

***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 Mrs. Kathleen Gorman  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Saint John Of The Cross Parish School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 708 51 Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Western Springs State IL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 60558 - 1925

County Cook

Telephone (708) 246-4454 Fax (708) 246-9010

Web site/URL https://www.stjohnofthecross.org/school/ E-mail gorman@sjc.pvt.k12.il.us

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\* Dr Jim Rigg E-mail jrigg@archchicago.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Archdiocese of Chicago Tel. (312) 534-5200

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 Mrs. Kim Sarros  
(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	43	31	74
K	25	37	62
1	31	21	52
2	31	34	65
3	28	30	58
4	29	34	63
5	31	30	61
6	32	34	66
7	38	24	62
8	31	27	58
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	319	302	621

\*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):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 1 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 7 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 87 % White
  - 4 % 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: 2%

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	1
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	14
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	15
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	631
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

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

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %  
0 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 0 %

Total number students who qualify: 0

8. Students receiving special education services: 7 %

42 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>0</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>7</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>1</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>16</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>14</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</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: 12

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.	30
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	14
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 21:1

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	95%	94%	98%	96%	96%
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. 2012

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

The mission of St. John of the Cross Parish School is to provide a safe and dynamic Catholic environment where faith is nourished and knowledge grows. We offer challenging educational experiences that foster success, promote unity, and respect the individuality of each student. Our parish school prides itself on multi-generational Catholic traditions and achievement, which empowers our students to live The Good News, Rooted in Faith, Growing in Knowledge.

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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For over 55 years, St. John of the Cross Parish School (SJC) has provided a safe and dynamic Catholic educational environment, built on excellence and a strong Catholic identity and legacy.

Besides the generations of families that have attended SJC, students have returned as staff members, dedicated to Catholic education and mission. Families attending SJC reside in the school's location of Western Springs, the surrounding western suburban communities, Chicago and the far west and south suburbs. We take pride in our multi-generational Catholic traditions and achievements. We are driven to achieve success in all academic areas, yet remain rooted in the faith-based education. In accordance with our mission, we offer challenging educational experiences that foster success, promote unity, and respect the individuality of each student.

Our school community is influenced by supportive parents, who regularly volunteer in school and parish activities. Additionally, many parents participate in philanthropic activities with their families outside of school, further emphasizing our community's compassion for others. Diversity is highlighted by our curriculum and involvement in community outreach programs. For example, Helping Hands, an organization serving adults with disabilities within our community, partners with SJC in a program entitled Teaching Together. We employ two adult interns as teacher's aides. The goal is to train these individuals so they become productive members of our community and to teach our students that regardless of any disability, all individuals deserve the same opportunities and respect.

Within our outreach programs and through many service projects, our goal is to also expose our students to socio-economic diversity through community groups and programs. Some of these organizations include BEDS Plus, Feed My Starving Children and Port Ministries Sandwich Making. Our older students participate in Leadership, a program designed to empower students to be competent leaders, compassionate toward others while serving their community at large.

When addressing school culture, we set high standards for teacher performance and increased academic expectations. Our academic programs prepare our students to excel at prestigious Catholic high schools throughout the Chicagoland area, while our faith and spiritual formation prepare our students to be positive, thoughtful and involved members of our parish and the larger community.

We build on Catholic and school traditions in our programming. These include our Christmas Pageant celebrating the birth of Christ in grades 1-4, our spring play which highlights our Fine Arts Program in grades 5-8, the Living Rosary in grade 7, focusing on our devotion to the Blessed Mother, and the May Crowning followed by grade 8 Ribbon Ceremony, which highlights students' journey through elementary school toward an understanding of community and responsibility as Christians in our society today. When the students graduate, our faculty blesses them with a beautiful hymn to begin a new journey in life. Our popular Memorial Games tradition unifies the student body, parents, alumni, and community members as our grade 8 students play a basketball tournament and create skits and songs to celebrate their journey to middle school graduation.

In order to achieve the remarkable community environment within the daily life of our students, we established the 3Rs Program, – Ready, Respectful, Responsible - which is the fabric of SJC. The 3Rs fosters our faith-based program. As a faculty, we collaborate within grade levels and through different disciplines, both vertically and horizontally. The spirit of collaboration flows into other committees, such as the Continuous School Improvement (CSIP) and the Technology Committee.

