

# Education Guide

ST. MARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

## St. Mary Catholic School recognized for excellence

For MediaNews Group

Set on a quiet landscape in Lower Frederick Township, Montgomery County, near historic Schwenksville, you will find the picturesque St. Mary Catholic School.

St. Mary has served the surrounding Perkiomen Valley and beyond for over 60 years. What began as a simple K-8 elementary school has grown into an Educational Center, providing preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds through Agnus Dei Academy, as well as evening Catholic education through P.R.E.P (Parish Religious Education Program).

The parish school has gone through many changes, with the 2021-2022 school year being no exception. St. Mary opened its doors to in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year, continuing to navigate the ever-changing recommendations during the pandemic while keeping exceptional education at its helm.

In September 2021, the United States Department of Education announced that St. Mary earned the honor of being a national Blue Ribbon school.

This recognition “affirms the hard work of educators, families and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging and engaging content,” a media release from the department said.

St. Mary also was named a school of Distinguished Instruction by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. The year’s accolades were completed with the reaccreditation from Middle States Commission on Higher Education.



St. Mary Catholic School celebrates being named a national Blue Ribbon school with a choreographed flash dance to the song “Happy” by Pharrell Williams.

COURTESY OF ST. MARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

ucation.

But St. Mary is so much more than titles and honors. It is a community, forged on gospel values, with educating the whole child at its forefront. Agnus Dei Academy students move on to St. Mary Catholic School for kindergarten through eighth grade. The foundation of elementary education starts with a kindergarten program bolstered by daily religion, reading, writing,

experienced Catholic educators who have fine-tuned curriculums to prepare children to become successful students, and ultimately, lifelong learners.

Agnus Dei Academy students move on to St. Mary Catholic School for kindergarten through eighth grade. The foundation of elementary education starts with a kindergarten program bolstered by daily religion, reading, writing,

grammar, math, Latin and Spanish classes. Academics are supported by continuous exposure to fine art, music, performing arts, physical education, technology and STEAM.

Students attend Mass regularly while also receiving a comprehensive Catholic education. English Language Arts (ELA) and penmanship are areas of study all K-8 students focus on throughout their day, as

well as math. Honors math is available for the students that seek an accelerated curriculum within the upper school (grades 5-8). Spanish and ecclesiastical Latin are practiced on a daily basis through prayer; students also study conversational Spanish from kindergarten through eighth grade.

In the fine arts department, students express their talents in a variety

of areas while having the opportunity to be showcased, not only throughout the school, but throughout the community as well. As students advance through the grades, fine art merges with technology to present the students with media arts, a course typically only available in high school.

During the 2021-2022 school year, student works were showcased at multiple



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offer the student activities, clubs, events and campus life for an unforgettable college experience. A full complement of NCAA athletic programs at each campus leads the spirit of Huskies, Bald Eagles and Mountaineers. And with the connectivity of our other campuses, you have even more opportunity to form life-long friendships. When you step off campus, you're surrounded by endless adventure in some of the most beautiful locations in the Northeast that you need to see to believe.

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**KUTZTOWN UNIVERSITY**

# KU celebrates student success in spring semester

For MediaNews Group

While the ultimate celebration of Kutztown University students' successes took place May 13 and 14 with spring commencement ceremonies, KU's students stood out in both their academic and extracurricular activities throughout the semester.

## Chambliss Awards

KU's most prestigious student awards, the Chambliss Student Academic Achievement Awards, were presented to six accomplished students on April 8.

Established in 2004 through a donation by former KU professor Dr. Carlson Chambliss, the awards recognize the individual achievements of a select group of graduating seniors. This year's recipients were Vanessa Maybruck, Al-



The Kutztown University campus.

lertown, mathematics and mathematics education dual major with a minor in biochemistry, gold medal; Isaac Reiter, Fleetwood, mathematics major, gold medal; Kayla Argen, Cresco, sport management major, silver medal; Corey Potter, Reinholds, geology major, silver medal; Rylee Derr, Lititz,

majors in special education and elementary education; copper medal; Shani Trebatoski, York, art education and crafts major, copper medal.

