

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[ ] Public or [X] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [ ] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. Jason Pohlmeier  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Saint Joseph Catholic School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1722 N Starr Drive  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Fayetteville State AR Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 72701-2937

County Washington

Telephone (479) 442-4554 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL https://www.sjfayschool.com E-mail jpohlmeier@sjfay.com

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\* Mrs. Theresa Hall E-mail thall@dolr.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Diocese of Little Rock Tel. (501) 664-0340

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mr. Chris Fitz  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2020 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2014 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 0 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 0 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
  - 0 TOTAL

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	25	16	41
K	19	19	38
1	17	20	37
2	14	16	30
3	15	16	31
4	19	12	31
5	12	21	33
6	17	20	37
7	11	6	17
8	9	15	24
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	158	161	319

\*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 3 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 19 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 67 % White
  - 8 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2018 - 2019 school year: 4%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	12
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	1
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	13
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	306
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Spanish, Vietnamese, Italian, Thai, French

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 9 %  
30 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 13 %

Total number students who qualify: 42

8. Students receiving special education services: 17 %

54 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>3</u> Autism                  | <u>6</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>20</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>22</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 6

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	19
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 17:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

<b>Required Information</b>	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	98%	97%	97%	98%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2019.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2014

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school’s mission or vision statement.

St. Joseph Catholic School leads students to Christ through academic excellence, respect for others, and community service.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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School Mission Statement: St. Joseph Catholic School leads students to Christ through academic excellence, respect for others, and community service.

St. Joseph Catholic School (SJCS) is a parochial, non-public grade school located in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and is affiliated with the Diocese of Little Rock. SJCS educates nearly 320 students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. The school was first established in 1878 by a group of Mexican nuns, 34 years after the Church was founded, and the current school fully took shape in 1948. In 2002, St. Joseph completed construction on a new church and school facility. In 2012, an expansion added a full-size gymnasium for physical education and athletics, art and music rooms, and four classrooms. After decades of students graduating from SJCS in the seventh grade, the school successfully added eighth grade in 2014 and has developed focused, student-centered middle school and junior high experiences for students in grades 5 through 8.

St. Joseph Catholic School is located in the hometown of the University of Arkansas and is near the corporate headquarters of Walmart, Tyson, and J.B. Hunt. School families represent diverse religious, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Eighty-seven percent of students are Catholic, while 13% identify themselves with various Christian and non-Christian faith backgrounds. The pastor, school leadership, and school board strongly believe that any families in the parish who seek a Catholic education are welcome. One-third of the student body comes from a minority background, mostly Hispanic. In five years, the school has increased its level of financial aid and scholarships from \$100,000 to \$180,000, largely due to the Gap Campaign (annual fund) that has tripled since 2014.

The St. Joseph Catholic School staff consists of a principal, assistant principal, athletic director, office manager, nurse, counselor, nineteen classroom teachers, four teacher assistants, librarian/counselor, physical education teacher, art teacher, music teacher, technology teacher, Spanish teacher, four cafeteria employees, Title I teacher, and Math Intervention teacher. Support staff such as custodians are shared with the Catholic parish. All instructional faculty have a minimum of a bachelor's degree, and nearly one-half of classroom teachers hold advanced degrees.

Extending the learning beyond the classroom is very important to the faculty and staff of SJCS. Students have a wide variety of field trips and travel experiences. The Walton Arts Center is a favorite for performing arts while Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art introduces students to great works of art. Sixth graders attend an overnight trip to the Ozark Natural Science Center. The seventh graders have an overnight trip to Little Rock and visit various sites including historic churches and the state capitol. They also visit Heifer International, an organization focused on hunger, poverty, and agriculture. The graduating class participates in a faith-based tour of Washington, D.C. each April, and every student attends, regardless of ability to pay. Students also lead a monthly food drive and stock the shelves at a local pantry.

Since SJCS was first honored as a National Blue Ribbon School in 2014, many positives have occurred. School enrollment has increased by 40 students in the past three years, up 14 percent. SJCS has been honored as the "Best Private School in Northwest Arkansas" six years in a row by the local CitiScapes Magazine. We continue to use the Blue Ribbon honor in school marketing campaigns, including two professionally-produced videos highlighting the school's academics and overall student-development program. In the community, the award has been a significant morale booster for staff and school families to realize the school's strong standing not just locally, but nationally.

