

NATIVITY JESUIT

A C A D E M Y

SPRING 2025



Beyond the Lesson Plans

Voices from the Classroom

PLUS:

From Learner to Leader: Alumni Story

School Updates: New Strategic Plan and Playfield

EDUCATING YOUTH FOR A LIFE OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

Springtime at Nativity Jesuit Academy is a season of renewal, growth, and celebration! As we continue our camino—our shared journey in faith, learning, and community—we reflect on our progress and look to the future with excitement.

Our students are thriving academically, guided by dedicated teachers and staff who prioritize each child's success. Alongside academics, we remain committed to nurturing the whole student through programs like Camp Thunderhead, Graduate Support Services, and personalized support that build confidence, resilience, and growth.

Looking ahead to 2026, we are excited to announce the addition of a beautiful green space for our students. This new outdoor area will provide a safe and welcoming space for play, exploration, and connection. We were honored to have Mayor Cavalier Johnson visit in February to show his support for this transformative project. You can learn more about it on page 12.

Additionally, we were thrilled to host our first-ever Noche de Nativity (formerly the Scholarship Dinner) back at our school—where it all began! It was a lively and meaningful evening, celebrating our students and investing in their bright futures. Thank you to all who attended!

Thank you for walking with us on this camino. As St. Ignatius taught, our journey is also one of reflection, prayer, and discovering God's presence in all things. Together, we are building a lasting foundation of faith, education, and leadership that will guide our students for years to come.

Vanessa Solis
President, Nativity Jesuit Academy



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NATIVITY JESUIT ACADEMY
1515 SOUTH 29TH ST.
MILWAUKEE, WI 53215

Cover photo

Katy Gutierrez, 4th Grade Teacher; Katelyn Bartlett, Middle School Math Teacher; Martha Perez, K5 Teacher.

Nativity Jesuit by the Numbers

WHO WE SERVE

257
Total enrollment
in K4–8th grade

99
High school-aged
alumni through
our Graduate
Support Program

100%
Students
self-identifying
as Latino

99%
Students qualifying
for a Choice voucher



UNIQUE MODEL OF EDUCATION



Extended
school day



Year-round instruction,
including our
Camp Thunderhead
program in the
northwoods of Wisconsin



Graduate
support
services

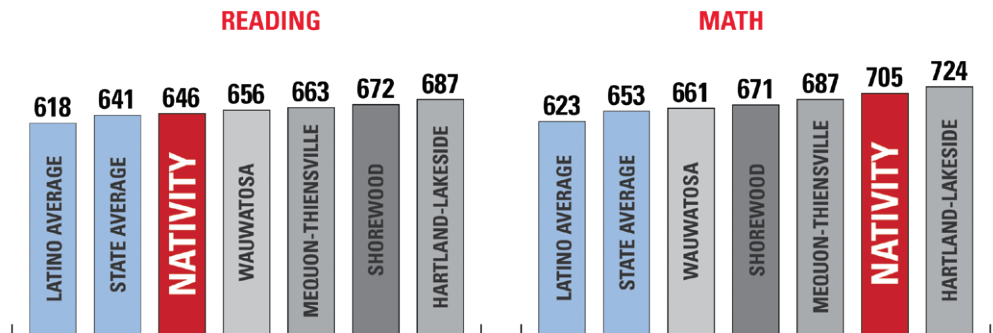


Formation in our
Catholic, Jesuit
tradition to be
“men and women
for others”

PROVEN RESULTS

Thanks to the commitment of the Nativity community, students remain competitive with their peers from the more affluent suburbs of Milwaukee.

Average 8th Grade Scores on the 2024 Statewide Forward Exam



We Couldn't Do It Without You!

Nativity's unique model of education and proven results are possible because of generous people like you! Thank you for considering support of our current wish list:

- \$80 funds one day of after school snacks and materials
- \$170 funds one month of coffee for faculty and staff
- \$250 funds a replacement Chromebook for one student
- \$344 funds adaptive academic tests (MAP tests) that measures students' grade level progress
- \$767 funds one grade of updated religion class textbooks
- \$2,122 funds music classes through the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music

Any amount towards these wish list items is greatly appreciated!

