

...Have Faith in Education

Catholic Schools Week 2008

Our Mission: To Educate Students While Nurturing Their Christ-like Formation

WHY CHOOSE A CATHOLIC SCHOOL?

1. FAITH FORMATION
2. ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
3. INSTRUMENTAL & VOCAL MUSIC
4. SPORTS & OTHER EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

"The value of a Catholic Education is not test scores or opportunity for involvement or a few Religion classes.

The value of a Catholic education is that at the heart of everything we do is the Catholic faith.

It is not citizenship or scholarship. The heart of everything we do is to instruct and help lead children to God. We feel we are not just doing a job but fulfilling a ministry."

-Principal Montgomery



Jesus himself gave the Church its mission to spread the Good News. Carrying out that mission in the life of any parish today means providing various ways to that end. We call those ways—or strategies—Faith Formation.

Our parish offers several strategies, including our parish school. Always keeping Christ's mandate in mind, the school strives for excellence, seeking to do the best job possible.

At this time of year we celebrate Catholic Schools Week, and we say a heartfelt **thank you** to the parish for providing a Catholic education for our children. Without the generous support of our parish, there would be no parish school.

Year after year, St. Mary Parish School has achieved excellence in test scores as measured by the state of Kansas.



Kansas state assessments have consistently shown that we are meeting (and exceeding!) the goal of educating our children. This is an accomplishment of which we should **all** be proud—our parish school relies on

the Stewardship of our entire parish for its success.

Test scores are not the only measure of a

successful school, though. Our school mission statement reveals another, equally important, goal—to nurture students' Christ-like formation.

Our students are immersed in their faith. They begin and end each day with prayer. Middle school students begin each new class with prayer. Students attend Mass at least twice a week and participate in a weekly prayer service. Students are more than attendees—they practice their faith hands-on as



servers and cantors.

Students are active in their faith, with regular participation in liturgical ministry and daily Stewardship opportunities. Middle school students help preschoolers write letters to Santa, are reading buddies to first graders, and students of all ages empty trash cans, clean tables and help teachers and fellow students. Children learn that our role in the Church is one of service to others.

St. Mary Parish School IS a school of excellence—but not just because the State of Kansas says so.

It is a school of excellence because our students thrive in what is truly the best of both worlds—academic excellence combined with daily faith formation.

Richard Montgomery
St. Mary Parish School Principal

MOST RECENT KANSAS STATE ASSESSMENTS RESULTS

2007:

- ◆97% of SMPS students met or exceeded state standards in reading
- ◆81% of SMPS students met or exceeded state standards in math
- ◆98% of SMPS students met or exceeded state standards in writing

2006:

- ◆92% of SMPS students met or exceeded state standards in reading
- ◆88% of SMPS students met or exceeded state standards in math

All Preschools are the same...*Right??*

by Marcia Helten, SMPS Preschool Teacher and Master Catechist

Pre-enrollment is just around the corner and it is time to decide if you should send your young children to preschool at St. Mary's or somewhere else. All preschools offer some of the same things: introduction to letters and sounds, counting, developing fine motor skills, playtime, etc.



But, there is one thing we have here at St. Mary preschool that no other preschool in Derby has: the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Atrium.

This hands-on religion room is now offered to children at St. Mary from three years of age through first grade. Second grade will be added next fall. New grades will be added each year reaching through eighth grade.

What exactly is the atrium? In Level I, students learn stories about Jesus, parables Jesus taught, about items used during Mass, and about our Catholic faith. In Level II (ages 6-9), students learn a deeper understanding of many of the materials used in Level I, learn the books of the Bible and about creation, and the atrium helps to prepare students for First Reconciliation and First Communion. A teacher presents the lesson and then students are able to move the materials and retell the lesson. When children go to church, they are able to better understand what is happening and the atrium helps their love for Jesus grow.

No other school in Derby has this method of teaching children about Jesus and their faith. If growing in love of God and family while developing socially and preparing for future academic success are your top priorities for your child, St. Mary Preschool is a great choice! We can help you with your child's religious formation and education. We make God a priority! If you have any questions or would like to see the atrium, call me at 788-3151 or 722-7205.

Are there advantages to a K-8 School?

Those who are unaccustomed to a K-8 school may be uncomfortable with the idea of mixing middle school students with younger children. While the middle school at St. Mary's has its own "wing" for most classes, having PK-8th grade classes in one school allows for some wonderful opportunities for older students to work with younger ones.

One example is Reading Buddies, successful and extremely popular with the younger kids, parents and older kids. Each year seventh grade students and first grade students pair up so younger ones can practice reading to older students. The students make gifts for one another and go on a field trip together at the end of the year.

Middle school students also participate in an activity to help three and four-year-old preschool students learn about the human body and another one writing letters to Santa.

During second semester, preschool students visit the kindergarten classroom to work alongside each other doing "real kindergarten work." Younger students really look up to their older buddies, and the older students respond with patience and kindness. These are just a few examples of ways we are able to instill a greater sense of parish community and responsibility because of our unique situation.

Non-curricular benefits of a K-8 school documented in multiple studies include:

- ◆ Increased test scores
- ◆ Improved student discipline
- ◆ Longer and potentially more positive teacher-student relationships
- ◆ Increased parent involvement
- ◆ More collaboration between elementary and secondary teachers

- ◆ Scholar Bowl
- ◆ Religion Bowl
- ◆ Spelling Bee
- ◆ Geography Bee
- ◆ Duke Talent Search
- ◆ Optimists Club Speech Contest
- ◆ DAR Writing Contest
- ◆ Diocesan Writing Contest
- ◆ Science Fairs for grades 3 and up
- ◆ Reading Buddies
- ◆ Middle School Sports
- ◆ Cheerleading
- ◆ Band & Choir
- ◆ Marching Band
- ◆ Art
- ◆ Drama
- ◆ Spanish
- ◆ Accelerated Reader Program
- ◆ Scholastic Book Fairs
- ◆ Little Flowers Catholic Girls Club
- ◆ Scouts

Right: SMPS 8th grade cheerleaders invite younger girls to cheer with them at a recent basketball game.



