

What makes the archdiocese's Blue Ribbon schools go?

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St. Joseph School in Cockeysville, St. Margaret School in Bel Air and St. Mary's Elementary School in Annapolis – all parish schools – were formally recognized as National Blue Ribbon Schools in Washington, D.C., Nov. 18-19.

Each received a plaque and a flag, but their celebration began Sept. 24, when they received notice from the U.S. Department of Education that they had earned its highest academic honor.

The schools share many similarities, as they were founded by religious orders and their principals worship at their school's parish. Their stability includes veteran faculty and families that have sent multiple generations to the schools.

Their curriculums include advanced math classes; their spirit is seen in service.

To view a slideshow, navigate the arrows below.

The National Blue Ribbon went to 286 schools this year, only 11 in Maryland. St. Joseph, St. Margaret and St. Mary's were the only non-public schools within the boundaries of the Archdiocese of Baltimore to receive the honor. It was the first time three schools offering kindergarten through eighth grade in the archdiocese received the distinction in the same year.

A look at each of the schools follows.

St. Joseph School

- Established in 1868 by the Religious Sisters of Mercy, it has 296 students in kindergarten through eighth grade.
- Middle school students are required to research, write and deliver speeches, which bolster their critical thinking and public speaking skills.
- Clubs include photography, drama and yearbook.
- Service opportunities include middle school students making hundreds of cheese or peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for Our Daily Bread in Baltimore each week and a monthly canned goods collection for a local food pantry.
- In addition to monthly school-wide liturgies, each class attends Mass together at least once a month. "Prayer buddies," older students paired with younger ones,

participate in activities together, including a Thanksgiving craft project where they made apples into turkeys.

- Terrance Golden, principal, worked for nearly 20 years in corporate health promotion in New Jersey.
- Quotable: *"It's really fun here. I love going to school. My teachers understand me. It's like a home here."* - Eighth-grader Paige Taranto.

St. Margaret School

- Established in 1911 by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, it has 633 students enrolled in pre-kindergarten 3-year-olds through eighth grade.
- Outreach includes a partnership with a sister school in Haiti; making and sending rosaries to a local detention center; and collecting and donating baby items and food.
- In an effort to be good stewards of the earth, the school works to use less electricity and conserve its resources, especially on "Wasteless Wednesdays."
- Traditions include a fall festival.
- Madeleine Hobik, St. Margaret's principal for four years, has been an educator for 35 years.
- St. Margaret's clergy, led by pastor Monsignor G. Michael Schleupner, are a vibrant part of the school community.
- Quotable: *"We have something special to offer. We get to live our faith every day. We don't have to hide it under a bushel basket."* - First-grade teacher Alice Owen, who has sent three children to St. Margaret.

St. Mary's Elementary School

- Established in 1862 by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, it has 833 students in kindergarten through eighth grade.
- Traditions include overnight trips for middle school students and school-wide Masses.
- After school enrichment opportunities include chess club, book club and tennis.
- Outreach includes food drives, Operation Welcome Home Maryland for military veterans at Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport and Christmas toy drives.
- Many St. Mary's students attend St. Mary's High School. The two are connected via a breezeway.
- Rebecca Zimmerman, principal for three years, has been an educator for 17 years, all at St. Mary's. She is a St. Mary's High alumna.

- St. Mary's pastor, Redemptorist Father John Tizio, is an integral part of the school community.
- Quotable: *"We have always been an excellent school and we're expected to be an excellent school. It doesn't change anything about us. Our expectations will still be the same."* – Carter Hughes, kindergarten teacher for 26 years and a St. Mary parishioner.

The following Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Baltimore have received Blue Ribbon status:

Mercy High School, Baltimore, 1984-85
 Notre Dame Preparatory School, Towson, 1984-85 and 2012-13
 Calvert Hall College High School, Towson, 1984-85 and 1988-89
 Loyola Blakefield, Towson, 1986-87
 St. Rita, Dundalk, 1986-87
 Archbishop Keough High School, 1987-88
 Mount St. Joseph High School, Irvington, 1988-89
 Trinity School, Ellicott City, 1989-90 and 1998-99
 Archbishop Spalding High School, Severn, 1992-93
 The John Carroll School, Bel Air, 1995-96
 St. John the Evangelist, Severna Park, 2008-09
 Resurrection-St. Paul School, Ellicott City, 2009
 St. John Regional Catholic School, Frederick, 2009-10
 St. Louis Catholic School, Clarksville, 2010-11
 St. Augustine School, Elkridge, 2012-13

Source: Archdiocese of Baltimore

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