



DIocese OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

• PO Box 230, Wheeling, West Virginia 26003 •

Catholic Education Expands in Martinsburg with the Restoration of High School Grade Levels

Friday, July 19, 2024

MARTINSBURG—The Martinsburg area Catholic community and the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston are excited to announce the expansion of Catholic education in the Eastern Panhandle with the restoration of high school grade levels at St. Joseph School in Martinsburg beginning with the 2025-26 school year.

The high school levels are an extension of St. Joseph School—currently serving infants through eighth grade—and will be managed as one school system.

“It is a true joy to be able to announce that we are opening a Catholic school rather than closing one,” said Most Rev. Mark E. Brennan, Bishop of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. “With the growth of the Catholic population in the Eastern Panhandle, there is a need to expand Catholic education at St. Joseph's School. To that end, our Diocesan Finance Council and I are providing seed money to establish a Catholic high school in Martinsburg and we will work with local Catholics to make it a reality. I am truly grateful to the parents and friends of Catholic education in the Eastern Panhandle for their commitment to this project.”

The enrollment plan for the school is a progressive enrollment model, meaning that beginning with the 2025 academic year (Fall 2025) ninth and tenth-grade levels will be offered and based on the current school campus. From there, the high school will mature with additional grade levels being added each year. The first graduating class will be the Class of 2029.

Currently there are 430 students enrolled at St. Joseph School. The new high school levels will accommodate 40-50 students per grade for the first year. Staff hiring is already underway for the high school.

Bishop Brennan added, “our Catholic schools do more for students than just fill their heads with facts or numbers, they fill their hearts with the love of God—they form the whole person in Christ. Students learn to be better disciples of Christ, to serve their communities in body and mind, and to live the Gospel. This is why parents choose a Catholic education for their children. We are thankful for those parents and are excited to support the growth of Catholic education in Martinsburg.”

“From the time that I arrived at St. Joseph Parish,” said Father Thomas R. Gallagher, pastor of St. Joseph Parish and School in Martinsburg, “I cannot tell how many people have been asking about when we would start a high school. Not only that, parishioners and alumni who attended

when St. Joseph School had a high school always spoke fondly of their experience. When I heard the news that St. Maria Goretti High School in Hagerstown, MD was shuttering, I felt was morally imperative to do something to provide Catholic education for those of our alumni who are in high school and those who will be coming up in future years. This is one way we can evangelize like St. Paul, to put our Faith into practice—helping high school students who need to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Fullness of the Truth the Catholic Church preaches. I want to thank Bishop Brennan and Ms. Jennifer Hornyak for being so supportive of our school and the idea to reestablish the high school after all these years. It is my hope that Catholic education will continue to grow and flourish in the Eastern Panhandle for many years to come.”

With this expansion, St. Joseph School will better serve all parish communities in the Eastern Panhandle. The school will be open to all members of the community, regardless of faith, race, or sex.

History:

The Daughters of Charity from Emmitsburg, Maryland established Saint Joseph School on September 4, 1883 in a two-story building with four classrooms on East Stephen Street. The wooded school building was moved to the west side of South Queen Street in the late 1880s.

In 1905, a four-year high school was introduced into the school system, and the wooden school building was replaced in 1913 with an eight-room, two-story, brick building. The building was dedicated on October 14, 1914, by the Reverend William Anthony McKeefrey. The first class to graduate from the high school was a class of eight students in 1915.

In the late 1960s, the four-classroom high school building was completed.

A gymnasium was built and dedicated in 1938, and the Saint Joseph Crusaders Basketball team brought spectators from throughout the state. The basketball team continually went to the West Virginia State Competition and came back victorious in 1967.

The high school closed in 1972, with the last seniors to graduate in the class of 1971.

In 2000, Saint Joseph School moved across Stephen Street to the current school building. The old gymnasium was torn down in 2006 and our current school building houses a new gym. The eight-room brick building on Queen Street currently holds Saint Joseph Church parish offices and serves a variety of other functions related to our church and our school. The four-room high school building now serves as our pre-kindergarten building.

Mission and Identity:

St. Joseph School Mission:

Saint Joseph School educates the young in the spirit of the Gospel, stressing Catholic values, inspiring academic excellence, global awareness, and services to those in need.

School Identity: Taken from the school’s website, <https://sjswv.org>

For more than 130 years St. Joseph School has been providing an excellent Catholic education in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. Its Catholic identity truly sets us apart in the way in which students are prepared to be good Christian leaders in the community throughout the rest of their lives. Through the building of a strong faith life, a firm moral character, and a desire of service, students are able to be always faithful to Christ and those around them.

The primary goal at St. Joseph School, above all else, is to help make saints. Thus, it strives to help each student encounter Jesus Christ and so build a personal relationship with him (cf. John 1:38-39). Through instruction in prayer, an intensive focus on scripture, and teaching about Church doctrine, students grow dramatically in their faith. In addition, they are given numerous opportunities to participate in the Sacraments such as weekly school mass and periodic penance services every year.

Furthermore, students are taught the importance of a moral character and how it must have a strong foundation (cf. Mt 7:25). They are encouraged to grow in virtue with each moment and each action. Each teacher helps to guide students to have a well-formed conscience and values system beginning with preschool up until when they graduate in 8th grade. Students are taught personal discipline through their academic assignments, extracurricular activities, and the normal day to day interactions with others so that they may be who God made them to be.

The belief in the Gospel drives all at the school to be “doers of the Word and not hearers only” (Ja 1:22). The students live out their faith through serving others and this often leads others to do so as well. Through a variety of service projects, activities, speakers, and field trips students are encouraged to be young men and women for others, even when it takes them out of their comfort zone. It is this giving of oneself that allows each student to live their faith, but also to choose what is good and moral throughout their lives.

St. Joseph School’s mission is to guide every student to be faithful to Jesus Christ. The Catholic identity of St. Joseph School is essential in helping teachers and students to live out daily Christ’s commandment “Love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34). By firmly trusting in Christ, living out their faith authentically, and teaching them to lead by example, students, and the whole school family, are able to let their light shine (Mt. 5:16).

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