We received the Blue Ribbon Award in 2012, the symbol of which has come to acknowledge our academic excellence which is located on our school letterhead, the placard on the building, and banners and flags strategically placed throughout the building. Parents celebrate our achievement by placing magnets on their cars which proudly displays our Blue Ribbon status. Families come to SJC because of our excellent reputation for a quality education. The Blue Ribbon designation resonates with current and prospective families that we are tirelessly working to maintain excellence.

Given the ever changing technology in our world today, we have taken our academic program to the next level and increased our commitment to adapt the programs through a strategic plan in technology which incorporates 1:1 iPads in the classroom and utilizes many different technology applications and teaching tools. We also created a STREAM Program, based on STEM/STEAM. The R adds reading, research, and religion to a multidisciplinary approach and incorporates solid cross-curricular teaching. We partner with a local community group, TynkeRWorks, which transforms students' learning through project-based innovations.

All stakeholders take great pride in recognizing the school for all it has to offer and the contributions our families make to the school. We embrace the commitment of our community as our faculty, staff, parents, and students work together to make SJC an outstanding environment that is "Rooted in Faith, Growing in Knowledge."

## **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

SJC has developed a fluid and comprehensive core curriculum design. In all subject areas, it begins with the established grade level standards, based upon the Archdiocesan GAINS Education Group, which combined the Common Core standards with college readiness standards. We strive to stretch our students beyond grade level expectations. Our grade level teams collaborate together on a weekly basis. At in-house professional development sessions, teachers articulate vertically across all grade levels within the particular disciplines and have written in-house articulation guides within our Language Arts (LA), math, science, fine arts and STREAM curriculum. During our professional development sessions, the different core curricular areas articulate and create cross curricular learning, which maximizes student learning. For instance, teachers collaborate regarding a puppet show in grade 6. LA teaches students how to write a cohesive document with a solid plot and conversation, art constructs puppets, science and math engineer a staging project, while technology films and curates each puppet show, allowing parents to view online.

Our teachers take great pride in meeting a child at his/her academic knowledge and skill base level, then build onto it. MAP formative assessment occurs across all grade levels three times throughout the school year. The results from that testing allows teachers to create common areas of need where they utilize our Student Resource Services (SRS) to push into the classroom or pull out small groups of students for additional instruction or enrichment. We focus on those learning styles and skills, then create learning plans and classroom instruction.

Our approach to instruction supports independent student learning through structured teaching. We want students to become problem solvers and critical thinkers. In order to do so, our teachers develop their curriculum through focused instruction, guided instruction, productive group work and independent learning. The focused instruction is achieved through goal setting, modeling, demonstrating, with formative assessment checking for understanding. Guided instruction utilizes questions, prompts, cues, etc. Students collaborate and deepen their understanding of the instruction, until they are finally able to work independently.

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

Our LA curriculum in Early Childhood - grade 3, centers on foundational language arts skills. Through a multi-modal and differentiated approach, teachers focus on the following: reading comprehension, vocabulary, phonics, fluency, grammar, spelling, close reading, and text features. We meet the needs of all learners by providing leveled guided reading clubs that are fluid as the members of the clubs are continually reassessed. Hands-on centers support the concepts being taught through a variety of modalities that allow the students to make choices and move at their individual pace. Technology supports learning in the classroom in many ways. One example is using QR codes to access online information that introduces or explains concepts. Book Creator is an app that allows students to write individual iBooks. Teachers use periodic online assessments and the MAP formative assessment, done once a trimester, to guide instruction and keep instructional groups fluid. Our SRS collaborate with each grade level and provide push-in and pull-out support to further assist the individual learning needs of each child.

Within our intermediate and middle school program, we build upon these foundational skills. Instruction is directly tied to the English Language Arts Priority Standards based on assessment data, including Aspire and MAP. Teachers incorporate differentiated instruction to address all strands, with emphasis on weaker areas. Students engage with provided text to identify and analyze ideas and concepts, work in blended-learning stations utilize close reading strategies and complete tasks related to ELA Standards. Our rigorous writing program is reinforced through multiple methods of writing, including expository, persuasive, argumentative, research-based, and narrative. Reading and writing are incorporated in all disciplines, particularly in our STREAM projects.

Part of our writing program focuses on a complex research project and utilizes annotations at each grade level, incorporating internal citations and works cited references following both Modern Language Association (MLA) and the American Psychological Association (APA) style and formatting.

Students participate in novel-based studies where they work on activities in book clubs, which follow the principle of guided reading. Students choose additional reading selections based upon their interests and varying abilities, as determined through the formative testing. Novel studies focus on the identification, analysis, and interpretation of skills related to the reading standards. Assessment occurs through individual and group projects, various writing assignments, oral presentations, and testing.

