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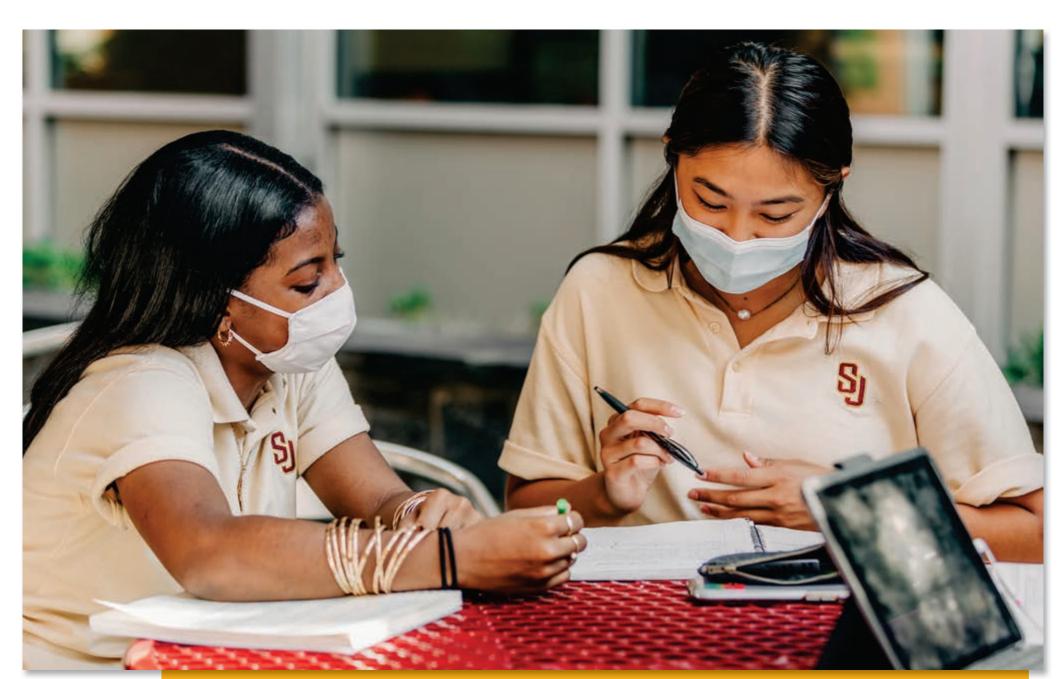
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The Wilton Bulletin

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college application season



Students study together on the campus of St. Joseph High School in Trumbull. Photo contributed by Owen Bonaventura.

Connecticut Schools Prepare Students with Intention

By Alex Fischer

W ith the spring semester in full swing, many high school juniors across the state of Connecticut will soon dip their toes into the pool that is the college application process. Many seniors will soon begin to make decisions about what college they will attend when fall rolls around. A stressful time for many, impressive Connecticut high schools are solid in their commitment to prepare their students and families for all that the college application and decision processes will throw their way.

Head of School at the Wooster School in Danbury Christopher Pannone takes pride in his school's philosophy of shaping students into adults before they graduate from high school.

Almost universally, students spend their first year or so of college figuring out their individuality and what they envision themselves doing with it. At the Wooster School, however, it is made an integral component of the academic experience to ask students to think inwardly about themselves while in high school, and then make the most of college with an already established sense of self.

"When you've been asked repeatedly throughout the course of your youth to ask yourself these reflective questions, about yourself as a human being and about yourself

as a learner, I think you have a better sense of what you want to try out when you get to college," Pannone said. "It allows you to choose your classes better, a better sense of what major you might try out, what types of people you best work with."

Pannone says that because the school prepares their students in such an intentional way, the collective mindset allows for a better understanding of where their energy should be channeled both academically while in college, and professionally after they've graduated.

Wooster students participate in an "academy" class each year of school, and junior year is when the college preparation comes to center stage. Although the school doesn't "teach to a test" as it doesn't align with their philosophy, some test preparation is embedded into the curriculum to benefit those taking either the SAT or ACT.

