

EDUCATION OUTLOOK

APR 2022

TUTORING CENTERS STRIVE TO SHARPEN SKILLS THIS SUMMER

by Alex Fischer

Keeping in touch with education this summer is extremely important, not only for those preparing for standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT, but for younger students who may need the extra support while school's

out. Lucky for Fairfield County residents, there are numerous places to turn for guidance. Several universities, schools and tutoring centers are offering opportunities for students of all ages to stay sharp.

CONTINUE **Tutoring** ON PAGE 12

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LIFTING OF MANDATE UNMASKS YOUNG & BRIGHT SMILES

by Alex Fischer

It's a cold March day at the Catholic Academy of Stamford, but Ms. Berberich's second grade class is in the school's backyard digging around in the Grows Garden, exploring the produce and having fun together while they take turns planting flower bulbs, those which are frozen on the bottom due to the cold air. Although passersby might be able to see the group, they surely can't hear the blissful, exhilarating noises of children's play. A symphony of laughter filled the brisk air and smiles of baby teeth spread wide across small, bright second grade faces as they ran aimlessly through the grass.

"Last season when we were out here, we all wore masks. It's refreshing to get to see their faces and their smiles, it's nice," Danielle Jahn said, one of the leads of the parent volunteer

group that frequently hosts student groups in the garden. "They just light up when they come in here."

The group of second graders were then tasked with picking carrots out of the raised bed, that which was met with a stampede of feet charging toward the soil. As the students scoured through the vegetable garden, each gleamed in awe as they held the orange stalk high to show to their teacher.

"I like that we can grow veggies and carrots. I like carrots a lot," seven-year-old Jackson Fiske said, one of the first students to pluck a carrot from its root. "My grandma grows carrots in her backyard."

Red leaf lettuce, Swiss chard, kale and cucumbers are just the short list of all that has come out of the CAS Grows Garden. The added bonus of



Smiley student at New Canaan Country School. Photo contributed by Meaghan Mallin.



Group of happy students play together at New Canaan Country School. Photo contributed by Meaghan Mallin.

the garden is the opportunity for connectivity, that which has only sprouted upwards since the Connecticut school mask mandate has been lifted.

Peering through the windows of classrooms revealed the in-school energy in a way that was both figuratively and literally unmasked — teachers and students are seeing each other smile again, and sharing the excitement together.

Second grade Mason Paterno says he “can breathe way better” without his mask. The young students, however, have seamlessly integrated sensitivity into their dialogue about unmasking, and therefore are respectful of the students who continue to keep their masks on.

“You can say that it was a safe choice because people can still get COVID and they may not be fully vaccinated,” Paterno said of class-

mates who may remain masked while inside the classroom.

The unmasking experience at New Canaan Country School has been somewhat similar according to Head of Lower School, Meaghan Mallin, who stood in the entryway as students arrived on their first mask-less school day.

“It was a really beautiful moment,” she recalled. “As they entered the building, they were clearly feeling

CONTINUE **Smiles** ON PAGE 4



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Smiles FROM PAGE 3

a strong sense of connection with one another which was expressed throughout the morning through fits of giggles.”

Throughout the pandemic and mask mandate, teachers at New Canaan Country School adopted the term “eye-le,” the smile in the eyes above the mask. This terminology came into the mix as teachers understood more and more that interpreting facial expressions is a key element of what it means to understand social context, something students faced obstacles with once facial coverings became mandatory.

“Being able to piece together tone of voice, language usage, body language and facial expression is at the core of developing vital social skills,” Mallin said. “Children use facial expression as a way to connect.”

Now, with masks beginning to come off within the walls of Connecticut schools, not only are schools seeing smiles again, but they are also regaining the environment where relationships form because of them. Closeness and connectivity to those around us often begins with a simple smile, and young students are on their way to more smiles, more laughter and more meaning both in and out of their classrooms.

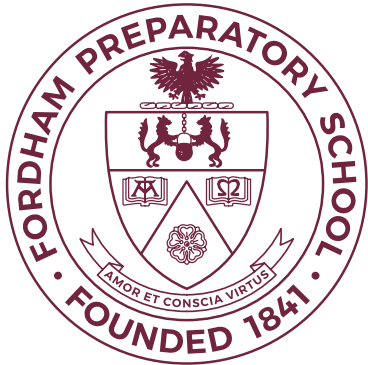
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Second grade students pick fresh carrots from their school’s garden. Photo contributed by Jen Hanley.