Always seeking to improve, SJCS has implemented new ELA, science, social studies, and math programs in the past four years. Students are encouraged to think critically, practice problem-solving skills, and become lifelong learners. Challenging and enjoyable STEM activities are a regular part of the science and math curriculum. Eighth grade students are able to take Algebra I, Spanish I, and Physical Science prior to high school for credit.

Another positive change in the past five years has been the addition of a robust offering of enrichment

activities, including: Chess Club, Angel Choir, Ballet, Archery, Pottery Club, Children's Adoration, Junior Legion of Mary, National Junior Honor Society, Battle of the Books, Science Fair, Spelling Bee, Cooking Club, Robotics Club, Quiz Bowl, Super Science, Family Hiking Club, Arts Live Theatre Classes, Knitting Club, as well as a full offering of athletic teams and clinics. These types of experiences are invaluable for students' academic, physical, and social-emotional development.

St. Joseph Catholic School continues to live out its student motto that is recited daily: "I will try my best every day to LEARN, to LOVE others, and to ACT like Jesus."

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

**1a.** Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

Catholic schools strive to educate the whole person by promoting the spiritual, moral, physical, creative, and intellectual development of each student. St. Joseph Catholic School's core curriculum is guided by the Diocesan In Spirit and Truth standards guide. Teachers utilize this standards guide to plan age-appropriate instruction that is both relevant and rigorous. Within the classroom, teachers provide differentiated instruction and tailored assessment to meet the needs of all learners. With over 50 students on various levels of accommodation plans, the school's teachers have learned through experience and professional development to work closely with parents and the administration in providing a differentiated classroom.

Ongoing formative and summative assessment informs and drives instruction. In addition to the informal assessment happening daily in classrooms, the school also utilizes the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), STAR Reading Assessment, Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS Math), and the annual Terra Nova 3. Teachers regularly review student data individually, in grade-level teams, and with the administration prior to making instructional decisions. Data from the spring Terra Nova 3 is heavily used when determining class lists and math placement for the following year. Professional development decisions are also based on assessment data.

The use of technology across the curriculum has long been a strength of St. Joseph Catholic School. A full-time technology teacher in addition to a library and media specialist support classroom teachers with collaborative student projects. One hundred percent of K-8 classrooms have interactive whiteboards. In addition to the 24-station computer lab, the school has five Chromebook carts and one classroom set of iPads that are available for in-class use.

### **1b.** Reading/English language arts

The literacy program at St. Joseph Catholic School is designed to develop strong independent readers, proficient writers, analytical thinkers, and confident speakers. Teachers encourage and promote literacy by integrating reading and writing across all content areas. Technology and media are used to assist in preparing for the increasing demands of the 21st century learner.

St. Joseph Catholic School utilizes a balanced approach to literacy that incorporates the five essential elements of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Students are instructed in diverse ways to accomplish the school's literacy goals. Literacy instruction is driven by standardized assessment and by teacher evaluation of each student's strengths and weaknesses through summative, formal, informal, and ongoing assessments.

In grades K-2, literacy instruction focuses on building a foundation for students to become lifelong readers and writers. In the past three years, SJCS has made an effort to link all early elementary literacy instruction to Science of Reading evidence-based programs such as Orton-Gillingham, Phonetic Connections, and Phonics First. Four teachers, one each in grades K-3, have completed the week-long training in Orton-Gillingham principles and approaches. Students are instructed using whole group and small guided reading groups. Guided reading groups allow teachers to meet the needs of all their students. These groups are formulated using the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) as well as the Renaissance Learning STAR reading assessment. Students are instructed using leveled readers and the Wonders reading series. Starting in second grade, teachers utilize Accelerated Reader quizzes to evaluate and encourage comprehension. Step Up to Writing principles are used to develop young writers.

In grades 3-8, literacy instruction focuses on developing the lifelong reader. Students are instructed using whole group instruction with explicit teaching. They are exposed to fiction and nonfiction, genre studies,

and various novels. The STAR reading assessment is given two to four times per year as a form of measuring students' reading level. Accelerated Reader quizzes are used to evaluate and encourage comprehension. Six+One Traits of Writing is being taught and utilized in the intermediate grades.

