

# St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic School



## 2026 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 strong reputation for academic excellence and a vibrant Catholic identity through the dedication and support of our staff, families, and parish community. It is truly a joy to walk through our halls and see passionate teachers and enthusiastic students fully engaged in the learning process.

This is my eighth year as principal, and I am grateful each day for the opportunity to serve St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic School and Parish. I can confidently say that our students, staff, and families experience 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, intentional professional growth for teachers, service to others, social-emotional well-being, and strong relationship-building.

If you are seeking a strong faith foundation for your children and a spiritual community to call home, we would love to meet you. Please give us a call to schedule a tour and experience the love of Christ shared at our school.

Mrs. Julie Perrault, Principal



### OUR MISSION

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



*"Our children receive an excellent academic education and formation in the Catholic faith. At SSM, faculty hold students to high standards and truly care about the personal growth, well-being, and success of their students. Our children have made wonderful friends and we feel confident knowing our children's lives are being shaped and formed by a strong Catholic community."*

— Vicki K., mother of 1st grader & preschooler

### MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR

St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic Church is a community for all to encounter Christ, know Christ and proclaim Christ. Our parish school is a vital expression of this mission. Through faithful stewardship and generous fundraising, our parish community contributes more than half of the true cost of educating each student. This remarkable support makes it possible for all children to receive an outstanding education rooted in a strong Catholic faith. We are deeply grateful for the generosity that sustains our school.

Our students are truly blessed by the exceptional educators who serve them each day. It is an honor and a privilege to work alongside such a dedicated team of administrators, teachers, and staff. Their care for our students goes beyond academics—they are committed to nurturing the whole child and helping each student reach their God-given potential. Together, we strive to form young people who live as disciples of Christ, bringing His peace, joy, hope, and light into the world. Thank you for taking the time to review this report. We are grateful for your support and look forward to continuing to share the love of Christ with you and your family. May God bless you!

Father Dave Belt, Pastor

## FAITH

St. Stephen the Martyr is proud of its Catholic identity and mission to form knowledgeable Christian servant leaders. Each grade participates in service projects with reflection, helping students grow in understanding of the Omaha community through charity and service.

Prayer is woven into daily school life, with regular Mass attendance, classroom prayer, and participation in Catholic devotions such as the Rosary, Eucharistic Adoration, and the Stations of the Cross. Students have regular opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and help plan special prayer services, including Advent services and the May Crowning.

Priests regularly support classroom faith formation, while teachers complete ongoing faith formation. Preschool students participate in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, and K-8 students are supported through Theology of the Body. The Catholic Identity Committee meets quarterly to guide curriculum, staff formation, service initiatives, adoration, and Catholic Schools Week celebrations.

## COMMUNITY

The St. Stephen the Martyr School community is known for its strong sense of belonging and positive culture. Connections are fostered across grade levels through buddy programs and mixed-grade Mass celebrations.

Students enjoy many opportunities beyond the classroom, including athletics through PAL and CYSL and a wide range of extracurricular activities. Students in grades 5-8 also benefit from built-in Flex Time to participate in activities during the school day.

Families are valued partners in school and parish life and are always welcome to volunteer, attend Mass and events, or join their children for lunch. We are proud of our families who also financially support the parish outside of their tuition fees. Service and outreach begin in preschool and help students grow in virtue through meaningful acts of charity that support those in need. Parents are encouraged to take an active role in their child's education, supported by a vibrant Home & School Association that fosters connection, involvement, and lasting friendships.



