Rapid City Catholic School System

Developing Personal and Academic Excellence in the Catholic Tradition

Annual Report 2014-2015
Dear Friends:

I hope you find this 2014-15 Annual Report informative. The RCCSS maintains a system of internal controls and an external audit over financial reporting to provide reasonable assurance that assets are safeguarded and transactions are executed in accordance with school policy.

Thank you for all you have done to help the Rapid City Catholic Schools complete another exceptional year. We have been blessed beyond measure! Your prayers and support of our faculty, staff, students and families play such an important role in all we do and all that is accomplished. As you read through this annual report, you will see how well our students continue to compete in all areas: academic, fine arts, and athletics.

In January of 2015, the RCCSS hosted an External Review Team from AdvancED with the purpose of seeking renewal of our District Accreditation. The team interviewed a total of 175 stakeholders during their three-day visit. In part, the Exit Report stated, "The Rapid City Catholic School System is to be commended for their commitment to Catholic education and the achievement of their students. Such a commitment is an essential element of successful teaching and powerful practices that ensure a process of continuous improvement for their system." More detailed information regarding the External Review Team’s findings may be found on Page 2 of this annual report.

Enrollment in the RCCSS remains strong, with a 4% increase during the 2014-15 school year. Our Child Development programs at Terra Sancta continue to attract young families. Numbers were at an all-time high with a total of 101 children enrolled in Preschool. Increased tuition assistance made it possible for more families to enroll in our schools.

Thank you for taking the time to review this report. Please continue to pray for the success of the RCCSS and that God’s will is being done. On behalf of our school community, thank you for your commitment to Catholic education. May God bless you in all things.

Thanks be to God!

Barb Honeycutt
Superintendent

St. Elizabeth Seton Elementary Principal:
Colleen Lecy clecy@rccss.org

St. Thomas More High School Principal:
Wayne Sullivan wsully@rccss.org

St. Thomas More Middle School Principal:
Keiz Shultz kshultz@rccss.org

Rapid City Catholic School System Superintendent:
Barb Honeycutt bhoney@rccss.org

21st Century Library Exemplary Award to STM HS and SES Libraries

Eighteen school libraries in the state of South Dakota were recognized by the Department of Education. Among the eighteen were St. Elizabeth Seton and St. Thomas More High School, both receiving the exemplary awards, the highest level awarded. The 21st Century School Library Award recognizes school libraries as effective, enhanced or exemplary, based on performance in three areas: place, which refers to the learning environment (both physical and online), programming and professionalism. Mrs. Jenelle Kirchoff, Director of Library Services for the RCCSS, conducted a self-assessment and provided evidence to meet South Dakota's guidelines for school libraries.

During library time, 5th graders at SES researched how greenhouses work, learned about plant life, set up a business (to sell the seedlings) and sold the plants, honing their math skills. We are incredibly grateful for Master Gardener Dianne Aultmann’s help in this project.
Accreditation Report From AdvancED

AdvancED is the global leader in providing continuous improvement and accreditation services to over 32,000 institutions serving 20 million students worldwide. The External Review Team identified the following powerful practices, opportunities for improvement, and improvement priorities:

**Powerful Practices:**
- Professional development for the interpretation and use of data in instructional practice supports a system-wide assessment plan to continuously collect, analyze and apply learning from a range of data sources.
- Teachers work to meet the unique learning needs of students and to advocate for their students’ success.
- The governing body establishes policies and promotes practices that are focused on student achievement and are aligned with leadership’s vision to foster a culture consistent with the system’s purpose and direction.
- The rigor of the system’s curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences for all students.
- The system maintains facilities that are safe, clean and healthy for all stakeholders.
- The warm and welcoming school culture provides a Catholic, Christian and family-like atmosphere for all system stakeholders.

**Opportunities for Improvement:**
- Continue to develop a systemic process for professional evaluation that will enhance instructional practice to support student achievement.
- Continue to develop resources to support the instruction of students with varying abilities and needs.
- Continue to focus on salary and benefit improvements to aid in the recruitment, employment and retention of qualified professional staff.

**Improvement Priorities:**
- Develop and implement a protocol to regularly evaluate the existing Strategic Design Plan.
- Prioritize efforts to improve the current process of securing resources to bolster the existing technology infrastructure and to strengthen the use of technology as an instructional tool.

