

# CATHOLIC SCHOOLS REPORT



CATHOLIC DIOCESE  
OF PITTSBURGH

*Lighting the Way*  
2023 - 2024

*Lighting the Way*  
*2023 - 2024*

## Dear Friends,

In the radiant light of our faith, fifteen years before the inception of our beloved Diocese of Pittsburgh in 1843, our Catholic schools were already laying the foundation for the spiritual, intellectual, and emotional growth of the young souls in their care.

Many of our first students were children of immigrants who came from Europe to serve in our steel mills and river-based industries. From those humble beginnings to the present day, our commitment has remained unwavering. Rooted in the rich soil of academic excellence, our mission is to instill in our students a profound devotion to God and a boundless love for their neighbors.

This report is a testament to the outstanding achievements of our students, as evidenced by their superlative scores on standardized tests and a remarkable 100% graduation rate. Beyond the academic realm, our students engage in acts of compassion, solidarity, and service, embodying the teachings of Christ through their actions. Every piece contributes to the holistic development of our students, fostering a love for God and a deep sense of purpose.

It is also important to acknowledge that most of our students benefit from significant tuition subsidies, made possible through our pledge to make Catholic education accessible to all.

As we reflect on the achievements outlined in this report, I invite you to join me in prayer for our students and school families, our teachers, administrators, and staffs. May our Lord bless our students with wisdom and a spirit for learning. May He fill the hearts of our school families with His unifying love. May He wrap our teachers, administrators, and staffs in the grace to guide and inspire. May our Catholic schools continue to light the way for generations to come, shaping others in accordance with God's will.

With gratitude for our shared belief that  
'Nothing is Impossible with God,' I am,

**BISHOP DAVID A. ZUBIK**  
*Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh*



.....

## Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Our 45 elementary and secondary schools in the Diocese of Pittsburgh are truly lighting the way. They show students new worlds through language, math, history and the sciences. Their teachers shine the light of God's love and wisdom on all of these subjects, as students learn to understand Who created them and how Jesus wants them to use their knowledge and abilities.

That commitment to serve God is an important reason why students in the Diocese of Pittsburgh outscore their public school peers at all grade levels and far exceed national benchmarks for college and career readiness.

Each of our high schools offers about 20 Advanced Placement courses. Rigorous academics are rounded out by a wide range of extracurricular activities: sports, mock trials, Christian leadership teams, barbershop singing, technology clubs, poetry clubs and theater, to name just a few. When our students graduate – and our graduation rate is 100% – they have had every opportunity to explore what kind of future they feel called to pursue.

Our schools are more than a collection of classes and programs. They are true communities, where students of all ages learn to care for one another and their neighbors. Whether they are interacting with the student at the next desk or taking donations to the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, our students learn and live the Gospel command to love.

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Pittsburgh are affordable. Almost no one pays the full cost. We offer multiple streams of scholarship funding to help families with tuition. If you – or someone you know – is interested in Catholic school but fears the expense, please look at [www.diopitt.org/affordable](http://www.diopitt.org/affordable). There you will see that many families with six-figure incomes are still eligible for aid – and that families with lower incomes will receive even more.

May these pages help you to make the best decision possible for your children and give you the information you need to help other families choose Catholic schools.

**MICHELLE PEDUTO**  
*Superintendent*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS



|       |                                |
|-------|--------------------------------|
| 3     | LIGHTING THE WAY               |
| 4     | DEPARTMENT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS |
| 5     | AFFORDING CATHOLIC EDUCATION   |
| 6     | GOVERNANCE                     |
| 7     | NATIONAL TEST SCORES           |
| 8-9   | PRESCHOOL THROUGH EIGHTH GRADE |
| 10-11 | HIGH SCHOOL                    |
| 12    | FAITH                          |
| 13    | SERVICE                        |
| 14    | STUDENT LIFE                   |
| 15-16 | STUDENT WELL-BEING             |





# Lighting THE WAY

---



## OUR LEGACY

as a faithful community begins in 1843, when the Diocese of Pittsburgh was founded with Bishop Michael O'Connor as our leader. At the time, Catholicism, specifically Catholic education, provided a foundation for many immigrants coming to the United States who settled in western Pennsylvania. Not only did Catholic education provide a foundation for supporting families' economic and spiritual growth, but it also paved the way for a community to grow together as one people created by God. This community has grown to consist of over 1,000 teachers and almost 13,000 students all connected by our love of Christ. This year, the Diocese of Pittsburgh celebrates its 180th anniversary. Our Catholic schools have been bringing communities together for decades, each year presenting new opportunities to discover how God calls us to serve.