Another key area within our LA curriculum is the required summer reading projects. In grades 5-8, students must read selected novels before returning to school after summer break. In this way, it assures that the students are reading. It also gives teachers a starting point within their curriculum when school resumes. As with the novel study, students analyze various aspects of literature. Characterization and theme become a focal point through comparing/contrasting the novel to other novels, books, current events or moral and ethical issues that surface within the content of the novel.

We employ online learning resources, including Membean (vocabulary) and IXL (ELA skills practice), as well as Newsela (nonfiction reading and writing). All these online tools allow for differentiation based on students skill levels.

### **1c. Mathematics**

Within our Math Program in Pre-K through grade 5, students are engaged with learning, focused on working smarter and preparing for the future. Math lessons begin with problem-based situations and then build to more abstract problems. Our curriculum builds student problem-solving proficiency and confidence, along with other basic skills resulting in successful results on assessments.

We begin with the basic skills in the younger grades, concentrating on counting, understanding basic operations and incorporating algebraic thinking, measurement and geometry, then solving problems. Fact fluency is recognized as an essential building block in the primary. The goal for all students is to internalize both addition and multiplication facts by the end of grade 3. Success in this skill translates into a higher level of confidence in mathematics for our students. Students in grades K-8 test their skills through the MAP formative assessment. In addition, grades 3-8 are evaluated with the Aspire Summative Testing Program. Our teachers examine the data and utilize it for differentiation through Math Centers and blended learning. Our SRS team will push in or pull out students, based upon their needs from MAP Progress Monitoring.

Within our Middle School, we teach a year ahead of the grade level benchmarks. Thus, we created a Pre-Algebra Program for grade 7 and grade 8 Algebra Program. Grade 7 course heavily incorporates life skills through word problems. Our grade 8 Math teacher works directly with the local high school district and assesses our students with the high school midterm and final. Students are introduced to graphing calculators in grade 8 and learn to navigate the various functions aligned to the Algebra curriculum. As a result, many of our students begin their high school studies having affirmed a grasp on Algebra, allowing them to expand their studies into more accelerated areas of mathematics in high school. For struggling students, we created a block math schedule for more support with our SRS Program. These students are given opportunities for extra practice, individualized instruction, and diagnostic testing.

The addition of a Math Lab in grades 5-8, reinforces and expands upon ideas/concepts presented in class. Many lessons in Math Lab focus on application of material in a real-world context. The lab also enhances our STREAM Program. Students utilize online support through our math series for video instruction and practice. Additionally, each student has an account through IXL that the teachers supplement to improve understanding, which is aligned to the learning standards. Our dedicated teachers attend Academic Bowls, designed for students to work as collaborative teams in problem solving, and allowing high achieving students to work towards establishing their skills and knowledge in a competitive way. These competitions allow students to showcase their academic strengths among other grade schools in the area. Self selected

math experiences are incorporated throughout the grades giving both practice in previously taught skills and enrichment of higher level math concepts. These center activities promote independent learning.

Math Club in grades 5-8 and Continental Math in grades 3-8 reinforces independent thinking and learning.

#### **1d. Science**

SJC incorporates the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), with an investigative focus in our primary through middle school programs. Primary students are introduced to science through the nonfiction reading that occurs within grade level centers and various exploratory field trips. In the upper grades, our curriculum centers around Earth, Physical, and Life Sciences.

Students learn how to be creative, collaborative problem solvers. They are encouraged to think critically, use technology responsibly, and communicate effectively. We created STREAM in all grades. As a multidisciplinary and cross-curricular approach, communication and collaboration skills are ever important in our increasingly global society. We are preparing our students to make scientific inquiries today and prepare for the jobs of the future.

Students attend the science lab where they take their scientific inquiry skills and apply them to real-life investigations. Science naturally lends itself to differentiation through hands-on, small group investigations, encouraging scientific thinking and discovery. Additionally our school courtyard provides many environmental/scientific/biological features where a teacher can use nature.