**Other Findings:**

**Teaching and Learning Impact**
- High expectations for student learning
- Academic rigor
- Teacher commitment
- Additional support for students with varying abilities and learning styles
- Strong teacher evaluation process

**Leadership Capacity**
- Strong leadership provided by administration and school board
- Excellent use of data analysis to improve instructional practice
- Vision and effectiveness of the system’s purpose and direction
- Collaborative partnership between the RCCSS and the Diocese of Rapid City

**Resource Utilization**
- Excellent facilities
- Strong student resources - counseling, RTI, library services, and tutoring
- Strengthening the use of technology in instructional practice

The team assigns a final overall score referred to as the IEQ (Index of Educational Quality). The overall score of the RCCSS was 318.54 compared to the AdvancED network average score of 282.45. In conclusion, the RCCSS was commended for a very strong Catholic identity and received an overall score that was 36.09 points above the AdvancED network average!
### Staff Demographics

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<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Clergy</th>
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<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full-Time High School</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>(total includes Clergy)</td>
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<td>Part-Time Elementary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part-Time Middle School</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part-Time High School</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>District and Support Staff</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>82</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>109</strong></td>
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### Staff Awards

The average employee has been with us for 8.67 years. Many of our dedicated staff members have been with the system for over 15 years. The RCCSS would like to recognize the following staff who celebrated a special anniversary with us.

**5 years:**
- Cathy Matthesen
- Sally Weaver

**10 Years:**
- Julia Katzenberger
- Stacey Nelson
- Curtis Peacock
- Jeff Pekny
- Lloyd Potter
- Angela Weber

**15 Years:**
- Ann Trucano

**25 Years:**
- Ann Walther

**Outstanding Employees of 2014-2015**

Nominated by their peers, recipients of this award are chosen annually. An external committee is established to review the nominations. Congratulations to this year’s recipients!

**Joanne Achbach**

“...is very professionally driven, exhibits a determined and hard work ethic, and has a devoted strength of character. Her spiritual witness to both students and adults is present and evident in everything she is involved in, and her love of students is the foundation by which she works and teaches.”

**Gerald Scherr**

“...must have quite a relationship with God to be able to do everything that is asked of him and still keep smiling. Even our little pre-school children know this person and if something needs to be fixed or something is broken, the children say, “Call Jerry, he can fix it! He always makes everything better!”

**Luke Ponto**

Luke Ponto, a Seton 5th Grader, finished in 1st place in the Red Ribbon Billboard Contest. His artwork was displayed on a billboard in Rapid City.

### Fast Facts

- First non-public school system in SD to receive the AdvancED district accreditation
- AdvancEd Accreditation Process and Continuous Improvement Plans are showing wonderful results in character and academic development in our students and a strong development of faith formation.
- **100% graduation rate for the Class of 2015**
- **The Class of 2015 was** offered (the highest so far) 5.3 million dollars, with an acceptance of 2 million dollars to their respective schools.
- RCCSS has packed over **1,000,000** meals for the Packing Hope campaign since 2007. Meals are sent to people in Honduras.
- 92% of students are involved in extracurricular activities and receive state and national recognition.
- **80% of all 7th and 8th grade students** participate in at least one or more extracurricular activity.
- SES and STM provided 15 families with Thanksgiving meals, Christmas gifts for children in the community, and 750 pounds of food and $2,000 for the Care & Share Food Drive.
- Twenty-one 8th grade students donated over 50 hours of service volunteering in the community, and nine students donated over 100 hours of volunteer time in 2014-2015.
- Thirty-one middle school students passed the State of South Dakota Algebra I exam to earn high school credit.
- Four students were recognized with the Presidential Award for earning a 4.0 GPA throughout their middle school years.
All staff are involved in the AdvancEd Accreditation Process and are required to obtain continuing education hours through various workshops, classes, and opportunities to continue to grow as educators.

