



Dear Parents,

February 25, 2026

I have been concerned that some of our St. James children are not getting enough sleep at night. This may be due to the amount of screen time before bed. According to Jay Vera of the Sleep Foundation, "Electronic devices—tablets, phones, computers, TVs—emit blue-wavelength light. Research shows that this type of light **reduces the body's production of melatonin**, the hormone that signals the brain that it's time to sleep. When melatonin is suppressed, children feel less sleepy and take longer to fall asleep."

Keeping electronic devices out of bedrooms is wise. It is best to have them in common places, like the living room or kitchen. This enables parents to monitor the children's usage naturally. Parents are surer to know if the program is child-appropriate, in keeping with Catholic values, and fostering of creativity and thought. The practice of using devices in a common area also helps parents to know how long children have been on the screen. Parents need to set and uphold limits to screen time if they care what is good for their children. (Please see the enclosed flyer).

When it comes to helping children have a restful night's sleep, few things are more comforting than a simple bedtime routine with a parent. Spend a few quiet minutes talking about the day, read a short story, and say some nighttime prayers together. Stick to the routine. This will create a calming transition which helps children feel secure and ready for sleep.

In the Heart of Christ the King,

Sister Mary Alma, C.K.
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Parent-Teacher Conferences: Parent-Teacher Conferences are here once again! Thursday, February 26 is the big day. Conferences run from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm, from 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm, and from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm. Be sure to give us a call if you have not signed up or if you need to change your time. We are looking forward to being with you! Although both parents and teachers can sometimes feel nervous about the conferences, I think most would agree that they are beneficial. Children know that if mom and dad take the time to talk to their teachers, then school must be important. Children care more about their education when they know that their parents care too.

Good Shepherd Scholarship: It is time to be applying for the Good Shepherd Scholarship once again. The flyer in your packet coming home today has the eligibility information. Please go to www.goodshepherdscholarship.com to fill out the application as soon as you can. Tuition at St. James School next year is \$3,100.00 per child. The scholarship takes \$1,800.00 off your tuition and enables you to be eligible for the Sacred Heart scholarship.

You will need:

1. Your email address
2. Your 2024 or 2025 tax forms
3. Your 1040 form
4. Your W2 form
5. Your social security number and your children's social security numbers
6. Date of birth for your children
7. Information on taxable income
8. Information on nontaxable income (child support, food stamps, government assistance)

Need help filling out the Good Shepherd Scholarship? We may be able to help you during Parent- Teacher conferences. Call the office to schedule a time. Make sure you bring the items listed above.

Screen Time Guidelines by Age

As recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics

Under 18 months old

No screen time outside of video chatting with Grandma, etc.

Toddlers (18 months-24 months)

Little to no screen time recommended

- This is a critical developmental period for them, so encourage as much physical and creative interaction with people as possible.
- If they do get screen time, co-watch high-quality educational content with them to help them understand what they are seeing, and limit total exposure to < 1 hour. (Content offered by [Sesame Workshop](#) and [PBS Kids](#) is great)

Preschoolers (3-5)

Up to 1 hour per day is fine

- Try to plan TV-time in advance – resist the temptation to use them as a calming or distracting device.
- Children at this age can have mindful interaction with characters, so help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them!
- Many types of screen media content have print or other versions – try finding books or toys that can enable your child to interact with favorite characters off-screen. It makes for another way to engage your kids in creative play!

Elementary School Aged (6-10)

Up to 1 to 1.5 hours per day

- Place consistent limits on time spent using media, and the types of media being consumed.
- Since they are now entering school, make sure screens don't become a habit before homework gets completed.
- While developing tech skills is important, try to aim for a balance of creative and laid-back time.
- As they grow, parents can gradually give kids more control and choice in how they manage their time.
- Make sure media does not take the place of adequate sleep, physical activity and other behaviors essential to health.

Middle School Aged (11-13)

Up to 2 hours per day

- At this age, children can understand the concept of balance. It is up to parents to help them see how screen time fits into their schedule.
- If you find your child getting really into a certain video game for a week or two, gently try to help them understand the benefits of moderation.
- Help your children understand that recognizing when we are spending too much time doing any one thing is a valuable life skill.

Everyone in the Family

- Communal screen activities positively engage children in different ways! Break down screen time's inherent tendency to isolate us by enjoying a movie night or trip to the theater together.
- Participate in regular, physical activity together – walks, bike rides, trips to the park, etc.
- Model the type of behavior you want – limit your own screen time to 2 hours per day.
- Reinforce the message by having consistent conversations about appropriate amounts of screen time.
- Designate media-free time together, such as at the dinner table, in the car, etc., to achieve balance.