Students in grades K-3 who are considered struggling readers receive services through the Title I program for additional one-on-one or small group instruction. During this time, the Title I teacher focuses on the specific skills individual students need to become proficient readers and writers.

SJCS seeks to develop outstanding communication skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing - so that students gain confidence and competence. Research skills related to media and technology are integrated throughout the Language Arts curriculum. Students graduate from eighth grade with the ability to read at an almost 10th grade equivalency (STAR Reading) and can compose 500-1,000 word persuasive essays and short stories. A highlight of each school year is hearing the graduates stand at the church ambo confidently delivering farewell speeches.

### **1c. Mathematics**

Math reflects the order of God's universe and helps students develop their ability to reason and think critically, logically, and creatively. St. Joseph Catholic School students are instructed in math as outlined in the Diocesan curriculum, *In Spirit and Truth*, which incorporates the Common Core State Standards.

The SJCS math program in grades K-4 is Saxon Math (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), a spiraling curriculum in which each lesson teaches a new concept using hands-on learning. Calendar boards and manipulatives increase student understanding of material taught before paper and pencil work begins. Technology is incorporated as students use the interactive whiteboard to solve problems and demonstrate their work to partners, small groups, or the whole class. Each lesson also includes practice on previously taught concepts, and students are assessed every five to ten lessons. Math fact practice is completed every day.

The SJCS math program in grades 5-8 operates with a tiered system to meet the needs of all levels and abilities of students. Texts include Saxon Math and Big Ideas Math (Big Ideas Learning). These middle school and junior high students are split into three leveled groups. One section is advanced a full grade level; oftentimes, one-half of a grade level is working a full year ahead of schedule. The other two are taught at grade level with one section having a smaller number of students and a slower pace. Each student is assessed individually to allow for developmentally appropriate instruction. The leveled instruction and small class size (3 to 10 students each) allow an opportunity for students performing at or below grade level to receive extra assistance as well as an opportunity for more advanced students to excel. Students taking Algebra I in eighth grade receive high school transcript credit at the local public schools. The advanced junior high math class participates annually in the Math Madness competition from Arete Labs.

The comprehensive math curriculum has an online element available for each student which includes the textbook, extra practice, quizzes for each lesson, online tutors, and homework help. Along with this online resource available to all students, St. Joseph math teachers utilize interactive whiteboard instruction daily. As needed, technology is used to enhance a math idea or concept with tools such as spreadsheets, graphing calculators, PowerPoint, and online graphing programs. Students in grades 3-5 utilize Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS Math), with weekly participation requirements. ALEKS provides a supplement for students who are able to work above their grade level and those who need to overcome gaps remaining from lower grades.

Junior high classroom grades include a math lab portion which is used to introduce or reinforce ideas using hands-on and practical exercises that allow students to relate what they are learning to real life. The labs are performed in small groups to encourage and practice teamwork, creative thought processes, and idea sharing.

## **1d. Science**

The SJCS science curriculum helps students see their impact on the natural world and seek to better understand and appreciate God's creation. In 2018, the school reviewed its science curriculum and adopted the HMH ScienceFusion program for elementary grades. Junior high students utilize the Glencoe iScience materials from McGraw-Hill. Teachers use an inquiry-based model with activity-before-content labs. It is common to see students working collaboratively to solve a scientific problem or environmental dilemma prior to classroom instruction on the topic. Science has also become cross-curricular through the use of nonfiction leveled readers that can be used for both reading and science instruction. Assessment practices include summative assessments, labs, individual projects, and team problem-solving.

St. Joseph students have an annual presence on the winners' stage at the Northwest Arkansas Regional Science and Engineering Fair. In recent years, third grade students participated in a grant to plant and maintain a monarch butterfly garden on school grounds. Middle school students have the opportunity to join the Robotics Team to build robots that perform specific tasks and then compete against other schools. Sixth grade students annually participate in an overnight natural science immersion field trip to the Ozark Natural Science Center. Eighth grade students can graduate from SJCS with high school credit for Physical Science.