- Nine faculty and staff attended the NCEA Conference in Orlando, Florida in April.
- Barb Honeycutt, Kaycee Baye, Mary Helen Olsen, Keiz Shultz, Robert Aberle, Cathy Matthesen, Susan Oleson and Colleen Lecy attended the AdvancEd Accreditation Convention in Pierre, South Dakota. Additionally, Kaycee Baye, Mary Helen Olsen and Cathy Matthesen participated in the evaluation of several different schools in South Dakota.
- ELA and computer teachers participated in Reading Plus training with Learning Solutions.
- Keiz Shultz was a presenter at the 2015 TIE Convention on using technology for student differentiation in reading comprehension growth. Seton K – 5 Grade teachers participated in two courses offered through the TIE office: “Six Shifts of Language Arts” and the “Shifts of Mathematical Practices.” Megan O’Daniel, Amanda Biggs, Tammy Richards, Terry Lundeen, Theresa Palmer, Jenelle Kirchoff, Jeff Pekny, and Maria King attended the annual TIE Conference.
- The Diocese of Rapid City offers the Veritatis Splendor Institute of Catechetical Certification. Carol Cooper, Marie Broz, and Mary Helen Olsen are working on the master level, and Joanne Achbach and Elizabeth Hofer are completing the basic level.
- Amy Tweed and Doug Murano are taking a class through the University of Notre Dame, “Incorporating Catholicism in the Curriculum.”
- Sally Weaver, Tammy Murray and Colleen Lecy participated in CPR Certification course offered through Early Childhood Connections.
- Brenda Velasco and Jenelle Kirchoff completed a graduate course on SD Indian Studies offered through Black Hills State University. Jenelle also attended the Black Hills Area Library Spring Conference.

NCEA: Outstanding Teacher of the Year Susan Oleson

Susan Oleson of St. Elizabeth Seton School in Rapid City, SD, received the 2015 Distinguished Teacher Award from the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) for her dedication and commitment to excellence.

The Distinguished Teachers were recognized during the annual NCEA Convention & Expo that took place April 7-9 in Orlando, Florida. Pastors, principals and teachers, who have demonstrated a strong Catholic educational philosophy as well as exceptional ability, dedication and results were honored during the annual awards ceremony.

“In the end, all of the effort to create excellent faith and academics for students in over 5,000 Catholic elementary schools only occurs by having amazing teachers in the classroom,” said Jim King, interim director of the Elementary Schools Department. “The outstanding work that these teachers do is an inspiration to all of us who work in Catholic education.”

Susan Oleson has been an elementary teacher with the Rapid City Catholic School System for 18 years. Her love for teaching and commitment to the first grade level is evident every day. Her passion for life spreads to the stage where Susan is the current Director of the St. Thomas More One Act Play. Susan received her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of South Dakota in History Education. She and her husband, Greg, have two children.

About the NCEA Convention

NCEA's convention, held this year in collaboration with the Diocese of Orlando, is the largest private education association gathering in the country. It draws participants from all facets of Catholic education, including elementary and secondary schools, religious education programs, and colleges and universities. The event features professional development sessions, liturgies and an exhibition of educational products and services.

NCEA, founded in 1904, is a professional membership organization that provides leadership, direction and service to fulfill the evangelizing, catechizing and teaching mission of the church. NCEA's members include elementary schools, high schools, parish religious education programs and seminaries. For more information, visit: www.ncea.org/convention.
EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION ENDOWMENT: $7,091,248

The Endowment is dedicated to securing and enhancing the future of the school system. It provides permanent support for the mission of the school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<td>Staff and Tuition Assistance</td>
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<td>Staff Salaries and Benefits</td>
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<td>Unrestricted</td>
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<td>Western SD Catholic Foundation</td>
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<td>Facilities</td>
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Endowment Funds includes:

- Crazy Horse Scholarship
- E Betty Bradsky Memorial
- Fr. Peter Kovarik Grant
- Lola Leu Trust
- Notre Dame HS Charity
- Sr. Katherine Brady Grant
- Scholarship Memorial
- The Donna Klapperich Grant
- Duhamel Fund
- Friends of Joe Butler
- J Bachand Memorial
- Lori Thiel Simpson Grant
- Msgr. O'Connell Fund
- Pat Keegan Fund
- Wasserburger Fund
- R&E Native American College Fund
- Special Growth Accounts

School Liabilities as of June 30, 2015

- Terra Sancta Construction Loan Balance: $2,593,717
- Terra Sancta ARRA Loan for Energy Efficiency: $525,540 (interest-free loan)

Cost to Educate a Child

Cost Covered by Tuition

- High School: 77% Catholic, 23% Non-Catholic
- Middle School: 66% Catholic, 34% Non-Catholic
- Elementary: 58% Catholic, 42% Non-Catholic


Catholic education should be accessible to all. To that end, the school offers many forms of financial assistance to Catholic and non-Catholic families. Who provides tuition assistance? The bulk of the tuition assistance funds come from donor gifts to the school. These funds are held in the Endowment for Education fund for the purposes of Tuition Assistance.