## THE *Golden Apple* AWARD



honors educators who exhibit exemplary commitment and witness to Gospel values in the Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Bishop David Zubik presented this prestigious award to the 2020-2023 winners at a special dinner in May.

**Elementary School Teachers:** Debra Brungo, Holy Cross Academy; Josephine Cashdollar, Holy Cross Elementary School; Donna Chronowski, East Catholic School (now closed); Marie DiLonardo, Holy Family Catholic School; Mallory Gurney, Blessed Francis Seelos Academy; Lisa Hooper, Ave Maria Academy; Emily Janocha, John F. Kennedy Catholic School; Lisa Jarosh, Mother of Mercy Academy; Dorothy Johnson, Holy Sepulcher Catholic School; Lisa Radzanowski, Ave Maria Academy; Lisa Rothrauff, Holy Sepulcher Catholic School; Tracy Shields, Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School; Darci Smith, John F. Kennedy Catholic School; Angela Stead, Sacred Heart Elementary School; Windelin Rickard, Ave Maria Academy

**High School Teachers:** Karen Decker, Seton LaSalle Catholic High School; Maura Doyle, Oakland Catholic High School; Meloni DiPietro-Guthero, Seton LaSalle Catholic High School; Megan Koroly, Oakland Catholic High School; Kathleen Jackson, Seton LaSalle Catholic High School; Krista Tozier, North Catholic High School

**Principals:** Sister Daniela Bronka, Saint Bede School; Robert Childs, Serra Catholic High School; JoLynn Clouse, Saint Wendelin Catholic School; Erin Rice, Saint Gregory Catholic School; Nikole Laubham, Divine Mercy Academy; Kimberly Minick, Saint Joseph High School; Robert Reese, Blessed Francis Seelos Academy

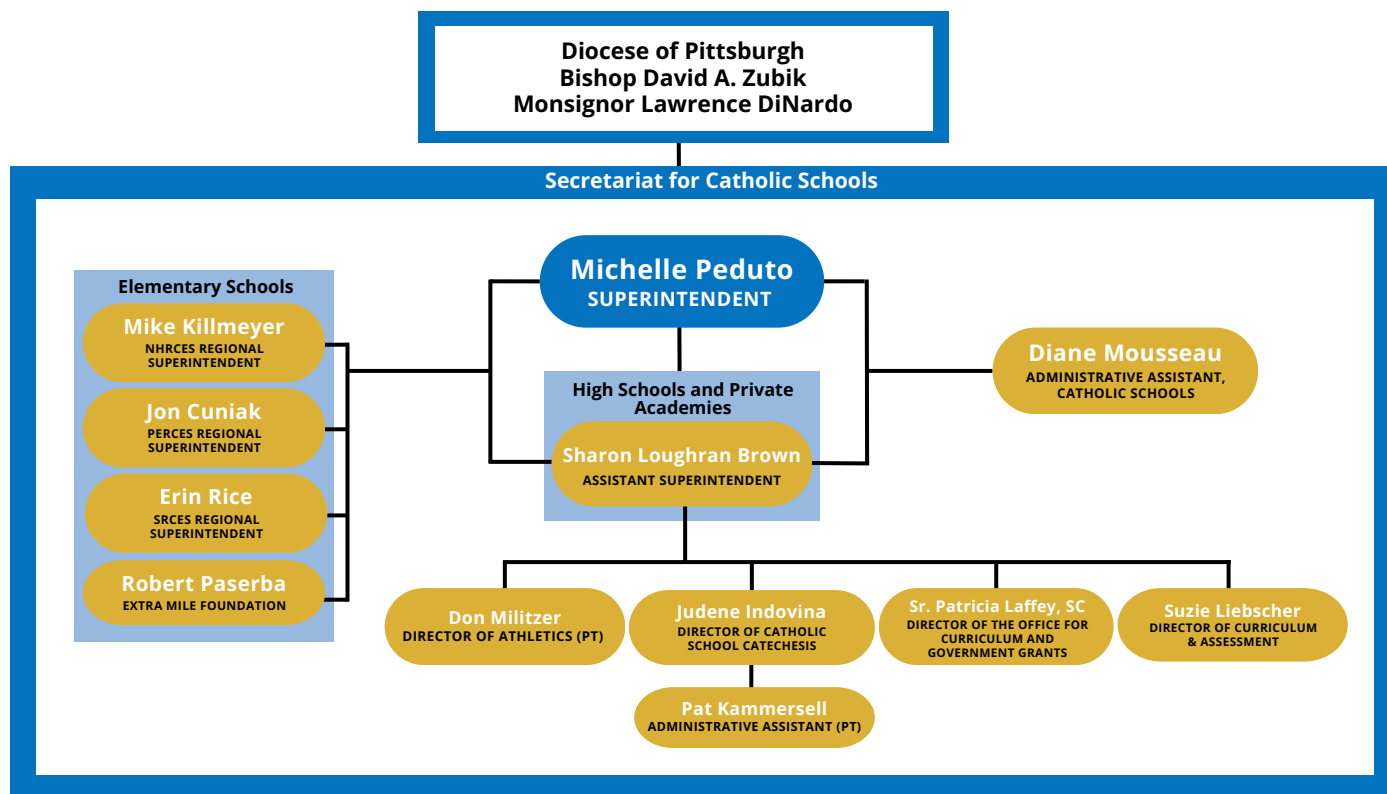
The Rainbow Volunteer Fire Company spent the morning with students at Mary of Nazareth teaching them about fire safety and allowing them to check out the fire truck.



