



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
DIOCESE of DES MOINES

AS
SAINT THERESA
CATHOLIC SCHOOL

LOVED US



ANNUAL REPORT
2024-2025



“For as one body we have many parts, and all parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another.”

Romans 12:4-5

LETTER FROM PRINCIPAL MRS. WATZNAUER

Dear St. Theresa Community,

The 2024-2025 school year was full of excitement, growth, and faith. Staff supported our students' academic, social and faith development at St. Theresa Catholic School. We are blessed to have such a supportive, faith-filled community. Our teachers always chose to keep faith at the center of all we do.

We are seeing students grow in their foundational skills, their writing stamina and their math skills. They are settled into larger class sizes and have accepted our new teachers on staff as if they have known them forever.

As we continue with a faith focused Leader in Me program, we are seeing students embrace their leadership capacity, building resilience and using the language in their conversations. It allows them to refocus their personal thinking in self-talk with goal setting for their academic and spiritual growth. Our monthly Leader in Me Assemblies bring us together as a school to review the concepts and celebrate success. This has also led to more collaboration with mass buddies for different activities during the school year.

We are thankful to all who support our school with their time, talent and generosity. Our grandparent reading program is flourishing and both grandparents and students look forward to their time together. Our community is a true blessing to our students, staff and families. We are blessed to serve these families during their time at St. Theresa Catholic School.

Mrs. Gretchen Watznauer
Principal



OUR STAFF

Office Staff:

- Gretchen Watznauer, Principal
- Jennifer Jorgensen, Office Manager
- Danielle Jarnagin, School Nurse
- Emily Melcher, Communications
- Tony Tedesco, Maintenance

Kitchen Staff:

- Billie Collins, Nutrition Director
- Angela Wolfe, Kitchen Staff
- Randy Hanten, Kitchen Staff

Before/After Care:

- Jessica Chicoine, Director
- LeAnn Hilchen, Asst. Director
- Tess Meacham, Staff

Title/Resource Teachers:

- Angie DeMoss, Reading/EL
- Julie Hallgren, Title I

Specials:

- Ron O'Connor, PE
- Liz Patrick, Music and 5-8 Band
- Megan Sassatelli, Art
- Erica Niggemeyer, STEM
- Marcy Custer, Guidance Counselor

Preschool:

- Sarah Mohrfeld, PreKindergarten 4's
- Shirisha Gaddam, PreK Associate

Elementary:

- Missy Collins, Kindergarten
- Ann Strom, First Grade
- Lana Duff, Second Grade
- Nicki Castellano, Third Grade
- Mary Pane, Fourth Grade
- Krista Kreidt, Fifth Grade
- Jenna Sokolowski, Fifth Grade

Middle School:

- Jen Hoben, Math
- Theresa Hogan, Science
- Patrick Williams, Social Studies, Religion
- Katie White, Language Arts



OUR MISSION

St. Theresa Catholic School educates the individual child within our Catholic faith by providing excellent academic experiences and dynamic faith formation.

OUR VISION

We are a nurturing community that empowers and challenges each child to use their God given gifts to become faithful disciples, inspired life-long learners and responsible citizens.



LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The St. Theresa Catholic School Leadership Council allows for collaboration among volunteers, the pastor, and principal in meaningful volunteer roles. The council is comprised of school and parish volunteers and works closely with the principal and pastor in the areas of faith, academics, community-building, and fundraising to support the mission of the school.

The Leadership Council is structured as follows:

- Membership includes the pastor, principal, and volunteers invited to serve by the pastor.
- Leadership Council Officers – Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer – to be named by the pastor.
- Committees led by Committee Chairs: Academic/SIAC/Wellness, Faith and Service, Fundraising, and Community and Social.
- Meetings are held throughout the year and are open to the public

Parents are encouraged to attend meetings to learn more and support the committee work we are doing. We ask our community for patience and prayers as we embark on this new structure. We look forward to our community's feedback throughout the year.

