

# NATIVITY BVM CATHOLIC SCHOOL

*Established by the Irish Sisters of Mercy in 1956*

*Enrolling students in K2 through 6th grades*

*A Home for Generations of Students*



*Our Mission...*

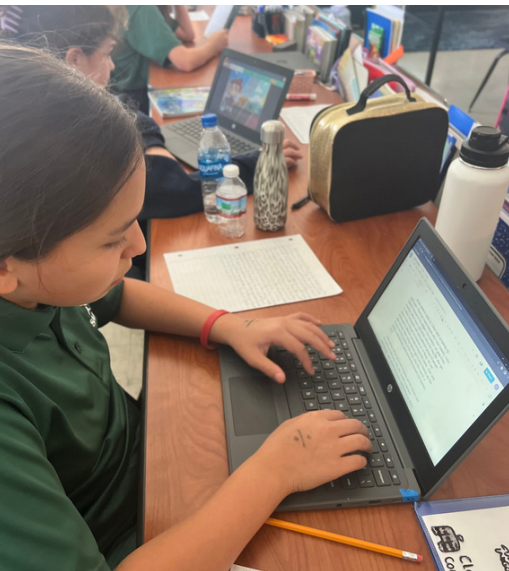
*Guided and nourished by the word of God, Nativity BVM Catholic School welcomes all and inspires academic achievement while forming disciples of Christ.*



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# ACADEMICS



## ACADEMIC PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Accredited by Cognia and  
The Mississippi Department of Education

- Principal: Traci E. Kessler, Ed.S. (Nativity alumna)
- 13 licensed educators on staff
- 10 educators with Master's Degrees
- 5 National Board Certified educators
- 10 Project Read trained educators
- 9 additional education support staff
- 1 certified gifted educator
- 1 certified special education educator
- 1 annual nationally normed academic assessment for grades 2-6
  - For the 2021/2022 school year, our 2nd-6th grade students tested 1.6 grade levels higher than the national average.
  - Specifically, our outgoing 6th grade class tested 2.4 grade levels higher than the national average. Those same 6th grade students had a grade level equivalency of 10th grade for writing!

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# PRESCHOOL



*"Play is really the work of childhood." -Fred Rogers*

Nativity BVM Catholic School's preschool opened in 1995. Our preschool program is proud that 100% of our teachers are trained in Project Read, a reading curriculum that applies sound/symbol knowledge to spelling and reading comprehension using targeted multisensory activities and direct instruction. Our curriculum prioritizes hands-on learning, learning through movement and play, and introduces students to a variety of fine and gross motor, social, self-help and language building skills. Each classroom has a full-time assistant teacher.

- K2 is led by Mrs. Kim Audo who has a BS in Psychology and has completed coursework for a Master's Degree in Education.
- K3 is led by Mrs. Lindsay Illich who has a BS in Child and Family Sciences with an emphasis in Child Development.
- K4 is led by Mrs. Marie Papale who has 20+ years of experience teaching our four year olds.



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# RELIGION & CATHOLIC FAITH FORMATION



Faith is at the center of Nativity BVM Catholic School. Our days begin and end with prayer and religion is taught in our classes daily. Christian values of love, patience, kindness & faithfulness center our days and form the basis for all we do within our school walls. All our religion classes use *Christ In Us* textbooks except our 2nd grade, which uses Dynamic Catholic's *Blessed First Communion and Blessed First Reconciliation* in order to prepare for these Sacraments.

Mrs. Lauren Ellis, our Campus Minister, plays a vital role in the faith formation of our students. She teaches *Theology of the Body* in grades K-6 and also plans our twice monthly seminary meetings. Seminary meetings are a chance for older students to walk in faith with our younger students.



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# CURRICULUM, TEXTBOOKS & MATERIALS:

- PK3 and PK4 follow The Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Three and Four-year-old Children.
- Grades K-6 follow *The Mississippi College and Career-Readiness Standards* which outline the skills and knowledge expected of students from grade to grade and subject to subject.
- All textbook series have been replaced within the past five years. Students are issued a set of textbooks to aid in their learning process.
  - Reading: **Journeys** is a comprehensive K-6 English Language Arts program. It provides an instructional system for reading both literature and informational texts, for acquiring foundational reading skills, and for developing mastery of speaking, listening and writing. **Project Read** is introduced in PK3 and taught in PK4-2nd grades.
  - Grammar & Writing: **Voyages in English** for grades 3-6 aligns with national academic standards and the National Council of Teachers of English Standards. This series ensures mastery of skills and empowers students to become critical thinkers and effective writers, speakers and listeners.
  - Mathematics: **EnVision Math** used in K-6 combines problem-based learning and visual learning to deepen students' conceptual math understanding.
  - Science & Social Studies: **Studies Weekly** is in a student-friendly periodical format and robust online learning platform that is aligned to state standards and framework. **Scholastic News** and teacher-made units are used in kindergarten and 1st grade.

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# SPECIAL SERVICES

## Special Education Program:

Nativity BVM Catholic School began its resource program over 40 years ago in order to make a Catholic education available to the vast majority of children. In 2002, a generous donation from Mr. Victor Mavar enabled us to build a wing onto our school to house our special education program and provide for its continuity.

- Inclusion and resource services are provided by Ms. Rachel DiMauro. Ms. DiMauro has a Master of Education, dual certification in Elementary Ed (K-8) and Special Education, and is National Board Certified in literacy.
- Our program is an approved Educable Child program by Mississippi Department of Education and services children in grades K-6.
- Individual Service Plans (ISP) are written for students that qualify for services. Included are individual goals, accommodations/modifications to content, and supports to assist with accessing the general curriculum.
- Speech Therapy (articulation only) is provided by the Biloxi Public School District for students in K-6.