Scan the QR code to visit [www.diopitt.org/schools](http://www.diopitt.org/schools) where you can find a list of all Diocese of Pittsburgh Catholic schools & regional schools.

## THE DEPARTMENT OF *Catholic Schools*

Though the Diocese of Pittsburgh was formed in 1843 - when it covered half the state - the first school in that territory opened in 1828. The chart below shows the organization of our Secretariat for Catholic Schools, which oversees our **45** schools. Their staff can be reached via [www.diopitt.org](http://www.diopitt.org) or the QR code on this page.



*Catholic schools are vibrant communities that give students opportunities to encounter academically challenging courses in an environment centered in faith. We provide resources and experiences to allow our students to thrive in all areas of their lives as they strive to become the best versions of themselves.*

- Lauren Martin  
Principal, Seton LaSalle High School

# ACCESSIBLE & AFFORDABLE

*Financial Aid for Catholic Education is available to you.*

**ALMOST ALL** students' tuition rates are substantially less than the cost per student due to subsidies from the Catholic community.

**25%**

of Catholic school students receive additional financial aid, further reducing their already subsidized rate.

## *Bishop's Education Fund*

The Bishop's Education Fund provides tuition assistance to Catholic families attending Catholic schools within the Diocese of Pittsburgh. The application form requires a signature from the family's parish pastor. Information and application forms are at [www.diopitt.org/affordable](http://www.diopitt.org/affordable), which you can access via the QR code below.

## *The Extra Mile Foundation*

The Extra Mile Foundation provides support to three urban elementary schools in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. This program also serves children attending other Catholic schools through scholarship support. Over 600 of our pre-K through eighth-grade students receive scholarship support thanks to Extra Mile.

## *EITC*

### **Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program**

Both Catholic and non-Catholic students are eligible for tuition assistance from the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) programs, which are supported by business owners who opt to divert a portion of their state taxes to the educational institution of their choice. For information about how to apply for this tuition assistance or for information about how to donate to these programs, contact Michael Freker, diocesan director of Planned Giving, at [mfreker@diopitt.org](mailto:mfreker@diopitt.org).



## *STAR Students*

### **Student Tuition Assistance Resource**



An anonymous donor provides funding for STAR, a Student Tuition Assistance Resource. The donor has specified that funding will initially serve students at Butler Catholic School in Butler, Holy Sepulcher School in Glade Mills, St. Joseph High School in Natrona Heights, and St. Wendelin School in Carbon Center.



*Scan to visit*  
[www.diopitt.org/affordable](http://www.diopitt.org/affordable)



# GOVERNANCE

All Catholic schools affiliated with the Diocese of Pittsburgh operate under the diocesan bishop. He is advised and informed by both clergy and laity on the diocesan staff or who serve on school governing boards. Those boards are under the direct authority of a diocesan body known as the Board of Members, which comprises the bishop, his vicar general and the diocesan chancellor.

