



St. Celestine Catholic School

FALL 2023

Believe, Achieve, Succeed!

3017 N. 77th Ave., Elmwood Park • 708-453-8234

86+ Years of Catholic Education including Preschool 3 years through 8th grade

Principal:
Sheila M. Klich

Pastor:
Fr. Paul Cao

**Believe, Achieve
and Succeed at
St. Celestine!**

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St. Celestine School... An Affordable Investment in Your Child's Future

Catholic schools are the best choice for what matters most... faith and a rigorous education, which prepares students for life in the 21st century. Meanwhile, we understand the difficulties that families face when deciding how to pay for a Catholic education.

What makes a Catholic school a good value?

Well, like all questions of value – there are two sides to the equation – cost and benefit. There's a constant struggle between keeping our schools affordable for as many as possible and providing fair and equitable compensation for our staff. There's also a cost associated with technology, curriculum and resources. As for benefit, we look at many measures of quality to substantiate our schools' value.

These include the following:

Access to Technology

St. Celestine School is a 1:1 school (a device for every student), with students in K-1 having access to iPads and students in grades 2-8 having access to Chromebooks. Our students develop digital literacy skills through collaborating with students and teachers using Google Workspace Tools. Our students learn coding, robotics, video creation, Chroma Key Technology, and graphic design. All of these activities lead to students who are able to approach problem solving with integrity, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity.

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An Affordable Investment in Your Child's Future
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Performance on Standardized Tests

Our students consistently outperform national results on standardized tests. Our students are well above national norms in every subject. This allows our students to attend the high schools of their choice, with many of them earning scholarships to do so. In fact, the 2023 graduating class received a total of \$90K in scholarship offers from nearby Catholic schools.

Catholic Faith Development

The most important part of a Christian education is raising our children in the Catholic faith. It's the day-to-day teaching of faith and values, praying together,

and putting our faith into action through service to others. These are all part of the witness we pass on to students each and every day. And it's that daily, ordinary witness that changes lives.

An Affordable Option for Families

St. Celestine School offers 10-and-12 month tuition payment plans, so that families can plan costs into their budgets. Based on a daily cost, a 10-month plan makes the daily cost under \$20 per day. A 12-month plan has a daily cost of under \$17 per day. Should families need additional support for this cost, St. Celestine School is committed to helping them find it through tuition

assistance programs based on need. Families need only to reach out to the School Office to learn more.

When analyzed in the light of what is gained and the investment in your child's future, the cost is well worth it. A Catholic education opens doors to a child's future and provides them with the tools to succeed for life.

**Families can reach out to
the school office at
708-453-8234 to learn more
about tuition assistance.**





School Wide Improvements Funded through a \$135K Grant!



As part of pandemic relief funding, **St. Celestine School received a grant of nearly \$135,000.00** to spend on items tied to the pandemic. The grant was very clear and specific regarding items and spending practices. Through a careful review of technology needs, current school resources and academic initiatives, decisions about spending were made.

St. Celestine School purchased 23 Promethean Panels, which are interactive panels that connect to the internet and allow teachers to bring interactive, secure and engaging lessons to the students. These panels replaced the projectors and boards we had in the classrooms for the past decade and bring a whole new user experience to lessons.

Every year, a classroom set of Chromebooks has been replaced. With this new grant funding, St. Celestine School was able to procure 158 new Chromebooks! These updated Chromebooks replace older models and strengthen the current one-to-one technology program for our students.

Besides improving and upgrading the technology available within the school, non-technology spending from this grant allowed us to get a few items from our “Wish List.” Chief among these items were consumable Math workbooks for students in Grades 3-5 and Math Center Packs for students in Grades K-2. The Envision Math Program currently in use helped the school increase Math scores tremendously, but was previously purchased as a digital-only platform. These new physical math materials will help the teachers bring an even stronger Math curriculum to our students.