Pannone applauds the recent shifts regarding the growing number of test-optional colleges and universities. "I think that is good for human beings, generally, and definitely for kids who are ramped up in a really competitive process that has gotten out of hand particularly in the last 10 or 15 years," he said.

SEE APPLICATIONS ON PAGE 4

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discover Catholic SCHOOLS week

By Alex Fischer

The annual celebration of Catholic education in the United States is a tradition honored since 1974. This year, the honorable Discover Catholic Schools Week will begin on Sunday, Jan. 30 and run through Feb. 5 with this year's theme, "Catholic Schools: Faith. Excellence. Service." Through numerous opportunities for community engagement, Connecticut's Catholic schools focus on the values of the education they've cultivated and its impact on churches and the larger community.

A central element of America's Catholic education is care for each student's mind, body and spirit, therefore

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laying the foundation for well-rounded and compassionate individuals. Many Connecticut families decide to turn to Catholic schools because of the values that set them apart from the alternative options for education.

"I think that when people think of religion in school they think of a traditional version of studying the Bible, which we do, but the most important part is the way our students think about other people and the values that they take away," Rebecca Steck said, Head of School at Greenwich Catholic School.

SEE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS ON PAGE 7



applications From PAGE 4

At King School, private K-12 school in Stamford, students are supported by a dedicated team to help prepare them for their next academic chapter. The school, well-known throughout the state for producing top students each year, provides a level of academic rigor that in its own way prepares its students for part of what college will bring.

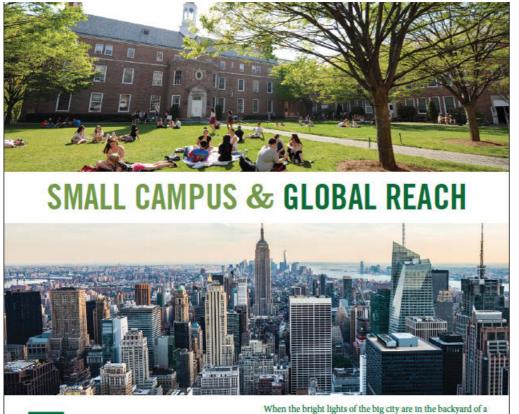
"At King School, the college counselors know each student well and support students and families with a four-year developmental program, starting in grade nine, that centers on empowering students as they reflect on their passions, capabilities, and ambitions," Jessica Landis, Director of College Counseling at King School, said. "The productive partnership among college counselors, students, teachers, families, and colleges helps students discover the most competitive fit."

During the spring of junior year, King students typically work with their assigned college counselor to lay out standardized testing strategies and begin to develop their list of colleges they intend to apply to in the fall.

St. Joseph's High School in Trumbull additionally supports students and families in the college application journey in using the SCOIR platform to connect with colleges. Parents and students have access to this resource to research schools, view data on past and current accepted students from their high school, build a resume and view schedules for college representatives planning to visit their school.

St. Joseph's has strong relationships with several college admissions representatives who each year read a select number of essays from active students and provide feedback.

SEE APPLICATIONS ON PAGE 6



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applications from page 4

"It has been so wonderful and so helpful to our students to be able to know that they're on the right track," Megan Baird said, associate director of college and school counseling. "The feedback they're providing is just invaluable."

Baird, a St. Joe's alumna herself, takes pride in her support to students and their social emotional well-being. Given the stressors surrounding the college application process, especially at such a prestigious high school, she understands and empathizes with students who find themselves daunted by the unknown.

When students are not in their best health mentally, it's very hard to focus on these other pieces of the puzzle."

"It really does go hand in hand, because if they're dealing with anxiety then it's really hard to focus on the college piece of it, because that in itself is a very scary experience," she said. "When students are not in their best health mentally, it's very hard to focus on these other pieces of the puzzle."

