

## MEET OUR DEDICATED AND CARING SJF LEADERSHIP TEAM



### Mrs. Maura Nash, Principal

**Background:** Mrs. Nash's personal and professional background is a great fit for SJF School. She is a life-long product of Catholic Schools, 34 years as a student or educator and counting! Mrs. Nash has a BA in Secondary Education, English Literature and History, with a minor in sociology, and a MA in Educational Leadership with a Type 75 certificate. Mrs. Nash is a Certified Danielson Model Evaluator and her teaching experience prior to SJF was at the high school level in English, ACT prep/tutor. Prior to teaching, she was a counselor at St. Xavier University.

**Falcon Pride:** Mrs. Nash is a proud mom of 3 Falcons! Her upbringing has instilled a strong sense of pride for Catholic Schools everywhere. She is a firm believer, champion, and ambassador of Catholic education and is committed to SJF students in this role and families in our community. She has led the school during a time of significant adversity and is proud of the resilience of our teachers, students, and parents. She leads with the essential notion that we are all in this together, in our own family and in God's family.

**More about Mrs. Nash:** Mrs. Nash was teaching ELA in the junior high at SJF in 2018 when she was asked to take on the role of Principal. She stepped up and has not wasted a minute as she was immediately dedicated to the role and our school. In just a couple short years she has led the development of the five-year strategic plan and reenergized SJF School's mission with structure and focus. She is committed to understanding the strengths of our school and community and to recognize our weaknesses in order to create a plan that encompasses and embraces both allowing us to thrive as a vibrant and high-achieving community.

**Favorite Part of Being a part of SJF:** Walking the halls and visiting the classrooms for the opportunity to interact with each student. I'm greeted with a smile and such optimism from so many students and each interaction inspires me to do more. I love when I witness our Falcons lift one another up. Celebrating those positive interactions and kind behavior that our students demonstrate is everything. Lastly, I'm so hopeful after meeting so many community members that we can leverage the strong legacy and spirit of SJF to continue to set our sights high and focus on our future. There are so many wonderful people in the community supporting SJF.

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### **Ms. Elena Chermak, Director Religious Education**

**Background:** Ms. Chermak has been a faith leader in our SJF school and parish for many years. She serves as an advisor to teachers and staff, and works directly with students in every grade to plan and present prayers, masses, prayer services, liturgical seasons, and sacramental celebrations. Ms. Chermak is originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where she is the 2nd of 8 children in a family where faith is important. She earned a B.A. in history from Duquesne University while on a full four-year scholarship as a performer in an Eastern European folk dance ensemble which travelled extensively throughout the United States. She came to Chicago to study at the University of Chicago Divinity School from which she holds a Master of Arts in Divinity. She studied language, history, and culture in Rome and at the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, each for a summer session. Her first job in Chicago was teaching high school religion while also working as a youth minister. In her first years at Saint John Fisher, Ms. Chermak went on to earn a Doctor of Ministry degree at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake (Mundelein Seminary).

**Falcon Pride:** Everybody is important! I have had the pleasure of working with many students and teachers throughout the years, yet every year is brand new, as the children's excitement for learning and their joy for encountering each season is infectious. The teachers and staff join me to instill a sense of pride in our students as beloved children of God. My experience as a performer and my love of our faith help me teach the children to pray and read confidently at our prayer services and Sacraments. They are excited to participate. I love hearing how these faith experiences are formative for our students and families.

**More about Ms. Chermak:** Ms. Chermak is sought after for teaching in the archdiocesan Religion Teachers Certification and Lay Leadership programs. She received archdiocesan awards for her work in our school and parish, including Excellence in Catechesis presented by Cardinal Cupich in 2015 and the Heart of the School by Cardinal George in 2005. She also held archdiocesan leadership roles as vice president and president of the Chicago Association of Religious Educators. These activities let all know the wonders of our great school and parish community.

**Favorite Part of Being a part of SJF:** Working with your children in our faith-filled family of Saint John Fisher brings great joy daily. Every year is exciting with the students, principal, staff, priests, teachers and parents of our kind and caring community. The parents' faith, support, and encouragement make all these wonderful faith experiences for our children possible. May this foundation in faith guide their lives always.

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### **Mrs. Claire Larmon, Assistant Principal Instructional Support**

**Background:** Claire oversees all areas related to instruction including, but not limited to, the development and facilitating of faculty and staff professional development related to school culture, teacher improvement and curriculum development as well as consistent enforcement of student conduct. Claire is a certified Danielson Model Evaluator. Claire received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Loyola University of Chicago and was also the recipient of the Cecil Coleman Award for Conference Student Athlete of the Year. Claire began teaching English and also served as the head sophomore and varsity assistant girls & basketball coach at Saint Ignatius. While working at Saint Ignatius, Claire went on to earn her Master's degree in Education as well as her Administrative Certification from Loyola University. After a number of years in the classroom, Claire assumed an administrative role as Director of Admissions and Recruiting at Saint Ignatius. Claire also served as the Program Director for Redwood Prep, a high school entrance exam prep course. Claire taught 8th grade English Language Arts at St. John Fisher before accepting the role of Assistant Principal of Instructional Support.

**Falcon Pride:** Claire is thrilled to be working at her alma mater and feels privileged to serve and work beside such a dedicated and innovative faculty and staff.

**More about Mrs. Larmon:** Claire Larmon lives in Oak Lawn with her husband and five children. Her two oldest daughters attend Saint Ignatius College Prep and Marist High School respectively, and her other three children attend St. Catherine of Alexandria.

**Favorite Part of Being a part of SJF:** For Claire, it's exciting to see some of the new technology and curriculum investments that will enable the teachers to make an even better impact. It's a hardworking and collaborative team!

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### **Mrs. Nikki Carey, Counselor and Assistant Principal of Student Support**

**Background:** Mrs. Carey joined SJF in 2019 and wears multiple hats. Her specialized background has helped her to make an impact with our students. She is a licensed Professional Counselor, Professional School Counselor (Type 75) and certified Danielson Model Evaluator with 10 years of counseling experience. Nichole earned a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Bachelor of Arts in Women Studies from Loyola University of Chicago, followed by graduate work at Boston College and Loyola University of Chicago, earning a Masters in School Counseling from Loyola University Chicago in 2009. She began her career as a counselor at the University of Chicago Orthogenic School, a residential facility serving children with severe mental health challenges. Following University of Chicago, Nichole began employment at Mother McAuley High School in 2011 serving as a counselor, college counselor and most recently the Director of Counseling.

**Falcon Pride:** Mrs. Carey is also the proud Mom of 4 Falcons. She gets to experience the culture of SJF as a parent and a leader and this motivates her to lead SJF's mission with personal and professional pride.

**More about Mrs. Carey:** Her primary responsibility as a school counselor is to promote the academic, personal, and social development of all students. She delivers the counseling curriculum to all students PreK – 8th with thru social emotional learning initiatives, grade level programming and 1:1 and group counseling. She also serves as a resource to parents as it relates to the academic success and/or social/ emotional needs of their child(ren).

**Favorite Part of Being a part of SJF:** Her favorite part of being a part of SJF is seeing the students enjoy and benefit from the SEL curriculum in our classroom and in extra-curricular activities or even at home. Helping our students to develop key skills such as optimism, perseverance, gratitude, empathy, self-awareness will serve them for a lifetime.