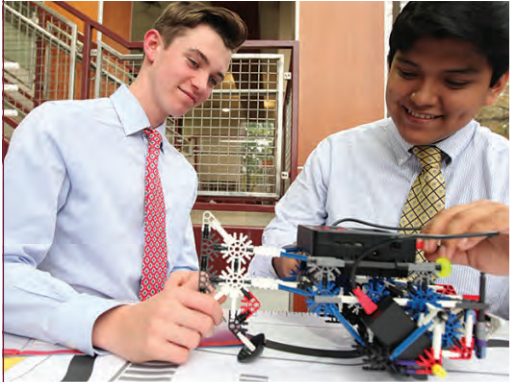
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by Alex Fischer

Whether it’s your first student or not, the college application process can be incredibly daunting not only for high schoolers, but for parents, too. Because there are so many paths to choose from, encouraging your student to make the right choice oftentimes comes with a great amount of support from many different sources, your son or daughter’s school posing the biggest potential influence.

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“ ”

IT’S REALLY JUST ABOUT EXPLORING,
GETTING AS MUCH INFO AS WE CAN,
DIGGING DEEP AND FINDING WHERE THINGS

start to line up.

MATT DEBES
ST. JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL PARENT

Many parents find this time quite stressful, especially with their eldest children, and it’s not abnormal to struggle in trying to gain all the necessary information and resources to best support their student. Many parents of high school-aged students have experiences to share and advice to offer to parents navigating this process for the first time.

CONTINUE **Direction** ON PAGE 8



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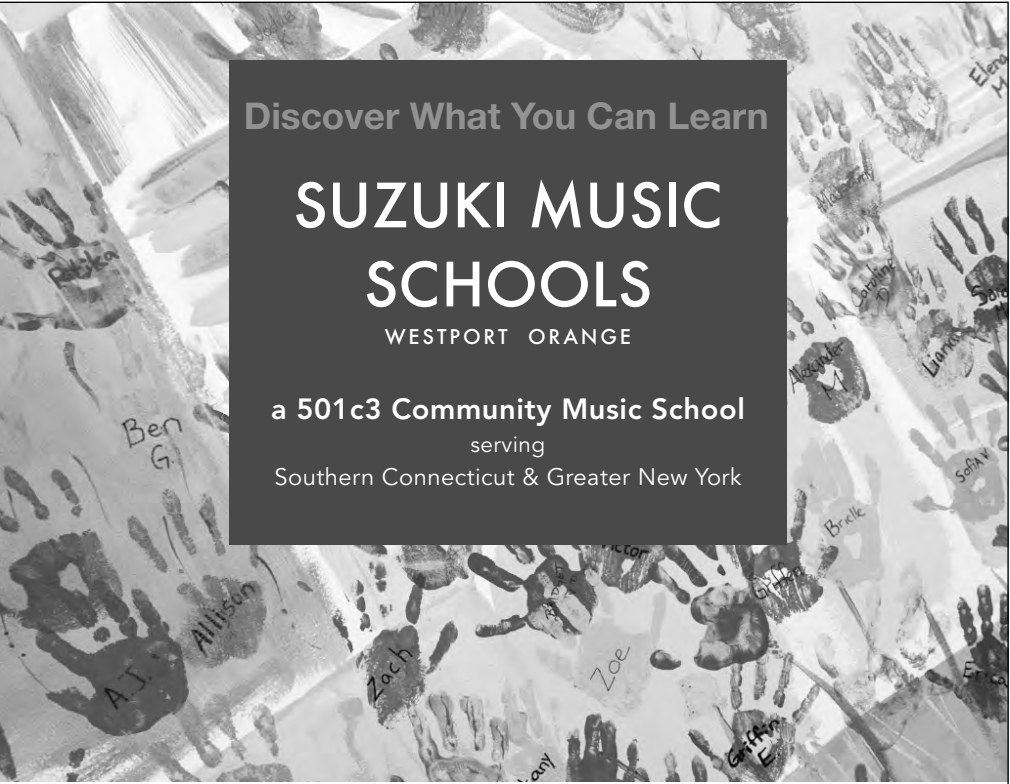
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Direction FROM PAGE 6



Student works together with a college counselor at Immaculate High School. Photo contributed by Peapod Design.