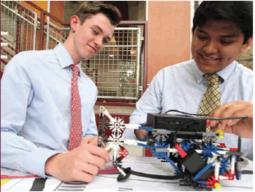
Helping students maintain a healthy and positive headspace is integral to the college application process. For parents, this may mean supporting your child in guiding them through difficult questions about what they desire for their future. Many resources can be found online at little to no cost. The Common App, for example, has begun to offer advising via chatbots as well as video sessions with admissions counselors. Several free resources have similar offerings, including Get Schooled for advising as well as Khan Academy for test preparation.

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catholic schools FROM PAGE 3

Something true to the Catholic faith is the Golden Rule, a moral principle which denotes that you should treat others the way you want to be treated yourself. Many catholic students are taught to treat others with respect and carry this practice with them through their years of schooling.

Along with kindness and compassion comes the core value of service seen in a large amount of the state's Catholic schools. For many students enrolled, going out into the community and volunteering at food banks, animal hospitals, participating in food or clothing drives, and involvement with church groups are all part of the Catholic experience.

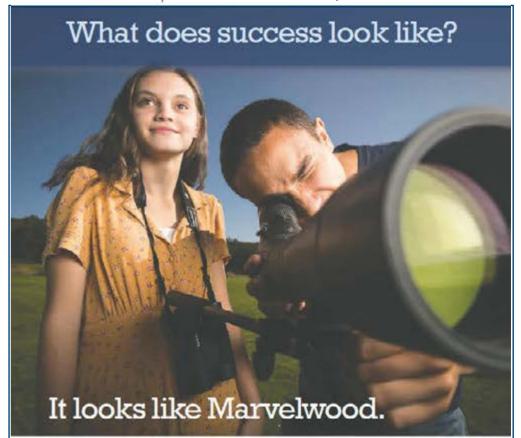
The Catholic Academy of Stamford and All Saints Catholic School in Norwalk have both participated in service initiatives to benefit the Malta House in Norwalk, one of a limited number of programs for young homeless mothers and their babies, and the only shelter for pregnant women in Fairfield County.

"When you give, you give with a giving heart," All Saints Catholic School Principal Linda Dunn said of student service. Around Thanksgiving, the All Saints students additionally held a food drive in which they received enough donations to feed 10 families.

All Saints Catholic School additionally celebrates the presence of decency in their school with 26 Acts of Kindness, the annual honorary period that takes place over 26 school days. Each day is named something different to encourage acts of kindness across the student body, including days dedicated to being good to yourself, calling a relative and saying thank you.

At Pre-K through grade 8 school, The Catholic Academy of Stamford, students support local non-profit, Person-to-Person, through an extremely successful toy drive. This year's drive collected more than 400 toys for those in need.

SEE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS ON PAGE 8



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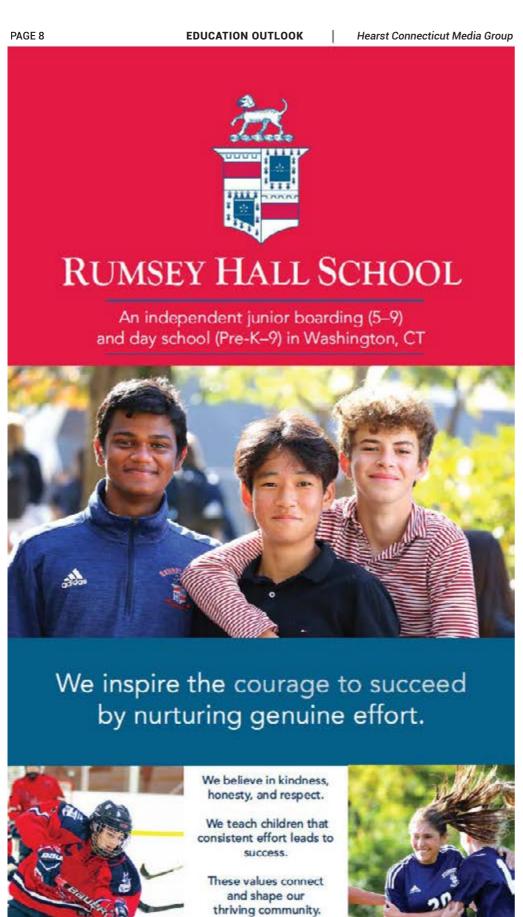
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JANUARY 2022



catholic schools from page 7



A group of Fairfield Preparatory School graduates pose at the 2021 commencement ceremony. Photo contributed by Robert Taylor Photography