## **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement**

The goal of social sciences at SJCS is to discover those social forces and historical events, which have influenced human and societal development. This gives students a global perspective to accept responsible membership in their world. As a Catholic school, students also learn how the Church has shaped human civilization over time.

Social Studies curriculum resources include: Kids Discover magazines, Journey Across Time (Glencoe/McGraw-Hill), The U.S.: Making a New Nation (Harcourt), Geography Alive (TCI), and History Alive (TCI). Seventh grade students complete a semester-long study of Arkansas History.

Teachers regularly plan cross-curricular units that combine history and literacy standards. In the fall, fifth grade students share their history class with their parents and younger students by organizing a "Colonial Fair," where students develop informational displays about colonial life and act out fun skits, complete with clothing from the time period. In the spring, fifth grade students also conduct a "Living Museum," in which each student must choose a historical figure, research that person, dress in costume, and then present to an audience their autobiography.

From 2015 to 2019, the seventh grade class participated in the Global Challenge through Heifer International. The Global Challenge was a three-day program in which students were assigned living conditions appropriate to the regions that Heifer International serves. Each group is given one specific resource which they must use to barter with the other groups. Heifer International discontinued this program in 2019. St. Joseph is developing plans to replace this trip with a historical, political, and religious focused trip to Little Rock.

The eighth grade class participates annually in a four-day faith-based tour of Washington, D.C., where students experience our country's leaders at work and see their government in action. Every graduating student is able to attend, regardless of their ability to afford the trip fee.

## **1f. For secondary schools:**

## **1g. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:**

St. Joseph Catholic School offers a pre-kindergarten program for three-year-old and four-year-old children. The program earned licensure through the Arkansas Department of Human Services in April 2011. In January 2016, St. Joseph earned the status of Better Beginnings Level 1 through the state of Arkansas, and in June 2017 achieved Better Beginnings Level 2.

Better Beginnings connects Arkansas families with information and care that helps their children experience a safe, happy, healthy childhood. Better Beginnings is designed to improve the level of quality in childcare and early childhood education programs across the state. As part of Better Beginnings, St. Joseph implements the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), to ensure that early childhood best practices are in place at every moment of the day.

Better Beginnings and ECERS are motivated by the philosophy that a child's early care and education play a critical role in a child's brain development. The developing brain is affected by every experience and interaction, both positive and negative. Positive learning environments for children produce tremendous brain development and positive, nurturing relationships at these early ages are essential for healthy social-emotional development.

The In Spirit and Truth Curriculum Guide of the Diocese of Little Rock includes few standards for preK to avoid interference with required state guidelines. Therefore, at this time, the In Spirit and Truth Curriculum only includes preK standards in Religion which do not overlap with state guidelines. Students who enter kindergarten from the school's preK classes are consistently more prepared socially and academically for kindergarten than their peers who did not attend preK at St. Joseph.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

**Visual and Performing Arts:** St. Joseph Catholic School is committed to building students' appreciation of and involvement in the arts, both visual and performing. Teachers and students acknowledge that we honor God when we use our talents and gifts to celebrate and praise Him. SJCS has both a full-time music teacher and a full-time visual arts teacher who daily help students to discover their artistic and creative talents.

Students in visual arts classes participate in a variety of lessons and techniques, including drawing, painting, pottery, mixed media, design elements, crafts, and folk art. The classroom includes a pottery wheel and kiln. Students also study many artists from a broad spectrum of time periods and styles of art. Elementary students have 50 minutes of visual arts instruction weekly. Junior high students are allowed to add Advanced Art to their schedule as an elective; this course meets for 105 minutes of advanced instruction weekly.

SJCS students praise God with their voices and musical talents. Students perform publicly in annual music programs at Christmas and Easter. Elementary students receive at least 50 minutes per week of music instruction. Junior high students are able to select band or choir/drama; both classes meet for 100 minutes weekly. An after-school Angel Choir is a popular activity for students in grades 3-8. This group has sung at many venues around the community including the Lights of the Ozarks Christmas Parade and Veterans' Day programs. The school band is registered with the Arkansas Activities Association (AAA) and annually participates in the Regional Solo and Ensemble competition. In five years of participation, SJCS students have earned 66 first division "superior" ratings and 23 second division "excellent" ratings.

