

Meet James Fiore, President at The Loyola School

Jim Ries: [00:00:00] Hello and welcome to Java with Jim. I'm Jim Ries, Director of Business Development at Offit Kurman. Joined here today with James Fiore, President at the Loyola School. James, how are you today?

James Fiore: Doing well, Jim. Thank you.

Jim Ries: Good. Well, thanks for joining me. So James, tell us about the Loyola School. What do you do there and how do you serve the community around you?

James Fiore: Sure. So the Loyola School is a pre-K and elementary school that provides full scholarship opportunities for students from underserved communities. So our youngest students are two year olds and we go up to fourth grade. So in eight years, we have the opportunity to help students build a strong foundation while also giving parents year round, childcare education. So the opportunity helps the whole family and hopefully uplifts and helps them grow in this community. So two year olds through fourth grade get a private [00:01:00] education at the Loyola School for tuition free for them.

Jim Ries: That's amazing. And just for clarification, people watching this conversation might be wondering if you are all affiliated with Loyola Blakefield or a Loyola University.

You wanna touch on that for a moment?

James Fiore: Absolutely. Yeah. So when you hear the name Loyola it does conjure up those names. Loyola Blakefield and Loyola University. And the reason is we are all part of the Jesuit community, Jesuit ecosystem. However, we are separate entities and unlike Loyola Blakefield, or Loyola University, our families do not have to pay for our tuition.

We find outside individuals, corporations, or foundations to help sponsor our students and help them with their education.

Jim Ries: Okay, great. Thanks for the clarification. So, James, when it comes to the Loyola School, what are you most proud of?

James Fiore: Ooh, there's so many wonderful things happening here. We started in 2019 with 18 two year olds, and every year [00:02:00] since we've been adding a grade, we are now up to fourth grade, which is our last grade.

We are serving currently 140 students 60 in the preschool and 80 in the elementary school. What I am most proud of, wow, it's the fact that we are supporting and helping that many families and students in Baltimore get a strong educational foundation to help set them up for success. What I'm also proud of is the fact that we are growing.

We just opened up a new elementary school in the Mount Vernon community. It is a state-of-the-art facility. We converted five row homes and turned it into this new elementary school. We have room for growth, so we are serving 80 students just in the elementary school and this new building will eventually allow us to serve 140 students in the elementary.

So 60 from the preschool, eventually 140 in the elementary school. 200 students eventually will get this incredible opportunity when we get to full capacity. So that's something I'm very proud of. I'm also excited about where they're gonna [00:03:00] be going for middle school next year.

So we end at fourth grade intentionally because our founder, Father Bill Waters also started St. Ignatius Loyola Academy and Cristo Rey Jesuit, which others might be familiar with. And St. Ignatius starts at fifth grade. So our young men when they graduate this June, can go off to St. Ignatius and the young women can go to Sisters Academy, which is also another school in this kind of full tuition model.

Jim Ries: Well, congrats on your growth. That's amazing.

James Fiore: Thank you.

Jim Ries: James, what will you and the Loyola School be focused on in the next six months? I think you just touched on the new school, which is incredible in the growth. Anything else that you're focused on in the next six months?

James Fiore: Yeah, so, graduation will be exciting. That'll be this June, our first group of students graduating is gonna be really quite an accomplishment and a milestone. Getting to see them and where they go off to middle school will be exciting. In addition to that I am basically entering my second full year as [00:04:00] president of the Loyola School and the board and I will be working on a strategic plan to help us look forward to the next three years.

What's gonna be happening here at the Loyola School now that we've got this brand new elementary school and the growth that's gonna be happening with enrollment. How do we continue to support our preschool division, which has been operating since 2017. Just all those things wrapped up in one is what we're looking at in this strategic plan.

Jim Ries: Lots of excitement.

James Fiore: Mm-hmm.

Jim Ries: Alright James, so what do most people watching this video not know about you?

James Fiore: It's a great question, Jim, and I was trying to think of my answer prior to this interview. I think everybody knows I'm incredibly passionate about education and giving students an equal opportunity. I got my career started at the St. Ignatius Loyola Academy, the middle school. And currently I'm in my office, which is one of my former apartments.

But if you come on a tour, you'll probably hear that, 'cause that's part of my spiel. What people probably do not know [00:05:00] about me. Jim, I think it's, hmm.

Jim Ries: I may have stumped you.

James Fiore: Yeah, no, I think...

Jim Ries: Well if nothing comes to mind, oh, okay. You got something?

James Fiore: Here's one.

Jim Ries: Alright.

James Fiore: Some people have heard me say this. And it's something I'm somewhat embarrassed to admit, but, I'll share it here. I actually don't know how to swim and I never learned as a kid. I'm okay in the water, but I'm not great at it.

But it's a passion of mine is to figure out how to make sure our students at the Loyola School learn how to swim before they graduate our fourth grade. I think it's such an important life lesson for all students all age groups. But it's become a private project of mine that I've shared with some individuals in the community because I just think it's such a important life lesson that everybody needs to learn, so.

Jim Ries: Sure it is.

James Fiore: That's one.

Jim Ries: Yeah. It sure is for them and for you. So, you'll be there right with them learning how to swim. Thank you for sharing that. I can see that's not necessarily an easy thing for you to share publicly.

Appreciate you sharing that with me and with the Java with Jim [00:06:00] audience. James, thanks for being with us today, and I hope to see you sometime soon.

James Fiore: Jim, thank you so much for this opportunity, and thank you for all your viewers. This is a great opportunity to share the Loyola School with everybody.

Thank you.

Jim Ries: Take care.