St. Theresa Catholic School Leadership Council 2024-2025 Officers and Committee Chairs:

Executive Committee

Pastor – Fr. Raphael rassamah@stsdsm.com

Principal – Gretchen Watznauer gwatznauer@stsdsm.com

Chair – Amanda Dvorak toale24@gmail.com

Vice Chair –Theresa Welch theresa@innervisionshealthcare.org

Secretary – Sarah Brown brownse27@gmail.com

Treasurer – Vicki Nolan VMcCarthy76@yahoo.com

Committee Chairs

Academic/SIAC/Wellness – Allison Archambo

Faith and Service – Jill Dimon

Fundraising – Vicki Nolan

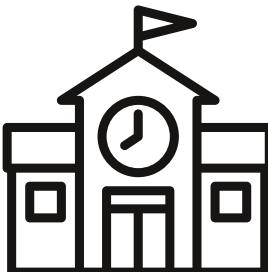
Community and Social –Christine Giberson



SCHOOL YEAR 2024-2025 BY THE NUMBERS

272

PK-8 Students



10

School Districts
Represented

11

Languages
Represented



25

Average Class
Size



49%

Students provided CTO Assistance

39

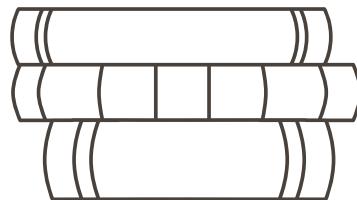
School Masses
lead by students

25



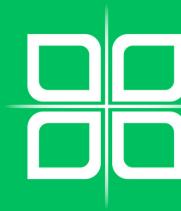
Students in Grades
6-8 participated in Little
Flower Chapel Masses

3



Full-time Teacher
Associates in Primary
supporting learning



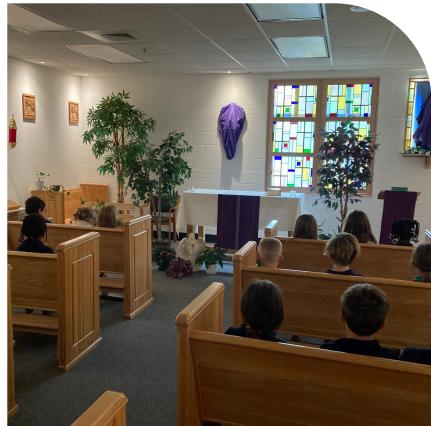


A FAITH-FILLED ENVIRONMENT



"The staff shows students how they live their Catholic faith daily because it is important for them to see how we all should behave and remember to love one another."

- St. Theresa Parent



FAITH

Formation promotes a relationship with Christ demonstrating to students how to live the Gospel in love and service to others through scripture, doctrine, prayer, and Liturgy. Our Catholic faith is the cornerstone of our school, we welcome students of all faith traditions. Students in grades PK-8 participated in 39 school masses. In addition, our faculty provided over 1,200 hours of faith instruction to all students.

Scripture, doctrine, prayer, and Liturgy are related to children at their developmental levels, beginning with their own experiences. Prayer is interwoven throughout the student's day. Prayer begins and ends each day at our school, is experienced daily in religion class, and occurs before lunchtime. Additionally, students have the opportunity to celebrate Liturgy together once a week and are involved in the planning of school Masses. Family and friends are always welcome to these Masses to celebrate the faith with our school community.

Through the lens of Catholic social teaching, we encourage our students to respect the diversity, dignity and beliefs of all in pursuit of knowledge and truth through critical thinking and constructive debate. This helps form strong principles, a moral center, and a vibrant community that celebrates all achievements for the common good.





FAITH HIGHLIGHTS



22 second graders celebrated the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist.



During the 2024-2025 school year, the Little Flower Chapel in the school was used for multiple purposes. Students participated in saying rosaries and learning out our faith in a quiet, reverant place. During middle school masses Fr. Mike and Fr. Raphael said mass while teaching students about the parts of mass, church traditions, and active participation.