## Startup Challenge

Also in April, KU students Shantal Ewell and Kevin Smyth won the

\$10,000 first-place prize in the annual State System Startup Challenge, sponsored by Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education. Ewell, an MBA student, and Smyth, a master's in Student Affairs student, created a business plan for the Schedules Degree Planner, an online platform that

would create a personalized degree plan for students.

## Rock Ensemble

KU's Rock Ensemble I recently received two 2022 Downbeat Student Music Awards, and a singer in the ensemble, Delacey Lora, has been named Best Singer in the Pop, Rock and Blues category.

The Downbeat Music Awards are the equivalent of a student Grammy Award and are considered the highest, most important and most competitive honors in the collegiate music field.

## Softball

KU's talented student-athletes brought home the PSAC softball championship in May. The team continued through the NCAA Division II tournament and eventually ended their historic season in Super Regionals.

The team reached the Super Regional round for the fourth time in program history and registered its seventh 40-win season.

## Men's rugby

With their win May 30 in the Collegiate Rugby Championship Men's Premier National Cup final, KU's team claimed the first national championship in program history.

KU has been a qualifier for the CRC sevens tournament every year since 2013 except 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. The team finally reached the top of the mountain after having been agonizingly close before as two-time national runners-up in 2014 and 2015.

Learn more about Kutztown University and all its academic and extracurricular offerings at [www.kutztown.edu](http://www.kutztown.edu).

## Excellence

FROM PAGE 1

community events, in addition to the annual Student Showcase and Open House held at the St. Mary Education Center. Media arts students designed the school yearbook and other printed materials, giving them the opportunity to see their ideas manifest to tangible, finished products.

In the performing arts department, music is a staple, with instruction in singing, dancing and instrumentals. Choir and band introduce the students to the world of performance arts, while the annual plays, spring musicals and dinner theaters provide in-depth exposure to live performances.

Christmas of 2021 brought the return of many treasured holiday traditions. Both student choirs, Cherubim and Seraphim, accompanied the Christmas tree lighting ceremonies for St. Mary Parish and

Upper Salford Township. The Seraphim Choir shared their vocal talents with the seniors of St. Philip Neri during their annual Christmas luncheon.

The entire school, parish, and community enjoyed the annual Christmas pageant as each grade participated. Seventh- and eighth-grade students put on a production of "Twas the Opening Night Before Christmas" to complete the Christmas season.

The spring musical, "Disney's Aladdin," allowed students to continue to expand their performing skills. Their performance season was completed with "The Emerald Heist," a fun and interactive mystery that had the audience asking "who done it?" until the very last moment.

Physical education is also an essential element at St. Mary. The campus sits on 23 acres, complete with walking trails, an outdoor classroom and plenty of room for children to play. While phys ed class is preferred to be held outside,

there is an indoor option when weather doesn't cooperate. Hedge Hall contains a basketball court where class can be held when it rains, snows or is exceptionally cold.

Many Catholic Youth Organization teams hold games, tournaments and competitions there throughout the year.

Technology is a considerable part of the curriculum. Beginning in kindergarten, students utilize desktop computers in the computer lab, starting with the basics to acclimate themselves with mice and full-size keyboards and how to properly handle equipment. As they progress, they learn how to efficiently and safely use the internet; create presentations, fonts and websites; and use editing, illustration and programming software.

STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) was a natural progression for the school, with the 2021-2022 year showing a growing love for STEAM among the

students. Whether it was building natural forts to see how they would fare through the winter, challenging how to improve the world's transportation systems or designing and constructing fun and creative miniature golf courses; the students embraced an outstanding STEAM program and took advantage of every opportunity.

Fifth-through-eighth-grade students participate in the annual STEM Fair, developing an experiment of their choosing and by following the scientific method presenting their findings to the school and the community. Seventh- and eighth-graders participated in the Montgomery County Science Research Competition at Germantown Academy, earning over 18 awards in their first regional science fair.

While the outstanding academic environment is a highlight, there is nothing more important than the grounded, Christ-centered foundation that children need to navigate the



COURTESY OF ST. MARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Elle celebrates moving on to first grade.

world. St. Mary Catholic School encourages students to build a close relationship with God, providing them with a strong moral compass and teaching them to act with compassion and humility throughout their lives. The students, faculty and staff consistently prac-

tice kindness and courtesy to foster respect.