Please give today through the enclosed envelope
or at nativityjesuit.org/support

Thank you for making a Nativity education possible!



BEYOND THE LESSON PLANS: Voices from the Classroom

Joal Moriarity
Principal

Nativity Jesuit Academy is dedicated to defining excellence in K4–8th grade education. We are committed to providing our students with the highest quality education while equipping our teachers with the best resources available. Our top priority has always been allowing teachers to focus on their passion—teaching—by offering a robust curriculum and strong instructional support. This approach eliminates the need for teachers to search for materials, freeing them to dedicate their time and energy to student learning.

Since I began teaching here in 2019, it has been clear that Nativity stands out in its leadership, supportive parent community, and resources that truly empower educators. This strong foundation creates an environment where teachers can make a significant impact on their students.

What truly sets our teachers apart is their commitment to our Jesuit mission of magis—the drive to always strive for more. Nativity is home to some of the most talented educators, and knowing that our students will continue learning from dedicated teachers year after year motivates us to prepare them for the next level. Our faculty remains dedicated to our mission because they witness firsthand the success of the Nativity model.

Looking ahead, the future of Nativity is bright. We remain focused on recruiting and retaining exceptional teachers, expanding our extended-day programming, growing our Graduate Support Services, and strengthening community partnerships. By continuing to invest in our teachers, students, and families, we ensure that Nativity remains a place of opportunity, growth, and excellence.



Martha Perez

K5 Teacher

From a young age, I knew I wanted to be a teacher. Initially, I pictured myself in a high school or middle school classroom, but during college, I discovered my true passion for elementary education. Teaching has always been a profession I deeply admire, and I find great joy in shaping young minds and guiding students as they grow.



One of the most rewarding aspects of working at Nativity Jesuit Academy is witnessing students develop academically, socially, and emotionally. Throughout the year, teachers encourage students to think critically, build meaningful relationships, step out of their comfort zones, challenge themselves, and serve others. Watching them recognize their potential and take pride in their hard work shows how Nativity is cultivating leaders—not just for their own personal growth, but as individuals committed to serving others.

As a Catholic Jesuit school, we place Christ at the center of everything we do, guiding us to live not for our own gain, but for the good of our community. Each day, we take time to recognize Christ's presence and reflect on our faith through the Examen and weekly Mass. As a member of our Ministry Team, I work with a dedicated group to create meaningful opportunities for students and faculty to deepen their understanding of faith. At Nativity, we encourage students to reflect on their lives through small acts of gratitude, love, and charity.



As both a teacher and a parent at Nativity, I see the power of strong communication between educators and families. Together, we build a supportive network that helps students reach their academic goals. By inviting parents to participate in family projects, events, and open communication, we strengthen our community and deepen our connections.

Ultimately, my goal is for every student to leave my classroom knowing they are loved, cared for, and valued. They are God's beautiful creation, and with God's guidance, they can continue to grow—expanding their hearts through kindness and their minds through learning.

Katy Gutierrez
4th Grade Teacher



From a young age, I knew I wanted to be a teacher. I loved school, and attending Catholic school from kindergarten through 8th grade was a formative experience for me. My teachers showed me so much love and support, and I wanted to offer the same to the next generation of students. Since I loved school so much, why not stay in it forever?

One of my favorite parts of teaching at Nativity Jesuit Academy is the families. Parents at Nativity demonstrate incredible dedication and commitment to their children's success, and this passion is passed down to the students. I still remember my first day at Nativity when I announced we were going to the library, and the students cheered! Their enthusiasm motivates me every day, and I truly believe this mindset starts at home.

At Nativity, I've also had the privilege of being part of the Ministry Team. In addition to helping plan liturgical events, I organize all school Masses, working closely with Fr. Rick and other teachers to ensure students are involved as much as possible. It's a joy to be part of a team that nurtures the spiritual growth of our students, families, faculty, and staff.