The school additionally supports Wreaths Across America, another service initiative that honors fallen heroes at the Arlington National Cemetery and others across the nation. The Catholic Academy of Stamford proudly sponsored veterans' wreaths at a cemetery in Connecticut.

"It's instilled in the students to go out of their way to help others," Jen Hanley said, Director of Marketing and Communications at the Catholic Academy of Stamford. "The kids are constantly being reminded to do things for other people even if it's as simple as saying thank you."

Educators at Fairfield Preparatory School believe that community service is in alignment with the Catholic faith, so much so that their service program is referred to as "Christian Service."

"Service and outreach is central to our mission as a Jesuit catholic school," Elliot Gualtiere said, director of campus ministry. "This idea of love in action permeates all of what we do – in the classroom, on retreat, in the community and on the playing fields. Give to others and you receive so much more in return."



At Holy Trinity School in Wallingford, Principal Michael Frachette greets students every morning with a warm welcome as they arrive at school. The school's participation in this year's Catholic Schools Week is centered around teaching the gospel values to students while in their elementary school years. Each school day starts and ends with a school-wide prayer.

"We establish lifelong learners, and we believe that we teach the students skills to succeed beyond the class-room," Frachette said of his school. "We communicate the gospel values to the students, and we have very high expectations academically and behaviorally. Not only do they walk away with an outstanding education, but with the morals and values of the Catholic faith."

The student experience at St. Catherine of Siena School proves to be somewhat similar, ensuring that the presence of faith is ingrained in education.

"The academic program at SCSS effectively blends innovative teaching strategies while helping students to learn foundational skills that prepare them for the rigors of high

When you give, you give with a giving heart..."

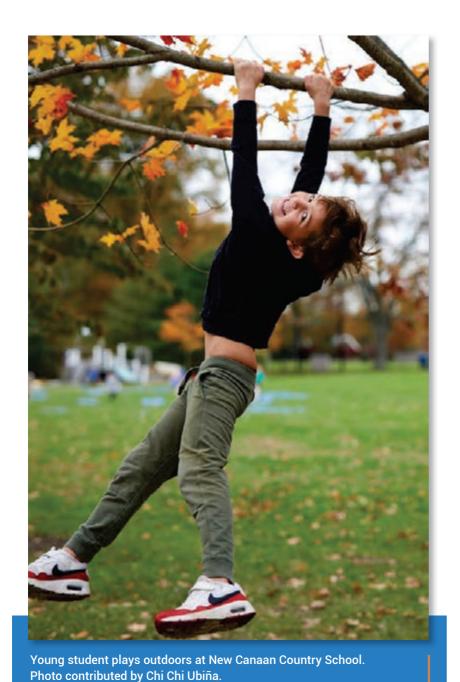
school and beyond. At the center of the SCSS experience is our faith in God and the belief that each child is created in His image and likeness as a unique and beautiful individual," Principal Rachel Ambrosio said of her school.

Many Connecticut Catholic Schools are hosting events throughout Discover Catholic Schools Week to give area families the chance to see all that they are about. To learn more about Catholic Schools Week and events happening in your area, be sure to visit the websites of the diocese.





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We believe that curiosity is a natural ability that children bring to their learning..."

education FROM PAGE 1

"Play is the work that asks children to attend, to be invested, to stay with something when presented with a challenge and persist, to collaborate. It is rigorous for a young child—those are all skills they're developing and they are so essential," O'Brien said. "Play is such an integral part of them becoming the students, and really, the humans that we want to be participating and collaborating for the future."

