

St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic School



2024 Annual Report

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRINCIPAL

Hello and welcome!

It is both a blessing and a privilege to accompany the students, families and staff of St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic School. Our school has earned a reputation for academic excellence and a strong Catholic identity through the hard work and support of our staff, families, and parish community. It is truly a joy to walk through the school and see passionate teachers and enthusiastic students engaged in the learning process. This is my sixth year as principal and I am grateful every day for the opportunity to serve St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic School. I can confidently say that our students, staff, and families can feel the joy of Christ in all that we do.

St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic School lives its mission by being *United in Christ to ignite the joy of faith, community, and learning*. I am especially confident in our priorities: providing a safe and nurturing Catholic environment, continuous improvement, ongoing intentional teacher development, service to others, social-emotional well-being, and relationship-building.

If you are seeking to provide a strong faith foundation for your children, and if you are looking for a spiritual community to call home, we'd love to meet you! Give us a call, we'll schedule a tour!

Experience the love of Christ shared at our school.

Mrs. Julie Perrault



OUR MISSION

*United in Christ to ignite the joy of faith,
community, and learning.*



MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR

St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic Church is a community for all to encounter Christ, know Christ and proclaim Christ. Our school is an important extension of this mission. With this understanding, through financial stewardship and fundraising efforts, all parishioners help fund more than 50% of the per-pupil tuition cost. This generosity allows all children in our community the opportunity to establish a strong Catholic faith foundation while receiving a first-class education. Our school is truly blessed by this financial support.

The children at St. Stephen the Martyr are in great hands. I am so humbled and blessed to be a part of our amazing team of educators. Our administrators, teachers and staff are second to none. We love our students, and we are committed to providing a solid Catholic education, while drawing out the very best of each child so they may become servants of Christ, bringing peace, joy, hope and His light to our world. On behalf of our parish and school, thank you for taking the time to read through this report. We look forward to sharing the love of Christ with you and your family. God bless you!

Father Dave Belt

FAITH

St. Stephen the Martyr is proud of its unique identity as a faith-based Catholic school. Our education develops knowledgeable Christian servant leaders to impact the world. We invoke God's name in prayer first thing in the morning, throughout the day and upon dismissal. Each class attends Mass and assists in the liturgies. Students are active in Catholic devotions including praying the Rosary, Eucharistic Adoration, and The Stations of the Cross. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered to students throughout the school year. Our priests regularly visit classrooms and help with faith formation.

Our preschool programs participate in Montessori-based approach to faith formation through the "Catechesis of the Good Shepherd" curriculum and the "Theology of the Body" curriculum is used for faith formation in grades K-8.

Our Catholic Identity Committee meets quarterly to review Catholic Identity goals. In 2023, the committee planned and facilitated our first school-wide Eucharistic Procession, our annual May Crowning procession, and student-led Lent and Advent prayer services. Additionally, the committee plans and facilitates 24 hours of faith formation for our teachers each year.

COMMUNITY

A sense of community is fostered between grade levels with our buddy reading program and mixed-grade Mass celebrations. Students have the opportunity to participate in athletics including basketball, football, volleyball, cross country, track, and soccer through the Parochial Athletic League (PAL) and Catholic Youth Soccer League (CYSL). We also offer an array of extracurricular opportunities including robotics, musicals, math club, yearbook committee, student council, band, SSM News Team, and more.

As part of the curriculum, students grow in virtue by participating in community outreach starting in preschool. Students feed the hungry with food drives, make cards and gifts for the homebound, elderly, and sick, provide warmth to the homeless and low-income hosting sock and winter glove drives, and support women and children through our participation in our parish's annual diaper drive and our school's annual Penny War benefitting Essential Pregnancy Services.

Parents are encouraged to play an active role in their child's education by collaborating with teachers, volunteering in the classroom, and getting to know other parents. A vibrant and active Home & School Association plans many events for parents to interact and create lasting friendships.

OUR STORY

St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic School was established in 1992 and named after the first martyr of the Catholic Church. The school started with grades K-5. Fr. Gerry Gonderinger was the founding pastor and Sister Regina Wagner was the first principal. Our own Fr. Dave Belt was the first music teacher in addition to being the associate pastor. Within four years of opening the school, it had grown to K-8th grade. Two years later a new structure was added providing 19 more classrooms, a computer lab, a library, and a full-size, state-of-the-art gym. The enrollment grew quickly and by 2002, there were three classes in every grade including preschool.

In 2008, the school earned the title of being a National Blue Ribbon School. That same year, St. Stephen the Martyr became an accredited school. Both awards acknowledge excellence in administration, curriculum, and instructional staff. The school continues to exceed accreditation standards attributable to the hard work and commitment of students, staff, and families. St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic School is truly a place where students, staff, and families feel safe and loved.

Today St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic School has 701 students enrolled in preschool through 8th grade and consistently remains a top-five populated Catholic Elementary School in Nebraska. Since its inception, St. Stephen the Martyr has graduated almost 2,000 students.

