

St. James-St. John integrating education and religious study in an exemplary way

For much of the population there isn't much to decide when it comes to education for our kids – they are sent to the public school in their neighborhood or locale. There is a smaller portion of parents will consider private or charter schooling as an alternative. For Catholics, however, they have these two and a third option: parochial schooling.

Why should a parent consider sending their child or children to a Catholic School? What are the differences among public, private and Catholic schools in terms of curriculum, staff and performance? Will it hinder or benefit my child? Choosing an education for your children can be one of the most daunting tasks a parent can encounter. It sets a compass needle providing much needed direction; it paves a foundation that will last a lifetime. It will heavily impact their future and even subsequent generations.



The educators are a passionate, experienced lot that are pleased to be role models.

Catholic Schools, of course, supply a solid foundation in academics, music and arts. Properly preparing a child to enter society with all the necessary social skills and academic understanding they need to navigate their way through life is something public, private and parochial schools do. How Catholic Schools differ is that they focus on nurturing the Catholic identity and faith. There is an *extra* element or layer to the education at a parochial school: developing spiritually. This is done by making religious education a core subject of the curriculum, as well as interspersing prayer and liturgical life.

The religious program is provided from Bishop to teacher. The teachers then contribute their own planning and teaching aspect to the lessons. The Catholic Church has had some astounding success with education and today operates the world's largest non-governmental school system with over two million students in the U.S. alone.

Statistics show that students vote more, are more tolerant and civically engaged than their public peers. Minorities that attend Catholic schools have had greater success in graduating both high school and college – due to the lessened aspect of social class effects in the school environment. Regardless of ethnicity and household income, all students are treated equally as God's children.

St. James-St. John School is a New Bedford Catholic School that exemplifies the ideals of the Catholic Church's education ministry. They offer a safe, Catholic educational environment rooted in Gospel values and provide rigorous, quality, faith-filled education for grades Pre-K through 8th. Their students achieve their full potential both academically *and* spiritually through shared learning experiences in social justice, morality, and faith. Principal Cristina Raposo and pastors, Fr. Jack Oliveira and Fr. Craig Pregana have successfully integrated religion with education. The students learn to discover God's presence in their daily lives and appreciate

the value of that relationship through the good and inevitable bad moments of life.



St. James-St. John has creative ways to keep the students engaged.

This is nothing new for St. James-St. John – they’ve been a parochial “school” in New Bedford for well over a century. I place school in parenthesis because it is the unification of two schools. Beginning in 1885 as St. Mary School (on Acushnet Avenue and Wing Street), they would become St. James’s School – the parish they were associated with – in 1964. In 1941, the other half, St. John’s Academy opened in the former Grinnell Mansion on County Street.

In 1973, the two schools would merge into one and relocate to the former St. James building on Acushnet Avenue. In 1986 they again relocated to their current location at 180 Orchard Street.

Ms. Raposo feels it is she who is blessed to “..be able to share in the lives of these young people and be able to model and instruct in the teachings of Jesus everyday. My hope is to one day touch their lives in a special way.” She won’t have to hope too much, because when I asked the students and parents to volunteer to share their experiences, I was inundated with anecdotes. I actually had to prune some for the article. There were *that* many.

Her most memorable moment was having a post-graduate student

thank her and let her know that she was a role model and someone they strove to be everyday. High praise indeed. "I was so touched and honored and **knew** at that time, I was where I was, not because it was my job, but my vocation and a place where God had led me."

Some of the academic offerings include Pre-K and up activities like reading with phonics, BBC programs and more. Social studies include politics, the world atlas, ancient civilizations, history, and National Geographic. There's math, geology, weather, art, science fair projects, research and citation help, and an "All About Animals" program.

Though the curriculum is Common Core aligned, the teachers have academic freedom and do not need to spend their time teaching to the test. Furthermore, if the students leave St. James-St. John and take MCAS and other exams, they are well prepared.

Certainly a diverse and rich academic profile.



There are dozens of reasons you see so many smiling faces in these photos!

Catholic Schools are typically steeped in community activity and St. James-St. John School is extraordinarily busy in that sense. One of the best ways to teach kids to be civically active and engaged is to lead by example. The school has worked closely with Pennies for Patients, the American Cancer

Society, American Heart Association, the Juvenile Diabetes, Alzheimer Association, Food Pantries, the Donovan House, Catholic Social Services, Habitats for Cats, Ovarian Cancer, Veterans Transition House just to name a few.