Matt and Noelle Debes, a set of St. Joseph High School parents, are in the throes of their college search alongside their 11th grade son, Matt. Matt, a three-season varsity athlete with an interest in broadcast journalism has begun thinking about his next chapter, that which he'd like to begin at a college within a six-hour radius of his childhood home in Fairfield County.

Starting the college process early has been a secret weapon for the Debes family, consuming direction from the high school's college counseling department in bite-sized pieces and doing their absolute best to remain positive.

CONTINUE **Direction** ON PAGE 10

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Direction FROM PAGE 8

“It’s a marathon not a sprint. This is a long process; we don’t have to have an answer tomorrow — there are no wrong answers. It’s really just about exploring, getting as much info as we can, digging deep and finding where things start to line up,” Matt’s father said, he who shares the same first name with his teenage son.

St. Joseph High School is home to a robust and advanced college counseling department, many of the counselors coming from careers within the college admissions space. Because so many of the counselors are so well-versed, many families find themselves turning to their son or daughter’s counselor not only for general guidance, but for their expertise as well.

Students in action at a St. Joseph High School college fair. Contributed photo.



“From his perspective, there’s somebody other than his parents that he can talk to about this. If it’s coming from your mom and dad, you kind of put a filter on it, but if it’s someone’s job to do that – they’re amazing at it and they’ve been doing it forever – the kid is able to say ‘Alright, this is really what’s important,’” Debes said of his son’s interaction with his college counselor, a constant presence in his high school experience who he has worked with since freshman year at St. Joe’s.

Noelle Debes, Matt’s mother, says her son’s school makes every effort to help parents. One way Debes has been supported is through seminars offered by the school, many which spell out difficult processes such as financial aid form-filling, application advice and essay writing.

“ ”

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Student and parent chat with college admissions representatives at a college fair. Contributed photo.

The college process for families at Immaculate High School in Danbury is also quite comprehensive, beginning from the very first conversation about college in ninth grade through May 1 of senior year when students commit to schools nationwide.

Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Assessments, Steven Santoli says the school’s college counseling department offers rising senior conferences, a 40-minute meeting including the individual student, their assigned college counselor and their parent(s) and/or guardian. Rising senior conferences are intended to discuss what the student’s “game plan” looks like, to brainstorm different pathways and to create actionable goals. Laying the groundwork for the college process has proven to mitigate stressors for both students and their families.

“Our kids were so well prepared for college and beyond,” Cathy Kallberg said, a parent of three Immaculate graduates. “Immaculate was the best choice we made for our family’s education.” Kallberg’s children went on from Immaculate High School to attend the University of Connecticut, Villanova University, University of Scranton and Penn State.

“Our parents are very much involved. We know it’s a challenging process and we know it’s not something that’s easy for most, especially if they’ve never gone through the college process,” School President Mary Maloney said.

“There’s support from our teachers and our counseling team to really work with the parents and work with the students,” Denise Suarez added, director of admissions and parent to three current Immaculate students.

For the past four years, the graduating classes at Immaculate High School have averaged close to \$25 million in scholarships and awards from various institutions each year. The class of 2022 has already achieved \$17 million and counting.

To learn more about college counseling at St. Joseph High School and Immaculate High School, visit www.sjcadets.org and www.immaculatehs.org. |



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Tutor Me SOS in Stamford offers a friendly and safe environment, not only through private and group tutoring sessions but within their ACT and SAT bootcamp. The Summer Bootcamp Program is an intensive curriculum that prepares students for the ACT and SAT exams administered in the fall. After meeting with the director and taking a baseline exam to understand the student’s starting point, students can register for the summer bootcamp and pick their preferred tutoring schedule.

“I’m in touch with the students to understand their needs,” Owner Mona Mitri said. “The service that we offer is based on a lot of experience of trying to understand the student and provide them with what they need. It’s not a generic experience, it’s very customized.”

Tutor Me SOS additionally hosts a free reading and math program for younger students to help keep skills sharp throughout the summer. This year’s program begins on June 20 and runs throughout the entire summer. However, spots are limited and fill up quickly!