We are so grateful to our families for their outpouring of support and confidence in our school leadership. Everything we do together, and we will continue to provide students with an exceptional faith-filled education.

ST. STEPHEN BY THE NUMBERS

613 K-8th grade students

88 early childhood students

447 school families

333 school families are parishioners of St. Stephen

140 students in KidZone (before/after school care)

13 average Early Childhood class size

24 average K-8 class size

18:1 student to staff ratio

79% of 8th-grade graduates attend Catholic high school (past 3-year average)

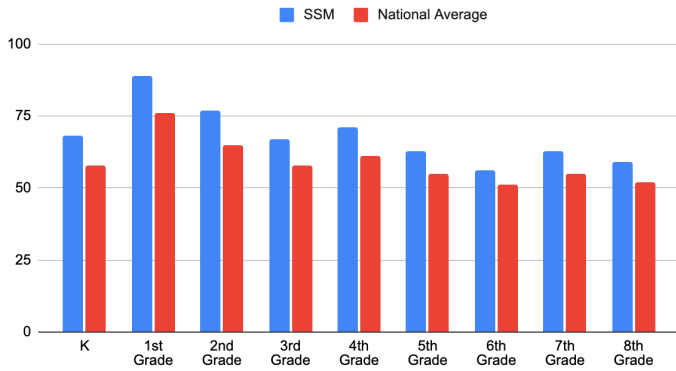
26% of 8th-graders taking the Catholic high school entrance exams earned scholarships for the 2022/2023 school year

85% of our alums earn high school academic honors, regardless of whether they attend public or Catholic high schools



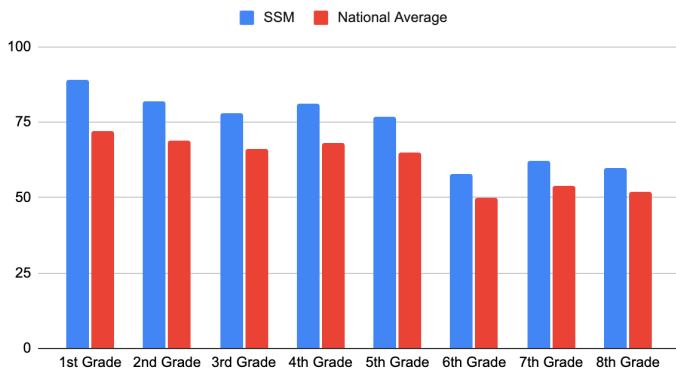
LEARNING

STAR Reading Comparisons Winter 2024



SSM = St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic School compared to the National Average. Kindergarten test results are for Early Literacy. 1st-8th Grade are test results for Reading.

STAR Math Comparisons Winter 2024



SSM = St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic School compared to the National Average

"We have had six kids attend and graduate from SSM. We are nearing the end of our journey at St. Stephen with our seventh and youngest in 6th grade this year. One of the things that we love most about SSM is the genuine care that the teachers, faculty and staff have for the students. Not only do they care about the students' academic success, but they also strive to instill faith and values in and out of the classroom. Our kids have left St. Stephen's not only with a solid academic foundation, but also a strong moral compass and sense of purpose." - Kevin & Lori R., Parents of 6th grade student and six St. Stephen Graduates

St. Stephen follows the State of Nebraska curriculum standards while adding additional Archdiocesan curriculum standards, including religion and more robust core expectations. Our academic programs are measured against performance objectives and are aligned with The National Standards and Benchmarks For Effective Catholic Elementary Schools. Our students are assessed three times during the school year in both reading and math using Renaissance® STAR™ Assessments. These assessments allow teachers to pinpoint exactly where a student's abilities are at a given time, while also charting their progress and allowing teachers to tailor learning and standards to their students' level and abilities. Additionally, teachers can collaborate with their colleagues to understand incoming and outgoing students' abilities and together help students not only meet required standards but exceed standards when possible. The charts on the left show comparative information from winter 2024 data based on the national average and St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic School.

St. Stephen the Martyr offers a Blended Learning approach to education. Students in a Blended Learning classroom rotate through small group stations to better understand specific concepts within a core subject (i.e. multiplication). Examples of small groups would include manipulatives, teacher (small group), reading/writing (cross-curricular), and iPad/computer work. This also allows teachers to differentiate learning by placing students into groups based on their level of understanding.

We are a Google-based educational facility and utilize Google Classroom Suite for posting assignments, calendars and email communications. Our technology lab includes Google Chromebooks, iPads, 3D printers, robots and a STEM maker space. Additionally, each of 6-8th grade students has their own Chromebook through our rent-to-own program. TK-5th grade classrooms have a shared set of iPads. Teachers have access to their own iPad and laptop to use with either an interactive board or an Apple TV for projection or board work. The school also uses many digital learning opportunities through RAZ Kids, Mystery Science, Freckle Math & ELA, Flocabulary, IXL, guided readers, BrainPop, and other grade-specific subscriptions. The school currently uses FACTS School Information System, and Home & School funds a customized family mobile app that allows our families to easily access their FACTS Family Portal and other school resources.

