

Spring 2025

ACADEMY CONNECTION

ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC ACADEMY
DIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY-ST. JOSEPH



Welcome



A message from our President, Mrs. Natalie Newville:

It's a truly exciting time to be part of the Catholic school community here in St. Joseph! There's so much energy and joy on each of our campuses, and it's a true blessing to witness all the incredible things happening every day. Whether it's athletics, music, theater, or academics, our schools are filled with vibrant opportunities that reflect the unique spirit of our community.

As I write this, we find ourselves in the heart of Lent—a season that has been especially meaningful and faith-filled. The Catholic identity of our campuses shines through in every visit I make. Just recently, I had a conversation with an alumni who shared how deeply moved he was to see how the Catholic faith has continued to grow and flourish since his time as a student. From the powerful Live Stations of the Cross to regular Mass, adoration, and confession, our students are not only learning about their faith—they're living it.

You may be aware that we recently completed our feasibility study, including interviews and surveys. We're grateful to all who participated. The SJCA Board is now actively working with the Diocese to determine the next steps based on those findings.

One of the key priorities identified in the study was the need to replace the roof at Bishop LeBlond. This deferred maintenance issue has posed significant challenges, and addressing it was a top priority for the health and longevity of our facilities. Thanks to the incredible generosity of several private donors, we are thrilled to announce that the roof will be replaced before the start of the 2025–2026 school year!

We're especially excited to complete this important project even before launching a full Capital Campaign. With this major milestone behind us, we can now turn our focus to other vital projects across our Academy campuses. The next step will be to present our findings to Bishop Johnston as we seek approval to move forward with the broader Capital Campaign.

As we approach the end of the school year, I want to sincerely thank you for your continued support and commitment to Catholic education. It has been a joy to complete my first full school year alongside all of you, and I'm incredibly proud of what we've accomplished together. I hope you and your families enjoy a refreshing and joyful summer break.

And don't forget—there are still some fun events on the horizon! We hope to see you at Catholic Schools Night with the Mustangs and at Scoops for Scholars. Let's continue celebrating the wonderful community we've built together.



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Academy Updates



SJCA is looking for passionate and dedicated elementary, middle, and high school teachers to join our team! Our campuses foster a faith-filled community with strong administrative support and meaningful relationships. As a full-time certified teacher, you'll receive a full tuition scholarship for your children to attend any SJCA K-12 campus. Come be a part of a school that values both education and faith—apply today!



I am blessed to teach at a Catholic school because I can share my love for Jesus with my littles and incorporate our faith in all subjects. It is also fun to see my own kids throughout the day!

-Mrs. Arens, St. Francis Kindergarten



Enrollment is open for the 2025-2026 school year! Our Catholic schools offer a high quality education in a strong faith-environment for PreK-12th grade.

Give us a call at 816-375-5180 or email nnewville@sj-catholic.org for more information or to set up a tour.



Don't let finances be a barrier...a Catholic education is more affordable than you think! Check out the Bright Futures Fund for details.

Get information on these topics and more by clicking or scanning the QR code.



Pastoral Perspective



A message from our Pastoral Coordinator, Fr. Stephen Hansen:

I write to you on Easter Saturday—Happy Easter!

Tomorrow we celebrate the Second Sunday of Easter, also known as Divine Mercy Sunday, which marks the conclusion of the Octave of Easter.

This morning, while watching coverage of the Holy Father's funeral, I came across an interview with Cardinal Bergoglio—now known to us as Pope Francis—recorded before his election to the papacy. In it, he reflected on the profound importance of the example set by parents. It reminded me fondly of my own upbringing, watching my parents do their best to raise their seven children (and I suspect I was among their more challenging cases!).

I want to take this opportunity to thank you, parents and grandparents, for all you do in leading your families. You are the primary educators of your children, and your example is a powerful force for good. Though I have not yet received formal permission from all the local priests, I nonetheless extend an open invitation: our doors are always open to you. Please let us know how we can support you in your vocation as parents. You already inspire us, but we are here to walk alongside you, too.

At the conclusion of today's funeral Mass for Pope Francis, His Eminence Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, the Dean of the College of Cardinals, shared these moving words:

"Pope Francis often ended his speeches and meetings by saying, 'Do not forget to pray for me.'"

Dear Pope Francis, we now ask you to pray for us. May you bless the Church, bless Rome, and bless the whole world from heaven, just as you did last Sunday from the balcony of this Basilica in a final embrace of all the people of God, and extend that embrace to all humanity—especially those who sincerely seek the truth and hold high the torch of hope."