“Tutoring is especially needed this year to address the learning gaps that our students have suffered during the pandemic. Recent academic studies have shown that students will need additional support to catch up to where they should be in math and reading,” Mitri said.

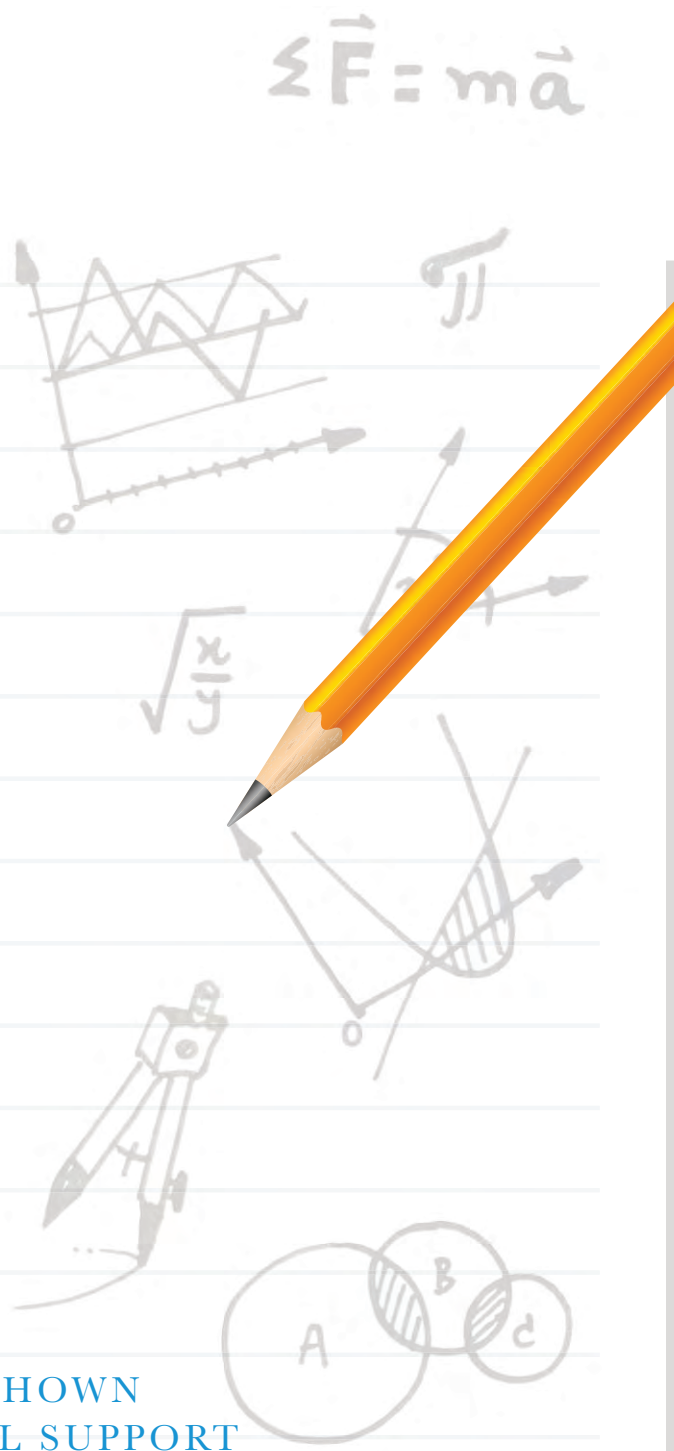
Mitri’s team is made up of several tutors who have worked with her for nearly 10 years, and they have a shared belief that customizing a program for each individual student is the most effective way to foster academic improvement.

“ ”

RECENT ACADEMIC STUDIES HAVE SHOWN
THAT STUDENTS WILL NEED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT
TO CATCH UP TO WHERE THEY SHOULD BE IN

math and reading.

MONA MITRI
OWNER, TUTOR ME SOS IN STAMFORD



CONTINUE **Tutoring** ON PAGE 18



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by Alex Fischer

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represents becoming a well-rounded student and person. Far too often has community service been an obligatory box to check off, and many area schools

have implemented opportunities into their student experience that make this duty fulfilling and enjoyable rather than a chore.



Students help transplant flowers with Long Hill Garden Club in Trumbull CT. Photos contributed by Mark Perrson.