For over fifty years, the people of his parish have helped children in our community develop spiritually and academically, learn about our rich Catholic heritage, and live as disciples of Christ. **Thank you for Your Support!**

Parents Express Their Gratitude



Jessica Rau: I was hesitant about Catholic school. I grew up Protestant, in a community without a Catholic school. Although my husband, his siblings, and his parents attended St. Mary Parish School (SMPS), I did not intend to send our children here based on my own misunderstandings and misconceptions about Catholic education. As I became involved in the parish, my attitude began to change. The warmth and friendliness shown to my family, and to me especially as a non-Catholic, were inspiring. I began to feel a part of our community.

Now I love SMPS. The tangible warmth and sense of community make it a joy to send our children here. Staff members have a deep sense of responsibility for students, and parent volunteers work with teachers and staff to give our children the best educational experience possible. Everyone works together to help our children grow in every part of their life.

The curriculum is impressive. Our son's reading and math are far more advanced than when we were in first grade. I enjoy hearing what he learns during religion, and he is helping me learn traditional Catholic prayers. Our two years at St. Mary have been wonderful. At least once a week our son tells us, "Today was the best day ever!" We can't wait for our younger children to experience the Christ-centered and challenging education SMPS offers. Anyone who has wondered what SMPS has to offer should come for a classroom visit.

This school is truly a gift and I am so **thankful** for the staff, families and our parish members supporting SMPS.



Debbie Speed: We felt it was important, when choosing a school for our children, that we choose one that allows them to develop their Catholic faith. St. Mary blesses us with both a faith-filled environment and high academic standards. I am fortunate to be able to stay home with my children and love to volunteer in the school whenever I get the

chance. Knowing how involved all the parents are in the school and in the children's lives gives me a feeling of great comfort.

Thank you, St Mary!

Don & Stephanie Birmingham:

SMPS provides the whole package—great teachers, strong values, and a safe, friendly atmosphere.



We're constantly amazed how much our six-year-old daughter is learning, and because of the great environment at St. Mary, our older son chose to attend Catholic high school and Notre Dame University. Both children are stronger in their faith and education, **thanks** to St. Mary.

Carol Mayfield: We chose SMPS because we wanted the best for our daughter. I truly love our faith and I am very proud to be Catholic. I volunteer at St. Mary for more selfish reasons! I leave every day with a smile on my face. I love the children's enthusiasm and the happiness that they so eagerly share. It is refreshing to experience how beautiful life is through the children's eyes. I am **grateful** for the opportunity to work with the Read Naturally Program.



Stacey Cahn: We chose to send our children to SMPS and become members of this parish after touring several area Catholic schools. At St Mary, we could sense the strength of the staff's desire to help our children succeed. They oriented the tour to the children and stressed several times that the goal at St. Mary is for every child to succeed.

A Kapaun Mount Carmel High School staff member's words influenced us too, and still stand out in our minds. He gave St. Mary an excellent recommendation: he said that you could pick St. Mary's students out of a crowd because they are the first to

step up when they see a student or teacher in need. They go above what is expected. These are Catholic values we wanted our children to learn from their school experience, and they do.

As a volunteer at St. Mary two mornings a week in the second grade, I feel **blessed**. There is no greater pleasure than working in an atmosphere with children where there is love, compassion, joy, and the great desire to make sure every child is a success. That is true at St. Mary, and we are so **thankful**.

Thank you again!

by Richard Montgomery, principal and SIMPS parent

Thank you, St. Mary Parish, for providing a Catholic education for our parish children. Among the many blessings of Catholic schools are the people that make it happen every day: students, parents and staff.

We are proud of the difference our dedicated staff members make in our parish children's lives. Many have been recognized by the state and the diocese for their accomplishments. In fact, this year, **fourth grade teacher Bethany Ramsey has received the Diocese of Wichita New Teacher award!** Qualifications for nomination were a full-time teacher with one to five years of diocesan teaching experience, teaching either science or religion during the school day, and modeling religious values to the school community in her vocation.



Mrs. Ramsey, a parishioner, exemplifies each of the core values which are part of our parish mission statement:

♦ **Stewardship**—She is a Eucharistic Minister at school and parish Masses, tutors students after school, helps supervise latchkey, and is an active member of our North Central Accreditation Committee.

♦ **Community**—Mrs. Ramsey is welcoming of all. She treats her class as family, stressing the sense of belonging and reverence for one another. She serves on our Hospitality Committee, whose basic purpose is to welcome and encourage, whether it is planning a meal or organizing an “Advent Angels” activity.

♦ **Faith formation**—Mrs. Ramsey does more than teach religion. She teaches Catholic faith. Every situation, whether in the classroom or on the playground, is an opportunity to review “What would Jesus do?” In her classroom, all classes are Religion class.

♦ **Eucharist**—Coming together in prayer and worship are of utmost importance to Mrs. Ramsey. Our classes take turns preparing Wednesday prayer services and liturgical ministries for weekday Mass. Through their preparation, practice and reflection, she ensures that her students not only know what to do but understand what they are doing.

It is impossible with such limited space to introduce you to every member of our staff and to what they each bring to our school. Please take a moment to visit our website for more information about each staff member:

www.stmarysderby.com/school/staffbios.html

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