Now is the time to see if St. Mary Catholic School is the perfect fit for your family. Contact Genevieve to schedule a tour by calling 610.287.7787, ext.244, or email [ggiampa@smsk-8.org](mailto:ggiampa@smsk-8.org).



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YMCA OF GREATER BRANDYWINE

# YMCA of Greater Brandywine offers quality, affordable childcare

For MediaNews Group

As families plan for childcare, there are a plethora of options to consider before making a choice. As the largest childcare provider in Chester County, the YMCA of Greater Brandywine is a top contender for families looking for a caring and safe environment for their child.

Here are three key factors to consider when making the right choice for your family:

**Quality**

Our programs are led by degreed teachers who complete an additional 20 hours of training annually and provide children with hands-on learning experi-

ences through a comprehensive, research-based curriculum that focuses on exploration and discovery.

Additionally, our programs participate in the Keystone STARS program, which promotes high-quality standards in early learning and school-age programs.

**Variety**

With large facilities and a wide catalog of program offerings, the YMCA has much to offer your family. Children enjoy indoor and outdoor playgrounds, gymnasium spaces, expansive campuses and more in addition to their educational activities and programs.

Families can also choose to add-on enrichment ac-



COURTESY OF YMCA OF GREATER BRANDYWINE

With large facilities and a wide catalog of program offerings, the YMCA has much to offer your family.

tivities such as swimming lessons, dance classes and more — a win, win — as children enjoy programs

with their friends and parents avoid additional evening or weekend commitments.

**Affordability**

The YMCA's childcare and early learning pro-

gram rates are among the most affordable in Chester County, and YMCA members receive discounted rates.

Additionally, as a non-profit organization, the YMCA of Greater Brandywine offers financial assistance to those unable to pay the standard fees.

Ready to get started? The YMCA of Greater Brandywine offers early learning and childcare programs for children ages 6 weeks through 6 years old at locations across Chester County as well as Montessori classes, Pre-K Counts, kindergarten, before- and after-school care and summer camps.

To learn more about childcare and educational programming at the YMCA, visit [ymcagbw.org/ymca-academy](http://ymcagbw.org/ymca-academy).

About the YMCA of

Greater Brandywine: The YMCA of Greater Brandywine (YGBW), an association of eight YMCAs, including the Brandywine YMCA, Jennersville YMCA, Kennett Area YMCA, Lionville Community YMCA, Oscar Lasko YMCA and Childcare Center, Octorara YMCA Program Center, Upper Main Line YMCA and West Chester Area YMCA, is a leading nonprofit organization committed to strengthening the Chester County community. We strive to nurture the potential of every child, promote healthy living and foster social responsibility through life-changing programs for all. YGBW raises funds to provide financial assistance to those unable to pay the standard rates. To learn more, visit [www.ymcagbw.org](http://www.ymcagbw.org).

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**STUDY TIPS**



METRO CREATIVE

Students can learn to develop good study techniques.

## 7 study tips for high school students

*Metro Creative*

Assessments such as quizzes and exams help educators recognize areas where students are excelling and where they might need a little extra help.

In addition to tests in the classroom, high schoolers generally take standardized testing for state or provincial assessment purposes.

Testing may come easier to some students than others, but having solid study techniques can improve students' performance on a wide range of exams.

In fact, research by Stanford scholars, whose data was published in Psychological Science, found that applying a strategic approach to studying helped college students improve their exam scores by an average of one-third of a letter grade.

The testing preparation resource PrepScholar says it is important to build and maintain strong study habits to help students avoid undue stress and last-minute cramming.

The following are seven techniques that may help foster good study skills.

### 1. Find value in the lessons

Many students lament that what they learn in school just isn't relevant

in daily life. That can make the subject matter feel less important and uninteresting.

Finding value in what one is learning and seeing how it can be applied outside of the classroom may make a student more inclined to learn and retain information.

### 2. Avoid distractions

Study time is time to take a break from social media, video games and any other distractions that can pull a student away from studying.

Constantly checking notifications can interrupt thoughts and make it hard to learn the material.

### 3. Establish a study schedule

Develop a system and a schedule for studying.

Students should establish a fixed habit of studying each day or week, whatever is best for him or her. Over time, studying will become routine.

### 4. Establish dedicated study spots

Students should locate places that work best for them as study and homework stations.

Certain individuals may need the quiet of a library or a bookstore. Others may do best with the hum of conversation around them or in a group.