One of the most rewarding aspects of teaching is watching my students grow beyond the classroom. I've had the privilege of mentoring a former student, now a senior at Marquette University High School, who is preparing to attend Marquette University. Seeing him transition from a 5th grader into a young man ready to chase his dreams is truly incredible. At Nativity, we support our students well beyond their time here.

More than anything, I want my students to remember that our classroom was a place of joy and support, where they felt loved by one another, by me, and by God.





Katelyn Bartlett
Middle School Math Teacher

I've known I wanted to be a teacher for as long as I can remember—since I was three or four years old. I've always valued interpersonal relationships and knew I wanted a career centered around working with people. Teaching offers me the unique privilege of getting to know students and their families, hearing their stories, and supporting their growth. Few professions provide such an incredible opportunity for personal transformation while also helping to transform others. It is both humbling and rewarding work.

One of the most special aspects of Nativity Jesuit Academy is the camaraderie among the staff. My colleagues are not only incredibly skilled but also deeply committed to our students, making Nativity a truly unique and inspiring place to work. Our school's model fosters both academic and personal growth. The extended school day helps build strong study habits and a solid work ethic, while Camp Thunderhead aids in students' emotional and intellectual maturity. I had the chance to experience camp firsthand in the summer of 2023, and it completely changed my perspective on the Nativity experience. It is truly transformative.

As the middle school math teacher, I embrace Nativity's core value of "seeking intellectual excellence." The word "seeking" suggests a continuous journey—one that never truly ends. My goal is not just to develop strong mathematicians but to cultivate deep thinkers who approach challenges with persistence, creativity, and resilience. Teaching middle school allows me to guide students through three years of growth, both academically and personally. Ultimately, I want my classroom to be a place where students feel safe, supported, and challenged because I know their potential is limitless.

From Learner to Leader:

IRVING'S STORY



As a 2003 Nativity alum and current board member, Irving Ibarra has evolved from student to mentor, and from learner to leader. His journey—transitioning from a Nativity student to becoming a respected mentor and community leader—exemplifies the lifelong impact of a Nativity education and what it truly means to be a “person for others.”

As an immigrant navigating new challenges, Irving sees Nativity as a turning point in his life. “There was who I was before I came to Nativity, and that person was young. That person was an immigrant. Some of those identities never leave, but I think my time at Nativity marked a fresh start. It was a beginning for me to focus on education and to make a life that positively impacts others.” His experiences at Nativity instilled in him a sense of service and purpose, shaping both his personal and professional trajectory.

Irving’s understanding of service has evolved from simply helping others to empowering them. “It’s not just about solving individual problems. It’s about teaching others the long-term skills they need to achieve the goals they have for themselves.” This mindset has

guided him throughout his career, especially as Director of All-In Milwaukee, a college completion program for high-potential, limited-income students. Whether he’s mentoring Nativity alumni, leading colleagues, or parenting his own children, Irving emphasizes resilience, perspective, and equipping others with the tools to succeed.

For Irving, Nativity was not only an academic beginning but also a spiritual one. He recalls learning about “kairos,” or “God’s time,” during his Kairos retreat in high school, realizing that Nativity was his own kairos—an opportunity for growth and service. “Nativity marked the start of a journey to help me become a little bit better every day than I was the day before.”



Through
helping
others,
we help
ourselves.
”



Irving's advice to current students is simple: "You get back what you put into it." He encourages them to fully engage, reminding them that growth and service are intertwined. "Through helping others, we help ourselves."

Irving's journey from student to mentor reflects the transformative power of a Nativity education, rooted in service and leadership. His story is a testament to the lasting impact of being a "person for others" and the ripple effect of giving back.

IGNATIUS REFLECTION

with Assistant Principal, John Tanner



The camino (journey) of life is often as much about the people we meet along the way as it is about the destination itself. In the story of Ignatius of Loyola, one of the most lasting images is that of him as a pilgrim. While Ignatius' personal journey was filled with hardship and transformation, it was also shaped by the people who accompanied him and those he served. His camino was not just about reaching a final destination but about encountering others and learning the value of helping and being helped.