<table>
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<th>Assistance Type</th>
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<td>Parish Support to Catholic Families</td>
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<td>Employee Tuition Discount</td>
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<td>Multi-Child Family Discount</td>
<td>$    7,533</td>
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<td>Hardship Assistance</td>
<td>$    8,785</td>
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<td>Evans Native American Grant</td>
<td>$    8,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Tuition Assistance Provided</td>
<td>$681,965</td>
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2014-15 was a banner year for students attending the Rapid City Catholic School System! We are thankful for the gifts and talents our students bring to our school and the community. This is all made possible by the generosity of supporters like you. We are proud to announce that gifts to the 2014-15 Annual Appeal have reached over $72,800. Our largest fundraiser, the Mayfest Auction and Dinner, brought in over $107,200 while Winefest brought in $16,773. Thank you to all who support the Rapid City Catholic Schools!

Support for the Rapid City Catholic Schools

**Endowment** - Give to the Endowment for Excellence in Education that provides funding for faculty and staff salaries, tuition assistance, and capital improvement projects.

**Annual Appeal** - Give to the RCCSS Annual Appeal each year to help support the actual cost of educating a student.

**Will** - A bequest is a method of making a charitable gift from your estate by naming the Rapid City Catholic Schools as a beneficiary in your will.

**Life Insurance** - Name the Rapid City Catholic Schools as the beneficiary of an existing life insurance policy or choose to purchase a charitable life insurance policy.

**Scrip** - A very popular fundraiser, Scrip has brought in over $60,000 for tuition assistance and tuition compensation for the families who purchase the gift cards, which can be purchased at the school system.

### Annual Appeal Donors

The Annual Appeal is a fundraiser for the Rapid City Catholic School System that benefits teacher compensation, benefits, and special needs for the district. The campaign runs from December through May.

<table>
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<th>Anonymous Donors</th>
<th>Bill &amp; Barb Honeycutt</th>
<th>Mr. &amp; Mrs. John &amp; Joyce Schlim</th>
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<td>Evelyn Anderson</td>
<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Dirk &amp; Edna Jablonski</td>
<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Robert J. Schurger</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beth Bauld</td>
<td>George &amp; Loretta Jackson</td>
<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Greg &amp; Melissa Schweiss</td>
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<td>Bill &amp; Sandra Beshara</td>
<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Larry &amp; Andrea James</td>
<td>Matthew &amp; Lynn Simmons</td>
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<td>Fr. Steven Biegler</td>
<td>Mrs. Debbie Jennings</td>
<td>Mr. &amp; Dr. William &amp; Mary Snyder</td>
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<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Jerry &amp; Lori Cope</td>
<td>Mr. Roger Johnsen</td>
<td>Rita K. Strand</td>
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<td>Rev. D. Craig Cower</td>
<td>Miss Dora Ann Jones</td>
<td>Mr. George Stroppel</td>
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<td>Dana Dental Arts</td>
<td>Fr. Dan Juelfs</td>
<td>Harley Taylor</td>
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<td>Kathryn M. Dennis</td>
<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Mike Keegan</td>
<td>Dr. &amp; Mrs. Hubert Theissen</td>
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<td>Dr. &amp; Mrs. Ron &amp; Jean Drummond</td>
<td>Mr. George Kick</td>
<td>Mrs. Irene Trione</td>
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<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Dan Duffy</td>
<td>Mr. James Kineen</td>
<td>Fred &amp; Paula Welsch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Bill &amp; Kate Duhamel</td>
<td>Ms. Jenelle Kirchoff</td>
<td>Dr. &amp; Mrs. Roger Wilson</td>
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<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Don &amp; Miriam Dunnire</td>
<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Donald Konechne</td>
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<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Thomas &amp; Cathy Durkin</td>
<td>Mrs. MaryAnn Kopp</td>
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<td>Dr. Eric &amp; Dr. Dionne Eastmo</td>
<td>Marge Kovarik</td>
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<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Kelly &amp; Suzanne Lambert</td>
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<td>Ms. Barbara Eilers</td>
<td>Ms. Marie Lamm</td>
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<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Burke &amp; Beth Eilers</td>
<td>Barb Landguth</td>
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<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Stephen &amp; Barbara Elkjer</td>
<td>Mr. Duane Leier</td>
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<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. David &amp; Deanna Emery</td>
<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Kevin Lewis</td>
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<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. James W. Emery</td>
<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Jim &amp; Cora Lunan</td>
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<td>Kevin &amp; Denise Maher</td>
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<td>Mr. Mike Goggin</td>
<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Patrick J. Miller</td>
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<td>Mrs. Peter L. Goodwin</td>
<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Ronald Myscofski</td>
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<td>Ms. Connie Haselhorst</td>
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<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Rice</td>
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<td>Dave &amp; Denise Hollenbeck</td>
<td>Lyncus &amp; Kathleen Ryan</td>
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<td>Mary C. Hollenbeck</td>
<td>David Satter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charles &amp; Maxine Holm</td>
<td>Ms. Karon L. Schaack</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robert Satter, Director of Development
It is always wonderful to see how God makes it possible for us to take care of all levels of students and staff. The Campus Ministry Office serves to incorporate our Catholic Identity into the daily lives of the students.