The overarching parent corporation for our high schools is Catholic High Schools of the Diocese of Pittsburgh (CHSDOP), whose members are appointed and bylaws approved by the bishop. Beneath the umbrella of CHSDOP, each high school has a board, assisted by ex-officio members from the diocesan staff.

Elementary schools in the diocese are undergoing regionalization. Through regionalization, we have moved from parish governance to oversight by a regional administration and board of directors subject to the reserve powers of the members. The four regions are Pittsburgh City Regional Catholic Elementary Schools (PCRCES), North Hills Regional Catholic Elementary Schools (NHRCES), South Regional Catholic Elementary Schools (SRCES), and Pittsburgh East Regional Catholic Elementary Schools (PERCES).

Not all Catholic schools within the territory of the diocese are operated by the diocese. Private Catholic schools and independent academies within the diocese are owned and operated by a religious congregation or a lay board.

Christ the Divine Teacher Academy in Aspinwall hosted its 29th annual golf outing at the Fox Chapel Golf Club, with assistance from student volunteers. It drew a record number of participants, sponsorship from many local businesses and raised more than \$25,000 for the school.





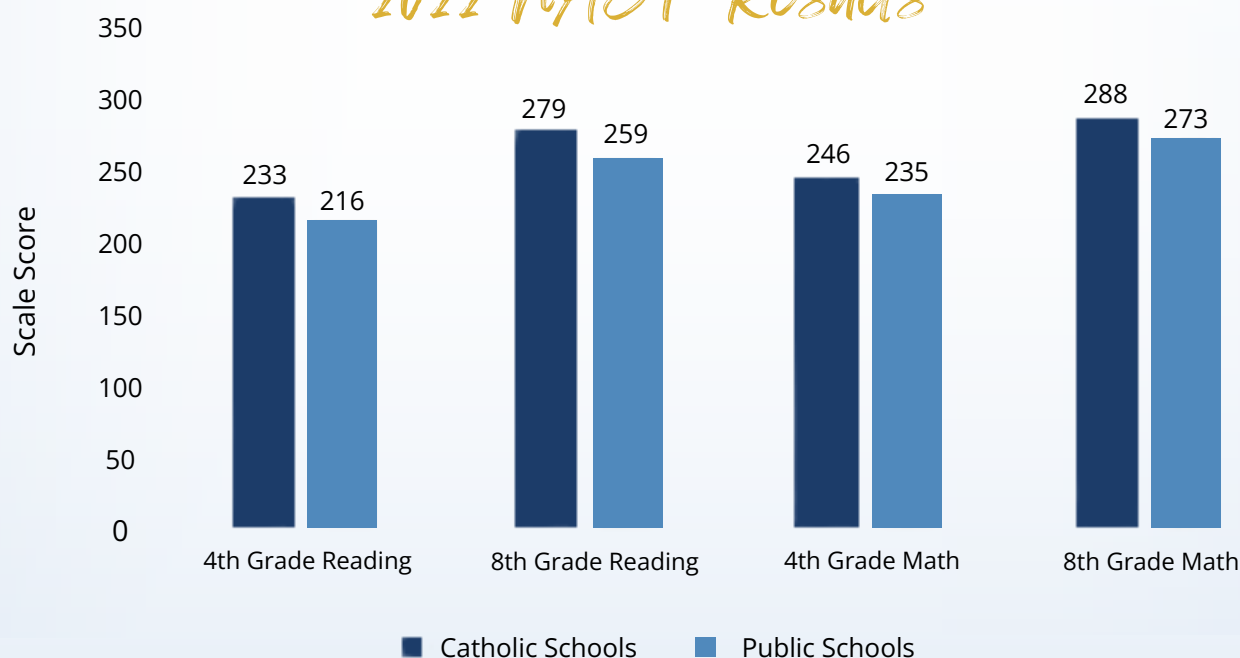
Students at Madonna Catholic held a crimson-and-gold fundraising day to show support for Serra Catholic High School and assist the family of Serra student Samantha Kalkbrenner, who was killed in a school bus crash on September 20, 2023.



