

‘We Take Pride in Every Child’

Parish-School Relationship Unique

By Suzanne Hill

Holy Family has the next best thing to its own school—a written covenant with St. Charles School.

Since Holy Family’s founding in 1980, St. Charles has accepted Holy Family students as though they were St. Charles’. Holy Family pays the per pupil cost for children whose parents are registered, active, tithing families at the parish. Parish manager Marie Relic has more information.

“A lot of people in the diocese look to that model. Our working relationship is unique to the entire diocese,” principal Mary Omecene explained. Other parishes call for information because the relationship is an “ideal model.”

About 59 Holy Family students from kindergarten to eighth grade are enrolled at St. Charles, according to Mary. This year, ten kindergartners from Holy Family are enrolled.

Holy Family has a representative on the school board and another on the school finance committee. Father Matthew celebrates Mass at the school once a month.

“He’s very good with the children,” she said, adding that he attends some



school activities, including parent meetings, and hands out school packets to Holy Family parents.

“Religion is at the heart of everything we do,” Mary stressed. All children are expected to go to church and attend religion classes, regardless of affiliation. Some non-Catholic parents send their children to St. Charles for moral and values education.

“We educate for life,” she noted.

Students learn life skills, such as compassion, cooperation, respect, friendliness and taking initiative.

Academic excellence is equally important. Students take the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, a national standardized test. Children who leave St. Charles and attend classes elsewhere are usually ahead of other students. High school principals tell St. Charles staff that the students are well prepared for high school.

St. Charles is the only Catholic summer school

offered in the Northland. The program concentrates on reading and math.

Oratory is part of the curriculum in grades six through eight and students do a great deal of essay writing.

St. Charles provides “gender education” for seventh and eighth graders in science, social studies and religion classes.

Mary noted this started as a one-quarter experiment with eighth graders because teachers felt that students would discuss subjects more freely with members of their own sex. “Everybody loved it,” she said, and the



Why Do These Fifth Graders Like St. Charles School?

Gabby Monachino—“I get to see my cousins and brother.”

Brian Wilson—“We can go to church here and the teachers are nice.”

Toni Monachino—“I get to see my friends every day and talk to them.”

Rachel Marquardt—“Our art class. I like all the projects that we do.”

Ben Monachino—“It doesn’t matter what race you are and they really don’t care.”

Meredith Kincaid—“I like having friends of different ages.”

program was expanded.

“You can do so much more. They are not as self-conscious” in this circumstance. There is less distraction. The material is geared specifically to what boys want to learn about and what girls want to learn about.

Students also learn Catholic social teaching, including the importance of service for the right reasons, not for pity, but because people have the right to food, shelter and clothing. Students donate to the parish food pantry, participate in a toy drive for Bishop Sullivan Center and assist other charitable organizations.

The school provides small class sizes of 25 in kindergarten through eighth grade. It operates two classes of each grade, beginning in preschool. In preschool through second grade teachers are assisted by aides. Mary feels that a dedicated staff provides “academic excellence.”

Mary has been principal 15 years. When she came, she was charged to build the middle school and develop a three-year preschool.

One of the keys to St. Charles’ academic success is the preschool, which operates five afternoons a week. The preschool offers separate three- and four-year-old classes in the mornings. The third year is a prekindergarten program in the afternoons for students not ready for kindergarten. Readiness includes the ability to stay focused and move about



Holy Family students include these fifth graders. All pictured from left. Front row: Gabbie Monachino, Toni Monachino, Annie Gaudin, Rachel Marquardt, Meredith Kincaid. Back row: Brian Wilson, Riley O’Toole, Ben Monachino, Brody Meloy and Nicholas Taphorn.

independently. It is a joint school-teacher decision.

If children attend preschool, they bypass the kindergarten waiting list. “We have a spot for you,” Mary stressed.

The school’s day care program runs ten months of the year. St. Charles’ philosophy is that two months away from the school gives them a break. During that time they can go to the YMCA for day care, to a grandparent’s home or spend time with their parents.

St. Charles provides a safe and secure environment. Mary mentioned once that she wanted a security system and some parents working



Eighth graders Kaylee Marquardt, left, Andrew Schuhmacher and Kelcie Thomas, right, pose with St. Charles.

for employers that make matching gifts came forward with the funds. Adults wear identification—picture IDs for employees and name tags for visitors. The school has a vibrant, active parent community that is very supportive of and helpful to the school, she noted.

The school is a member of the Northland Catholic School Education

Committee, “a joint effort to work cooperatively and cohesively to provide quality Catholic Education in the Northland,” according to the school handbook. Mary added that the committee’s mission is to “provide Catholic education to anyone who desires it.”

As a part of that cooperative effort, if a family calls St. Charles wanting to enroll their children and if the school doesn’t have a vacancy for all the children, Mary calls other area Catholic schools. The family decides if the children will be placed on a waiting list or will attend the other Catholic school.

Mary is a Holy Family parishioner. She is delighted to see her students at Mass, regardless whether she attends Saturday night or Sunday morning.

Interested in sending your children to St. Charles’ preschool or grades K-8? Call 816-436-1009 to schedule a visit when school is in session.

St. Charles Is Accredited by:

- National Association for the Education of Young Children (Preschool)
- North Central Association K-8
- Missouri Nonpublic School Accrediting Association