STREAM projects begin in Kindergarten learning about bird adaptations and the function of their beaks. Students construct an actual bird's nest incorporating geometry, writing, and art into their model. The student's level of knowledge and skill increases as presented by our third grade study of ecosystems. Through recycling, reusing, and reducing programs, grade 3 students learn to be thoughtful, responsible citizens. Students create/construct an invention based upon a reading entitled, "Junkyard Wonders." We continue to see this progression as seventh-grade students create prototypes, models, and investigations utilizing electricity, magnetism, servos, and switches. Finally, our eighth grade students explore life science from cell to ecosystem. In an exploration of cells, students conduct internet research, construct a mathematical model, and artistically represent the cell and its organelles. Our Science Lab supports this learning with the space it provides as a resource.

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

We offer our younger students the opportunity to learn more about social studies and civics through the holiday celebrations throughout the course of a year. They become acquainted with community as it relates to family and the larger community. Students delve into maps, charts and projects. By grade 3, students discover famous Americans and their impact on our lives. They are introduced to basic concepts of history and geography, the State of Illinois, and the Village of Western Springs, through an expeditionary learning experience.

The curriculum becomes more sophisticated as students enter grade 4, incorporating economics, citizenship, geography, government, history, culture, and technology to better understand the world around us. Students participate in our Regional Fair, which incorporates STREAM, and is a means to learn more about states and regional areas of our country.

In Intermediate and Middle School, social studies includes history, geography, economics, government, and current events, taught simultaneously as they affect each other, reinforcing critical thinking. Classes challenge perspectives on historical events and discussions and debates, which are a vehicle for students to voice their opinions and ideas in a respectful manner. Students can better understand the cause and effect relationship of history and the relevance of historical events. Authentic assessments recognize different learning styles and are designed to challenge the students to think critically.

Constitution. A Vietnam veteran speaks to grade 8 and students visit the Holocaust Museum in Skokie, Illinois as primary resources. We also supplement instruction with other multiple primary sources/documents, including written text, pictures, videos, music, and newspapers. Technology embellishes the instruction. One resource utilized is Newsela, which is an online database of primary and secondary documents. The students modify the text to meet their reading lexile level. Again, STREAM is incorporated into student learning.

**1f. For secondary schools:**

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

Our Core Curriculum in Early Childhood covers LA, math, and religion combined with Fine Arts, which encourages our young students through a stimulating, loving, caring environment and develops the skills needed for school readiness. Within the LA Program, students learn pre-reading skills, phonemic awareness, decoding and encoding skills. We use the Rowland Reading Program, “Happily Ever After.” This program precedes the Rowland Reading Program, “Super Kids,” which will be used daily in kindergarten through grade 2 and incorporates all learning modalities. Students are taught through whole group and center-based instruction. Daily routines play an important role in the students’ language development, days of the week, months of the year, read-alouds and storytelling. Students listen and speak through free play, participation, directions, and visual/auditory cues. The Math Program teaches number sense, geometry and problem solving. Within the Math Program, our students learn formal addition and subtraction, estimation, measurement, geometric shapes, and relationships in patterns and data. Students learn to relate prior knowledge to new information. Our program follows the EC learning standards in social studies and science. Social/emotional growth is developed through play, as students form relationships with peers and learn empathy. Our Religion Program teaches about God’s love and connects Scripture stories to children’s lives. Learning about God and prayer stimulates the spiritual growth of the child. They learn about the world God has made, accept their own uniqueness and develop a sense of belonging to family and the community within the classroom. The Fine Arts Program provides students a means of expressing themselves through music, art, P.E. and technology. We also offer an afternoon Preschool Enrichment Program, focusing on LA and science. The students are exposed to hands-on and engaging lessons that prepare them for kindergarten.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Our Fine Arts Program strengthens the whole child, academically, spiritually, physically, socially and emotionally by exploring areas of self-expression through creative means utilizing language, performance, sensory elements, listening skills, and organization. Through the arts, our young children have an opportunity to explore and utilize their creative talents.

In Art, students are introduced to many styles and types of art and art history through the use of a wide variety of media, tools and technology, such as watercolor, oil pastels, clay, Paper Mache as well as Google Classroom iPad applications. The art curriculum is arranged so that each year, the rigor of the grade level projects increase, scaffolding upon the previous year. A grade 7 architectural STREAM unit engages students in the process of creating two-point perspective buildings, with pencil and on the iPad, and combining with the history of architecture from Greek to modern day, culminating with a final ceramic architectural façade.

Our Music Program allows students to participate in various aspects of music. They learn first through rhymes associated with music and simple songs, developing a love of singing. Students further incorporate beats, rhythm and melody using various instruments, such as drums and recorders. Grade 8 performs an annual talent show, spotlighting students’ talents through their specific musical or theatrical skills. Our band program offers students an opportunity to compete with other area schools. Many of our students receive accolades for their accomplishments in various instrumental presentations. Our Music Program culminates with Band/Choir Concerts during the school year.