## STELLAR NATIONAL TEST SCORES

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), or “the nation’s report card,” is one of the most valid and trusted national measures of student achievement. First administered in 1969, it is the largest nationally representative assessment comparing the progress of students in both public and private schools. Students in grades 4, 8 and 12 are assessed in the areas of reading, math and other subjects every two years. In 2022, Catholic schools outscored public and charter schools in almost every category.

### 2022 NAEP Results





# AT A GLANCE

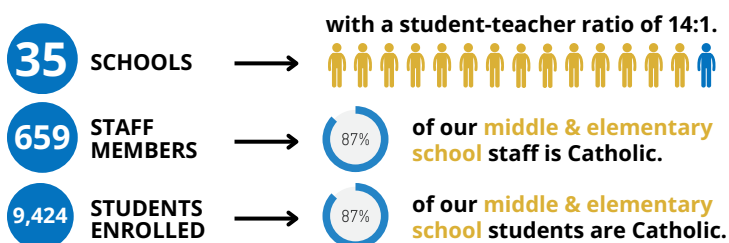
## Middle & Elementary Schools

Our middle and elementary school buildings offer an exceptional educational experience deeply rooted in faith, values, and academic excellence. We believe that every child is a unique and precious gift, and we are dedicated to nurturing their growth, both spiritually and academically.

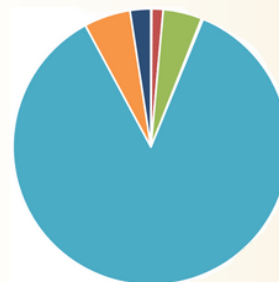
Ave Maria Academy campuses in Mt. Lebanon and Bethel Park constructed rosaries made of balloons in honor of the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary and to celebrate October, the month of the Holy Rosary. Students, faculty, and families alike gathered outside at both campuses to pray the rosary.



### Student population broken down by race/ethnicity



- American Indian / Native Alaskan - 9
- Asian - 126
- Black / African American - 430
- Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander - 18
- White - 8,098
- Two or More Races - 514
- Unknown - 229



On Wednesday, September 20, 2023 Sacred Heart Elementary School commenced their 150th anniversary celebrations as Mayor Ed Gainey proclaimed this day as "Sacred Heart Elementary School Day in the city of Pittsburgh."

# ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

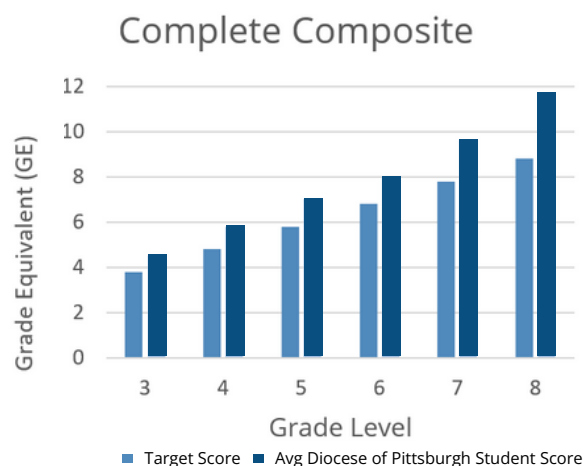
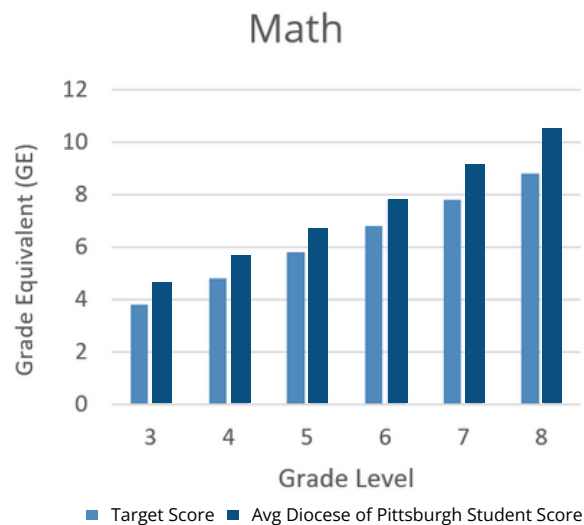
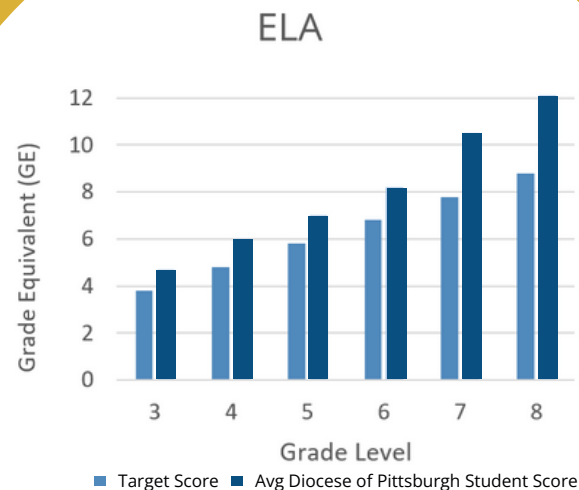
## *Middle & Elementary Schools*

