

*Be a part of*  
***something greater.***



# Testimonials

## Alumni Stories

A school is there to serve its students, and we take great pride in our investment in each student who walks the halls of NCA. We strive to build a foundation for our graduates to become adults of strong character who go on to do amazing things.



"I'm incredibly proud to be an NCA alumna. After high school, I attended UIC for my bachelor's and received a full scholarship to the University of California at Riverside where I earned my master's and Ph.D. in Bioengineering. I'm currently at Cal Tech working on my postdoctoral. I firmly believe that my early education is what led me to where I am today."

—*Jaimie Stewart, Class of 2004*

"I am a proud alumna of the very first graduating class of NCA. I continued my Catholic education from grade to graduate school, and each step positioned me perfectly for the next. NCA set me up for honors courses at Loyola Academy, which



set me up for a nursing major at Georgetown University, which led to my success in the workforce. It also motivated me through earning my MBA at Loyola University Chicago. The foundation for my personal success was laid at NCA. I learned lessons like determination, personal and community responsibility, critical thinking, tolerance, and curiosity.

I often think of what a blessing it was for me to start my journey at a school where I was encouraged to take a less-traveled road, where I was afforded the opportunity to participate in science and history fairs, and where I was able to make lifelong friends. NCA helped me build the rocket ship, and while I may not be going to the moon, I'm certainly among the stars, and the view is spectacular!"

—*Colleen Clennon, Class of 1995*

**“The amazing *community & education* I got from NCA helped mold me into the person I am today.”**

“I always remember my time in the NCA community fondly. I still have friends I stay in close contact with from NCA, and we often talk about



great memories from grade school. After NCA, I went to Northside College Prep for high school, followed by the Georgia Institute of Technology, where I received my B.S. in Architecture. I hope to get my master's degree as well eventually. I am also fortunate to have received my first job with a former NCA family. I really believe the amazing community and education I got from NCA helped mold me into the person I am today.”

*—Daniel Cancilla, Class of 2012*

## Parent Accounts

While the students are the center of the NCA world, parents are an integral part of our community. Together, we create an invaluable support system to nurture these children's potential and amplify their light.

“Our daughter absolutely loved kindergarten at NCA! She has a very shy personality (especially being new to the school) and the teachers helped make her transition to this new environment so smooth. We were impressed by the teacher-parent communication, as well as all the fun learning activities the teachers gave for home time. Our daughter accomplished her personal goal in kindergarten to learn how to read . . . and as she moves into first grade, she now is filled with academic confidence. We couldn't be happier.”

*—Michael Jacobson*

**“The families & community here have become our family.”**

“We are starting our 9<sup>th</sup> year with Northside Catholic Academy and once again are reminded of the incredible community that we are blessed to be a part of. From the beginning of preschool until the present, our kids have felt happy and eager to go to school each day—this is in large part to a friendly, inclusive environment and kind, engaging, and empathetic teachers. They have benefitted from the range of arts, music, and language “specials” classes in addition to a solid core curriculum. Mainly, students experience an opportunity to interact and engage with a diverse group of kids in a nurturing, diverse, progressive faith-based school. A very active parent group is also a plus!”

—Michelle O'Sullivan

“We are in our 5<sup>th</sup> year at NCA and we could not have found a better school. Our daughter is growing into a beautiful young woman who is supported at every turn by her peers, faculty, and administration. The families and community here have become our family, and they are the reason we continue to live in the city!”

—Jeannie Walker

“NCA has been our home for 6 years now and we couldn't be happier. All three of our kids are there and we have had a fantastic experience. Great personable teachers and an amazing community overall.”

—Nathan Dant

“I was so glad to send my son to NCA Kindergarten last year! Having two dedicated teachers in the K Classroom is so beneficial. Both teachers were highly communicative and very responsive throughout the year and into the summer. You can tell they truly care about your child.”

—Amanda Kim



# Excellence & Accountability

**Northside Catholic Academy is a Blue Ribbon School.** This honor is awarded to the top 50 private schools in the country that demonstrate exemplary high performance. This recognition is earned through performance on state assessments and nationally-normed tests.

We are very proud of this distinction, and we strive to maintain this standard and propel our students forward by maintaining small class sizes and providing a balanced focus on test preparation.

## Small Class Sizes

### **TEACHER TO STUDENT RATIOS:**

Preschool — 1:10 per classroom

Kindergarten — 1:12 per classroom

1<sup>st</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> Grade — 1:25 per classroom

## Test Scores & High School Acceptance

Our scores consistently rank above the national average in every subject and across all grades.