St. James-St.John is an experienced, trusted institute that is consistently doing what they do best: lead the way in religious based education. They do this exceedingly well as demonstrated by the many volunteers – parents *and* students – who eagerly provided testimonials. Testimonials that “say” much more than anything that I can type. While browsing the photo gallery, you’ll notice children smiling in almost every photo – another demonstration of the school’s success.

If you’re considering enrolling your child in parochial school, and want passionate, spiritually minded educators who are genuinely dedicated to their academic, mental, social, and physical well-being, you will be overjoyed to discover St. James-St.John has been doing that for 120 years and is still doing that today, with an eye on the future.



Starting in 1885 teaching only 1st and 2nd

grades. St. James-St.John has evolved into a large school that teaches from PK-8th grade.

*"We've been part of the St. James St. John family since 2010. I can't say enough about how great our experience has been so far! Our daughters absolutely love their school and are always learning something new. The faculty does a great job of communicating with parents and setting clear expectations of the students. The fact that there is a full time nurse is an added benefit that many other schools do not have. Nurse Ana takes excellent care of the students and provides them with plenty of useful education. Overall, we're entirely pleased with the decision to send our daughters to this school! – **Jeff & Shonda Escobar, parents of Hannah (Grade 3) & Leah (Grade 1).***

*"My children have attended SJSJ school since preschool. Our plan was to have them there only through Kindergarten. However, after a very short time we realized that we wanted them to continue on throughout elementary and middle school. SJSJ is a family. The faculty and staff are dedicated and vested in providing each child with a first class education and a spiritual foundation. As an educator myself, I know my children are being challenged academically. As a parent, it makes my life easier knowing that they love their school. SJSJ provided the safe, nurturing environment we wanted for our children. It was a perfect fit." – **Lina Louro-Cunha***

"Over the past ten years my children have called Saint James Saint John their home. As a family we are constantly amazed at the endless warmth and support from all faculty and staff at our school. There is a family atmosphere that pervades the school with a strong focus on faith, learning, achievement, growth and accountability."

*– **Terry Wolkowicz, Parent of Justin and Aria.***

"Thank you so much for an amazing year. Isabel and I are so lucky to have St. James St. John's school in our children's

lives, I truly have no words to fully express the gratitude that Isabel and I have for the Love, Patience, Kindness and a priceless education our children receive there. I hope you have an awesome and safe summer. God bless.”

Respectfully,

Thomas D. Consoli

Property Services Manager

Sea-Dar Construction



St. James-St.John School has a well rounded curriculum that includes religious study, academics, music and art.

“I just wanted to let you know that we are so pleased with St. James St. John and wish we had moved Ryan earlier. You have a great group of parents, teachers and students. We feel Ryan has really thrived and is very prepared for highschool. Thank you so much for allowing him to go to your school.” – **Janice Carrigg**

“What makes St. James St.John school different from the rest is the teachers. The teachers at this school encourage us to do our best and help us when we need it.” – **Myra Wong,**

student.

“What I find most special about St. James St. John School is its ability act not only as a school, but as a home – where you learn new things with your family each day. It’s very rare to find a school where friendships have been formed over a course of ten years, to a point in which you can call your peers family.” -**Josh Downey, student**

“St. James St. John School is special because of the bond that all of the students have. The school is like a family brought together by the kindness that each student shows to one another and the support we receive from our teachers and staff.” – **Brendan Rego, student.**

“I wouldn’t want to be at any other school other than St James St John, because the students and teachers feel like family” – **Victoria Raposo, student.**

“Our school prepares every student to succeed in the future, both academically and spiritually.” -**James Dee, student.**

“What makes St. James St. John School special is the nice family-friendly environment that the school provides to students and their parents. Another thing that makes St. James St. John special is that every student feels like they belong in his or her class.” -**Patrick Vescio, student ambassador.**

“Saint James Saint John School... Living and learning through Christ.” – **Faith Medieros, student.**

“When I walk through the doors of St. James St. John it feels like your walking into family.” **Emilia Costa, student.**

“I like St. James St. John because of how we are all one family and how you can easily make friends with students, teachers, and staff. “ – **Gilbert Souza, student.**

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St. James-St. John School

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