### IOWA Assessment 2023

Academic excellence is a priority for our diocesan schools. Third- through eighth-grade students take the Iowa Assessments and consistently score above the national norms. These assessments measure readiness, student achievement and growth, evaluating foundational as well as complex skills.

In the spring of 2023, our students in grades three to eight took the Iowa Assessment, which measures student performance and readiness for college or careers. Diocese of Pittsburgh students across all grade levels exceeded the national average by 19-27% in English language arts and by 12-22% in mathematics.

Displayed to the right are "grade equivalent" scores, which show the year and month of school for which a student's skills are typical. For example, a grade equivalent score of 3.8 means that the student's achievement is typical for a child who has completed the eighth month of third grade. Our diocesan school averages exceeded the norms in all subjects at all grade levels.





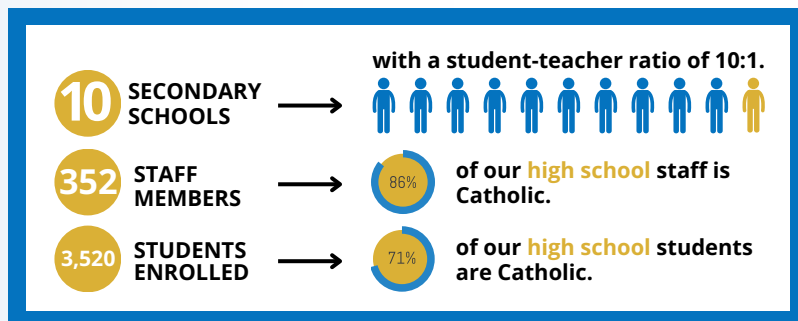
# AT A GLANCE

## *Our High Schools*

The high schools of the Diocese of Pittsburgh are designed to build the skills, faith and character of tomorrow's leaders. They offer a dynamic and nurturing educational environment that combines the rich traditions of our faith with the modern tools and knowledge needed for academic and personal growth. Our mission is to empower students to excel academically, grow spiritually and embrace values that will guide them throughout life.

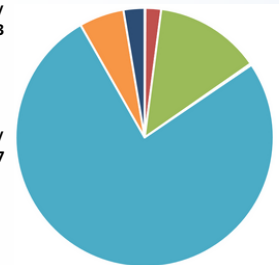


North Catholic High School seniors Robert Staresinic and Anna Zahorchak were chosen as National Merit Scholarship semifinalists for the class of 2024. They were among 16,000 students selected from more than 1.3 million applicants.



### Student population broken down by race/ethnicity

- American Indian / Native Alaskan - 3
- Asian - 70
- Black / African American - 467
- Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander - 7
- White - 2,682
- Two or More Races - 198
- Unknown - 93



Students, faculty, staff and Felician Sisters at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School join in the annual eucharistic procession around campus, with prayers at the statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.



# ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

## *Our High Schools*

Jack Sabo is a product of 13 years of Catholic education here in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. A South Fayette native, he attended Saint Louise de Marillac for grades K-8, and graduated from Central Catholic High School in 2023.



20

AP courses are offered to our high school students per school on average.

32

honors courses are offered to our high school students per school on average.

100%

of our high school students graduate.

99.5%

of our high school graduates are accepted to a 4-year college or university.

\$20M

has been collectively secured on average in scholarships per school.