This grant allows St. Celestine School to provide an excellent education to our students through these updated resources. Historically, the school’s curriculum has always been rigorous, but this grant enables excellence to continue, despite the many challenges the pandemic continues to have on the educational system.

Why Attend St. Celestine School?

Five Pillars of the Value of a Catholic Education



Choosing a school for one's child is one of the biggest decisions a parent faces. This choice sets not only a course for education, but also friendships, emotions and spiritual foundations for life. There are many things to consider in making the choice. Examining five "pillars" or benefits of choosing St. Celestine School may help in making this decision.

1 The first pillar is **Academic Readiness**. In its long history, St. Celestine School students receive acceptances to the high school of their choice. Our graduates attend the very finest high schools in the area, including Fenwick, Trinity, St. Patrick, Notre Dame, St. Ignatius, Resurrection, St. Viator, Immaculate Conception and Chicago Public Schools Selective Enrollment High Schools. **The 2023 graduating class was offered \$90,000 in scholarships from area Catholic High Schools.**

2 The second pillar is **Moral and Spiritual Development**. St. Celestine School students participate in weekly Mass. Planning for monthly Masses are part of the religion curriculum each year. Students are taught that they are a unique and loved child of God. Their education is such that they are given the Fundamentals for a life of faith and service to God, with the belief that God is actively present in their lives. Since faith development is important, families are encouraged to attend Mass and participate in the parish life of St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish. Students also learn about service and ways to support the community as a part of their formation. We have school community assemblies every other week to support our community and our faith.

3 In addition to family worship, St. Celestine School encourages the development of the third pillar which is growth of a **Community of Families**. Organizations such as Parents Club, School Board, Athletics, and Scouting encourage our families to form lifelong bonds of friendship that continue, in many cases, into adulthood. Many of our students are children of St. Celestine alumni. The phrase, "It takes a village to raise a child," is not lost on our families. Parents work together to plan events for both parents and children that allow families to raise children side by side. St. Celestine School is a family-centered environment, where parents are supported in their journey.