## ST. STEPHEN BY THE NUMBERS

**638** K-8th grade students

**89** early childhood students

**445** school families

**86%** of school families are parishioners

**131** students in KidZone (before/after school care)

**15** average Early Childhood class size

**24** average K-8 class size

**14:1** student to staff ratio

**78%** of 8th-grade graduates attend Catholic high school (past 3-year average)

**25%** of 8th-graders taking the Catholic high school entrance exams earned scholarships for the 2024/2025 school year

**88%** of our alums earn high school academic honors, regardless of whether they attend public or Catholic high schools

## OUR STORY

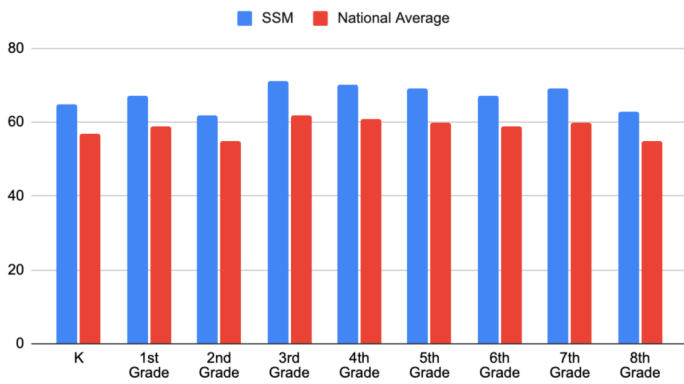
St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic School was established in 1992 and named after the first martyr of the Catholic Church. The school started with grades K-5. Fr. Gerry Gonderinger was the founding pastor and Sister Regina Wagner was the first principal. Our own Fr. Dave Belt was the first music teacher 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 727 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 more than 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.

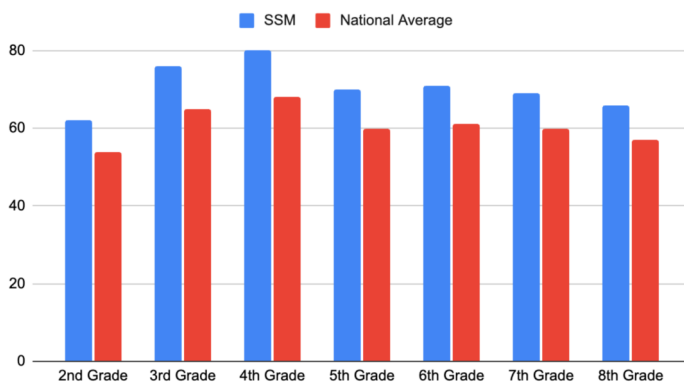
# LEARNING

## STAR Fall Reading 2025



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 Fall Math 2025



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

*"Teaching at a SSM has been an incredibly rewarding experience. The sense of community among staff, students, and families is truly special, and it creates a supportive environment where everyone can grow in faith and knowledge. The administration is always encouraging and provides the resources needed to create nurturing, faith-centered and academically rigorous classrooms.*

*I love being able to incorporate faith into my lessons, helping students not only excel academically but also grow spiritually and morally. It's a privilege to be part of a school that prioritizes both education and faith, as well as the well-being of the whole child. SSM as truly been a blessing in my life!"*

**- Sarah O'Leary, 2nd grade teacher & mom to three students**



St. Stephen the Martyr School is an accredited school through the State of Nebraska. Last spring, we participated in our five-year accreditation review. Among the commendations received were the following: ***"St. Stephen's is an exemplary school with great achievement and a positive culture. The school deserves praise for its commitment to continuous improvement. The community truly lives its mission of being 'United in Christ to ignite the joy of faith, community, and learning.'"***

St. Stephen follows the State of Nebraska curriculum standards while also incorporating additional Archdiocesan curriculum standards, including religion and more rigorous core academic expectations. Our academic programs are measured against performance objectives and aligned with the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary Schools. Students are assessed three times per year in reading and math using Renaissance® STAR™ Assessments. This fall, for the first time, our third-grade students participated in the state reading proficiency assessment. **We are proud to share that 89% of students were already proficient at the beginning of the third-grade year.** These assessments allow teachers to pinpoint each student's current abilities, monitor progress over time, and tailor instruction to individual learning needs. Teachers also collaborate to analyze data and ensure smooth academic transitions, helping students meet, and often exceed, grade-level standards. Comparative data from Winter 2025-26 is displayed in the accompanying charts, showing St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic School's performance alongside national averages.

**St. Stephen the Martyr School is one of the first Archdiocesan schools to fully implement the Science of Reading into its curriculum.** This year, we adopted CKLA, and teachers are already seeing strong results. CKLA is a comprehensive reading and language arts program that integrates foundational reading skills with rich content knowledge in history, science, and the arts. Grounded in Science of Reading research, the program builds comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills. Students, parents, and teachers alike are enthusiastic about the impact of this program.

