



ST. MICHAEL HIGH SCHOOL
A CHESTERTON ACADEMY





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THE RENEWAL OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION CONTINUES

Join us as we *Build Something Beautiful* at St. Michael High School!

November 29, 2025

Dear Friends of St. Michael High School,

There's a crisis in Catholic education. Sadly, that isn't news. It's been ongoing for decades now.

Believe it or not, Catholic schools were packed just a couple generations ago – but over the last sixty-odd years, nationwide enrollment has declined relentlessly. Ever more so today, legacy Catholic schools continue to shrink and close with alarming suddenness and frequency. Of course, the damage hasn't been limited to our schools. Catholic parishes across the country continue to consolidate and close, in response to the decades-long plunge in Mass attendance and religious vocations.

Thanks to YOUR faithful support of St. Michael!

- ✓ Largest student body, most full-time students ever
- ✓ Homeschool Lyceum prepares future students for SMHS
- ✓ Operated in black for '24-'25; fundraising up, costs down
- ✓ Balance sheet improved, legacy debts more than halved
- ✓ Completed *Strategic Planning* with *Partners in Mission*
- ✓ Drama program raises the bar with Shakespeare & more
- ✓ Iconography class with Jane Cardinal begins in January
- ✓ Athletic achievement in X-Country, Track, Skiing, Co-ops
- ✓ All-new Gala & celebratory events - more fun, more funds
- ✓ After 7 years of prayer, Planned Parenthood is CLOSED!

In recent years, however, and with energy and persistence all its own, a new wave of Catholic schools isn't closing their doors, but opening them, in synch with a tidal wave of families that are homeschooling. This 'new wave' is revitalizing Catholic education and, in doing so, is helping to re-energize the Church. More American families than ever are pursuing Catholic education via non-traditional avenues.

A common feature of these new schools is recognition that Catholic education isn't merely providing information, training, and

credentials but, much more critically, requires immersing students in Christian culture and prayer, forming them as joyful warriors for our Lord. Most of these new schools are Classical or pivoting to become so. As long-time members of this movement, we at St. Michael cheer its continued success.

This educational renewal is exciting and essential...

- It's fortifying the next generation, the very souls of our children. Those who know and live their FAITH as teenagers are far more likely to retain it as adults.
- It's providing HOPE to a secular culture badly in need of course correction from its despairing and self-indulgent nihilism. This is the antidote to a litany of societal ills.
- It's fulfilling our mandate, our 'Great Commission,' to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth, bringing the LOVE of Christ to the multitudes in need of it.



In the Classical model of education all subjects are integrated, pointing to our Creator, coherently presenting the immaculate order of His Creation, bypassing modern education which ignores or denies His very existence.

Classical education, as handed down by Catholic scholars for centuries, marks a return to our educational birthright. This surely includes the study of philosophy, theology, Latin, and the arts, but that's just the beginning. We 'raise the bar' for our students in many ways, training them to absorb original texts and wrestle with most important ideas of history. We teach our students to think and we inspire them to dream.

That this educational renewal is fueled by a return to a Classical approach steeped in the best of Western Civilization is no accident...

- We rely on the timeless wisdom and tradition of the Church regarding human formation, providing the perennial roadmap to excellence and holiness that our children need to flourish.
- We celebrate the renaissance of the *Catholic intellectual tradition*, reality-centric teaching that breaks away from modern education with its implicit subjectivity and lack of any Christian conviction.
- We embrace a Christian worldview with its supernatural vision of *Truth, Goodness, and Beauty* – transcending the merely natural and material which will never fully satisfy any of us.



The Chesterton Schools Network exemplifies the rapid growth of this movement. In 2019, we became its 13th member. Today, there are nearly 70 Chesterton schools *with 18 more slated to open next year.*

Particularly among Catholics and other Christians, the Classical educational movement isn't a fad, but now a well-established trend. Among the latest to move toward its implementation is the entire Diocese of Lansing. We're optimistic that continued advancement of this trend will further catalyze growth at St. Michael and similar schools.



With all of that as table-setter, we're pleased to invite YOU to join this *nationwide renewal of Catholic education*. More specifically, we ask for your support as we strive to execute our crucial mission at St. Michael High School!

By the Grace of God, we've made remarkable progress since assuming leadership of St. Michael in Spring '24, including the following highlights...

ENROLLMENT

While we surely seek (and need) continued growth of our beloved school, we celebrate the many new families we've welcomed so far. We have the most full-time students ever and, with our innovative *Homeschool Lyceum* program, easily the largest student body in school history. We're deploying new school management software in January, enhancing efficiency and professionalism in our Enrollment process.

FUNDRAISING

Fundraising success last year was an answer to prayers! Our all-new Gala was not only a BLAST, but raised triple what it had in prior years. Thanks to the generosity of donors like you, we not only paid our bills last school year, but also whacked down about \$150K in legacy debts. With your help, we hope to quickly address our remaining debt, totaling about \$120K – after which our school will finally be debt-free!



STRATEGIC PLANNING

Last spring, we wrote our *Strategic Plan*, guided by national leaders in Catholic school consultancy at *Partners in Mission*. '**Unum Est Necessarium**' ('*Only One Thing Is Necessary*'), provides a roadmap for our continued pursuit of excellence, holiness, and growth, and we're pleased to report that many key objectives are already accomplished. We are determined to complete our transition from 'persevering start-up' into Northern Michigan's preeminent high school, blessed and built to last for generations.