In "The Power and Purpose of Play," article written by O'Brien for the New Canaan Country School, she cites several different kinds of play that each contribute to a different set of skills for young students to develop. In cooperative play, for example, children learn to collaborate with others around them, while in solitary play, they create space for self-reliance and decision-making skills. Students use their imaginations during imaginative play to cultivate long-term creative abilities, then effectively fine-tune those abilities during rules-based play.

There's a certain richness that can be learned from observing children during their playtime, O'Brien says. The different types of play come through later in their development as key skills that come to define who they come to be as adolescents and ultimately as adults, too.

Academics are woven within the play-based structure of classrooms at the New Canaan Country School and each room is intentionally set up to facilitate opportunities to extend learning from just their lessons. On tables, teachers will put things like clay or wire or other materials to motivate conversation amongst peers, and ultimately camaraderie to problem-solve.

Through trial and error, students have the freedom to ask themselves questions about how to logically solve the situation in front of them, a practice that will travel with them through life as they develop.



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At King School in Stamford, the lower school's Reggio Emilia-inspired project-based teaching and learning program encourages children to collaborate in their exploration of intentional classroom set ups, many of which are filled with vibrant colors and opportunities to engage. In the Pre-K and kindergarten classrooms, the school mission is to lay the foundation for self-discovery through asking questions, gathering data to make models, and ultimately teaching others about what they learn.

In a similar way to that of the New Canaan Country School, lower school classrooms at the King School carefully select the materials put on desks and tables to initiate play. Art supplies, building blocks and science tools are commonly utilized to help students gain an understanding of the world around them.

"We believe that curiosity is a natural ability that children bring to their learning – we encourage students to ask questions, make discoveries, think critically, analyze and solve problems, be good listeners, and have fun being involved in the dynamic process of learning. We value every child and build strong, safe classroom communities where exploration, discovery, and play leads to mastery," Dr. Sandy Lizaire-Duff said, Head of Lower School at King School.

Above all, the rationale behind the actionable playbased education model is to encourage young students to feel confident in their ability to make significant change and be an essential part of all that is happening around them. Creating an intentional space for thoughts, ideas and decision-making gives students the opportunity to develop strong voices, and learning these practices at such a young age, the lessons can be carried around with them for the rest of their lives.

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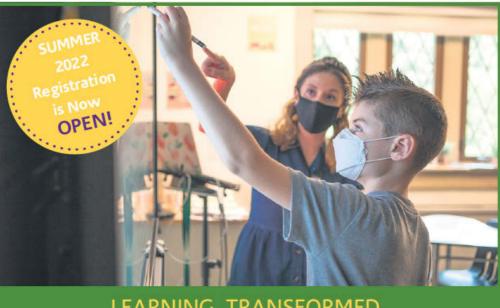


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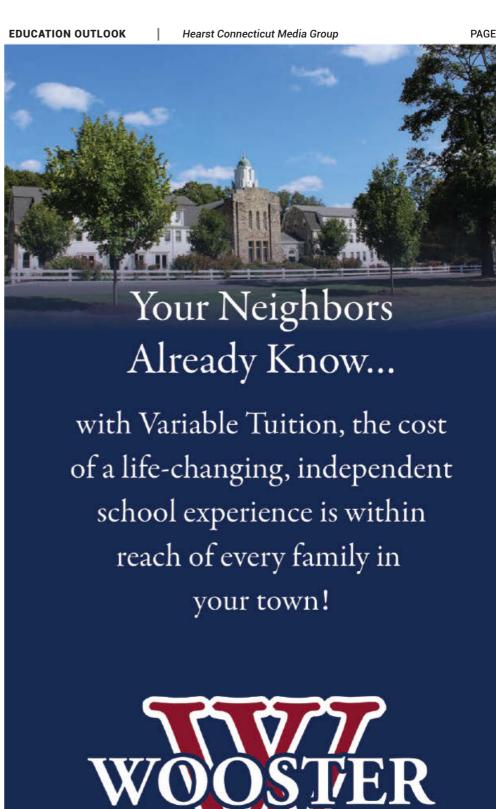


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Head of School Clay Kaufman describes students as creative, engaged, motivated, and eager to learn if it's given to them in a digestible way. Photo contributed by Dylan Kaufman.