## Gifted Education Program:

Since 2017, Mrs. Zina Puzz has taught our gifted education program. Mrs. Puzz has a Master of Education degree and is certified in Art Education (K-12), Elementary Education (K-6), and Gifted Education (K-12.) The students in grades 2-6 practice critical thinking skills, creative exercises, and access subjects not taught in the general education classroom.

- All students are screened in 2nd grade. Those that score in the top percentiles are referred for IQ testing.
- A student that has an IQ of 120 or higher qualifies for the program.

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# SPECIAL AREA CLASSES

Nativity BVM Catholic School has a rich history of special area classes. Studies have shown that when schools remove physical education, music, art and restrict recess and play, student emotional and mental health suffers. Our special area classes are designed with the overall health of our students in mind, as well as to encourage their love of school.

- **Physical Education** - Our PE classes are taught by Mrs. Alexandra Smith (a nativity alumna) who has AA certifications in physical education, health, elementary education, chemistry, biology and general science. Students are taught the MS Department of Education Objectives for PE in K-6 and exceed the required amount of time for PE throughout the school week.
- **Library and Computer Lab** - Nativity students receive weekly library time with Mrs. Judy Kavanagh, a certified teacher with 20+ years of experience. In library, students are introduced to basic library skills that reinforce classroom instruction, reading skills are strengthened through Accelerated Reader and students are encouraged to develop a love of reading at a young age simply by being read to.
- **Music** - Music classes are taught by Mr. Terry Maddox. Mr. Maddox is also the Minister of Music and Director of Fine Arts for Nativity Cathedral parish. Our school choir directed by Mr. Terry and Mrs. Burke, lead the music at all school masses and at the cathedral twice a month. They have also been asked to perform at several city events.
- **Art** - Students in grades 1-6 enjoy creating drawings, pottery, 3D models, and much more with Mrs. Zina Puzz. As an artist herself, Mrs. Puzz has a way of nurturing the artistic abilities in each student. From creating t-shirt designs, to Christmas ornaments, to impressionistic drawings, our students learn to share their talents with others!

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# TECHNOLOGY

There is no doubt that technology plays a vital role in a student's education. Nativity BVM Catholic School uses technology as one of many tools to enhance student learning and to keep parents informed. However, we believe there is no substitute for in-person lessons and meetings, small group work, and hands-on instruction. Technology highlights at our school include:

- Grade K-6 students have individual Chromebooks to supplement the curriculum with web-based learning tools.
- Each educator has a Promethean Active-Board in their classroom. These boards allow for interactive learning and use of online components of our textbooks.
- Grades K3-6th have weekly classes with our technology instructor, Mrs. Judy Kavanagh, a certified teacher with 20+ years of experience. In the computer lab, students focus on computer programming (including Scratch & Code.org), keyboard/typing skills, research skills and website evaluation. Grades 4-6 learn to use Google Classroom for submitting assignments, a skill necessary for middle and high school.
- 6th grade has Oculus Quest VR headsets which allow them to visit the International Space Station, explore the universe, ride roller coasters and visit biomes around the world.
- Each parent has access to FACTS, our student information system. Here you can view grades, add funds to lunch accounts, and pay tuition.
- Teachers use ClassDojo to communicate with parents via pictures and instant messaging.
- There is a closed Facebook group for family members and friends and each grade has its own closed group.

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# THE ARTS



*"Every child is an artist..." -Pablo Picasso*

- Children's Choir (Grades 2-6)
  - Sing at School and Cathedral masses and special events
  - 2 choir concerts a year
- Cantor Academy (Grades 3-6)
  - Liturgy Music Leaders
- Private Music Lessons (All ages)
  - Guitar, band instruments, voice piano & more
- Arts Alive! Drama Club (Grades 4-6)
  - Fall, Christmas, & Spring Performances





# CLUBS, HONORS & ACTIVITIES



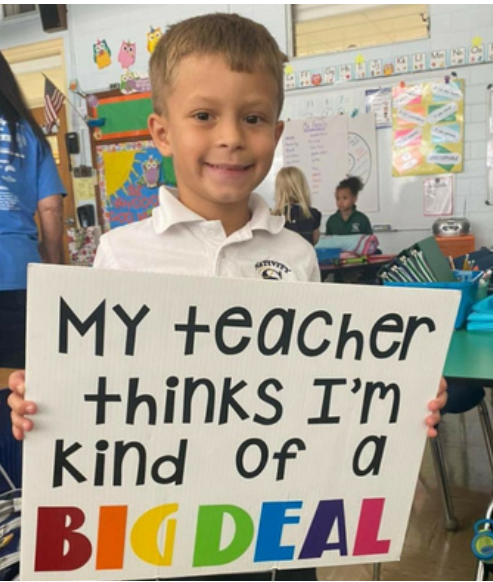
- *National Elementary Honor Society Chapter Charter #5025 (grades 5-6)*
- *Boys & Girls Basketball (grades 2-6)*
- *Cheerleading (grades 1-6)*
- *Flag Football (grades 1-4)*
- *Tackle Football (grades 5&6)*
- *Track Team (grades 1-6)*
- *Girl Scouts (grades K-6)*
- *Cub Scouts (grades K-6)*
- *Robotics Team (grades 4-6)*



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# NEXT STEP



THANK YOU FOR VISITING NATIVITY BVM CATHOLIC SCHOOL!  
SHOULD YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT OUR PRINCIPAL:

TRACI KESSLER

TKESSLER@NATIVITYBVM.ORG

228-432-2269

**APPLY NOW TO BECOME A  
NATIVITY SAINT**

- [www.nativitybvm.org](http://www.nativitybvm.org)
- Admissions
- Registration
- Application for Admission (NEW students only)



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