Monthly a student from each classroom received the Little Flower Award. This award is given to students embodying the qualities of our patron saint, St. Theresa and demonstrating the Habits of Leader in Me, showing that they are a true leader for Christ.



Teachers grew in their faith through participation in Convocation activities, Catholic Schools week Mass, faith journey sessions, and faith retreats throughout the year.



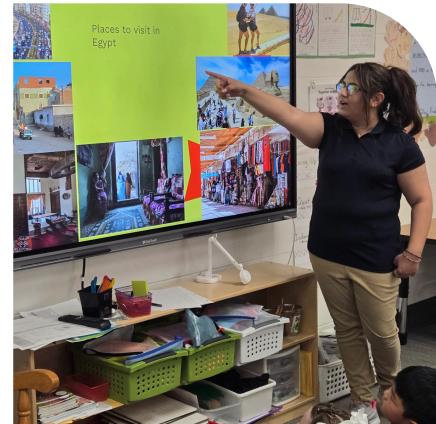


EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION



"We liked the idea of the STEM school, looking at the future of our kids, not realizing it starts in pre-k! On STEM Day, the pre-k kids built parachutes, while the older grades got to build rockets and shoot them. The Maker Space has been an amazing addition to the school and just goes to show the continued hard work the school is going to for our kids."

- St. Theresa Parent



EXCELLENCE HIGHLIGHTS



St. Theresa Catholic School is fully accredited by the state of Iowa. We challenge students to achieve academically, spiritually and personally through faith-centered learning with a rigorous academic program aligned with state standards. Since 2011, St. Theresa Catholic School has offered STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education in all elementary and middle school classrooms. This STEM-centered learning caters to learners of all academic abilities by working collaboratively using hands-on methods to solve real-world problems.



STEM allows students to be creative and use their knowledge in new and innovative ways that are unique to typical classroom settings. These opportunities allow students to master success in the classroom experiencing new ways to express their knowledge.



STEM is taught in all grade levels by teachers in their math and science classes. We utilize multiple reading resources to promote STEM learning in our classrooms. Having STEM embedded in classroom instruction allows students to see how important math and science are in conjunction with inquiry and creativity.

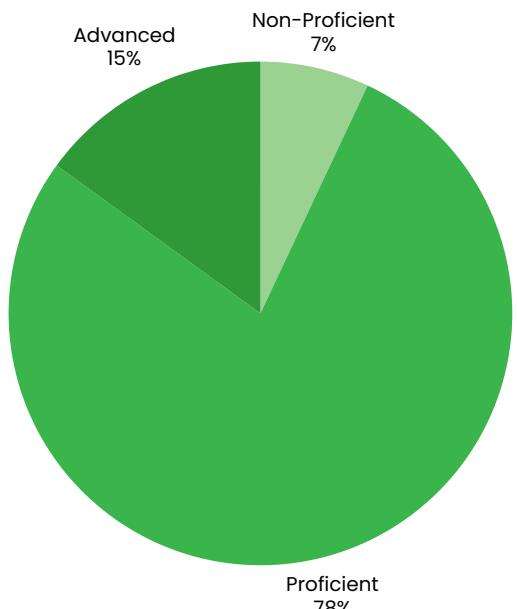


Every St. Theresa student has access to technology as an educational tool. We have a fully equipped STEM lab and are a 1:1 device school.