We also combine music with performing arts. In our Christmas Pageant, students perform the story of Christ’s birth in an age appropriate production. Grades 1-4 perform this rendition with song, dance and

memorization of script. In grades 5-8, they participate in an all school musical, allowing the children to build confidence, strengthen public speaking skills and collaborate as a team. The students take part in all of the production elements including exercises in vocal and dance performance, acting, stage management, lighting and costume and set design.

Through our Wellness Program, we focus on student safety through the foods that we eat as highlighted in the classroom curriculum. Students need physical activity not only for their physical well-being, but their emotional well-being too. The PE/Health Program is aerobic-centered. The PE teachers utilize Google Classroom to implement all three domains within the PE curriculum: psychomotor, cognitive, and affective.

The goal of the Spanish immersion program (grades 1-8) is to instill confidence and enthusiasm using the target language by developing listening, reading, writing and speaking skills. Students also gain an understanding of customs, traditions, history and geography of Spanish-speaking countries. An overarching goal is to prepare our students for the general written and oral skills needed for high school.

Technology is integrated throughout the curriculum in Early Childhood – grade 8, empowering our students for life. Grades K-3 learn basic computer skills preparing them for the transition to 1:1 iPad program in grades 3-8. The school 1:1 iPad program for grades 3-8 provides a consistent and flexible mobile platform, Google Apps for Education, including Google Classroom, digital textbooks, and other personalized tools which enhances creative and collaborative learning. Students in grades 5-8 attend STREAM Exploration class which focuses on robotics, coding, genius hour, and engineering. This year, our grade 8 culminates the STREAM curriculum by creating a drone. Students use the scientific method and the engineering design process to complete problem based projects. All grade levels learn STREAM cross curricular projects throughout the school year. SJC is certified in Common Sense Media's Digital Citizenship Curriculum.

Character building and life skills are provided to every grade level with a consistent program designed to problem solve with social issues that our students face. Our teachers utilize Second Step, a character development series in an age appropriate manner. As needed, our school counselor works with the different grade levels on socialization, problem solving and/or conflict resolution. Our counselor is available for individual sessions as needed.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which students understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (casel.org). Utilizing the five core competencies outlined in CASEL's framework (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making) and implementing the Random Acts of Kindness Curriculum (RAK), SJC has been proactive in addressing the social and emotional needs of our students. Grade level group sessions are scheduled for students in grades 3-8 during the school year. Grades 5 and 6 are enrolled in weekly SEL classes, utilizing the RAK curriculum. The lessons build upon core concepts of respect, caring, inclusiveness, integrity, responsibility, and courage, which are routinely reinforced throughout the school year.

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

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

At SJC, the SRS team's mission is to provide academic support services for students who have been identified as having one or more learning needs. Some of the students have Student Service Plans with academic accommodations, while others have an Individual Service Plan (ISP) and receive direct services from one of our two public school districts.

SRS works with grade level teams to determine which students require push-in support, and/or small group pull-out sessions. The grade level teacher and the SRS teacher articulate based upon student performance and formative results produced through MAP testing, Aspire assessment, STAR Reading Inventory, and classroom observation. Groups of students with the same learning needs are grouped together. Teachers also work one-on-one with students who have ISP and Student Service Plans. Groups are flexible and

change after thoughtful collaboration with grade level teachers to ensure remediation needs are met. Throughout this process, teachers and parents collaborate.

The SJC School Intervention Team (SIT) is made up of nine educators whose primary focus is to review student performance, generally on a monthly basis, and offer recommendations for interventions. SIT's task is to share ideas and suggest intervention strategies to be included in an action plan that will be implemented by the classroom teacher and/or SRS personnel to close any performance gaps.

Struggling learners are provided with interventions at increasing levels of intensity to accelerate their rate of learning growth. These services may be provided by a variety of personnel, including general education classroom teachers, SRS teachers, instructional aides, and reading/math specialists. Progress is closely monitored to assess both the learning rate and level of growth performance of individual students. SIT is designed for use when making decisions in both general education and student resource services settings, creating a well-integrated system of instruction and intervention guided by student outcome data.