There's no right or wrong study spot. Maintaining consistency will help the mind associate a place with studying.

### 5. Use grades as benchmarks and motivators

Blaming a teacher for a poor grade won't get a student anywhere.

Rather, grades should indicate how well one is learning the material, and in turn, the effectiveness of students' studying habits.

Students can tweak their habits if they find their grades are not where they want them to be.

### 6. Rephrase material

Textbook language can be dry and unappealing.

Students can try putting the material into their own words or rephrase passages to make them easier to remember and recall.

Similarly, teaching or sharing the material with another person also may improve retention.

### 7. Make a formula sheet

Depending on the subject, having a sheet with shortcuts, formulas or diagrams can put the material into smaller bursts of information that are easier to digest.

Along this same vein, writing information down can help improve recall.

**THE ARTS**

# How music and arts programs benefit academic performance of students

*Metro Creative*

The cost of products and services continues to rise, and organizations everywhere have increasingly been feeling the pressure to reevaluate budgets.

It's no different in school districts nationwide, with school boards making difficult decisions about which programs to keep and which will have to go in order to save money. Music and arts programs often are the first to be cut when school budgets are tightened.

The organization Save the Music says that during the Great Recession in 2008 and 2009, per-pupil spending in public schools decreased by approximately 7% across the country. This led to a trickle-down effect that resulted in the cancellation of art and music programs.

Since then, many districts have continued to cut arts programs due to budget limitations. COVID-19 also did little to help the situation. Art program cutbacks are rarely met with open arms, and that resistance has a lot to do with the positive effects such offerings have on students' academic performance.

### Better test performance

Numerous studies have found a correlation between early introduction to music education and a number of benefits for children.

Music education can help develop communication skills, brain plasticity, language and motor skills. A study conducted by the University of California, Los Angeles used a database of more than 25,000 middle and high school students. The researchers found that students involved in arts performed better on standardized achievement tests than students with

lower arts involvement.

Furthermore, data from 2015 from The College Board, which produces the SAT, found students who took four years of arts and music classes while in high school scored an average of 92 points higher on their SATs than students who only took one-half year or less.

### Improved emotional states

In addition to better performance on tests, a review in Frontiers in Psychology examined several studies linking arts and aesthetic experiences with broad improvements in people's emotional states.

Those improvements included greater psychological and physical

well-being.


### Community involvement

Participation and even appreciation of the arts can have an impact as well.

Researchers from the Department of Public Administration at the University of Illinois Chicago found that being an art curator or audience member leads to high levels of civic engagement and social tolerance.

The support and therapy company Evolve Treatment Centers reports that involvement in music and arts leads to overall higher GPAs, higher scores in math and reading and a reduced risk of behavioral problems and suspensions.

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AIM ACADEMY



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Academic programs at AIM Academy are individualized and innovative and designed to spark student curiosity and enthusiasm.

# AIM Academy seeks to empower students through literacy

For MediaNews Group

At AIM Academy, a college-prep school for students in grades 1-12 with language-based learning differences such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia, we empower and transform lives through literacy.

AIM's curriculum is evidence-based and grounded in the science of reading. This includes instruction in Wilson Language Training and an arts-based program that emphasizes hands-on instruction and the development of background knowledge.

Academic programs at AIM Academy are individualized and innovative and designed to spark student curiosity and enthusiasm in a learning environment that looks and feels different than traditional schools.

The humanities, STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and design and mathematics) and arts programs develop deep understanding and critical thinking skills needed for college and career success. We blend hands-on, arts-based and 21st century learning in all of our classrooms as we prepare future ready learners for their learning and work experiences to come. Underlying every aspect of our pro-

gram is the knowledge and use of cutting-edge research into how our students learn best across all disciplines.

In AIM's middle and upper school, we know that teenagers who struggle with learning in traditional schools often need extra attention to ignite their passion for learning or creating. We do this by individualizing each of our students' schedules, pushing them to the highest level of challenge they can handle and supporting them in any areas of struggle that emerge. We remediate and accelerate simultaneously, and we work with a great sense of urgency.

Our experienced, highly-trained and creative faculty members prepare students by lighting a fire or sparking a passion that will propel them to maximize their success. Our students have opportunities to become leaders, and all seniors experience a taste of college through our dual-enrollment partnerships enrolling in college courses while still in high school and learning to develop critical skills needed for their college experience.