At King School, there is a large population of students who have spent the entirety of their academic experience on the same campus. This experience not only comes with a rigorous, in-depth education, but with consistent and lasting sense of compassion toward the community.

Through the school’s program King Cares, students can choose what sorts of community service projects they’d like to take part in. In December 2021, the King community conducted a kindness campaign in which students wrote gratitude messages to send to veterans on Veterans Day as well as letters to first responders for the holidays. Additionally, they volunteered for the school’s after school music program, Project Music.

“Participating in events like this gives me an opportunity to express

how I feel and show my appreciation to those who do so much to help so many. I’m really happy that King gives students this opportunity,” seventh grade student Tyler Phillips said.

King School additionally uses collaboration as an advantage in making a larger impact – partnering with Wooster School in Danbury for a book drive this spring. With a combined goal of 1,000 books, the two schools have several highly involved students at all grade levels that will drive the effort.

“I think the main message that I’ve taken away is the impact that kids can make,” Wooster School senior Max Porter said, a key player in the school’s successful community service efforts. “With collaboration and a common purpose, you really can do anything. If you have the drive to make an impact, you can.”

Wooster School has established partnerships with more than 15 well-intentioned service organizations, many of them local to Connecticut. Building Homes for Heroes is just one, an organization which leads the construction of homes for disabled veterans. Jericho Partnership, another, creates opportunities for Wooster students to become mentors and tutors to children in at-risk communities in Danbury.

Social impact is potentially the school’s largest focus as far as service initiatives go, that which Joulé Bazemore, Director of the Equity and Justice Center, says is almost entirely student-run. “Our students have the skill and capacity to do this work, as adults we just get out of the way,” she said. “We just try to create the space where they can collaborate; we create interdependence.”

Grow FROM PAGE 15

Members of the Christian Heritage School jazz band perform at Middle Brook Farm in Trumbull, CT. Photo contributed by Mark Perrson.



WE JUST TRY TO CREATE THE SPACE WHERE STUDENTS CAN COLLABORATE;
we create interdependence.

Not far from King School, the Catholic Academy of Stamford has continually put forth the importance of service to the student body.

“The Catholic Academy of Stamford has a full-fledged service program, However, we had to adjust that in COVID times,” Principal Patricia Brady said. “So much of our service has been, rather than leaving our school to go to places, we are educating ourselves about areas of need and raising funds to support them.”

This includes Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Bridgeport, Foundations in Charity, a newly formed program by the Bridgeport Diocese, the Bennett Cancer Center, Wreaths Across America program, and the Catholic Diocese in Kentucky in supporting those suffering from the tornadoes.

“Now we are hoping to emerge from just being able to fundraise to continue what we always have done which is go out and serve the community,” Brady said.

Christian Heritage School in Trumbull is committed to service as well, posing the belief that student

participation in service goes to cultivate more genuine and principled young adults.

“We’re not just preparing students to step into the world with great SAT scores or with a great resume, that’s all well and good, but we want to make sure that we’re graduating students who have the perspective that ‘I am in a place that is much bigger than me, I serve a small part of this, and I need to look outside myself to see how I can better other people,’” Karl Simon said, Upper School Principal at the Christian Heritage School. “It is incumbent on us to prime the pump and give them these opportunities to do that.”

Because of this philosophy, the Trumbull school provides ample opportunities for students to get involved in their community. Through specific service opportunities like clothing and food drives, visits to local nursing homes, and projects with Bridgeport Rescue Mission to fight against homelessness, students feel the value of giving back early on and carry it with them as they spread their wings.

During the holiday season, the school has taken part in initiatives run by Samaritans Purse, a non-denominational evangelical Christian organization providing spiritual and physical aid to hurting people around the world. This past year, students at the Christian Heritage School sent boxes of presents to children in under privileged communities.

“If it needs help and gets student working that muscle and seeing that there’s a benefit from serving, we love to provide those opportunities,” Simon said.