**Physical Education / Health / Nutrition:** Physical education provides experiences that contribute to the psychomotor and cognitive development of each student. Participation leads to the development of self-confidence, social skills, and an appreciation of God's gift of life and movement. Students have physical education for 40 to 50 minutes per week in a full-size gymnasium as well as on the natural playground and running trail. The PE instructor also teaches seventh grade health and nutrition and serves as the school's athletic director. Over 90 percent of students participate in an organized school athletic activity (basketball, volleyball, cross country, track and field, golf, cheerleading, football, and soccer clinic).

**Foreign Language:** St. Joseph Catholic School is in compliance with the Arkansas and Blue Ribbon program's foreign language requirements. Students in every grade level have Spanish one or two times per week for 25 to 50 minutes. All eighth grade students have 140 weekly minutes of Spanish instruction with the opportunity to take Spanish I for high school credit.

**Technology / Library / Media:** SJCS believes all students should be educated in the use of technology as they engage in today's world. Technology classes for K-8 students range from 45 to 70 minutes weekly; all

students visit the library weekly for 35 to 70 minutes. Students in the primary grades master desktop and tablet skills, including the organization of materials in folders. Starting in second grade, students have their own Google accounts. They learn digital citizenship skills as well as proper use of materials from the internet including citations. Students have created Google Slide presentations about the changing seasons, incorporating photos uploaded from iPads as well as presentations about animals. Students also interact with other classrooms via Skype or Google Hangouts for Mystery Visits. HTML is used as a way for students to present information about a place in the world they have studied. Computer coding is introduced at all levels, with a Coding Block presented to eighth grade.

College and Career Readiness: SJCS understands the need to prepare students for their English and mathematics high school course work so they can succeed in postsecondary courses without the need for remediation. Two-thirds of SJCS graduates qualify to enroll in Advanced Placement English and accelerated mathematics courses at local public high schools. Seventh grade students complete a one-semester Leadership course using John Maxwell's *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level**

St. Joseph Catholic School serves a diverse population and places differentiated instruction as a priority in helping students meet learning goals. In addition to traditional teacher-led instruction, students are engaged on a daily basis in integrated technology activities and student-led projects.

In kindergarten and first grade, the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) are administered at various times to assess growth. Students in grades 2-8 take the STAR Reading Assessment multiple times per year. This assessment gives immediate feedback to the teacher by measuring 46 reading skill areas within 11 domains. Teachers also receive valuable data as to a student's zone of proximal development (ZPD) and can then assist the student in selecting challenging, yet enjoyable reading material. Students in grades K-3 who are considered struggling readers receive services through the Title I program for additional one-on-one or small group instruction. During this time, they focus on the skills they need to become proficient readers and writers.

Starting in fifth grade, students are provided with leveled instruction according to math understanding and ability. A Math Intervention teacher provides slower paced grade-level math instruction for individual students or small groups.

Students in grades 3-5 participate in ALEKS Math. Students are assessed at the start of the school year and placed in the grade level material appropriate to their progress and ability. While the majority of students are placed in their age-appropriate grade level, students who place lower are able to use ALEKS to develop the skills they need and close learning gaps before progressing to grade level.

#### **3b. Students performing above grade level**

Those students who need more challenging learning opportunities are offered enrichment work within the classroom or additional pull-out instruction. The math program is manipulative-based through grade three, so students are actively engaged in the learning process. Starting in fifth grade, students are provided with leveled instruction according to math understanding and ability. Approximately one-half of students work one grade level advanced in math. Students taking Algebra I, Spanish I, and/or Physical Science in eighth grade can receive high school transcript credit at the local public and private high schools.

Students in grades 3-5 participate in ALEKS Math. Students are assessed at the start of the school year and placed in the grade level material appropriate to their progress and ability. Advanced students frequently complete all of the ALEKS material in their grade level and are able to progress to the next grade level to supplement their classroom learning. Some advanced students outside of the 3-5 grade range have been placed in ALEKS to supplement their regular instruction.

During the 2019 Terra Nova spring testing, only fifth grade had a subgroup with more than 10 students. Fifth grade had 12 Hispanic/Latino students. These students scored 7.5 scale points higher than the whole group in reading and only 0.4 scale points lower in math.