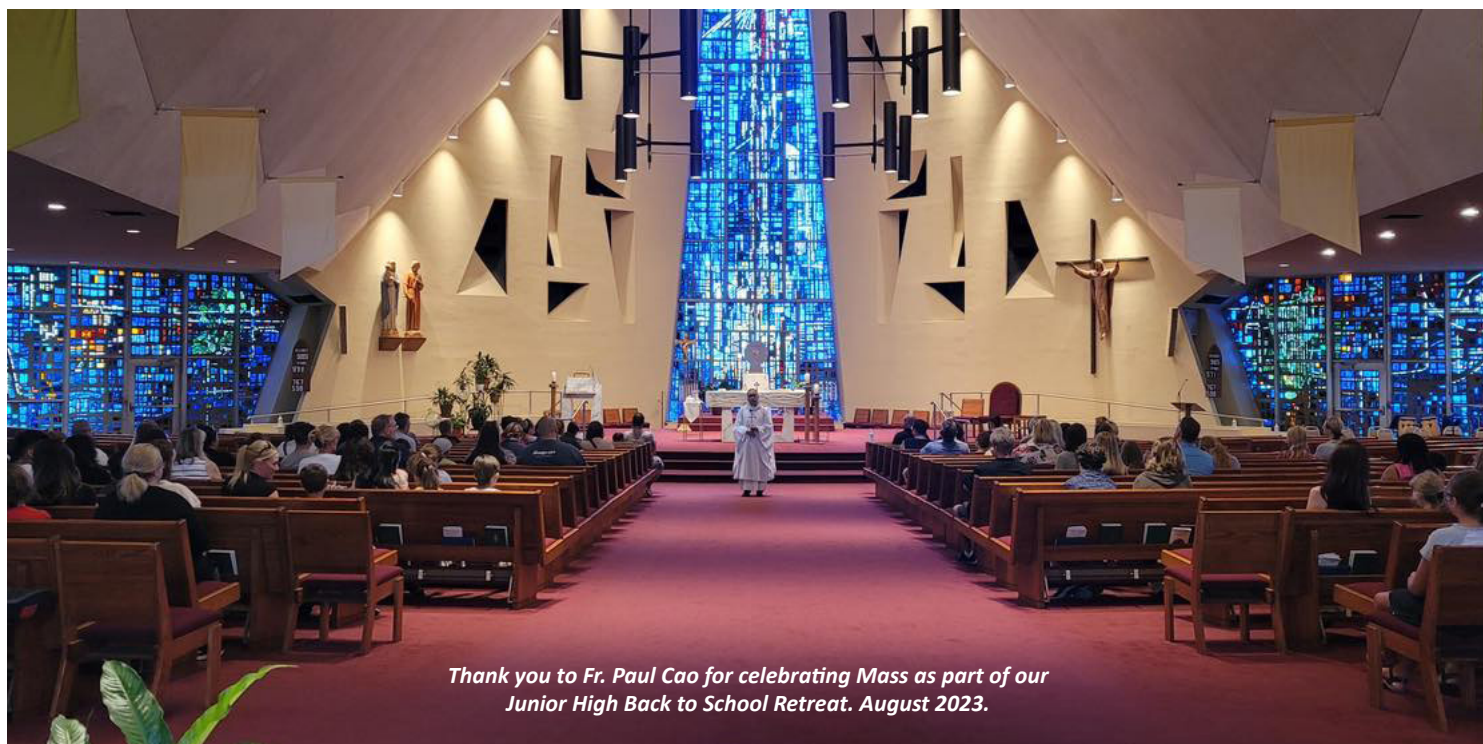
The family-centered nature of the school is further supported by having all students in **grades PreK-8 in the same building**. Students learn from each other, with our students participating in Buddy Activities, pairing younger students with older students. Research suggests that this model supports students as they grow and develop. There is no "starting over" in a new school as kids get older. This allows for confidence and a positive experience, while developing upon academic strengths and talents.

4 The fourth pillar, **Providing a Supportive Environment**, thrives in St. Celestine School's structures and routines. Children know what to expect each day and know that there is always a teacher present to help them in any way they need. They see God in their lives as they develop self-worth and see kindness modeled throughout the building. Additionally, St. Celestine School offers a School Counselor, Speech Language Pathologist, Resource Teacher, Title I Services, and a Special Education Teacher for students who qualify for those services.

5 The fifth pillar, seeing **Catholic Education as an Affordable Investment**, that all stakeholders at St. Celestine School realize the value of education as an investment for the future. Our families recognize that what is done today bears fruit later in life. Our students, because of their educational grounding, enjoy a wider path of opportunity in high school, college, and careers. Through the relationships created in the school community, families have a network of support available to them throughout life's ups and downs.



If these five pillars speak to you
and you want to join the
St. Celestine School community, contact:
Sheila Klich, St. Celestine School Principal,
at sklich@stcelestineschool.org.



Thank you to Fr. Paul Cao for celebrating Mass as part of our Junior High Back to School Retreat. August 2023.

A Reflection from Fr. Paul Duy Cao on Spiritual Development at St. Celestine School



Fr. Paul, Pastor of St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish, attends to the spiritual needs of the entire parish/school community. He supports the school in its mission and reflects on how important St. Celestine School is in developing faith within the parish.

St. Celestine School is part of St. Mother Theodore Guerin Parish. We are very blessed to have a strong, vibrant school with a dedicated, hard-working principal, teachers, and staff. We also have a very supportive School Board, an active Parents' Club, a dedicated Athletics program and extensive Scouting program.

As a pastor, I want to assure that our students learn about their faith as much as they can, and this is our priority. The first part of St. Celestine's mission is "to instill Gospel values and promote spiritual growth through liturgies, service, and commitment to God." We make sure our students will grow and deepen their faith in Jesus Christ.