After being wounded in battle, Ignatius of Loyola found himself relying on his sister-in-law, Magdalena, for care. This act of family love, amid his own suffering, became a turning point in his life. Ignatius' life and work emphasize that the camino, whether physical, spiritual, or academic, is never a solitary endeavor. We are never alone on this journey, and it can be profoundly meaningful to share our path with others.

At Nativity, this principle is evident in the experiences of our students and families. Here, academic success is not achieved in isolation, but through the support and guidance of teachers, mentors, families, and our growing community.



Every camino includes moments of discomfort and challenge. When traveling with others, we inevitably encounter differences, frustrations, and times when we may not agree or get along. Yet, these moments of discomfort often lead to the most rewarding and transformative experiences. In the end, the shared joy, support, and understanding form the foundation of the journey.

For students at Nativity, this journey extends beyond the classroom. They are accompanied by faculty, staff, and mentors who help them navigate both academic challenges and personal growth. The support also reaches beyond students themselves. It extends to family members, generous benefactors, and the broader community, all of whom walk alongside us in our mission.

As Ignatius demonstrated through his life and through the Society of Jesus, success and transformation do not happen without the support of others. His journey was not solely about reaching a destination, but about the people who helped him along the way. Whether it's through personal care from a family member or the support of a generous donor, it's clear that the journey is enriched by the relationships and communities we build.