At St. Stephen, learning extends beyond our students. In addition to 24 hours of faith formation, our teachers participate in 20 hours of professional development sessions on curriculum alignment, data analysis, and MTSS (multi-tiered system of supports) strategies for a growth mindset and social-emotional learning. For the best behavioral and academic outcomes for our students, we use the Gradual Release of Responsibility Framework, an "I do, We do, You do" approach to learning and Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS). Additionally, we use Restorative Practices to promote inclusiveness, relationship-building, and problem-solving. Instead of punishing students, we encourage students to reflect on and take responsibility for their actions and then build plans to repair any harm they may have caused. The way students are treated, and the way students treat others is just as important in a Catholic school as the formal, written curriculum.

"When our oldest started preschool, we remember walking into the school and her teacher said, 'Isn't it amazing that God blessed us with this beautiful weather?' From that moment, we knew we wanted our kids to be able to learn and talk about the faith at school. St. Stephen has surpassed our expectations and we love the way the school implements the faith in everyday learning." - Lizzy & Chris O., Parents of Preschool, 1st & 3rd Grade Students



2023 HIGHLIGHTS

- In the 2023-2024 school year we welcomed 113 new students and 53 new school families, bringing our Preschool-8th grade enrollment to 701.
- Our Resource Team has two full-time resource teachers, two interventionists, two counselors, three teacher-associates and a dedicated volunteer who support our classroom teachers and students to ensure every child is successful in school. This multi-tiered system of support, provides a proactive and preventative framework, integrating data and instruction to maximize student achievement and support their social, emotional, and behavioral needs from a strengths-based perspective, educating the whole child.
- Digital curriculum subscriptions including RAZ Kids, Mystery Science, Freckle Math, Freckle ELA, IXL and other grade-specific subscriptions were renewed to supplement in-school instruction and learning assessments.
- School facility updates include handicap-accessible entrance doors, school office remodel, new carpet in kinder classrooms, new viny tile in science labs, updated heating and cooling control system for room-by-room temp control, replaced school offices' AC unit, kitchen updates (new dishwasher, ovens, lunch trays) and new door handles/locks for all classrooms.
- Home & School Association raised \$147,557.62 for our school. These funds help offset instructional expenses and fund necessary remodels and security upgrades.
- Our students supported our community through whole-school and class-level service projects including food drives, collections (socks, diapers, winter gloves and hats, financial donations, etc.), visiting the elderly and homebound during the holidays and much more!

REASONS TO LOVE SSM

1

Academic Excellence

Recognized by the Nebraska Department of Education as a distinguished Cognia Accredited elementary school. This accreditation ensures that all learners realize their full potential and that the administration is committed to continuous improvement. Our school is also recognized as a Blue Ribbon School based on high standards and student achievement.

2

Individualized and Holistic Approach

Dedicated, passionate & qualified teachers and staff empower students to recognize their unique gifts and inspire them to reach their greatest potential.

3

United in Christ, Faith Formation

Students, united in Christ, participate in school Mass liturgies, daily prayer and Catholic catechetical instruction.

4

Care for Our Community

Students develop lifelong skills, virtues, and habits of heart and mind through service projects and caring for others in our community.

5

Needs-Based Instruction

Blended Learning environments allow teachers to differentiate learning by placing students into groups based on their level of understanding.

6

Welcoming, Thriving Environment

Rooted in faith, our vibrant student life, active Home & School Association, thriving sports club and supportive parish community ensure a positive, safe and joy-filled academic experience.

"When we were new to Omaha, we were searching for a school for our soon-to-be Kinder that would provide her a strong faith foundation with a smaller academic setting. And while it seemed so far away at the time, we really wanted to find a school that would carry her through her junior high years. Twelve years later, the St. Stephen's administration, teachers and staff continue to provide and foster an amazing, faith-based academic environment for our children and prepared them for high school. Additionally, the community of families at St. Stephen the Martyr are some of the best!" — Andrea H., Parent of 5th grader and two SSM Alums: Class of 2023 & 2021



"The community and support is unmatched. From parents to teachers to administration, everyone is rooting for you and your kids."
— Erin S., Mother of students in preschool, Kindergarten, second & fifth grades

"St. Stephen the Martyr is preparing our children for their future, shaping them both academically and spiritually. We value the opportunity for them to regularly participate in the sacraments with their classmates." — Matt & Katie K., Parents of Preschooler & 1st Grader



St. Stephen the Martyr
CATHOLIC CHURCH
Encounter, Know, Proclaim



Archdiocese of Omaha
Catholic Schools

Schedule Your Tour Today!
(402) 896-0754
school.stephen.org/tour