Technology is used throughout the academic day. All K-8 classrooms have interactive whiteboards, student computers, and document cameras for learning. Beginning in grade two, students participate in the Accelerated Reader program to improve reading comprehension and many advanced readers are motivated by the quarterly goal achievement and rewards.

### **3c. Special education**

For the 2019-2020 school year, St. Joseph has 58 students enrolled who have diagnosed conditions, including speech and language. The school strives to meet the needs of all of these students with the least invasive intervention. Often this can be accomplished with simple modifications on the part of the classroom teacher. If more significant intervention is needed, St. Joseph works with the local public school to complete a referral process for any students who are identified by teachers as possibly needing academic intervention. An interventionist assigned to St. Joseph School will observe and assess the student. The St. Joseph teacher and the interventionist will then meet with the student's parents to approve testing for the child. Following testing, all will again meet to establish an individualized student plan (ISP).

St. Joseph students qualify for services for articulation, other health impairment, or specific learning disabilities, and normally receive 30 minutes of intervention per week. The therapy is provided by a third-party contracted through the public schools. Progress towards goals is communicated to parents quarterly and an in-person parent meeting is conducted annually.

In addition to speech and language therapies which are provided at no charge through public school cooperation, the school will make accommodations to allow occupational and physical therapists to meet with students at school during the school day. Such therapists are independently contracted by the parents directly.

### **3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered**

The local public school zone in which St. Joseph is located does not offer ELL or Title III services. SJCS would gladly participate if such programs were available. Despite the lack of these specific services, SJCS strives to provide intervention to ELL students as needed through in-class modifications, Title I, speech, etc. Additionally, SJCS strives to provide substantial parent involvement to these families by employing several bilingual staff members and providing some written documents in Spanish.

### **3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered**

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

St. Joseph Catholic School supports students' spiritual, academic, social, and emotional growth in a variety of ways. Spiritually, students are regularly provided the opportunity to participate in the life of the Church as altar servers, lectors, musicians, and prayer leaders. The Sacraments are central to student life. Holy Communion is offered twice weekly. Reconciliation is offered throughout the year, especially during Advent and Lent. Students prepare for First Communion and Confirmation during their school-day religion classes.

Always seeking improvement, SJCS initiated its first student culture and climate surveys for middle school and junior high in 2019. Students in grades 5-8 were asked to complete a Google Forms survey seeking input on how they view their entire school experience, including friendships, classes, teachers, bullying, cyberbullying, safety, and areas for improvement. The school administration and teacher teams analyzed the data and prepared small group and whole group discussions to dive deeper into student ideas and concerns.

Also in 2019, SJCS revamped its student behavior and recognition system based on two programs: Discipline with Purpose (DWP) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Having used DWP for over two decades, the school administration and teachers worked collaboratively to create a new "Learn. Love. Act." program based on the school's student motto that is recited daily: "I will try my best every day to LEARN, to LOVE others, and to ACT like Jesus." Fifteen positive behaviors (five in each category) were defined and classroom visual aids created. Examples include: kindness, friendship, responsibility, fortitude, curiosity, joy, and reverence. Students are publicly recognized in front of their parents at monthly assemblies to honor them for displaying one or more positive qualities.

To support social-emotional growth during the formative junior high years, students participate in an "Order" group, assigned to them as sixth graders. The Orders (Dominicans, Jesuits, Franciscans, Benedictines) connect students in grades 6-8 with one another and challenge them to work together in a variety of ways. Students can earn points via science fair participation, spelling bee success, making the Honor Roll, winning a recess challenge such as kickball, competing in events at the annual track and field day, and many other academic, athletic, and social activities. The Order that has earned the most points at the end of the year is presented with the "Panther Cup."

The school's library/media specialist is also a certified school counselor and provides individual and small group counseling sessions throughout the school year. Each year, the counselor forms lunch support groups as needed, such as "New Students" and "Third Grade Girls." As the need arises, the counselor also works closely with individual students who are experiencing difficulty.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

St. Joseph Catholic School engages families and the community in a variety of ways. The school board is comprised of current and former school parents who provide counsel and support to the pastor and school administration. Each year, the board conducts a parent satisfaction survey to guide school growth. Some recent school improvements based on the results of that survey have been a revamped lunch program, anti-bullying training for students, and improved safety and security procedures.