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

Enrichment support varies across grade levels. Within the classroom, teachers instruct students through book clubs in small groups, designed to offer differentiation. After school academic clubs support students who want to compete with other schools. We give the children this enrichment, then send them to surrounding high schools, where they compete in Scholastic Competitions. Continental Math and Northwestern NUMATS Program provide students the opportunity to test and discover their strength within this area of the curriculum. Parents also send their children to test through ACT and find some students who score exceedingly high. Through a pull out program, we extend the curricular learning of particular concepts or activities. Our Math Program is particularly strong in grades 7 and 8. We offer Pre-Algebra to grade 7 and Algebra to grade 8. This affords students an opportunity to test out of Algebra I in their Freshman year of high school and it builds their math understanding. One final area of classroom enrichment begins at the Preschool level, where we offer a program to our early learners in LA and Science. Through hands on activities, the children become more adept at skills and concepts.

Various academic field trips extend student learning. Educational groups are invited into the school as well for experiential learning. Some of our students in grades 7 and 8 attend an accelerated course at local public and Catholic high schools, which once again, gives those students an edge in their high school courses.

Our enrichment approach has been instrumental to SJC's academic success year after year. It keeps our teachers aware of where they are as professionals and how they can strive to improve. It also informs them how to tailor instruction to meet the needs of each grade level as a whole. The end result is yearly achievement of scores in the 'Ready' or "Exceeding" readiness levels on the ACT Aspire summative assessment and the maintenance of an overall rigorous educational environment.

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

We have a limited number of students requiring Special Education Services. We are fortunate to collaborate with the local school district to determine a student's needs. The teacher first requests to have a professional screen completed, per parent approval, of the student who is identified needing a specific service. Those specific services may include Occupational Therapy, Speech, and/or Physical Therapy. The District is notified, completes the screening and meets with the Head of Student Services at SJC and our Assistant Principal to determine the best course of action needed. An ISP is composed and implemented so that the student receives needed services. We are fortunate to have the District personnel provide those services directly to the students in our building.

Often, a student may have a specific identified learning disability, Attention Deficit Disorder, other health issues or mild disabilities. Our Head of Student Services meets with the teachers, parents, and Assistant Principal, then devices a Student Support Plan, as it is labeled in the Catholic School. It does contain the accommodations that a 504 Plan would contain. Other issues may include social emotional issues which our School Counselor handles. Our full time nurse monitors any of the health issues and works with parents on

more serious problems.

Once again, SEL addresses the process through which students understand and manage emotions as mentioned earlier. Second Step, a character building and life skills program, is provided in every grade level in an age appropriate curriculum. The program assists students in problem solving with social issues they may face. It also functions as an anti-bullying program. SJC has been proactive in addressing the social and emotional needs of our students by recognizing issues before they become serious.

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

**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:**

SJC creates a welcoming environment. Our mission statement greets visitors upon entering the building and is posted in every classroom as a visual reminder. We want our stakeholders to embrace the mission and Catholic identity. Our teachers interweave our theme “Rooted in Faith, Growing in Knowledge” through the different disciplines throughout the day.

Our character development program reinforces the mission. The 3 R’s - Ready, Respectful, Responsible – engage students by stressing the importance of being ready to learn, showing a respectful attitude toward teachers, classmates and other adults as a way of life, and choosing to be responsible for one’s choices. These three traits work in tandem in developing the whole child and reinforcing social/emotional growth. As a school, we recognize students publicly by announcing their names over the PA and again at the end of each trimester. Their photographs are placed on the bulletin board in the school lobby each month, recognizing their efforts.

Other means of engaging and motivating students occur by involving our students in Academic Bowls, Speech/Debate tournaments, and the National Spelling Bee. We have had two students achieve national recognition for their participation in the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Students participate in a plethora of extracurricular activities, clubs, band/choir, chess, no cut athletics, etc.

In order to assure that the culture/climate becomes part of the student growth, we recognize as an administration, that we must empower our teachers and let them know they are valued and supported. Our teachers work productively in the grade level teams, collaborating about students with whom they work, plan curriculum and organize different school activities. Teachers articulate vertically among different grade levels and disciplines at faculty meetings. Teacher committees allow for lively discussion regarding various aspects of school life. Having a voice creates a positive rapport with teachers and an overall respect for what each individual offers with their time and talent.

At each staff meeting, we pray and offer personal intentions for loved ones. Teachers have the opportunity to “shout out” and recognize a positive moment in their professional life. Our Social Committee, fully supported by administration, offers a variety of activities throughout the year which all are welcome to attend and participate. We celebrate special occasions such as engagements or newborn children, have special luncheons for staff and celebrate altogether for special school wide activities, such as Halloween. This flows down to the student body. Overall, we are blessed with a supportive group of professionals.