*I wouldn't be where I am today without the teachers I had, the friends I made or the values I learned and lived through my Catholic education.*

- Jack Sabo

Saint Louise de Marillac Catholic School, Class of 2019  
Central Catholic High School, Class of 2023

Following his senior year, Jack served a term as president of the Pennsylvania Future Business Leaders of America, managing its \$6 million budget, creating a social media ambassador program for its 13,000 members and approving a new charitable foundation to provide aid and

scholarships to under-served student members. He was one of Central Catholic's Brother David S. Baginski FSC Scholars, producing an 89-page capstone thesis entitled "Crocodiles in Coach: Proposed Revisions to the Americans with Disabilities Act and Associated Recommendations as a Vehicle for Legislative Equality in Animal Access Rights".



# GROWING IN *Faith*

Our Catholic schools are communities where faith, learning and authentic friendship flourish. Like the Body of Christ, individuals from all walks of life, ages, cultures and vocations glorify God, each member uniquely growing and contributing to the whole.



## **MARK REYNOLDS** *7th Grade Student, Divine Mercy Academy*

Learning about my Catholic faith at Divine Mercy Academy has helped me grow closer to God. We have many opportunities to learn about God at our school. One of these opportunities is going to weekly Mass and receiving the sacraments. Receiving Jesus' body and blood helps me live in a Christ-like manner. In religion class, we are taught about our faith and God's love for each of us. This helps build my relationship with God. The principal, teachers, and staff at Divine Mercy Academy are good role models for my faith journey. Another benefit of going to a Catholic school is seeing God's love reflected in the actions of my classmates. This deepens my relationship with God because I see His love every day.



## **JESSICA WILLIS** *Teacher, Madonna Catholic*

Teaching in a Catholic school is a vocation that has ignited a deep love for my profession and the values promoted by Madonna Catholic. As a STEM and science teacher, my role goes beyond teaching content; it's about nurturing a sense of wonder in my students and bridging the gap between science and faith. I believe that by encouraging students to be open-minded and receptive to new experiences, we enable them to witness the magnificence of God's creation. I am constantly reminded that as a teacher, I'm simply a guide helping students unveil the beauty of the world. Like my students, I am on a continuous path of wonder and learning, growing not only as an educator but also as a person of faith, all while nurturing a love for teaching and my Madonna Catholic family.



## **SHARON SIPE** *Diocese of Pittsburgh Parent*

Being a parent of three children, it's easy to get caught up in daily chores and errands. Many miles have been put on my car to get my family to where they need to be - school, practice, appointments, or a friend's house. In the end though, what is it all for? Catholic education has been key in guiding my family to place God first in our lives. Over the years, many beautiful Catholic friendships have blossomed while we have been learning, loving, and serving God. Daily religion classes have conjured up meaningful conversations at family dinners. The school gives us many service opportunities, through which my family has learned to see Christ in others. We are able to be active in living the sacramental life, such as going to Mass and Confession regularly during school hours. Our prayer lives have been enriched with spending time with Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament during Adoration and participating in the Living Rosary and Living Stations of the Cross. Grace is said before every meal and prayers are said before every sporting event, reminding my family to always thank God for the gifts He provides and to glorify Him in all that we do. Over the years Catholic school has been fundamental to my family on our journey and leading us to our ultimate destination, which is Heaven.



# SERVICE *in Our Communities*

Service is a core value of our Catholic schools. Educators, coaches and parents teach by example, encouraging students to make a positive impact. Our academic clubs, sports programs and arts initiatives all include service components that nurture compassionate leaders.

Miss Golden's class made signs and bracelets to raise awareness of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD), a brain disorder from which Miss Golden's father died. Their project raised money for the Strides for CJD walkathon.



## *Archangel Gabriel School*

Students volunteer at the Saint Aidan Harvest Home Dinner and Festivalz, which benefits the school and parish. Nearly 400 students helped to provide more than 600 dinners.



## *Blessed Francis Seelos Academy*

The junior varsity and varsity volleyball teams raised more than \$100 and collected non-perishable food for the Saint Vincent de Paul food bank during bake sale and raffle fundraisers at their games.



## *Holy Cross Academy*

# STUDENT LIFE

## *Beyond the Classroom*

Schools of the Diocese of Pittsburgh offer an extensive range of extracurricular activities that promote the development of the whole person. They are an integral part of our educational approach.