**St. Stephen the Martyr offers a blended learning approach to education.** As a Google-based school, we utilize the Google Classroom Suite for assignments, calendars, and communication. Our technology lab includes Chromebooks, iPads, 3D printers, robotics, and a STEM makerspace. Students in grades 6-8 are issued their own Chromebook through our rent-to-own program, while classrooms in grades TK-5 share sets of iPads. Teachers are equipped with both an iPad and a laptop for use with interactive boards or Apple TV projection. Digital learning resources include Mystery Science, Freckle Math & ELA, Flocabulary, IXL, guided readers, BrainPOP, CKLA Boost, and other grade-specific subscriptions. The school uses the FACTS School Information System, and our Home & School Association supports a customized family mobile app that provides easy access to the FACTS Family Portal and additional school resources.

At St. Stephen, learning extends beyond our students. Teachers participate in more than 20 hours of professional development annually, focusing on curriculum alignment, data analysis, MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports), growth mindset, and social-emotional learning. To support strong academic and behavioral outcomes, we utilize the Gradual Release of Responsibility framework based on "I Do, We Do, You Do" approach along with Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). We also implement Restorative Practices to promote inclusivity, relationship-building, and problem-solving. Rather than focusing on punishment, students are encouraged to reflect on their actions, take responsibility, and work toward repairing harm. **At St. Stephen the Martyr, how students are treated and how they treat others is just as important as the formal, written curriculum.**

## 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

### Enrollment & Growth

- ⇒ 108 new students and 88 new families welcomed
- ⇒ Total Preschool–8th grade enrollment: 727 students

### Student Support

- ⇒ Resource Team: Director of Student Services, 2 resource teachers, 2 interventionists, 2 counselors, 3 teacher associates, 1 volunteer
- ⇒ MTSS framework provides data-driven academic, social, emotional, and behavioral support

### Academic Excellence

- ⇒ Fully implemented Science of Reading–based literacy program
- ⇒ Launched Teacher Mentor Program to support new educators and promote collaboration

### Facilities & Campus Improvements

- ⇒ Security enhancements based on professional assessment
- ⇒ New classroom carpeting, refreshed common areas, renovated gym office, interior gym doors
- ⇒ Upgraded HVAC with room-by-room temperature control, new commons windows, north-side lighting, new drinking fountains
- ⇒ Landscaping improvements to enhance school entrances
- ⇒ Ongoing upgrades continue

### Home & School Association Support

- ⇒ Raised \$191,260 to support instruction, renovations, security, and teacher grants

### Service & Faith in Action

- ⇒ Students engaged in food drives, clothing and winter item collections, financial donations, and visits to the elderly/homebound
- ⇒ Service fosters Christian virtue, empathy, and responsibility, living out the school's mission.



## REASONS TO LOVE SSM

1

### Academic Excellence

St. Stephen the Martyr School is recognized by the Nebraska Department of Education as a distinguished accredited elementary school. This accreditation reflects our commitment to continuous improvement and ensuring that all learners reach their full potential. We are also recognized as a pioneer school in the use of the NCEA National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary Schools (NSBECS) as the foundation for strategic planning and ongoing growth.

2

### Individualized and Holistic Approach

Our dedicated, passionate, and highly 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

United in Christ, students participate in regular school Masses, daily prayer, and comprehensive Catholic catechetical instruction.

4

### Care for Our Community

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

5

### Needs-Based Instruction

Blended learning, regular assessments, and effective data analysis allow teachers to differentiate instruction, place students in appropriate learning groups, and provide targeted, individualized support.

6

### Student Services

Over the past several years, we have intentionally developed a comprehensive Student Services program rooted in the MTSS framework. While student services are often associated with public schools, we are proud to offer robust academic and behavioral support to help every student succeed.

7

### A Welcoming, Thriving Environment

Rooted in faith, our vibrant student life, active Home & School Association, thriving athletics programs, Men's Club, and supportive parish community create a positive, safe, and joy-filled academic environment.

*"The faith and friendships our children have developed over the years will go on for her lifetime due to the strength and support of this amazing community! St. Stephen the Martyr runs deep in our hearts and we truly believe this is where God wanted us to be by following His words when we were on our journey back to Nebraska and finding our Faith Family in the Omaha area – absolutely no regrets!" - Sarah M., parent of three*



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](http://school.stephen.org/tour)**