

It's not what it used to be. Then again, yes it is.

A Catholic Education

For grades K-8, Strongsville's *Sts. Joseph and John School* offers an education steeped in Catholic tradition and faith. But you'll also find low student/teacher ratios, a strong academic record – and wireless laptops.

by **Carla Houdek**

Recently, Lizanne and Kevin Kenning, parents of four students at *Sts. Joseph and John School*, attended the "all-school mass" held each year before Christmas break begins.

"It was beautiful," beams Lizanne. "The students performed a nativity pageant, sang songs about the birth of Jesus and prayed together. They were learning the true meaning of Christmas. It's important to us that the school our children attend reinforces the Catholic faith they learn at home."

Although many parents have chosen *Sts. Joseph and John School* for its 50-year tradition of faith, there's another reason: a great education.

"A religious education is the main reason

graders residing in Strongsville and surrounding areas, including Brunswick and Columbia Station where bus service is provided. Students enjoy inexpensive and nutritional hot lunches, snacks and milk in a full service cafeteria. And a safe, teacher-operated after-school care program is available daily until 6 p.m.

Currently there are over 650 students in grades K-8. Full-day kindergarten became available in 2003 to fill a need in the community. The student/teacher ratio in the kindergarten classrooms this year is 11 to 1, with each classroom having a teacher and a full-time teacher's aide. As a result, most kindergarteners are reading by January.

The curriculum includes all fundamentals, plus computer, art, music, physical education and Spanish instruction beginning in Kindergarten. Enrichment

programs are offered in both reading and math, and high-tech classrooms make sure students are familiar with cutting edge technology. Computerized Smart Boards are used by teachers and students for group lessons and presentations. Wireless laptops are used in classrooms.

"The computer lab is impressive," Kevin Kenning states. "There are more than 30 state-of-the-art computers available to the students. They are learning skills that will be valuable in high school and beyond."

These teachers are clearly dedicated and caring, and work with both students and parents to ensure excellence in education and faith formation. One-third of the school's staff hold Masters Degrees and many have won awards for excellence in teaching.

"A teacher from our school has been honored as one of the *Outstanding Teachers* in the Cleveland Diocese for the past six years," boasts Principal Darlene Thomas, who has been at the school since 1995.

Parents are invited to stay in daily contact with teachers through the school's online parent/teacher link called *Edline*. The system alerts parents with an e-mail when new grades have been posted on the site and parents can check their student's progress daily, if desired. Homework is also posted on the site. "Edline has been a great way for us to review with our kids where they are in each class," insists Lizanne, "and a good mechanism to communicate quickly with teachers. Report cards are never a surprise."

IOWA test scores from March of 2005 show that *Sts. Joseph and John School* is succeeding in academic excellence. Its students are ranked three to 13 percentiles higher than the average student in the Diocese of Cleveland. Seventh graders at the school scored in the 99th percentile in both math and language. *Sts. Joseph and John* has been the only school to win *St. Edwards High School's "Classroom of Champions" Academic Quiz Championship* four times since it began in 1990. And for the 2005 academic year, twelve 8th graders were recognized as merit scholars by four area Catholic High Schools.

Students are also encouraged to participate in service activities that allow them to live the Gospel message they are learning. Last year students raised funds for Harvest for Hunger and Hurricane Katrina and Tsumani Victims. "In crisis situations the students often come to me on their own initiative to see how we can help," says Principal Thomas.

Students also visit the Falling Water/Crystal Water Retirement and Nursing Homes, send cards to area shut-ins, and



Parents Kevin and Lizanne Kenning send all four of their kids to *Sts. Joseph and John School*. "A religious education is the main reason," says Mr. Kenning, "but the school offers so much more."

participate in other community outreach programs. "These projects build character and compassion," explains Mrs. Thomas.

Diverse clubs, extra-curricular opportunities and CYO Sports provide fun after school activities. "There is something of interest to every student," adds Mrs. Thomas. "We have bands and choirs, Scouting, student government and our sports teams always do well, as you can see by the trophy case right outside the gym."

Open House

To find out more about an education at *Sts. Joseph and John*, visit the school's Open House on Sunday, January 22 from 1-3 p.m. New family orientation will be held from 3-4 p.m. You may arrange a school tour by calling 440-238-4877. The school is located at 12580 Pearl Road in Strongsville. The website may be found at www.sjsschool.org.

"Seventh graders at *Sts. Joseph and John* scored in the 99th percentile in both math and language."

"We chose *Sts. Joseph and John*," says Kevin, "but the school offers so much more. We're thrilled with the strong academic record of the school, the cutting edge technology available, and the fact that the school is located in the heart of our community so all their friends are close. Tuition for four clearly impacts a family budget, especially when the option of free public education is available. But we feel the value is well worth it."

Constructed in 1950, *Sts. Joseph and John* is one of only a few "Interparochial" schools in the diocese, meaning the school is supported by two home parishes -- *St. John Neumann* on Pearl Road south of Rt. 82, and *St. Joseph*, which is adjacent to the school just north of Rt. 82. Enrollment is open to all Kindergarten through eighth