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

When engaging families and community, we communicate the importance of partnership and stress parents as the primary educator. Communication is key. The website, therefore, becomes a core element, supplemented by the use of Google Classroom and newsletters in attaining this goal. Administrators and teachers regularly relay school/classroom curriculum in a weekly or monthly update to parents. Our Director of Advancement provides a summary of school activities in the Sunday bulletin and has created an alumni database in assisting the school with fundraising. In addition, the school is active on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts which furthers communication.

Parent input is crucial in maintaining a partnership for an excellent education. Each year, three parents or community members are elected for a three year term on the School Advisory Board, a total of nine members. These individuals participate in marketing, budgeting, enrollment and Catholic Identity. Board members provide counsel to the Principal, as well as develop, formulate and recommend policy changes. In the same manner, we have an Athletic Advisory Board which offers advice to the Principal concerning the athletic program. We often recognize that, as we determine policy changes, other parents or community members have much to offer. We invite parents onto committees to give their input, such as our Wellness Committee, Homework Committee, Uniform Committee, and Tuition Committee.

Parents recently worked with administration on two particular projects. The first was a yearlong educational project on Internet Safety. It culminated with local law enforcement representatives who spoke to families about keeping their students safe in this age of technology. The second project, a Wellness Committee, centers on the health of the students. As such, we brought in a local allergist and a program entitled FARE (Food, Allergy, Research, Education), addressing parent concerns about allergies and conducting an educational assembly for the students. The work of this committee prompted a change in policy by creating an Approved Classroom Snack List school-wide.

Another area where parents offer their services is through volunteering in the classroom. Presently, we have around 200 parents who regularly volunteer with specific activities. Volunteers manage the various Parent Association fundraising events such as a Book Fair, Art in the Classroom, Santa's Workshop, Celebrate SJC Day, Ice Cream Social, etc. Many parents come to school liturgies/prayer services and supervise recess and the lunchroom. Parents are readily available when we sponsor new parent events or Open Houses, which help to communicate the vibrant community here at SJC.

We certainly are blessed to have strong parent support and community involvement. Last year, our School Advisory Board conducted a school survey to collect feedback from parents on activities and curriculum at SJC. Their input was invaluable. This parent support sets us apart and sends the message to everyone that a strong partnership between school and home is the best way to achieve outstanding results.

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

We value the professional development (PD) of our teachers and staff in meeting the needs of all our students. Each year we develop our Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP). Our goals are a result of our Aspire assessment, given in April the previous school year. The faculty is split into three major committees: AdvancEd, Assessment and Technology. Initiatives flow from these committees. First, we integrated MAP assessment into our K-8 Program, thereby having a formal assessment in all grades, concentrating on the grade level benchmarks and guiding instruction in those grade levels. Aspire summative assessment in grades 3-8 was instituted across the diocese a few years ago, thus the committee worked diligently with the administration in understanding the summative data. When these committees meet, they examine the data and determine instructional strategies. Our third committee, Technology, required a more thoughtful strategy as we recognize that technology changes frequently and we anticipate those changes in preparing our students for the 21st Century. Therefore, we hired a technology coach who instituted numerous changes in our approach to technology. The administration and the technology team created a strategic plan moving forward. The PD provides needed workshops for teachers in achieving an adeptness with fundamental technology skills, instituting the Digital Citizenship curriculum at all grade levels, understanding assessment results, developing blended learning strategies in the classroom, formulating the STREAM Program, and aligning technology instruction to the grade level benchmarks.

We articulate at faculty meetings when discussing our curriculum vertically and horizontally. This type of activity is paramount when examining data per grade level or discipline. It offers the opportunity to clearly see where students fall in terms of academics and how we can improve instruction to assist them. It incorporates our SRS team in assisting with instruction.

We formulated a book club where we discuss pertinent educational pedagogy. Last year, our focus was on the book *Students at the Center – Personalized Learning with Habits of Mind* by Bena Kallick and Allison Zmuda. This year, we examine *Better Learning Through Structured Teaching* by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey. Through PD, we stress the individual learning plans for each student.

If a teacher desires particular training in an area for self-improvement, we provide a stipend each year where they may use those funds to attend PD outside the building. They return and present what they learned to their colleagues. In this way, our teachers constantly work toward improving themselves and each other. We also provide teachers the opportunity to observe their peers, an excellent learning tool.