NCA students are prepared to test into any high school they are interested in attending. We aid this process by exploring a variety of strengths and interests, encouraging students to understand themselves and their passions. This discernment helps them to identify a high school that will empower them to continue their academic and social success.

Each year, we see our students accepted to DePaul College Prep, Loyola Academy, Notre Dame High School, St. Ignatius College Prep, Walter Payton College Prep, Jones College Prep, Lane Tech, and other similarly prestigious schools.



**AVERAGE GRADUATING CLASS MATRICULATION RATES:**

- 100% Accepted into Catholic High School
- 76% Accepted into Selective Enrollment High School

**College and career readiness is our target for all children.** With this goal as our guide, we use the ACT Aspire test as our standard. The ACT Aspire test is the only standardized test for elementary schools that aligns with college and career readiness subjects and trajectory. NCA outperforms national averages in every subject that the ACT tests. For every year a child attends NCA, the higher they perform against the national average in critical problem solving and technological savvy.

We have also implemented iReady, a comprehensive assessment and instruction program that empowers our teachers through diagnostic data and personalized instruction resources. Teachers receive actionable insight while our students receive engaging guidance and accelerated growth that prepare them for benchmark testing and college-bound goal setting.



# Whole Child Philosophy

**We believe no education is complete without addressing the whole child: mind, body, and spirit.** This guiding principle allows us to create a uniquely unified academic experience.

We elevate classroom learning and movement practices by attending to matters of the spirit, providing a rich educational experience rooted in Catholic values of inclusion and service.

Our community seeks to create a closer relationship with God while helping our children appreciate our faith's values and traditions. We respect and care for each member of our diverse community and offer opportunities for our students to excel academically, build meaningful relationships, learn responsible citizenship, and develop skills for leadership.

## NCA's Core Beliefs

- Building character is as important as the curriculum taught
- Expressing faith through kindness and integrity
- Cultivating solution-oriented and growth mindsets
- Creating habits that lead to academic excellence, spiritual and emotional health
- Promoting teamwork, relationship-building, and limited screen-time
- Inspiring accountable servant-leaders
- Nurturing a diverse community of love and belonging
- Establishing a lifestyle of intentional giving

# *Cultivating empathy & solidarity leads to lifelong civic engagement and informed, caring adults.*

## Tenets of Whole Child

### **MORAL & SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

Our students experience a balanced curriculum for spiritual and moral development by learning to think critically about their beliefs, growing in faith through communal worship, and developing a lifelong commitment to civic engagement through works of social justice.

### **WISDOM**

Our students are encouraged to form their conscience by asking big questions and engaging with peers and mentors in deep conversation.

### **WORSHIP**

All our students engage with their faith by beginning and ending the day with prayer and attending a child-focused weekly mass. We also practice active participation in the seasonal Church calendar to learn through ritual and build tradition.

### **WORKS**

One of our fundamental goals is to instill principles of social justice and civic engagement in our students. Through our thoughtful works program, we raise awareness of injustice and duty in school, the neighborhood, the country, and throughout the world. Cultivating empathy and solidarity leads to lifelong civic engagement and informed, caring adults.





## **COMMUNITY OF FAMILIES**

We facilitate the formation of family communities grounded in mutual support, organically growing to know, love, and encourage each other while raising children side-by-side.

Our parent community is made up of people of all races and ethnicities, Catholics and non-Catholics, as well as diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, but remain united in the support of their children's dreams. We engage families around these goals through participation in school programming, worship, and volunteer works.

## **SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT**

Our schools provide safe, orderly, and loving environments in which children understand their worth through the eyes of God and recognize equal worth in their peers. Learning starts and ends with common prayer. Seeing Christ in each other allows us to build connections and diminish barriers within our diverse community.

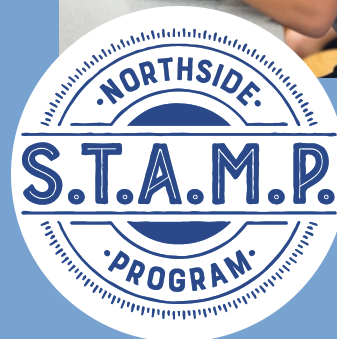
When children make mistakes or act disrespectfully we treat it as an opportunity. Through acts of restorative justice, we bring them back into communion with each other and with God.