CATHOLIC FORMATION

Rather than relegate religion to singular courses or events, we provide opportunities to live out a robust faith and prayer life throughout the day – in classes, on the athletic fields, and in extracurriculars. We have Fr. Peter Wigton and Fr. Mitchel Roman providing a priestly presence – and we’re confident that, as with other schools like ours, St. Michael will have graduates go on to pursue religious vocations. Finally, we note with joy that after seven years of faithful prayer for the unborn by our students & staff, Planned Parenthood closed its doors and departed Petoskey earlier this year. *Thanks be to God!*

EXCELLENCE IN THE ARTS

The power and influence of the arts on society and culture is undeniable, so we help students discern between that which glorifies God, elevating the soul – and that which seeks to alienate us from Him.

- Our Vocal Music program delivers inspiring choral and chant at concerts, Masses, and special events.
- Our Drama program aims high and outdid itself last spring with Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing*. Coming soon... *Anne of Green Gables*.
- Our resurgent Art program propelled Margaret Mercer & Mea Wesley to regional recognition.
- As follow-up to our exquisite *Evening with Icons*, we are thrilled to offer Iconography instruction featuring legendary local artist Jane Cardinal.



ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENT

We continue to sponsor 17 sports – 10 of our own teams and 7 ‘co-ops’ with other schools. We’re firm believers that Athletics, properly and vigorously pursued, mesh seamlessly with our mission in the formation of leaders and preparation for Christian life. We continue to punch above our weight class!

- Our Cross Country program had another incredible season, with both the Gents & Ladies winning Regional titles, then placing 4th & 10th at State.
- Our Skiing program enters its sixth season of competition, led by All-Stater Josie Kolka.
- We again had several All-State performances on the Track, led by recent grad Russell Vandermus.
- We’ve had a huge impact within our co-ops lately, with St. Michael ladies helping Harbor Springs attain ‘top ten’ State finishes in Tennis & Golf.



HOMESCHOOL OUTREACH

Our *Classical Enrichment* and *Homeschool Lyceum* programs have attracted new interest from a wide geographic radius, helping more families join up with ours. Together, we recognize that parents are the primary educators of their children and celebrate our unique ability to provide classroom & community experiences – as well as *leadership opportunities* – that simply cannot be replicated at home.

SO MUCH MORE...

Meanwhile, our Quiz Bowl team continues its tradition of defeating far-larger schools, opening its new season with a 7-0 run and a big win! Social Dance is back this winter, celebrating the chaste formation



of ladies and gentlemen. We're also planning simultaneous early-March trips – a pilgrimage tour of France and a backcountry 'team-building' venture to Moab with Wyoming Catholic College!

As always, *there's so much to do* – and as an independent school, we receive no federal or state assistance – nor do we receive any direct support from the Diocese. Aside from tuition, we rely solely

on donations. St. Michael High School is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, to which all gifts are tax deductible.

To our faithful benefactors, THANK YOU! To those not yet onboard, or for whom it's perhaps been a while, we humbly ask you to join our St. Michael family. *Please prayerfully consider joining our team, and help us **Build Something Beautiful** at St. Michael High School!*

Topping our needs list is help with ***Enrollment!*** Nothing matches the impact of new students at our school. Do you know of families (including homeschoolers) that may have interest in joining us? Please let us know and we'll gladly reach out to them.

Also, it currently costs much more than the \$7K sticker price for us to educate a student each year (it's actually closer to \$14K), and many young, working families require financial assistance. Can you bless these families as a ***'Tuition Angel'*** by helping us fill the *'tuition gap'* helping them make their *leap of faith*?



We've just completed some upgrades to our schoolhouse so as to meet modern building and fire code requirements – a one-time charge of about \$35K. We mentioned our lingering legacy debt earlier. Paying those off and ending debt service payments would help our monthly cash flow immensely!

Our biggest expense – and by far – is paying faculty and staff. Your general, unrestricted donations surely go toward their worthy cause. We wouldn't have any chance at a school without our faith-filled teachers!

Is a 'lump sum' year-end donation not desirable or feasible for you this season? How about a more modest **recurring donation** – quarterly or monthly? It's easy to set that up, as well as one-time donations, via our website at... stmichaelchesterton.org/donate/.



Have you considered *donating stock, real estate, or other appreciated assets* in conjunction with your tax planning, or of leaving a lasting impact to our school and its future families via **estate planning**? We can help with that – please give us a call.



Please also feel free to contact us to learn more about the school and its inner workings (ask for Kevin) or regarding the more corporate aspects of St. Michael – operating costs, finances, etc. (ask for Larry). We're not only committed to transparency, but we're excited to share our progress to-date as well as what we're planning for the months ahead. Please impose on us!

***The renewal of Catholic education continues...
right here in Petoskey at St. Michael High School!***

We invite you to visit and join us for a coffee – or for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Why not book a shadow day for your students? Come see for yourself... *the joyfully Catholic culture of St. Michael!*

Thanks for your prayers and support. May God bless you and your family this Advent season.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Weed".

Kevin Weed
Headmaster

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Larry Rudnicki".

Larry Rudnicki
Executive Director