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

Our school leadership institutes a sense of collaboration and shared leadership on staff. The Principal is the Spiritual and Curriculum/Instructional Leader. Although the religion curriculum is an integral part of who we are, as Faith Leader, the principal models and lives the faith daily through her actions and decisions that affect the school. The Principal oversees all curricular programs and attends the grade level meetings to assure that benchmarks are met. As she sees teachers growing professionally, she will give them additional responsibility in developing that sense of leadership. At this point, two of our teachers have decided to attend a Master's Program geared toward achieving their administrative licensure. The Principal meets four times a year with each teacher to establish their goals reflecting the needs of our students, instructional strategies to achieve that end and PD needed for excellence. The Principal visits the classroom often to assure that these goals are met through observation and informal/formal evaluation, and offers teachers coaching in areas of need.

Our Assistant Principal heads the CSIP process and works directly with Student Services and the SRS Program. His role with the CSIP is to finalize the CSIP goals, action plan and instruction needed in the classroom to achieve that end. With SRS, the classroom teacher and parent/s, he oversees the creation of a Student Support Plan for those individual students who need it. The SRS teachers are assigned cases and classes depending upon the students' needs.

We cultivate teacher leaders to take on different avenues of responsibility, such as, Reading Chair, Math Chair, STREAM coach, etc. Our Aspire Coach plays a key role with assessment. He utilizes the data from the testing to assist teachers in making sound instructional decisions. We designate a few meetings each year to examine data.

Both school leaders review the Parent Student Handbook and the Staff Handbook over the summer, make needed improvements and review with staff in August. Parents are encouraged to attend a Curriculum Night where changes are presented and explained, goals for the school year are presented, and parents can then attend individual grade level curriculum presentations. All stakeholders must sign the handbooks, indicating that they understand and will follow the policies within its pages. Along with the Curriculum Night, the principals meet for "Coffee with the Principals," which opens conversation about many areas of school, curriculum, policies, etc. Parents expressed a need to understand our Math Program, so we arranged a Math Night which provided insight to our overall program and gave parents an opportunity for questions.

The leadership has an Open Door Policy where all are welcome to share their successes and challenges. One example occurs at the end of the school year where teachers/staff complete a survey, indicating our successes and challenges moving forward. We want our teachers to achieve success and we encourage them to develop relationships with all staff members so that all feel that we are a part of the SJC family.

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

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The one practice that makes SJC so academically successful year after year has been the creation of grade-level goals based upon each grade-level's performance on the ACT Aspire summative assessment in the areas of reading and math. The ACT Aspire test determines if the goal type is a 'Benchmark Goal' or a 'Performance Goal'. A Benchmark Goal is determined when the group average is below ACT Aspire readiness standards. A Performance Goal is determined if the group readiness average is 'Ready' or 'Exceeding'. Based on the readiness level, the goal type is determined using Archdiocese of Chicago Curriculum Strands and Benchmarks. This identifies the skills in the strand in which students at a grade-level performed lowest in comparison to the other strands in each benchmark. SJC consistently scores in the 'Ready' or 'Exceeding' readiness level. Because of this, SJC teachers historically create performance goals.

Once performance goals are determined, action plans are created by teachers in each of the assessed performance areas. An integral part of these action plans is for each grade level to identify the instructional strategy(ies) and interactions with students that teachers will use to teach each benchmark. Student engagement is also identified by zeroing in on the differentiated student-centered learning opportunities and activities that meet students' individual needs. Curricular resources, which specify the rigorous coursework, discussions, or other tasks that will be used to target the benchmarks are then named. The final aspect of each action plan is benchmark assessment, the teacher identifies the general timeline when the Benchmark will be assessed. The ACT Aspire summative assessment is then used to assess each grade-level's action plan, which then forms the basis of the following year's performance goals and subsequent action plans.

This process has been the most instrumental to SJC's academic success year after year. It keeps our teachers adjusting as professionals and striving to improve. It also informs them how to tailor instruction to meet the needs of each grade level as a whole. The end result is yearly achievement of scores in the 'Ready' or 'Exceeding' readiness levels on the ACT Aspire summative assessment and the maintenance of an overall rigorous educational environment.

## 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?      \$6280  
(School budget divided by enrollment)
4. What is the average financial aid per student?      \$2585
5. What percentage of the annual budget is devoted to scholarship assistance and/or tuition reduction?      45%
6. What percentage of the student body receives scholarship assistance, including tuition reduction?      2%