



Dear Parents,

October 28, 2026

The decision has been made! St. James will add a 7th grade in the 2027-2028 school year and an 8th grade in 2028-2029. For those who attended the SFA meeting on Tuesday, October 20, this news is not a complete surprise though you might be wondering how we decided so quickly.

The answer is that, happily, a strong majority of our parents wanted this! About 40% of our families answered the survey which was sent in the last newsletter. Of those who answered, 54% replied that they “strongly desired their children to remain at St. James through 8th grade.” An additional 23% answered that they were “very interested pending on curriculum, athletics, and tuition details.” 15% were undecided and 8% were not interested.

As stated at the meeting, the addition of the 7th and 8th grades would happen through combination or cohort classrooms. Next year, for example, we will combine grades 6 and 7. The following year, there will be a 5th and 6th combination class and a 7th and 8th combination class.

At the meeting, Dr. Peter Fletcher, the principal of St. John Paul II Academy in Omaha, described some of the advantages and challenges of combination classrooms. Two of our own parents added their positive experiences in being educated in mixed grade level classrooms. The big advantage seems to be friendlier children who care for each other and learn from each other. The challenge is for the teachers who must meet the academic needs of children in a wider ability range. Two of our St. James dads, Matt VanSlyke and Andrew McNeely, and I saw that the academic challenge can indeed be met well when we observed the children and youth in the various combination classrooms at St. John Paul II Academy. These students, with very few exceptions, were happy, bright, alert, engaged and doing fine work. I plan to make more visits this year and also send some of our teachers so we may keep learning about how combinations classrooms can flourish.

During the SFA meeting, there were many questions asked. Our SFA President, Guadalupe Guiza, carefully recorded each of them. The SFA Board and I will be working throughout this year to get answers to these questions. We have parents right now, however, who want to keep their children at St. James even if all we did was exactly what we are doing now. For the sake of these parents’ peace of mind and heart, Father Daro and I wanted to say, “Yes” we are doing it because at a bare minimum we can keep doing as we are doing. With that said, we will try to make the new middle school program as wonderful and rich as we possibly can. We will have a meeting in the spring to announce developments and plans and will try to keep you informed as we go along.

What has happened in the last eight days? Working and planning with the teachers has begun and will continue. I have also spoken with Crete Public School’s superintendent Dr. Josh McDowell asking if our St. James 7th and 8th graders could join the Crete Public Athletic teams. The question is being introduced to the school board this coming Wednesday, November 4. So perhaps we could all say a prayer for a favorable response.

In the meantime, we have much to be grateful for in the day-today happening already occurring at St. James. May God bless all our children, families, faculty and staff.

In the Heart of Christ the King,

Sister Mary Alma, C.K.

Looking for a Champion: We are looking for someone to lead the charge in advertising and inviting people to participate in the upcoming federal tax credit program which has potential to make a huge and never-before-experienced financial impact on St. James. We need a leader! We also need others who would like to help. St. Teresa School in Lincoln is on fire about this opportunity and has a goal of getting 1000 people to participate. If they did that, their school would receive one to two million dollars in tuition assistance! How about St. James? I think we could do just as well for our children's school. Please let me know if you are interested. I need a champion for the cause!

In the Heart of Christ the King,

Sister Mary Alma, C.K.

Coming Home Today: Give Catholic Flyer

Upcoming Dates:

October 30	1:15 p.m. All Saints Parade – grade 1
	2:15 p.m. Mission Carnival for the whole school. Thank you 5 th and 6 th graders.
November 2	8:15 a.m. Mass of Remembrance