Our students are required to attend Mass once a week. Once a month, there is also a special mass for the entire school and each grade is in charge of planning for the liturgy. This is a very important part of their experience at St. Celestine School.

Religion class every day helps them to learn more about their faith. We also help prepare our first and second grade to receive their First Reconciliation and First Communion. The priests usually visit the classroom to teach our students about the Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. They also learn about different saints and Catholic traditions. Our 7th and 8th graders are also prepared to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Our students are very active in their faith during their time at St. Celestine School. Many of them are involved in the children's choir which sings on the first Sunday of the month at 11:00 a.m. Family Mass. Our students are also involved as altar servers at Sunday Masses and I am very proud of them all.

St. Mother Theodore Guerin is actively building a Youth Group to keep our older students engaged and a part of the community. The Youth Group also involves students at the high school level as well. Positive faith experiences and opportunities for socializing really matter to our community.

Let us continue to pray for the success of St. Celestine School that the Lord showers His abundant blessings to all the teachers, staff, students and all the parents. May we work together to promote the values of Catholic education under the guidance of our Lord Jesus Christ!



- Fr. Paul



Over the last few years, St. Celestine School has implemented *i-Ready*, a research proven approach to individualized instruction. *i-Ready* provides specific skill data about where the students were as learners, which teachers use in determining educational approaches. Students participate in conversations about learning and their goals based on i-Ready data.

We are proud to announce the gains our students made during the 2023/24 school year with progress above both National Norms and Public School Performance. In Reading students made 141% progress towards Annual Typical Growth. In Math, they made 123% progress towards Annual Typical Growth.

The *i-Ready* Program is an individualized approach to instruction tied to a student's level of knowledge, areas of strength and areas in need of support. The students began the program

by taking a diagnostic assessment of their individual learning. The *i-Ready Diagnostic* is an adaptive assessment that adjusts its questions to suit a child's needs. Each item a student sees is individualized based on their answer to the previous question. For example, a series of correct answers will result in slightly harder questions, while a series of incorrect answers will yield slightly easier questions. **The purpose of this is not to give a child a score or grade, but instead to determine how best to support a child's learning.** The results from the assessment allow the teacher to differentiate instruction, work with small groups and tailor instruction more strategically.

After the assessment, *i-Ready* instruction is implemented. Instruction provides students with lessons based on their individual skill level and needs, so a child can learn at a pace that is just right for them. These lessons are fun

and interactive to keep children engaged as they learn. The instruction allows for growth through just enough productive struggle with a path to success. The teachers receive support and ideas based on the *i-Ready* Program to guide each student to success as individual learners. This is just another way that SCS is committed to a rigorous academic program for every child in the school.



Social/ Emotional Learning Curriculum at SCS

For the 2023/24 academic year, St. Celestine School is continuing its Social/ Emotional Learning (SEL) Program to its curriculum. SEL helps support students as they acquire and apply skills focused on managing emotions, achieving goals, feeling and showing empathy for others, maintaining positive relationships and making responsible decisions.

The *Caring School Community* curriculum has been recommended by the Archdiocese of Chicago. Class meetings allow students to practice skills and build community. This program is nestled in our Religion classes, since we are developing a Gospel-based, Christ-centered loving community for all our students. All lessons are done in accordance with Church teaching and Gospel values.

Caring School Community is built around a focus on the whole community, which includes everyone in the building and extends to everywhere the child travels on campus, including lunch and recess. Lessons are easy to implement and are grade specific, based on where children are in their development, even for the upper grades. Classes are paired as "buddies," giving the older and younger students the opportunity to learn and grow together.

Decades of research show that students who are emotionally supported are better learners. SEL at St. Celestine School is designed to help them with decisions and emotions so that they can attend to learning while minimizing distraction.

Contact the Principal, Sheila Klich, if you would like to learn more about St. Celestine School's efforts to better support students.