Let us continue to pray for Pope Francis and ask for his prayers as well. Let us also pray for the College of Cardinals as they soon gather to elect his successor.



Happy Easter! Wishing you a joyful and restful summer. Thank you for entrusting your children to St. Joseph Catholic Academy!

Fine Arts

The LeBlond Eagles Choir performed at the solo/small ensemble day at District Music. Congratulations to Aiden, Brody, Gracie, and Julia who all received Outstanding ratings and earned silver medals, and to Dylan who received an Exemplary rating, earned a gold medal, and qualified for State Music!



The LeBlond Choir participated in the MEC Fine Arts Festival, with Gracie as a featured soloist for the concert.

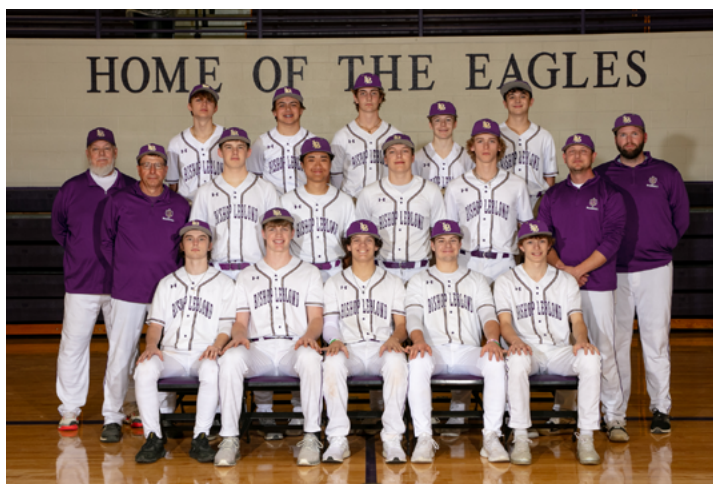
LeBlond's art students participated in the MEC Fine Arts Festival in Chillicothe, and the Albrecht-Kemper student art show!



MEC Blue ribbons (Artistic Excellence): Presley, Kayla
MEC Red ribbons (Certificate of Merit): Lea, Addisyn
MEC White ribbons (Honorable Mention): Demi, Abbi, Presley
Albrecht-Kemper, 3rd place for painting: Kinsley

Athletics

For the first time, members of the SJCA Archery team qualified for state! Congratulations to Coach Hausman, Genevieve, Bryce, Michael, Isabella, and Jonah!



Dodgeball

A total of 28 teams hit the court for another thrilling and successful SJCA Dodgeball Tournament—all in support of our Middle School Athletics program! Teams competed across four action-packed divisions, each vying for dodgeball glory and school bragging rights.

This beloved tradition, now over a decade strong, continues to be a highlight of the year for students, families, and fans alike. With high-energy matchups, enthusiastic crowds, and a fantastic cause behind it all, the tournament once again proved why it's such a highly anticipated event in our community.



Geography Bee

Students from Cathedral, St. Francis, and St. James participated in the 2025 Geography Bee, organized by Mr. Garrett Holtz and the LeBlond Academic Team.



Team Results:

1st Place St. James

2nd Place: Cathedral

3rd Place: St. Francis Xavier

Festival of Arts Offers Valuable Student Experience

Before the written word was developed, our ancestors communicated with pictures, music and oral recitations to convey the important truths about their world to the next generation. Yet, with the advent of the written word, art and music continued, but the practice of recitations slowly diminished as people preferred the permanence of written communication.

However, for the second year in a row, the St. Joseph Catholic Academy revived the tradition of recitations at its Festival of Arts in March. In addition to over 500 fine arts projects and several musical selections including voice choirs, handbells and recorders, there were recitations of Bible verses, poems and prayers.

Teachers selected pieces for students in each grade level from kindergarten through high school. The three elementary schools collaborated, and each grade level performed the recitations together at the festival.

“The festival recitations are especially fun because it showcases skills that not all children learn at a young age,” said Natalie Newville, Academy president.

Krystyn Schmerbeck, director of the graduate programs in classical education at Benedictine College, said she was happy to see recitations added to the festival last year and continued this year. She said recitation and memorization are a large part of students developing a deeper understanding of the world around them.

“When they recite important works, the goal is to understand what they are reciting, not just memorizing it,” she said. “It also equips children with confidence in speaking.”

Krystyn noted that recitation also expands students’ vocabularies and develops their public speaking skills. Additionally, it helps students connect with their own experiences and stretches their abilities.