To learn more, be sure to visit school websites www.kingschoolct.org, www.woosterschool.org, and www.kingsmen.org. |

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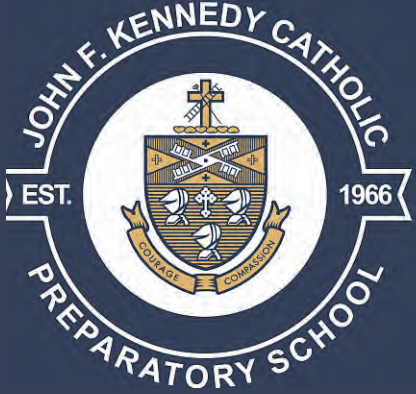
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Tutoring

FROM PAGE 12

IF STUDENTS PUT THEIR EDUCATION ON THE

back burner during the summertime,

IT IS EXPECTED THAT THEY WILL RETURN TO SCHOOL IN THE FALL WITH A LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE THAT IS A HALF-GRADE BEHIND WHERE THEY SHOULD BE.

Further north in Wilton, the **Mathnasium** of Wilton welcomes students of all ages for in-person and virtual tutoring sessions this summer. Owner and Center Director Dmitriy Kriger has made it a priority to create and maintain a positive learning environment for developing critical math skills.

A two-month summer program is available at the Mathnasium of Wilton for students in 1st through 10th grade, and this year it will begin in mid-June. Once school and activities have time to wind down, Kriger finds it incredibly important for students to stay sharp in their math skills.

“As soon as kids get out of school all the knowledge gets sent backwards. I’ve seen it, come September they’re going in cold turkey,” Kriger said. Furthermore, Kriger says that if students put their education on the back burner during the summertime, it is expected that they will return to school in the fall with a level of knowledge that is a half-grade behind where they should be. In addition to the summer program, the Mathnasium offers



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Campus tours available daily.
Call or email our Admission Office to schedule!
860-408-4200 | admission@ethelwalker.org

www.ethelwalker.org/admission

individual sessions and ACT/SAT prep for high schoolers.

Kriger and his team have planned several different activities to get students excited about tutoring, all of which appear on the Mathnasium’s “Fun Calendar.”

“We help kids throughout the schoolyear and many parents see the value continue,” Kriger said of families that continue to attend sessions throughout the summer.

For rising high school seniors, college application season is right around the corner. Summer is the perfect time to hunker down and think inwardly about what your future looks like. Many times, however, when

it comes to the college essay or personal statement, high school students are often uncomfortable with writing about themselves and unsure of what colleges are looking for.

In order to identify their strengths and effectively convey them, students may need some extra support. Luckily, **Finish Line Tutoring** offers the perfect boot camp for knocking college essays out of the park. With four intensive sessions at two hours each, Finish Line Tutoring’s Boot Camp gives students a serious head start on essay writing.

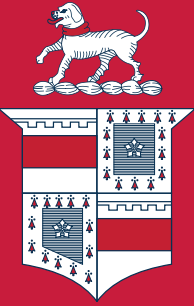
Students enrolled in essay boot camp will have access to an upbeat college essay tutor who has coached

students at the renowned Joel Barlow Writing Center and Greenwich Education Group. Tutors will help students gain an understanding of what college admissions people might be on the lookout for, as well as how to tell your story in a way that shows your best assets.

Finish Line Tutoring additionally offers a free follow up for all participants of the College Application Essay Boot Camp who want an extra set of eyes on their essay draft. Founder and essay expert Jason Howard is eager to help students with their essays and encourages them to get started in the summer while other coursework is on hold.




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Spring Open House

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27 AT 6:30 PM



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ADMISSIONS INFORMATION SESSION

May 25, 2022 | 6:30PM-8PM

Register at sjcadets.org/visit

Join us to learn more about the high school search and application process for St. Joseph High School. This event is open to students (Grades 6 - 8) and parents. Tours will be available before and after the admission presentation!

On A Mission for More

Nearly 800 SJ Cadets from 36 towns seek out their talents and thrive with confidence each and every day.

Academic Scholars

25 AP and Early College Courses. The average SJ student earns 6 college credits.

Athletic Champions

88% of students play on at least 1 of 50 teams. The Class of 2021 signed 23 letters of intent for Division I, II, and III collegiate athletics.

Student Leaders

SJ Cadets are given the opportunity to explore their hobbies and interests in 50+ clubs and activities.

Community Volunteers

SJ Cadets volunteer an average of 36,000 hours of service annually.

College Ready

100% of SJ Students are accepted to college. The Class of 2021 earned more than \$23 million in scholarships.



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