THE CEDAT SCHOOL in Greenwich

Succeeds in First Ever Semester

By Alex Fischer

he Cedar School, a brand-new high school located in Greenwich, recently wrapped up its first ever semester serving students grades nine through twelve with mild to moderate language-based learning differences. The brainchild of current Head of School Clay Kaufman, the school's purpose is to give all students a chance to learn, even if the way in which they're able to is different than the standard student.

Expressive and receptive learning challenges are obstacles faced by many students who interpret and store information best if presented in a multisensory fashion, something not conventional to generic U.S. public or private high schools. Instead of one-dimensional lectures and words on a white board, language-based learning curricula takes material to the next level and offers it in a way that's more engaging, and ultimately more meaningful to the student and their ability to process it.

Although Fairfield and Westchester counties are home to several different boarding schools that cater to students with language-based learning differences, The Cedar School gives families a day school option that the area previously lacked.

"When you take child who is really frustrated because they're not learning and you put them in the right environment, it just turns their life around and changes everything. Being in the right place really makes a difference," Kaufman said.





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This unique class of students tends to have enormous strength when it comes to creativity, the arts, and materials taught in a way that uses more than one sense. Usage of visual displays or music are popular for a multisensory classroom as well as hands-on learning activation. By creating association between learning contents, information is easier to access for those with retrieval challenges when it comes to learning.

Marylyn Zecher, a brilliant academic therapist in Maryland, once told Kaufman about an analogy that helps put language-based learning differences in perspective.

"It's as if you had everything in your home, all the little things that you owned: your scissors, your glue, your tape, your string, rubber bands—all in the basement—and 400 unmarked boxes," Kaufman said of Zecher's analogy. "If I sent you down to get some glue, you'd start looking through the unmarked boxes and after about 10 or 15 boxes you'd probably just give up. By using the multisensory piece, we're basically labeling the boxes."

The Cedar School's education model is explicit in making language the forefront of every lesson, and this comes through even in foundational courses such as high school physics and trigonometry that are common for high school students everywhere.

"It is not that are students are not able to learn, it's that being in the right environment makes a huge difference for them," Kaufman said. "Our message to parents is to find the right school for your child then let them thrive there, that's the goal."

Kaufman, previously the co-head at The Siena School in Silver Spring, Maryland and before that, at The Field School in Washington, D.C., has spent his career helping incredibly bright students find the best way to learn, even if it's unconventional. In developing a strong college preparation program for The Cedar School, Kaufman's goal is to send Cedar students to college with the skills they need to succeed in any type of classroom setup.

Included in the college-preparation experience is an impressive internship program that will have its first year in March. Many businesses in Fairfield and Westchester counties have jumped at the opportunity to bring an intern on board, and Kaufman hopes the experience will spark career aspirations for some students.

The Cedar School had a class of 17 students in its first semester, largely comprised of ninth graders. The administration was incredibly pleased with the class progress and has already begun to see an increase in enrollment for the spring semester and next schoolyear.

"One of the great things about working with this group of students is that they are creative, engaged, motivated, and they love learning if it's given to them in the right way.

It is not that are students are not able to learn, it's that being in the right environment makes a huge difference for them."

They're very responsive when you create ways for them to learn that make it easier for them," Kaufman said of this vear's students.

The Cedar School has a cap on classes so no more than 10 students are ever in the same classroom, giving each the opportunity for their voice to be heard as well as form relationships with teachers. As the school grows, Kaufman envisions hosting typical high school events like prom, expanding the athletics program and other extracurriculars.

To learn more about The Cedar School's mission, be sure to visit the school website.

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