Volunteering: An Easy Way to Support Your Child and Other School Families



Catholic education has both changed over the years and remained the same. In addition to the rigorous education provided by Catholic schools for generations, the reliance on all community members to provide Time, Talent and Treasure as part of creating a firm community foundation has remained consistent for generations, too.

Volunteering provides an opportunity for parents to engage in the school and in their children's lives in a deeper way. Research consistently shows that learning improves for children who have parents positively connected to the school through volunteering.

Volunteering helps keep tuition costs down and makes the school an option for all families who want a Catholic education. Since volunteering for fundraisers helps with raising funds, tuition is kept at a more manageable level.

St. Celestine School continues to be both traditional and forward thinking in its approach to community. Many of our traditions were impacted by the pandemic. Large gatherings were canceled. We are returning to the strong traditions and events that have kept us connected. We are building new traditions that move the school forward. Our school community thrives with the active, positive and creative talents of all volunteers. We need you now more than ever!

Time, Talent and Treasure as a way to support the school has changed dramatically over the years, particularly with the increased reliance on technology and different sources of communication. Volunteering at St. Celestine

School has a significant impact if the following volunteer pieces are included:

Time - volunteering at your child's school is a research proven way to improve their academic success and increase their appreciation of education. Your time is precious, but so is the education your child receives while he/she is here.

Talent - we all have one. Why not use your personal positive attributes to enrich learning and benefit the community? Are you a coach, an artist, a strong communicator, a friendly face? We need you!

Treasure - financial contributions are always appreciated. While St. Celestine School deeply appreciates and understands the sacrifice tied to tuition, additional support helps enrich educational programming, develop scholarship opportunities, and maintain our facilities.

Voice - use your love of the school to spread the word about us! A personal connection and recommendation is the best marketing. Having a strong enrollment with committed families ensures that the St. Celestine academic tradition will continue for generations to come.

Network - your personal network of friends, families and colleagues may help the school, as well. The power of connections are mutual. Donations from area businesses and organizations help the school. Businesses gain positive word of mouth and customers when they work with schools. Accessing a large Catholic school community helps small businesses grow. You come out looking like a rock star by helping the school and businesses in your area!

Please contact the Principal,
Sheila Klich at
sklich@stcelestineschool.org
to learn more.



Thanks to St. Celestine School's Enrollment Committee for hosting a table at this year's Taste of Elmwood Park. Everyone had such a good time! August 2023.

St. Celestine School Rises to the Next Level

After in-depth analysis of academic programming and educational research, St. Celestine School is participating in the Office of Catholic Schools Next Level program. Benefits of this selective program, for which St. Celestine School applied and was chosen, include:

- 1:1 Academic Coaching for school leaders
- Intensive teacher coaching through Skyrocket, a research-based program designed to build teacher competency and skill
- Phonemic Awareness training and materials for teachers in PreK4 - 2nd grade

The coaching programs for both school leadership and for teachers involves research proven guidance with the goal of developing teacher competencies, building instructional skills and helping students succeed to their fullest potential. Data sources such as iReady scores and survey results, as well as observation in the classroom are important elements to this program. The Next Level program is a continuation of work begun during the 2022/23 school year.

The new phonemic programs provide intentional, systematic focus on phonics instruction for students in Grades PreK4 - 2nd Grade, Heggerty and Wilson Foundations. A strong basis in phonemic awareness and phonics enables a student to learn to read quickly. It is a base for literacy skills that really pays off in the long run.

St. Celestine School

3017 N. 77th Ave, Elmwood Park, IL 60707

(708)453-8234

E-mail us at:

sklich@stcelestineschool.org



Scan the QR code to visit us at:
stcelestineschool.org
for tours, registration,
info about the school, parish,
faculty and student programs.

**Help us Believe!
Achieve! & Succeed!**



Make a gift today!
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visit our giving page.