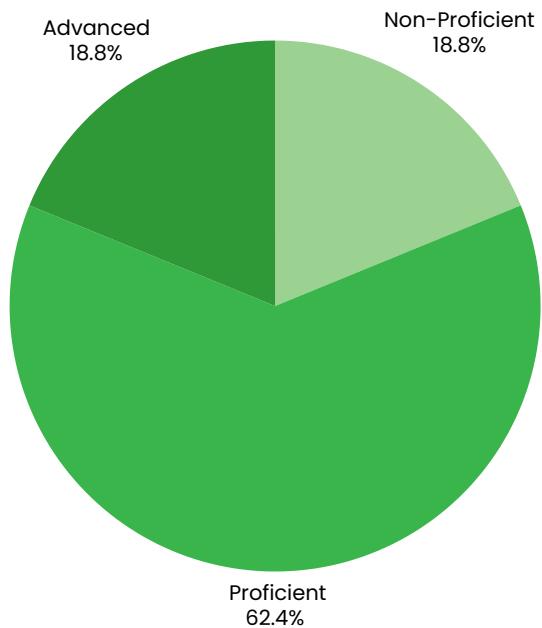


Academic Achievement

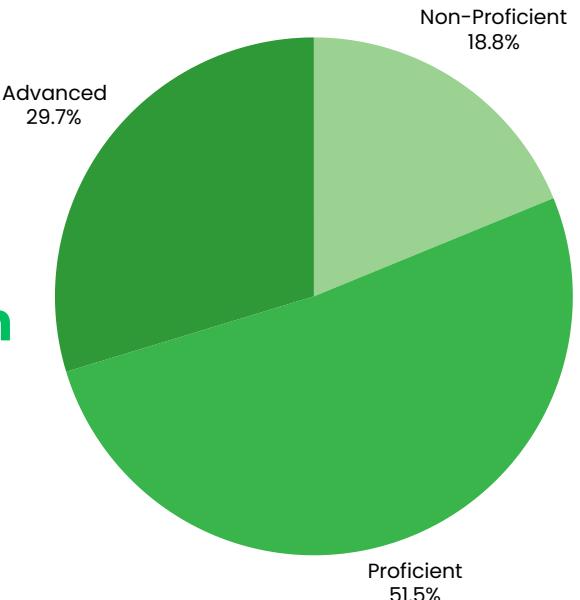
In the Spring of 2025, students in 3-8 grade participated in Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP). Students in grades 3, 4, 6 and 7 take Math and English Language Arts tests, while students in 5th and 8th grade took tests in Science, Math and English Language Arts. The graphic below shows how our 8th graders achieved on the test last spring. Our students leave St. Theresa prepared for their academic journey in high school and beyond.



English Language Arts

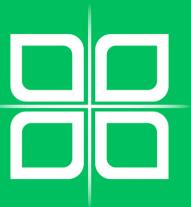


Science



Math





A CARING COMMUNITY



"St. Theresa is more than just a place of education for my children--it is so much more than that. It is a community for them, as well as for myself and my husband. I volunteer by reading to my daughter's class most weeks at library time, and my husband was the narrator in the last music concert. My mother is even one of the Girl Scout leaders for my daughter's troop. This makes us a part of the St Theresa community as well, and is again a gift that St Theresa has given us."

- St. Theresa Parent



COMMUNITY

St. Theresa School was created and continues to exist in order to partner with parents in educating their children. Collectively our school community experiences what it means to live a life of prayer, personal responsibility, and living the Gospel values. Teachers believe that each child is a unique creation of God, full of worth, dignity, and endless capabilities.

Our school has a rich tradition that binds our community and connects families, teachers, and staff on a deeper level. Each person in these relationships are personally invested in the success of our students and school.

We teach love, care, and concern for others as a part of our curriculum. Values of respect, discipline, dignity, and compassion are instilled in all students. In addition, students in all grades have the opportunity to participate in community service and mission projects. Through our service learning opportunities, St. Theresa Catholic students provide over 3000 hours of volunteerism in the community annually. Our staff also spends time volunteering in our community.





COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS



Our school serves students and families from all faith backgrounds, ethnicities, races, and cultures. Our student diversity was 29 percent and our student body represents 13 different home languages.



We served 272 students from nine different school districts across the Greater Des Moines region. We welcomed 38 new PK-8 students into our school community.

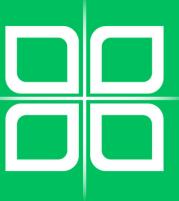


100% of our students and staff participated in service-learning by preparing lunches for the guests at Connection Cafe monthly, collecting much needed items for Catholic Charities, creating cards for homebound parishioners and for residents of the Calvin Community, and cleaning up the school grounds to beautify the space.