Through weekly prayer, we involve all grade levels to minister for services like Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, Reconciliation, recitation of the Rosary, Taize, the Stations of the Cross, classroom prayer services or guest speakers. Students respond positively when asked to help with the duties of prayer. It’s a wonderful way for them to understand what is happening and be active in their faith. We were able to utilize the new digital scoreboard at the High School gym during our prayer services. It not only allowed us to replace our music and worship aids, but with digital graphics and video clips, it enhanced the prayer experience. This year we were glad to see a significant increase in students willing to be more involved with the celebration of Mass as we trained 22 Eucharistic Ministers and over 50 servers.

Every Monday and Wednesday we had 7:30 a.m. daily Mass held at the High School Chapel with Eucharistic Exposition and Adoration on Wednesdays from 8:30 -12:00. Thanks to the Extension Society Grant and generous individual donors, we were able to improve the St. John Fisher Chapel. Improvements included: replacing chairs with new pews which we had received from a local Air Force base chapel, new kneelers and brass Stations of the Cross, new altar cloths, candlesticks, vestments and general chapel supplies. With the availability of the St. John Fisher Chapel at the Middle School, we held weekly Tuesday 7:30 a.m. Masses. Our last improvement was replacing all Advent wreaths for every classroom at all schools.

The senior retreat team that helped Campus Ministry provide exceptional leadership for retreats for grades 6-12 consisted of incredible individuals who showed great initiative and enthusiasm combined with genuine spirituality. We started the year by taking the seniors for a three-day retreat in the Hills to help them prepare for their upcoming phase in life. An overnight retreat experience was also provided for the sophomore boys and girls and the junior class. We found that by taking them overnight, the participants were more willing to delve deeper into presented topics, which for the sophomore class included the Theology of the Body. The remainder of the grade levels experienced a one-day retreat each with different age-appropriate themes.

The Campus Ministry Office organized the 2015 staff retreat with presenter Fr. Mark McCormick, the current Vocation Director and Stewardship Director of the Rapid City Diocese. He led the RCCSS staff in a day of reflection on what it means to be a responsible steward versus an ultimate master and how this reality can lead one into a deeper prayer life combined with a busy professional life.

The Society of Savio, a group of students who go above and beyond what is required for a class to serve others, met twice a month and hosted a very successful coat drive and cookie sale in December. The students used the proceeds from the sale to adopt a local family in need and supplied them gifts for Christmas and food through the spring months.

National Catholic Schools Week was celebrated the last week in January. Our partnership with the Office of Vocations through the Diocese helps encourage the understanding of vocations and builds relationships with the students and clergy. One of the more popular events is the annual Men-in-Black Basketball game, an opportunity for fun. It is well attended by the priests of the diocese, staff, students and their families. In addition to the Vocations Assembly, the Adopted Priest/Deacon and Seminarian Programs help the students to connect in a variety of ways with different vocations and provides an understanding about the call to Vocations on a personal level.