“It is a fundamental part of the curriculum for a Catholic liberal arts education,” she said.

Some of the festival recitations included “One Solitary Life,” Psalm 23, Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, the Nicene Creed, Dr. Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech and “Lovely Lady Dressed in Blue.”





"It takes a lot to memorize a recitation, and then get up on stage to recite it," Natalie noted. "The students all worked so hard at it."

Brianna Kostick, teacher at St. Francis Xavier School, had memorized the poem, "One Solitary Life" by James Allen Francis when she was a Catholic school eighth-grader. She remembered that the piece had an impact on her, and suggested it for the fifth-graders to perform at the festival. "It all came back quickly," she said with a smile.

Brianna noted that the first step in the month-long preparation before the festival was to read the poem in class and discuss it so the students could understand it. Then they broke the poem up in sections, and students worked with a partner to recite it separately several times, then with their partner, and then as a class. Brianna also tested the students where they had to write out sections of the poem, and encouraged them to practice it at home.

"I told them they had to practice in front of an audience, whether that was a family member, a mirror or a dog."

Brianna said she sees a lot of value in memorization and public recitations, but believes schools have gotten away from both, even since she started teaching 12 years ago. She is happy it has become an annual component of the Festival of Arts.

"It was great seeing the students so excited to share the recitation and their proud 'lightbulb moments,'" Brianna said. "Some of them said they were nervous before they went on stage, so it was good for them to get out of their comfort zone for a moment."

Dr. Karen Hopson, associate superintendent of schools for the diocese, said the first festival of arts in the spring of 2023 was created as a way to bring the entire Academy together for an event, but it did not include every student. The next year, she said, they wanted to include all students and decided that recitations would also be a valuable addition.

"The Festival of Arts was wonderful," Natalie said. "I love seeing our entire student body and their parents come together for an Academy event. The students like doing projects with students from the other campuses, and it gives our community an opportunity to support our students in the arts."

Courtwarding

Lea Pinkelman, Class of 2025

As high school students, courtwarding week is always a time we look forward to. During Courtwarding Week, we get to dress up in all kinds of fun outfits based on the theme, and we really go all out! This year, our theme was the Courtwarding Games, inspired loosely by the Hunger Games series.

The first day we got to dress up for was called district day! For district day, we split the classes so we can see who is really willing to come out and show their school spirit. The seniors were hunters, juniors were farmers, sophomores were lumberjacks, and finally, the freshmen were animals. It's a ton of fun to see what kind of outfits people are going to come up with for these kinds of days, and tons of people always surprise you with their creativity. On Tuesday, the theme was President Snow Day. There were a lot of snow pants and ski gear, and it turns out that a lot more of our students like to ski and snowboard than anyone would ever know. Wednesday was called Capitol Day. There wasn't any dressing up, and everyone wore their uniforms because it was a mass day, but of course, we still gave the day a fun name to go along with the theme! By the time Thursday came around, everyone was super excited because it was Mockingjay Day! For the day, everyone was supposed to match or pair up with someone, and many people had some awesome ideas that would have been great to see. Unfortunately, it snowed Wednesday night into Thursday, so we'll never know who the best-dressed duo would have been. Our final day was called Tribute Training Day; this was our opportunity to wear our purple and gold and show our finest school spirit. On this day, the Courtwarding Royalty visited elementary schools to speak with the children and engage with other parts of the Academy community.





The royalty also paid a visit to the Saint Gianna Early Childhood Center, which ended in tears, but was still a lot of fun. For lunchtime, the seniors got to go to the Senior Luncheon, where there was Chipotle catered, to everyone's pleasure. On Friday, we also had our big Courtwarming Pep Rally, where we made a special addition to the Eagle family. During the pep rally, there was a lovely retirement speech read for our dear mascot, Eddie, and a big, warm welcome to our new mascot, Edgar. I was lucky enough to be asked to read the speech for Edgar, and thanks to his flashy personality, everyone was super excited to meet him, and interviewing him turned into a lot of fun. The pep rally game was a lot of fun as well, as six people from each class got to participate in a sort of relay, where there is a ton of yelling and cheering, because who doesn't want their class to win? The seniors ultimately won the pep rally and went out with a victory.

Friday night was the big courtwarming basketball games against Savannah. Unfortunately, the girls did not win, but the boys got their courtwarming win! Between the games, the courtwarming royalty was crowned by the king and queen from 2024. Chris Miljavac was crowned king by Kayla Beam, and Demi Swope was crowned queen by Davis Jungbluth. After the game, most people went and hung out with friends or family, closing out the fun of courtwarming week with the people who make them happy.