All AIM students have multiple opportunities to discover their passion for a subject or an activity whether it is an athletic pursuit, par-

ticipating in our AIM Bikes opportunities, immersion in the arts, community service, diversity, equity and Inclusion work or creating in our innovation technology spaces.

And AIM also teaches teachers. The AIM Institute for Learning and Research has created online literacy training courses based on the curriculum we know works for students at AIM Academy. Not only do new AIM teachers undergo training in the AIM Pathways platform, but AIM also works in more than 20 states with schools, school districts and teachers, providing this important course work to 15,000 educators so far in 2022, to help educators everywhere incorporate the science of reading into their classrooms and transform even more lives through literacy.

Consider joining us to learn more about AIM.

Join us for a virtual info session and then visit for a Tuesday tour. Register at [www.aimpa.org/learnmore](http://www.aimpa.org/learnmore). AIM Academy is located at 1200 River Road, Whitmarsh Township, Montgomery County. For more information, call 215-483-2461.

■ 9-10 a.m. info sessions: Sept. 23, Oct. 7, Nov. 4, Dec. 2  
 ■ Noon-1 p.m. info sessions: Oct. 19, Nov. 16, Dec. 14

LANGUAGES



METRO CREATIVE

Some students may be surprised to learn just how much they benefit from studying a foreign language.

# How learning a foreign language can be helpful to students

Metro Creative

Adults undoubtedly recall their school days when schedules included a class devoted to foreign languages.

Some students embrace foreign language classes, while others may question their value.

Those in the latter camp may be surprised to learn just how much they benefit from studying a foreign language.

## Foreign languages and long-term cognitive health

Dementia might not be foremost on the minds of school-aged youngsters, but their foreign language class could be delaying its onset by a significant margin.

A 2010 study published in the peer-reviewed journal *Neurology* found that bilingual patients with probable Alzheimer's disease reported the onset of symptoms 5.1 years later than monolingual patients.

Authors of the study concluded that lifelong bilingualism confers protection against the onset of Alzheimer's disease, which underscores the value of learning a foreign language as a young person and maintaining that knowledge throughout adulthood.

## Foreign languages and attention span

A recent study from Microsoft found that the average attention span is now eight seconds, which marks a significant decline since 2000, when the average attention span was 12 seconds.

Researchers behind the report suggest the prevalence of screens, particularly the use of multiple screens at once, has led to that decline.

But bilingual individuals may be able to buck that trend. Researchers at the School of Psychology at the University of Birmingham suggest that bilingualism could lead to better sustained attention

and attentional monitoring, thus improving students' ability to remain focused and block out distractions.

## Foreign languages and multi-tasking

Most adults likely need no reminder that the current world is one that requires an ability to multi-task. Learning a foreign language can make it easier to navigate that world.

A 2012 study funded by the National Institutes of Health found that bilingual children had a greater ability to multi-task than monolingual children.

The NIH study utilized a switching task to gauge monolingual and bilingual children's ability to pay attention, plan, organize and strategize.

Bilingual children were faster at switching than their monolingual counterparts, which could set them up to be more successful in a world that has increasingly valued the ability to multi-task.



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Kindergarten to 6th Grade
- ★ **Summer Camp**  
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branches of the YMCA of Greater Brandywine



## GIVING EVERY CHILD THE CHANCE TO SHINE



At AIM Academy, young children with language-based learning differences quickly become older children with learning eagerness. It's simple. Students who learn differently, just need to be taught differently.

**JOIN US FOR AN INFO SESSION FOLLOWED BY A TUESDAY TOUR**  
[aimpa.org/openhouse](http://aimpa.org/openhouse)



## Right from the Start

**Schedule a tour and see** how meeting the specific needs of young students helps them build a lasting foundation—learning how to think boldly, solve creatively, and lead compassionately—right from the start. See and feel the joy of learning that happens everywhere.

Come learn why, when Montgomery students graduate, they are prepared to roll up their sleeves and contribute wherever they go. See how the discoveries and relationships made here inform and support how students will engage in the world.

**610.827.7222**  
[montgomeryschool.org](http://montgomeryschool.org)



**Embracing Childhood in PreK-8**