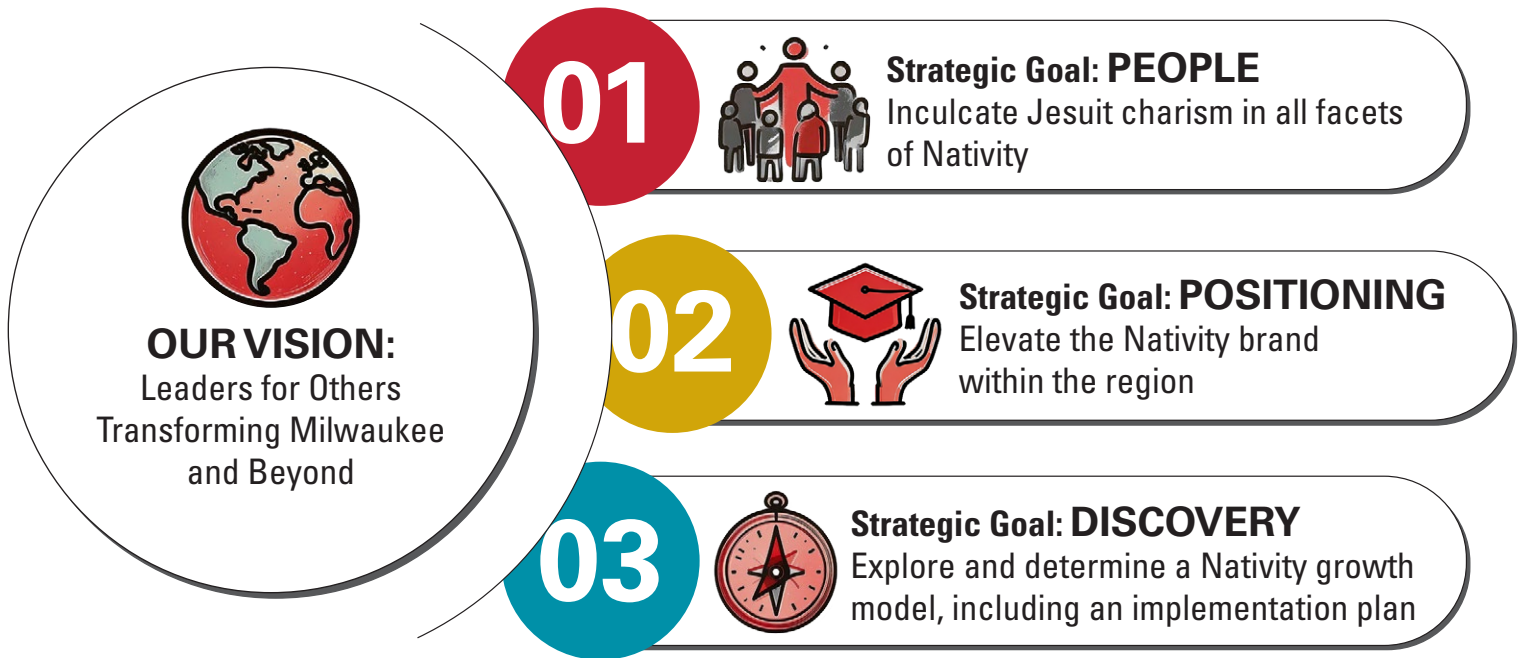
New Strategic Plan

This past summer, Nativity embarked on an exciting journey to shape a new strategic plan—one that reflects our evolving aspirations and deep commitment to our community. We dedicated time to crafting a vision for the future, engaging with stakeholders, and assessing our strengths while identifying areas for growth.

Our vision for Nativity is to be leaders for others, driving transformation not only within Milwaukee but also extending our impact beyond the city. We aim to empower our students, faculty, and families to become change-makers, equipped with the skills,

knowledge, and compassion needed to address the challenges of tomorrow. By fostering a culture of leadership, collaboration, and innovation, we hope to create a ripple effect that sparks positive change.

To ensure we remain aligned with this vision, we've identified three key goals that will serve as our compass moving forward. These goals will guide our efforts, shape our initiatives, and measure our progress as we continue to grow. Through these goals, we are confident that Nativity will continue to thrive and deepen its service to the community.



These goals will help us move forward and continue making a lasting impact in our community. We look forward to continuing to engage our various stakeholders in our strategic planning and giving updates as they become available.

Playfield and Pedestrian Mall Project Beginning in Spring 2026



In May 2025, we broke ground on Nicholas Family Field, a new playfield generously funded by the Lori and David Nicholas Family Foundation. This exciting addition will provide Nativity students with a safe and vibrant greenspace to play and stay active. Currently, Nativity students have limited outdoor space for recess and recreational activities. This project has involved substantial collaboration and approval from several key stakeholders, including Lori and David Nicholas, the City of Milwaukee, the School Sisters of St. Francis, neighbors, and parents.

As part of the project, 29th Street will need to be vacated. The field will feature a soccer field, basketball courts, and four-square courts. The Nicholas Family Field is slated for completion in Spring 2026, and we are thrilled to offer this new space for our students to enjoy. When school is not in session, the field will be open to the community.



Given the limited greenspace on Milwaukee's southside, we are grateful for the opportunity to provide this much-needed resource to our neighborhood.

More information will be shared as we approach the completion date, including details about a ribbon-cutting ceremony. We look forward to celebrating this exciting milestone with our students, families, and community partners.

Spring 2025 Alumni Updates

- **Manrique Valladares ('23)** was awarded the Knights in Shining Armor Award at Dominican High School. This achievement is awarded to students recognized for their improvement and outstanding effort in a specific academic department, and Manrique is a recipient for his excellence in world languages for the month of November.
- **Austin Piszczek ('15) and Carlos Nuñez ('15)** have been hired at Nativity Jesuit Academy and are now part of our faculty and staff! Austin and Carlos both work as academic aides.
- **Francisco Hernandez ('15), Austin Piszczek ('15), and Dario Camarena ('13)** are volunteering to coach the middle school boys basketball teams at Nativity. Similarly, **Eliazar Torres ('10), Adalberto Carrillo ('14) and Ruben Garcia ('09)** are coaching the middle school girls volleyball teams.
- **Ruben Garcia ('09), Dylan Ocampo ('14), and Alexis Sánchez ('10)** are serving as mentors to one or two high school students for the Nativity graduating Class of 2024.
- **Mauricio Campero ('12)** continues his work as an Upward Bound counselor, and he visited Nativity in early December 2024 to recruit for the current 8th class. The students who have been accepted into the Upward Bound program from the Nativity Class of 2024 are **Joseph Hernandez, Nirel Perea, América Palacios, and Guillerme Guerra.**

Nativity Jesuit Academy's Northwoods Campus, affectionately known as **Camp Thunderhead**, is currently seeking staff for the summer of 2025. All candidates, including Nativity alumni, are encouraged to apply by emailing Joshua Kraemer at kraemerj@nativityjesuit.org.