We added the Leader in Me Curriculum to our building, as well as continuing with Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) and use of Restorative Practices. These provide students with positive reinforcement for meeting school-wide expectations and logical consequences for problem behavior. These supports provide students with the skills to be successful at soft skills used in life.





THE BEST VALUE IN EDUCATION



"The love, attention and the concern teachers have with students is indescribable. For the first time our son enjoys going to school and sleeps more peacefully at night. What we can say is that St. Theresa Catholic School really cares for our children at an academic and spiritual level."

- St. Theresa Parent



VALUE

Our students get to experience high levels of faith, academics, and service throughout their school day. Our teachers model caring, kindness, and giving to others on a daily basis. Our students have the opportunity to learn by seeing and doing. It is such a blessing to be able to provide the students these experiences for growth.

Our Spring 2025 raised money to invest in storage for classrooms. These updates will be coming in the 2025-2026 school year. We raised enough money to start with a few classrooms. This will allow better storage in our classrooms and make more space for students.

The Sister Jude Scholarship was developed to support students in participating in extracurricular activities related to St. Theresa Catholic Parish. Students and families can apply for the scholarship to support their students participation in band, St. Theresa Parish sports, and activities to help offset the cost for families in need so their student can participate.





VALUE HIGHLIGHTS



62% percent of our students received assistance from Educational Savings Accounts (ESA), the Catholic Tuition Organization (CTO) and Diocesan Tuition Assistance (DTA) totaling \$907,200 Making a Catholic education at ST. Theresa Catholic School possible.



St. Theresa Catholic School has a bus route that transports 26 students on daily transportation routes. Additionally, our buses transport students to field trips throughout the year to enhance learning.



In the fall we held a Parent Curriculum Resource Night, lead by teachers, to introduce parents to the new curriculums being used in the building. Parents had the opportunity to rotate classes to learn about Wit & Wisdom, Really Great Reading, Leader in Me, and I Love U Guys!



THE COST TO EDUCATE

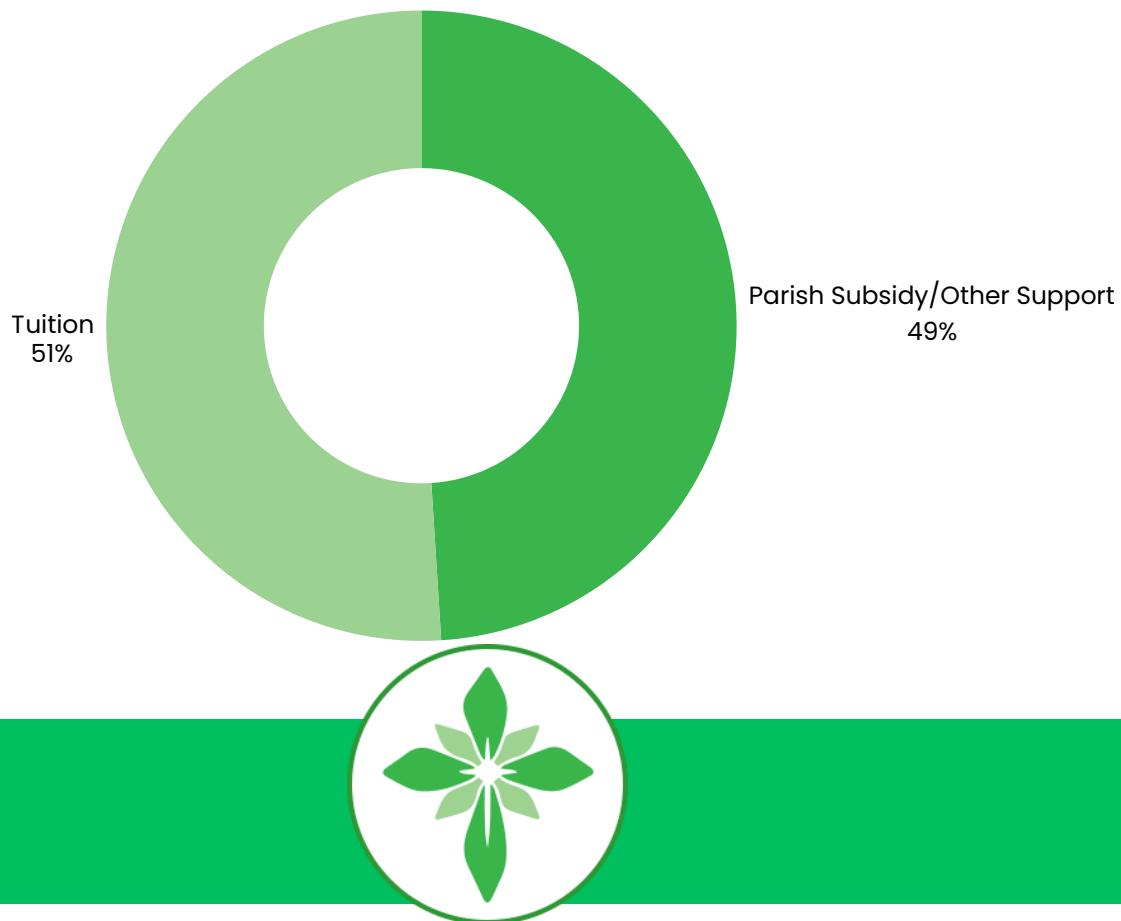
We greatly appreciate and understand the financial sacrifice our families make to provide their children with an education at our school. However, tuition only covers a portion of the cost to educate a student at our schools. The remaining amount is supported by parish subsidy, private donations, grants, and tuition assistance resources. We are incredibly grateful to the St. Theresa parishioners and all our supporters for making a Catholic education available to our students!