For the fifth year, 28 STM juniors, seniors, staff and parents participated in our mission program. We worked through the Mustard Seed Communities and traveled to the country of Jamaica. Our team worked in two orphanages, which care for physically and mentally handicapped children. While there, we helped build sidewalks, gardened, painted, and cleaned up the grounds, and helped with the daily care of the residents. Since we were there during the Holy Week, we were able to see the beautiful traditions of our Church celebrated in a different culture. It was an amazing trip, and we are on their schedule to return next academic year.
FACILITIES UPDATE

The Facilities Division of the RCCSS School Board approved the following improvements:

- The Middle School installed new scoreboard and banners in the middle school gym.
- The third phase of the Middle School Playground project finished with the upgrade to the volleyball court with a Sport Court top, water drainage routing, gaga pit and playground equipment.
- The Middle School parking lot and the north High School parking lot (freshman/sophomore parking lot) were sealed and painted.
- The STM Wrestling team has built walls and structures to designate a specific area in which to practice.
- The High School updates included digital display boards for the gym and new scoreboard & shot clocks that comply with the South Dakota High School Athletics Association new rule. The display boards were purchased by the school and have provided a new revenue source. All revenue from the advertising on the display boards will be designated to the RCCSS Facilities Fund.
- The SES gym roof was sealed to prevent leaking.
- The road between St. Martins Drive and Hidden Valley Road was re-graveled and sealed.
- The committee is in the process of replacing a boiler at SES.
- During the summer months, all classroom and hallway floors were stripped and waxed. Carpets were cleaned in the carpeted areas, and general maintenance continues.

C-SPAN 2015 STUDENTCAM DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION

“Students use video cameras to address public policy issues in their communities”

Each year since 2006, C-SPAN has invited middle school students (grades 6-8) and high school students (grades 9-12) to produce short documentaries on an issue of national importance. This year, students used video cameras to answer the question, “The Three Branches and You: tell a story that demonstrates how a policy, law, or action by either the Executive, Legislative, or Judicial branch has affected you or your community.”

In response, C-SPAN received 2,280 video submissions from almost 5,000 students in 45 states and Washington, D.C. “Now in its 11th year, the competition saw its greatest number of participants ever,” says Craig McAndrew, C-SPAN Manager of Education Relations. “All aspects of these student video productions, including the research, planning, and diverse range of expert interviews, demonstrate the highest levels of critical thought and initiative.” High school students competed on a regional level with the U.S. being divided into three regions: West, Central, and East.

St. Thomas More High School AP Government and AP Literature students participated in a cross-curricular project to write and produce videos for this competition. St. Thomas More had two winning videos. Matthew Eastmo, Ashley Peterson and Travis Mills will share $1500 as Second Prize winners in the Central Region for their documentary, “The Keystone Effect” about the Keystone Pipeline. This video aired on C-SPAN on April 9, 2015. In addition, London Kahler, Hanna Glissendorf and Alexa Diehl will share $750 as Third Prize winners for their documentary, “Technical Difficulties: Fixing Electronic Medical Records.”

- C-SPAN Press Release
A successful year can be defined as having fun, winning, and best of all, creating memories. This year the Fine Arts Department, led by Band Director Lloyd Potter, Choir and Theater Director Angela Weber, Art Instructor Shellie Farwell, and One Act Play Director Susan Oleson, saw great success at all the contests they entered, performances they gave, and concerts for which they spent countless hours preparing.

At the Region Eight Solo/Ensemble contest held in February, both the Woodwind Ensemble and Jazz Band received a superior rating. In March the Choir attended the annual Pops concert. A week later both choir and band headed off to The USD Jazz Festival. Congratulations to the students who participated and received a first-ever performance in the Show Choir division. Outstanding Soloist awards went to: Matthew Carreiro (Band), Joe Carlin (Band), Megan Albertson (Choir), Mia Hilt (Choir), Matt Vickers (Choir), Abby Simmons (Choir), Audree Blankartz (Choir), and Parker Oleson (Choir). Finally, the St Thomas More High School Symphonic Band received the honor of being invited to perform at the 2016 Bandmasters Convention in Brookings on February 12th.

This spring featured the musical "Annie." Donations received for refreshments at intermission all three nights allowed for a check of $1,100 to be sent to the Left To Tell Charitable Fund, an organization started by Immaculée Ilibagiza, for children/orphans affected by the Rwandan genocide, and any children in Africa who are in great need. Thanks to all who gave so generously to this effort!

The spring performance premiered the newest enhancement to the Theater department: wireless headset microphones. Feedback from the musical performance attendees was, “Everyone could hear loud and clear!” The Fine Arts Department will continue to improve the theatrical experience through updated seating.