An active Parent-Teacher Organization leads and supports many activities throughout the year. The week before school starts, PTO organizes a Meet the Teacher event to welcome students and introduce them to their teachers. The major PTO meeting of the year comes at the end of August as Curriculum Night and parent social. The Fall Fun Fest provides a Halloween-themed night with activities for all ages and is open to both school and non-school families. The PTO organizes the Panther Gala, a major fundraising event that brings parents together in February in a fun, social setting. The school organizes a Men's Night in May. While sponsored by St. Joseph school parents, Men's Night targets those outside the school community, thus introducing the school to those potential parents who might value the excellent academic and social

environment offered at SJCS.

SJCS values parents in the learning process and recognizes them as the primary educators of their children. During the summer months, the school opens the library for themed events and for students to check-out books. A summer Book-Mobile has also been used to share books with families in the community. Two parent-teacher conferences are scheduled during the year, and over 90% of families attend. Results from DIBELS, DRA, STAR Reading, and Terra Nova assessments are provided throughout the year to parents. Course grades are automatically emailed to parents every Sunday evening. The school administration uses the church bulletin, weekly Principal's letter, social media, and email communications to inform the greater community of the school's academic successes.

The school partners with various organizations in the community. Each year, computer science students from the University of Arkansas visit the school for the Hour of Code in December. They teach students the importance of coding and computer science while introducing them to interactive coding challenges. SJCS hosts three to five teaching interns from the University annually. The school supports community beautification efforts through the Adopt-a-Street program and provides goods and services to the Cooperative Emergency Outreach food pantry, Honduras Mission Trip, and Intersection NWA homeless kitchen.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

Similar to many non-public schools around the country, the St. Joseph professional development budget is not as robust as is provided by public schools. Therefore, the school administrative team employs creative methods to advance the professional development of faculty and staff. SJCS does receive Title II-A funds, and the administration works to use these funds as effectively as possible.

The Catholic Diocese of Little Rock provides an annual day of inservice, which includes both religious and nonreligious academic training. SJCS teachers have offered workshops during this annual inservice day on topics such as Google for Education, ALICE Intruder Training, and Literacy Best Practices. The school's principal and assistant principal have attended the National Catholic Educational Association Convention and Expo. The Arkansas Nonpublic Schools Accrediting Association (ANSAA) conducts an annual meeting with a nationally recognized speaker which administrators and some teachers attend. In recent years, ANSAA has begun to bring these national speakers to different regions of the state for all teachers to attend.

In the past three years, the school has allocated professional development funds to providing teachers with high quality experiences in the science of reading. Four teachers, one each in grades K-3, have been trained at a week-long seminar on the direct, explicit, multisensory Orton-Gillingham approach to teach literacy skills to struggling readers.

Many local resources are also utilized to improve academic standards and support student achievement. A local cooperative agency provides one to three day workshops, usually during the summer on instructional improvement, the science of reading, math methods, science exploration, and technology. Five inservice days at the beginning of the school year are used for professional and spiritual development in targeted areas.

ANSAA conducts an annual teacher survey of professional development needs and shares the results with school administration. Standardized test scores serve a key role in administrators' decision-making regarding allocation of resources for training. Arkansas law currently requires 36 hours per year of inservice training for certified teachers, so the school's efforts are continual and purposeful in order for students to improve and grow in their learning.

Working closely with the Parent-Teacher Organization and Knights of Columbus, the school provides several staff appreciation and recognition events throughout the school year: Christmas luncheon, Church and School All-Staff Christmas Party, End-of-Year Banquet and Retirement Recognition, and Teacher Appreciation Week. The school administration also frequently opens their homes to staff and family socials.

#### **4. School Leadership:**

The leaders at St. Joseph employ a servant leadership model in helping all faculty and staff recognize their unique role within the school community. School leaders realize that leading by example is the most effective method of building relationships and ensuring that all are cognizant of the institution's goals. The school principal, assistant principal, and athletic director are usually the first in the building in the morning and/or the last out each day. This practice shows that they are available for the needs of students, teachers, and parents and provide proper supervision of activities that meet the goals of the institution.