Here are some of the many opportunities available to our students:

### *Arts*

- Acapella
- Band
- Barbershop singing
- Concert choir
- Creative Writing Club
- Drama & theatre
- English festival
- Guitar lessons
- Newspaper
- Photography Club
- Piano lessons
- Poetry Club
- School musicals

### *Athletics*

- Archery
- Baseball
- Basketball
- Bowling
- Cheerleading

- Crew
- Cross country
- Dance team
- Fencing
- Football
- Golf
- Gymnastics
- Ice & in-line hockey
- Lacrosse
- Rugby
- Ski Club
- Soccer
- Softball
- Swimming & diving
- Tennis
- Track & field
- Ultimate frisbee
- Volleyball

### *Clubs*

- Adventure Club
- Art of Living Club

- Board Game Club
- Campus Ministry Club
- Chess Club
- Christian leadership team
- Cub scouts
- Environmental Club
- FBLA
- Girl scouts
- Latin & Ancient Coins Club
- Math team
- National Honor Society & Junior NHS
- Pro-Life Club
- Robotics Club
- SADD
- Spanish Club
- Spirit Club
- Student Council

### *Events & Activities*

- Academic games
- Altar serving
- Forensics
- Geography bee
- Invention Convention
- Junior Achievement
- Math 24
- Mock trial
- PJAS
- Quiz Bowl
- School dances
- Science Bowl
- Service learning
- Spelling bee
- Summer camps
- Tea & notes to nursing homes
- Yearbook
- Youth ministry



# STUDENT SAFETY & Well-Being

We make it our goal to care for students, families, and faculty before, during, and after school. Each day, we make a commitment to the academic, physical, emotional, and health of the entire Catholic school community here in the Diocese of Pittsburgh.



The Diocese of Pittsburgh has adopted a youth violence prevention program for its schools: **Safe2Say Something**. This initiative of the Pennsylvania Office of the

Attorney General teaches youth and adults how to recognize warning signs - especially via social media - from persons who may be a threat to themselves or others, and to say something before it is too late.

**Scan the QR code above to visit their website and learn more about this resource.**



## MEET Wendell

Bishop David Zubik hired security expert Wendell Hissrich in August 2023 to expand diocesan strategies for responding to safety threats that have been growing nationwide. He oversees security for schools, parishes and church-related events. His experience includes 25 years with the FBI and multiple roles in Pittsburgh government, including the Office of Community Services and Violence Prevention and the Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security. [whissrich@diopitt.org](mailto:whissrich@diopitt.org)

# STUDENT SAFETY & Well-Being

In the Diocese of Pittsburgh, all employees of parishes, schools, and diocesan offices must be compliant with our Safe Environment Policy, as must most volunteers. Each parish or school has a safe environment coordinator to assist with compliance with our child protection policies.

## SCHOOL EMPLOYEE

### *Clearance Procedure*

School employees must complete the following:

- Virtus® Online safe environment database
- Child Abuse History clearance
- FBI clearance or waiver
- Virtus® Protecting God's Children Training
- Mandated Reporter Training on-line class
- Act 24 - Arrest/Conviction Report & Certification Form
- Act 168 - Sexual Misconduct/Abuse Disclosure Release & Principal's Signature Form

## SCHOOL VOLUNTEER

### *Clearance Procedure*

School Volunteers must complete the following:

- Virtus® Online safe environment database
- Child Abuse History clearance
- FBI clearance or waiver
- Virtus® Protecting God's Children Training
- Mandated Reporter Training on-line class

## Student Services

All Diocese of Pittsburgh schools provide support services to students in grades K-12. We hire high school counselors and partner with five intermediate units within the State of Pennsylvania to provide a range of resources, including counseling, reading and math support, and speech therapy to support our diocesan schools.

- 7** **K-12 schools** house St. Anthony's special education programs.
- 29** **schools** offer extended day programs.
- 38** **schools** have students who receive federal Title 1 educational assistance for low income students.

- 1,250** **diocesan students** qualify for Title I services.
- 1,482** **diocesan students** qualify to receive free or reduced price lunch.
- 657** **diocesan students** receive support for a diagnosed disability.  
(ADD/ADHD, Autism, emotional/behavioral hearing impairments, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, speech/language impairments, visual impairments)

*Lighting the Way*  
*2023 - 2024*





**CATHOLIC DIOCESE  
OF PITTSBURGH**