The One Act Play, "The Great Pandemonium" by Pat Cook, was one of the top two shows in the Class A Regional One Act Competition. This earned STM a spot in the SDHSAA One Act Play Festival in Sioux Falls February 5-7, 2015. Audree Blankartz and Hannah Hanson received Outstanding Actor Awards at the Regional contest. Hannah Hanson, Audree Blankartz, Evan Henderson, Parker Oleson and Abby Julian received Superior Acting Awards at the State Festival.

To celebrate the successful year, the Annual Fine Arts Banquet recognized the hard work, long hours, and late nights all the students invested. The following seniors received the Fine Arts Club $100 Scholarship Awards: Audree Blankartz - Choir, Abby Simmons - Band, London Kahler - Art, and Evan Henderson - Drama.

RCCSS understands the importance of art in the classroom. Thanks to the South Dakota Arts Council and a matching grant from the SES PTO, two local artists traveled from classroom to classroom guiding students in two different art techniques. Mark Zimmerman instructed the students in drawing in November, and Mary Wipf held paper-making classes in February.
ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENTS 2014-2015

FALL SEASON

FOOTBALL - Head Coach Wayne Sullivan (11 - 2) Black Hills Conference Champions
State Runner - Up

CROSS COUNTRY - Head Coach Royce Wuertzer
Boys CC Team – Region Runner up, State Meet - 8th Place Team
Girls CC Team – Region Champions, State Meet - STATE CHAMPIONS

BOYS GOLF - Head Coach Andy Shaw – State Qualifier – 6th Place Team

GIRLS SOCCER - Head Coach Doug Noyes - State Soccer Tournament – 2nd Place Team

BOYS SOCCER - Head Coach Pete Sales - Qualified for the state soccer tournament.

GIRLS TENNIS - Head Coach Keiz Shultz - 2nd Place – One Class System

WINTER SEASON

BOYS BASKETBALL - Head Coach Dave Hollenbeck - Region 8A Champions
State A Basketball - 5th Place

GIRLS BASKETBALL - Head Coach Brandon Kandolin
State A Basketball - STATE CHAMPIONS (Back-to-Back)

WRESTLING - Head Coach Nick Durham
State Qualifiers – Stone Durham -- 132, Jon Hansen -- 220

SPRING SEASON

TRACK & FIELD - Head Coach Scott Benson
Black Hills Conference Champions - (8th Time in School's History)
Girls State Track & Field Meet – Class A - STATE CHAMPIONS
Boys State Track & Field Meet – Class A - STATE CHAMPIONS

GIRLS GOLF - Head Coach Brandon Kandolin
Alex Kandolin - Region Tournament, Individual Champion, State Qualifier - 7th Place
Megan Ward - Region Tournament - 5th Place – State Qualifier - 20th Place

BASEBALL - Head Coach Jeff Pekny - Region Champions
State Baseball Tournament – STATE CHAMPIONS (3-Peat)

The U.S. Army and the Pro Football Hall of Fame announced the 20 high-school athlete finalists for the U.S. Army-Pro Football Hall of Fame-Award for Excellence. The program highlights the achievements of student-athletes across the country.

The Award for Excellence Program focuses on athletic achievement combined with excellence in academics and community engagement. STM Senior Lincoln Feist was chosen and honored at an assembly in April.

"This is the third year of the program and for the first time ever, finalists will be honored in Canton during Enshrinement Weekend during which time the 2015 winner will be unveiled," stated George Veras, the Hall’s Executive Vice President, Chief Revenue Officer and Executive Producer. "... The weekend celebration will be capped off when the Award for Excellence finalists and their guests attend the NFL's preseason opener.” The Minnesota Vikings and Pittsburgh Steelers battle in the NFL/Hall of Fame Game on Sunday, August 9. The preseason classic is televised on NBC's Sunday Night Football. Visit ProFootballHOF.com/Army for more information.
KUDOS

**ACT of the Cavaliers:** Thirteen 2015 STM seniors scored 30+ composite on the ACT test, bringing the total of STM seniors who have scored 30+ to 130. Congratulations: Payton Bradsky, Alexa Diehl, Matthew Eastmo, Hanna Glissendorf, Abbey Hilt, London Kahler, Catherine Kellar, Giles McGillick, Travis Mills, Andrew Montoya, Aaron Moody, Henry O’Meara, and Ashley Peterson. The 2014 plaque can be viewed on the main floor between the Chapel and art display case at STM High School.