Courtswarming week is something students have always looked forward to, and I hope next year everyone has just as much fun!

High Five Mondays

LeBlond students visited St. Francis, Cathedral, and St. James on Mondays in April to greet students and welcome them to a new week!

Afterwards, the LeBlond Drug-Free Superstars talked to the grade school students about why they have chosen to remain drug and alcohol free in high school. It was fun to hear them mention that many of them made the decision to be drug-free when they were in elementary school listening to the previous Superstars!



Middle School Dance

More than 65 SJCA middle school students lit up the night at the annual Middle School Dance held on April 26th! This year's theme—**Neon Night**—brought out the brightest colors and boldest styles as students arrived decked out in glowing gear and vibrant outfits.

With upbeat music, tasty snacks, and plenty of energy, the evening offered an exciting chance for 6th–8th graders from our various campuses and parishes to come together, connect, and have fun. It was a fantastic night of dancing, laughter, and community building—a glowing success in every way!



Daddy Daughter Dance

Kindergarten-5th Grade girls put on their prettiest dresses and danced the night away with their dads at the inaugural SJCA Daddy Daughter Dance! With fun music, a DIY frame, snacks, and a balloon arch, it was a fun night for all!



David Wyble, Kenney Newville, and Garrett Holtz from the Class of 2005 brought their daughters to the SJCA Daddy Daughter Dance. We may have even overheard some talk about their 20th Class Reunion this fall!

ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC ACADEMY
**scoops
for
scholars**

JULY 20TH FROM 4-7PM
BISHOP LEBLOND HIGH SCHOOL



SAVE THE DATE!

ALL-YOU-CAN-TASTE ICE CREAM FUNDRAISER

Fundraising Wrap Up

Cathedral had a great time once again at Mardi Gras, raising critical funds for their school during the annual auction! The Fund-A-Need this year was for technology upgrades, including updating computers and classroom tech needs.

St. Francis had a totally rad time at the 80's Prom for this year's auction! The Fund-A-Need this year was to raise funds to make gym improvements including updating the windows.

If you would like to help Cathedral and St. Francis reach their goal, you can mail or drop off donations at either school office!



Robotics

The robotics program has taken off at SJCA! 5th-8th grade students from all three grade schools have started meeting regularly after school to learn how to build and code a robot.

At the high school level, students in the Computer Coding course have been introduced to the robotics process and will begin working to code competition robots soon.



Alumni Updates

Congratulations to Class of 2024 alumnus, Elliott Murphy and the University of Arizona Wheelchair basketball team on their National Championship win this past weekend!

While at Bishop LeBlond, Elliott competed in track and field, earning multiple state championships, and was a fantastic student-athlete.

Congratulations on the win, Elliot!



The LeBlond Alumni Volleyball Tournament was held on April 5th, with over 20 alumni from the classes of 1992 to 2024! Save the date for July 26th for an Alumni and Academy Volleyball Tournament at Volleys!

Susan and Christine Rinehart donated their mother's baby grand piano to Bishop LeBlond. Margaret Rinehart was the librarian at Bishop LeBlond in the 70's & 80's, and she sponsored the library club! Susan brought some of Margaret's piano music for our music library and gave us her LeBlond yearbooks from 1973-1983!

Thank you, Rineharts!



Upcoming Events:

May 23rd: Alumni Golf Tournament

May 23rd - 24th: Alumni Basketball Tournament

July 26th - Alumni & Academy Coed Volleyball Tournament

Whether it's that unforgettable field trip, a team victory, or simply moments with friends, we'd love for you to share your pictures from your time at one of our Catholic Schools!



Save These Dates

May

2nd: Cathedral Alumni Mass
9th: LB Graduation
12th: SFX Kindergarten Signing
12th: Cathedral Awards Assembly
13th: Cathedral Kindergarten Promotion
14th: Cathedral 8th Grade Graduation
14th: SJ 8th Grade Graduation 7pm
15th: SFX 8th Grade Graduation
16th: SJ PreK Promotion and Signing
16th: St. Gianna Preschool Graduation
16th: SFX Kindergarten Graduation
21st: Last Day of School
23rd: Alumni Golf Tournament
23rd-24th: Alumni Basketball Tournament



June

5th: Catholic Schools Night at the Mustangs

July

20th: SJCA Scoops for Scholars
27th: Alumni & Academy Coed Volleyball Tournament

August

18th: Freshman First Day of School
19th: First Day of School (All Scholars)