Three days per week on non-Mass days, the school principal leads an all-school daily morning prayer with student assistance. Included is the recitation of the school motto, flag salute, Saint of the Day, and recognition of birthdays and other achievements.

All policies and procedures for faculty, staff, parents and students are carefully reviewed annually by the school board, pastor, principal, assistant principal, and athletic director to be sure they are necessary, relevant and consistent with the school's mission and philosophy. These are also reviewed yearly by the principal with the faculty and staff and communicated regularly through the parent newsletter.

Both the assistant principal and athletic director teach courses. The assistant principal teaches a semester leadership course for seventh graders, while the athletic director teaches physical education and seventh grade health. The principal has previously taught religion courses for junior high students, and he is currently involved in the Diocesan Diaconate Formation program.

Classroom observations and evaluations of teachers are completed informally and formally throughout the year to recognize successful strategies and offer suggestions for improvement. The principal and assistant principal participate in student assessment data meetings to determine Title I eligibility, leveled instruction placement, and homeroom assignments.

Teachers and staff members also share leadership responsibilities. Efforts such as weekly prayer services, service projects, school musicals, National Junior Honor Society, athletic teams, Catholic Schools Week, Hospitality Committee, Quiz Bowl, Robotics Club, accreditation committees, and data teams could not happen without the shared leadership of the entire staff.

The Parent-Teacher Organization and Athletic Boosters Club provide active support of school programs. The principal meets monthly with the PTO officers to plan activities and programs that build community and relationships.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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Following targeted professional development, teachers and students at St. Joseph Catholic School have embraced the concept of developing a growth mindset. Researched by Carol Dweck and described in her 2006 book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, SJCS has made a focused effort to ensure that all students understand the difference between a growth mindset and a fixed mindset. The instructional staff has participated in a year-long book study of *The Growth Mindset Coach: A Teacher's Month-by-Month Handbook for Empowering Students to Achieve*, by Annie Brock and Heather Hundley. The SJCS principal and assistant principal guide the monthly growth mindset professional development sessions to assist teachers in reflecting on the monthly theme and identifying ways for teachers to introduce the new growth mindset concept to students.

Following monthly professional development, the school organizes a schoolwide Growth Mindset Hour when all classes take a pause from normal activities and focus solely on students' growth mindsets. Each month includes a positive student mantra such as "Everyone Can Learn," "My Brain is like a Muscle that Grows," and "I Matter, You Matter." Student learning objectives have included neuroplasticity (our brains can grow), brain anatomy and physiology (the parts of the brain and what they do), the power of "Not Yet!" (developing a growth mindset attitude), how relationships impact the brain, and the value of challenges and mistakes. Students in kindergarten through eighth grade have all learned about the cerebrum and amygdala, how their brains grow and change from infancy into adulthood, and how positive friendships and kindness can actually impact their brains and the brains of others.

Looking to the future, the school is developing plans to provide mental health initiatives for middle school and junior high students to better understand their brains during the sometimes difficult and confusing time of adolescence and the teenage years. It is no secret that teenage depression and suicide are affecting far too many young people. The SJCS National Junior Honor Society members have begun a program called "CREATE Change" with community partner, Ozark Guidance Center. Following that day-long session, the NJHS students have started a student-led initiative to combat bullying and anxiety among students. One program the school is planning to incorporate in 2020 is called SOS: Signs of Suicide. St. Joseph Catholic School is committed to helping its students navigate the teenage years by better understanding their own brains and mental health.

## **PART VII - NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION**

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1. Non-public school association(s): Catholic

Identify the religious or independent associations, if any, to which the school belongs. Select the primary association first.

2. Does the school have nonprofit, tax-exempt (501(c)(3)) status?      Yes X      No

3. What is the educational cost per student?      \$6776  
(School budget divided by enrollment)

4. What is the average financial aid per student?      \$3110

5. What percentage of the annual budget is devoted to scholarship assistance and/or tuition reduction?      8%

6. What percentage of the student body receives scholarship assistance, including tuition reduction?      19%