As parents, your tuition investment goes towards high-caliber educators, enhanced learning experiences, the latest technology, as well as moral and emotional education for your child. In addition, we offer tuition solutions and assistance programs – no family is turned away if they cannot pay full tuition.

In 2024-2025, 62 percent of our students received tuition assistance from Educational Savings Accounts, the Catholic Tuition Organization and Diocesan Tuition Assistance totaling \$907,200.

TUITION AND COST TO EDUCATE

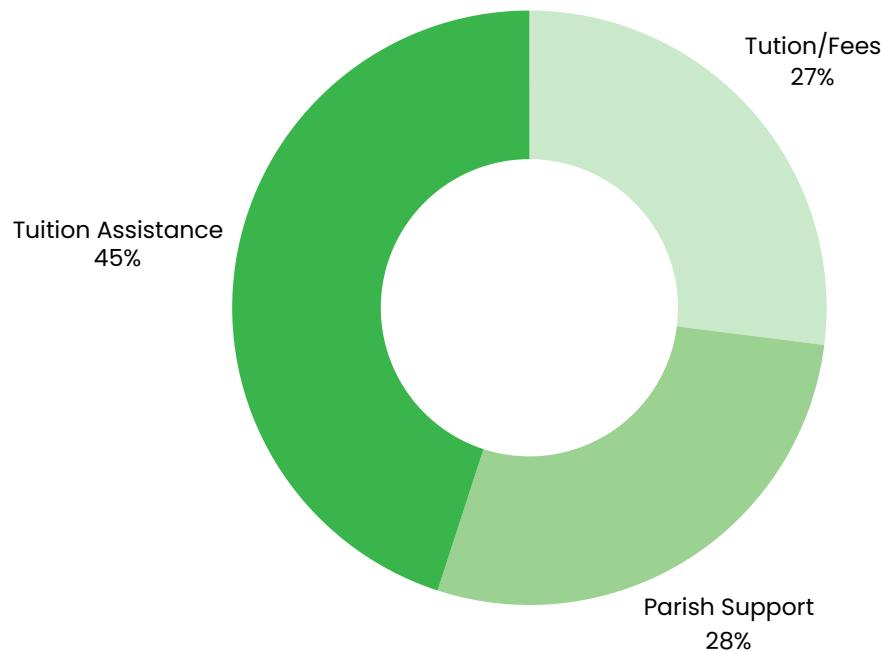
- Cost to Educate = \$10,600/student
- Average Tuition = \$5,400/student
- Parish Subsidy/Other Support for all students = \$5,200/student