**National Merit Scholar:** An academic competition for recognition and scholarships that began in 1955 allows students to enter the National Merit Program by taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. The test serves as an initial screen of approximately 1.5 million entrants each year. The student must also meet the published program entry/participation requirements. Recipients of this award are London Kahler, Payton Bradsky, and Alexa Diehl, and National Merit Commended Scholar Hanna Glissendorf.

**Elks National Foundation Awards for 2015.** Recipient Hanna Glissendorf will receive $750 from the regional committee and an additional $1000 for four years from the national committee.

**STM Sophomores Selected for Leadership Seminar:** STM High School Sophomore Audrey Cope has received the Hugh O’Brien Youth Leadership Scholarship. Steven Carreiro is the alternate for this prestigious award. District-wide, faculty and staff selected these students from the Class of 2017 based on their outstanding oral and written communication skills; critical and creative thinking; creative problem-solving; strong decision-making skills; and sensitivity to the needs or concerns of others. Audrey attended the leadership seminar at Dakota State University in Madison, South Dakota, June 11-14. There she joined other outstanding South Dakota high school students to build skills to implement at STM next fall. For more information about this worthwhile program, check out www.hobysd.org.

**West River Math Competition:** MS Algebra I Team: Samantha Bradsky, Patrick Kellar, Matthew McGillick, Angelea Baumberger, Gabrielle Prill, Phebie Rossi

HS Algebra 1: Joe Poeppe, Katherine Achbach (8th), Casey Ballard (8th), Emily Blote (8th), Sandra Cronin (8th), Spencer Lund (8th)

GEOMETRY: Zachary Basham, Andrew Josten, Megan Ward, Mia Hilt, Leah Lowenberg, Josie O’Meara

ALGEBRA II: Madison Feist, Dalton Lund, Sara Cote, Natalie Montoya, Grace Wittenberg, Sophia Gomez

ADVANCED MATH: George Bernard, Sean Maher, Cassidy Stratman, Megan Albertson, Kennedy Kirsch, Ciara Duffy

MASTERS: Payton Bradsky, Hanna Glissendorf, Andrew Montoya, Henry O’Meara

FACULTY: Joanne Achbach, Brandon Kandolin, Kaycee Baye, Amy Tweed

**National Catholic Math League:** Sam Gibbon--Math 5 National 4th Place (out of 1052 students), Megan Achbach--Math 7 National 3rd Place (out of 548).

**SD School of Mines & Technology West River Math Contest:** Spencer Lund, Matthew McGillick, Casey Ballard, Joe Hanson, Phebie Rossi, Gabrielle Prill, Samantha Bradsky, Emily Blote, Sandy Cronin, and Katherine Achbach. And a special congratulations to Sandy who placed 5th overall, and Katherine who placed 3rd overall! The STM Team took first place overall in the contest.

**Black Hills Reading Council Poetry Cabaret Winners:** 2nd Grade: Cecilia Constantine and Connor Reed; 3rd Grade: Grace Albertson and Libby Schaa; 4th Grade: Keigan Ballard, Gabrielle Robbins, and Abigail Wagner (who went on to the state level); 5th Grade: Genevieve Bernard; 12th Grade: Abigail Simmons & Morgan Lowenberg

**Black Hills Reading Council Young Authors’ Extravaganza:** Kindergarten: Soraya Pekny; 1st Grade: Marissa Bonsness, JonPaul Sullivan, Soren Kirchoff; 2nd Grade: Blake Eide, Teagan Vining, Declan Duffy; 3rd Grade: Grace Albertson; 4th Grade: Tom Solano, Devyn Brennan, Sophia Meyer; 5th Grade: Cade Kandolin, Aidan Aultman; 12th Grade: Jared Koval-Scarlett.

**Black Hills Reading Council Young Illustrators’ Art Escape:** Kindergarten: Grant Schad, 1st Grade: Cecily Schaack, Lily Fiedler, Patrick Pfannenstei; 2nd Grade: Annika Christopherson, Jackson Hall, Weston Rathburn, 3rd Grade: Shey Landguth, Libby Schaack, 4th Grade: Holli Siemonsma, Keigan Ballard, Carly Hanzlik.

**Spelling Bee:** Sam Gibbon, a 5th grader, won the regional spelling bee and competed in the State Spelling Bee in Vermillion.