## **AFFORDABLE INVESTMENT**

A private education that promotes high school and college readiness and supports moral development should be accessible to all families. It is an investment that is paid back over the course of a lifetime through secondary education and career opportunities, the strength of character, and unshakable networks of friends.



# Curriculum & Classroom



## Balanced Learning

Northside Catholic Academy students receive a well-rounded education that includes **S**panish, **T**echnology, **A**rt, **M**usic, and **P**hysical Education. Our **STAMP** Program provides students with hands-on learning experiences and stimulating variety, which contributes to their academic success.

Expressive subjects like Spanish, Art, and Music not only inspire creativity, they also enhance brain and language development. Physical Education nurtures the health and well-being of our students while encouraging teamwork and self-discipline. This is rounded out with a technology curriculum that embraces the STEAM philosophy and equips students with a frame of mind and set of skills for our rapidly changing world.

## Responsive Classroom Approach

Responsive Classroom is an evidence-based approach to teaching and discipline that focuses on engaging academics, positive community, effective management, and developmental awareness through integrating academics with social-emotional skills.

Our professional development tools and library of resources help our elementary and middle school educators to create safe, joyful, and engaging classrooms and communities where students can thrive and develop strong social and academic skills.

Independent research has found that the Responsive Classroom approach is associated with higher academic achievement in math and reading, improved school climate, and higher-quality instruction. It has been described by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as one of the most “well-designed evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs.”



## Responsive Classroom Practices & Strategies

The Responsive Classroom approach consists of tools that build academic and social-emotional competencies. These core classroom practices are the heart of an NCA education.

### PREK–8<sup>TH</sup> SHARED CLASSROOM PRACTICES

**Interactive Modeling:** an explicit practice for teaching procedures and routines (such as those for entering and exiting the room), as well as academic and social skills (such as engaging with the text or giving and accepting feedback).

**Teacher Language:** the intentional use of language to enable students to engage in their learning and develop the academic, social, and emotional skills they need to be successful in and out of school.

**Logical Consequences:** a non-punitive response to misbehavior that allows teachers to set clear limits and allows students to fix and learn from mistakes while maintaining their dignity.

**Interactive Learning Structures:** purposeful activities that give students opportunities to engage with content in active, hands-on, and interactive, social ways.



## K-4<sup>TH</sup> PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM PRACTICES

**Morning Meeting:** everyone in the classroom gathers in a circle for twenty to thirty minutes at the beginning of each school day and proceeds through four sequential components: greeting, sharing, group activity, and morning message.

**Establishing Rules:** teachers and students work together to name individual goals for the year and establish rules that will help everyone reach those goals.

**Energizers:** short, playful, whole-group activities that are used as breaks in lessons.

**Quiet Time:** a brief, purposeful and relaxed time of transition that takes place after lunch and recess, before the rest of the school day continues.

**Closing Circle:** a five- to ten-minute gathering at the end of the day that promotes reflection and celebration through participation in a brief activity or two.



## 5<sup>TH</sup>–8<sup>TH</sup> MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM PRACTICES

**Responsive Advisory Meeting:** a daily routine organized around one of seven distinct purposes. This helps build meaningful connections and develops respectful and trusting relationships, while also meeting students' developmental needs. The meetings have four sequential components: arrival welcome, announcements, acknowledgments, and activity.

**Investing Students in the Rules:** a process facilitated by the teacher that is composed of four steps: setting SMART goals, connecting the goals to rules, connecting the rules to concrete behaviors, and making the rules come alive.

**Brain Breaks:** short breaks in whole-class lessons that give students a chance to move and interact, used to increase focus, motivation, learning, and memory.

**Active Teaching:** a strategy for delivering curriculum content where the teacher presents, explains, illustrates, and demonstrates content in a way that enables students to meet a learning objective. The three phases of active teaching are Teach and Model, Student Collaboration, and Facilitate Reflection.

**Student Practice:** a process that follows active teaching where students explore and practice the content and skills taught during a lesson with the teacher's guidance. This lets the teacher identify and correct students' thinking before they practice further on their own.

**Small-Group Learning:** a structured way for students to work together on a specific learning goal, assignment, or project that is organized by the teacher.



**Primary School Campus** (PreK-4th Grade)  
6216 N. Glenwood Ave. | Chicago, IL 60660  
Main Office: 773.743.6277

**Middle School Campus** (5th-8th Grade)  
7318 N. Oakley Ave. | Chicago, IL 60645  
Main Office: 773.271.2008

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[www.NorthsideCatholic.org](http://www.NorthsideCatholic.org)