FINANCIAL DATA

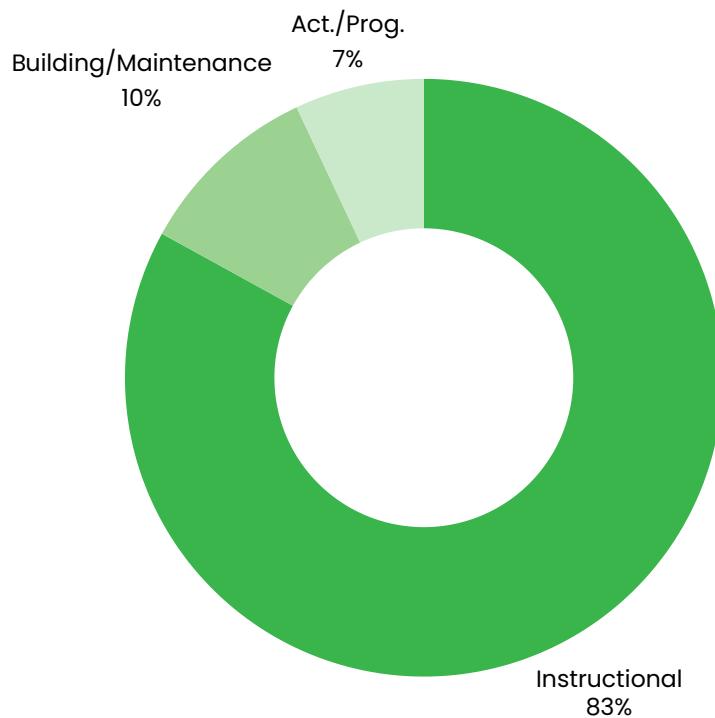
INCOME = \$2,075,904

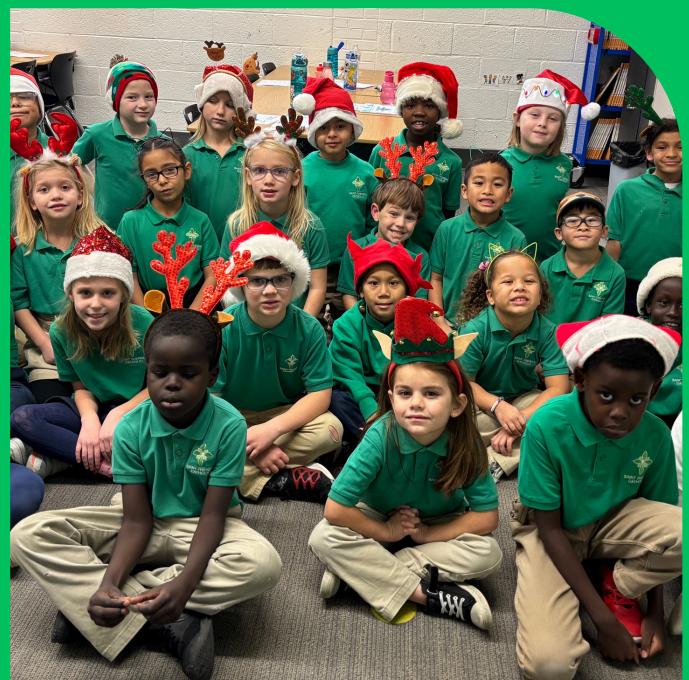
- Tuition Revenue and Fees = \$569,953
- Parish Support = \$598,751
- Tuition Assistance (ESA, CTO, DTA) = \$907,200



EXPENSES = \$2,6774,655

- Instructional Expenses = \$2,232,953
- Buildings and Maintenance = \$218,272
- Student Activities/Programs = \$223,430





St. Theresa Catholic School
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