have improved the school in some way. It is important that we discover more about these people's lives and how they changed Episcopal for the better.

How do these stories help shape the Episcopal of today?

Every story in Episcopal's past, from the positive to the negative, has had some effect on the current state of the school. We would like to understand exactly how these stories impacted this school and in what ways.

Inquiry Four:

How have the crises of the school's history affected the structures of Episcopal, both structurally and societally over its years?

Principles - Three C's of Crises

While Episcopal has a long history of successes, it has also been faced with many instances of crises through the years. Episcopal has gone through hurricanes, floods, and national issues. In this inquiry, we hope to examine how Episcopal has reacted to these crises. We decided to examine three different aspects of how each crisis impacted Episcopal. First, we wish to explore the different policies and structural **changes** that have arisen from the events of Episcopal's history. Next, we hope to examine how the crises in Episcopal's past have affected the **community**, both negatively and positively. Finally, we want to examine how the **character** of students and faculty within the community was changed by the impacts of crises.

1960s-Civil Rights Movement

While examining the history of the Civil Rights, we would like to examine the extent to which Episcopal's founding was caused by civil rights progress such as busing and integration. It could be beneficial to examine if any early Episcopal students were active in the civil rights movement. Did Episcopal acknowledge the efforts made by the civil rights movements? Prior to research, we understand that the Civil Rights movement played an important role in the events of the 1960s, so it must have been prevalent in the thoughts of students at the time.

2001-9/11

In addition to the base principles of our project, we understand that the September 11th attacks heavily affected how many Americans lived. Because of this, we think it may be beneficial to examine what the reactions from both students and teachers at Episcopal were. We also are curious in how Episcopal operated during and after the events. How did school policy change due to the aftermath? We already know that the September 11th attacks occurred during school when students were in class. Learning about the attacks at school could have changed how many students understood the role of Episcopal to them.

2005-Katrina

Hurricane Katrina was a major part of Louisiana's recent history. Katrina destroyed many parts of the state, and has continued to have an impact on the memory of Louisianians. To examine this crisis, we would like to examine how the school acted in order to accommodate students that were affected by Katrina. Not only does this include students that were at Episcopal, but also students from other schools that were situated at Episcopal due to damage to their schools. We would also like to examine how certain students or teachers were affected by Katrina.

2016-Baton Rouge Flood

One of the more recent events to impact the students at Episcopal was the 2016 flood that hit Baton Rouge as well as other areas of Louisiana. The flood occurred just one day after orientation, seriously impacting how many students saw that school year. We would like to examine how the students of Episcopal were affected by the flood. Additionally, we know that much of Episcopal was flooded, including the chapel and the gym. We want to highlight how the destruction caused by the flood led to a better Episcopal with an even stronger community.

2020-COVID

The final crisis that we wish to examine, as well as the most recent, is the COVID-19 pandemic. We understand that this crisis is still continuing, but we believe that it is important to acknowledge the current landscape of Episcopal that defined our school year. We think that it would be beneficial to examine how the current administration handled the initial breakout by shifting to distance learning. We would also like to look at what parts of student life had to be changed due to social distancing. What traditional school activities, like graduation, had to be changed to accommodate the new regulations?

Inquiry Five:

How have different people in the Episcopal community developed their perspectives on our school? How do these perspectives interact with each other?

Principles:

Episcopal's mission is divided between three central objectives: developing students through academics, athletics, and spirituality/the arts. We seek to understand the human perspectives in and around these groups through targeting certain individuals whose tenure and unique backgrounds distinguish them from their peers.

Using these individuals, we hope to discover what their unique perspectives are, and how those perspectives have developed and matured.

If possible, we also want to delve into Episcopal's history by bringing in the perspectives of some of our school's "first …" to gain a better understanding of the development of Episcopal's many perspectives.

To add a layer of provocation and interest to these 'discoveries' we want to add a conversational element between multiple perspectives.

From these interviews, we seek to draw conclusions about the meanings of not only the individual perspectives but also how they intersect and differ from each other.

We hope that this inquiry will add a layer of humanity and relatability to this project that isn't necessarily tangible—people want to see Episcopal through a personable, empathy-inducing lens.

Academics:

Teachers: Behind our extraordinary academics lies our incredible teachers and administrators who have defined subjects, departments, and entire eras of students at Episcopal. Interviewing these particular teachers would expose a unique perspective on the Academic aspect of the school.

Prospective subjects for interview include: Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Boudreaux, Mr. Anderson,*Mrs. Pulliam, and Coach Rhea.

First Students: Additionally, it would be extremely interesting to find and interview some of Episcopal's earliest students to understand how much Episcopal academics have changed over the past five decades.

Athletics:

Coaches: Coaches are such an interesting target for interviews because they observe Episcopal students at their highest and lowest moments, and they work to develop not only the health and athleticism of our students but also their character, values, and outlooks.

Prospective subjects for interview include: Coach Dupe, Coach Bourgeois, Coach Hebert, and Coach Williams*.

First Football Team: Football is incredibly important to the Episcopal community, so bringing in members of the first football team would hopefully spark interesting conversations and discoveries into the early days of our Athletic programs.

Spirituality and the Arts:

Grouping: We grouped these two departments together because they interact often in conjunction with one another, and Episcopal places a heavy emphasis on the codependency of these two together: they both draw on our student's senses of humanity, creativity, and love.

Leaders: Compared to the other subjects, there are relatively few leaders in these departments, but they nevertheless are essential to the Episcopal experience.

Prospective Subjects include: Father Skully and Mrs. Gagliano

"First…": This is challenging to pin down, but upon further research we will be able to target a certain "first." Some potential ideas are to interview the cast of our first play or our first student vestry members.

Questions:

To provoke the most genuine and unadulterated conversation, the interviewer in this inquiry should focus on asking open ended but nevertheless targeted questions meant to provide an interesting and possibly unexpected take that still pertains to perspective. We plan to ask uniform questions to every subject because the variety of answers and conversations to identical questions will demonstrate the true variety of perspectives in our community.

Early drafts of questions:

What do you look forward to when you step on campus every day?

What keeps you coming back every year?

How would you like your students/athletes to remember you?

With 'historical' interviewees:

What is your best story from your time at Episcopal?

How did your time at Episcopal impact your development into your adulthood?

*Both Mr. Anderson and Coach Williams have particularly fascinating perspectives because they have viewed Episcopal as Students, Teachers, and as Parents.

Overview of Project 55

Project 55 provides a unique and authentic way to view the Episcopal community through the lenses of multiple narratives while continuously remaining respectful but genuine about the culture of Episcopal and how it has progressed over the past fifty-five years. It explores the past events, ethos, school members, and the topics and events that are more relevant and current amongst community members today**. Project 55** will explore the community in a way never done before and can be a unifying point for the community to enjoy, reminisce, and move forward from. These inquiries and questions can be uncomfortable at times, but they are necessary to be talked about, so we can move forward, together, as a community. Taking that into consideration, the **Project 55** team is excited to explore these inquiries in a unique, respectful, and impactful way.