Mentoring Program

The Nativity Jesuit Academy Mentoring Program is looking for dedicated individuals interested in serving as mentors to high-school aged Nativity graduates. Mentors are paired with a Nativity graduate at the start of freshman year and work together with the Graduate Support Program and the student's family to help support their academic and personal goals. Students and mentors participate in monthly meetings, which include a guided conversation over a shared meal, and social events such as a fall cookout and spring bowling night.

Interested in learning more about how to join the next cohort of mentors (or becoming a mentor in the future)? Contact Alexis Sánchez at sancheza@nativity.org.



2025 Companions Award

Members of The Fotsch Family Foundation are the recipients of Nativity's 2025 Companions Award! This award is named in honor of the Holy Companions—St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Peter Faber, and St. Francis Xavier—whose deep friendship with God and with one another became the foundation of the Society of Jesus. Great works rely on the cooperation and support of friends in our mission, and the Fotsch family's partnership has significantly shaped both Nativity's students and mission since the school's earliest days.

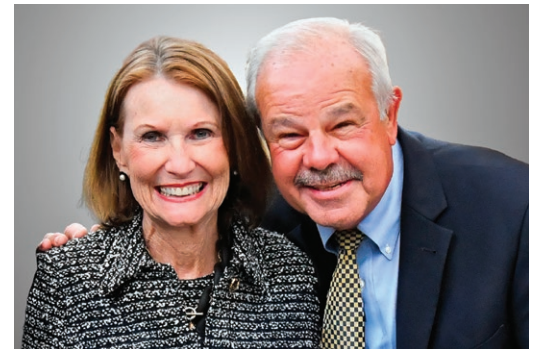


The Fotsch family's support for Nativity began in 2012 through the Fotsch Family Foundation, which is dedicated to empowering organizations and initiatives that help individuals reach their full potential. Their philanthropic contributions have left a lasting impact on Nativity students and the broader Milwaukee community. We are deeply grateful to Nana Fotsch and the entire Fotsch family for their unwavering support and continued commitment to Nativity's unique educational model.

We celebrated the Fotsch Family Foundation and their profound impact on Nativity at Noche de Nativity on May 2!

2025 St. Ignatius Leadership Award

Also receiving awards at our 2025 Noche de Nativity are Mary Ellen and Scott Stanek, the recipients of the St. Ignatius Leadership Award. This award honors individuals who have profoundly influenced Nativity's mission and educational model. St. Ignatius of Loyola believed that life's purpose is to love and serve others, and the annual recipient of this award embodies the true spirit of Nativity Jesuit Academy.



Mary Ellen and Scott have dedicated their lives to serving others. For the past 24 years, their unwavering support of Nativity has been evident in countless ways. From volunteering on the Golf Outing Committee to connecting numerous individuals with the Nativity community, their contributions have made a lasting impact. Their dedication to Milwaukee and Catholic education is widely recognized, and we are truly grateful to celebrate their commitment and the positive influence they've had on our community.

Thank you, Mary Ellen and Scott, for the depth of care and support you have given to Nativity students, families, and our mission!

We celebrated Mary Ellen and Scott and their outstanding support of the Nativity community at Noche de Nativity on May 2!

NATIVITY JESUIT ACADEMY

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UPCOMING EVENTS



GOLF OUTING 2025

Monday, July 28, 2025 at Westmoor Country Club
nativitygolf25.givesmart.com



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by updating your email address at
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