Managing Screen Time at Home

The guidelines listed above are a great starting point. Additional ways to monitor and protect your children from the effect of blue light exposure from digital screens include:

- Monitoring time on devices via screen-time-tracking and parental control apps like [Zift](#) and [Screen Time](#)
- Balancing exposure by implementing “earned” screen time by completing homework, finishing chores, brushing teeth, etc.
- Removing or shutting off digital devices in the child’s bedroom 2 hours before bedtime to enforce limits and encourage a consistent sleep routine.
- Providing nutritional support against the harmful effects of blue light on eyesight via [EyePromise Screen Shield™ Teen](#)

Sources:

“American Academy of Pediatrics Announces New Recommendations for Children’s Media Use.” AAP.org.
www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/pages/american-academy-of-pediatrics-announces-new-recommendations-for-childrens-media-use.aspx

Marcoux, Heather. “No More Guessing: Screen Time Guidelines for Toddlers to Teenagers.” Motherly, Motherly, 7 Aug. 2018.
www.mother.ly/child/no-more-guessing-screen-time-guidelines-for-toddlers-to-teenagers

Windows & Mirrors



Children need books that are windows and books that are mirrors

Grace Lin, a celebrated children's book author and illustrator, gave a TED talk in 2016 titled "The Windows and Mirrors of Your Child's Bookshelf." Using her own personal childhood experience, she explained that children need to read books that provide an opportunity for them to encounter a perspective or way of life that is different from their own, and also that they need to see their own life experiences reflected back to them.

Books as Windows

When a child reads or hears a book where the characters are different from him or her in some way, that book acts as a window, providing a way for the child to look out from his or her own life and take a peek into someone else's life. Perhaps the characters have different cultural traditions, or are homeless, or live in a distant period of history. Our lives are enriched when we can step into the perspective of someone else. Our children can develop empathy for someone who is different and can try to understand different life experiences, without having to live them in their own lives.

Books as Mirrors

At the same time, children also need books that reflect back to them their own experiences. Children need to see that their way of life is celebrated and validated. Children need to see characters who look like them and are relatable. This helps them gain a sense of self-worth and appreciation for the way God made them and for the realities of their life, such as their family's cultural traditions.

At St. James School, our families come from a beautiful variety of cultural heritages and everyone has his or her own unique story. The list at the right has ideas for books that can serve as windows or mirrors for your children.



Good Shepherd Scholarship Announcement – 2026-2027 School Year

We are pleased to announce that the Lincoln Diocese will continue to offer Good Shepherd Scholarships for the 2026-2027 academic year for students who attend Diocesan Catholic Schools. Since the Good Shepherd Scholarship Program was announced in 2019, the Lincoln Diocese has awarded over \$17.1 million dollars in financial aid to families who attend Catholic Schools. Since the program began, the Good Shepherd Scholarship Program has:

- Provided scholarships to 22% - 25% of Catholic School students each year
- Attained a 100% Graduation Rate for senior scholarship recipients (84% Nebraska Rate, 85% U.S. Rate)
- Awarded over 9,500 student scholarships, 30% of those scholarship recipients identify as minorities

The **Good Shepherd Scholarship** for the 2026-2027 academic year will be \$1,800 for grades K-8 and \$2,100 for grades 9-12 and will cover families within 225% of the Federal Poverty Level. To be eligible for the Good Shepherd Scholarship families must complete an application and upload tax document through the **FACTS Scholarship Management** program. Any family may apply, regardless of religious affiliation. For more information or to apply for these scholarships go to www.goodshepherdscholarship.com.

Good Shepherd Scholarship Program – 2026 - 2027

1. Good Shepherd Scholarships (GSS) are for families who are within 225% of the Federal Poverty Level and have students in grades Kindergarten through 12th grade who attend participating Lincoln Diocese Catholic Schools.
2. Families must apply in FACTS for all scholarships and submit 2024 or 2025 Tax Forms, including the 1040, other required tax forms and W-2 statements for each parent.
3. The FACTS application is one \$45 fee for all scholarships, including GSS and local Catholic school scholarships.
4. Families must complete the FACTS Scholarship application each year in FACTS to be eligible for scholarships.
5. Scholarship applications start January 1, 2026 and the deadline to complete the application is March 31, 2026.
6. The definition of income follows the Federal Lunch Program guidelines (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/eligibility-manual-school-meals>).
7. To apply for Good Shepherd and local scholarships go to www.goodshepherdscholarship.com.

25-26 Fed Poverty Level	
Family Size	225%
2	\$47,588
3	\$59,963
4	\$72,338
5	\$84,713
6	\$97,088
7	\$109,463
8	\$121,838
9	\$134,213
10	\$146,588