The Chargers' Voice

FALL 2026

Isabella C, Editor in Chief

Lorenzo H, Managing Editor

A STUDENT PUBLICATION OF SAINT LAWRENCE SCHOOL WEST HAVEN, CT

GUIDING OUR FAITH

WELCOMING OUR NEW PASTOR & PAROCHIAL VICAR



Father Israel Rivera

Appointed by Archbishop Christopher Coyne, Father Israel assumed his current position as pastor of Saint John XXIII Parish on June 30,2026. Continuing his focus on community, spirituality, parish revitalization, and faith we are enjoying getting to know him and his devotion to our school.

We asked Father Israel:

What was your childhood like?

"My childhood was very joyful. I grew up helping my parents take care of animals like pigs, chickens, and cows. We didn't have much so everyone worked together to help put food on the table. My siblings and I loved playing together, especially with toys that we built alongside our father. Some of my favorite memories include our awesome Christmas celebrations - when my father skillfully built a mechanical manger - and going to church together every Sunday."

Father Kelechi Anyanwu

Father Kelechi is a priest and counselor appointed as the Saint John XXIII Parish Parochial Vicar. Raised in a devout Catholic family in Nigeria, he learned the values of faith and community service that drive his ministry.



We Asked Father Kelechi:

How has being a priest impacted your life?

"Being a priest is an honor to me. It has given me the opportunity to be closer to God and God's people. My priesthood has brought out the gift of service. Celebrating School Mass is a life changing experience, meeting children who genuinely want to know God. My vocation came when I was a young boy. My family prayed every day. I eventually became an altar boy and never looked back. As a little boy, I knew God was calling me to serve him. Choosing priesthood was my way of saying yes to God."

God's Blessings On Our New Teachers

Our new Grade 1 teacher is Mrs. Melisa Sylvain! Mrs. Sylvain began teaching in 2025. She also was a paraprofessional for a few years. Her proudest accomplishment has been realizing how much of a difference a teacher can make in a child's day. She shared that listening, encouraging, showing patience, and making a child feel special has a lasting impact.



Mrs. Sylvain



Mr. Cornacchio

Mr. Mark Cornacchio Jr. joined us in Middle School as our Religion, History, and Geography teacher. "Mr. C" teaches social studies and religion for a variety of reasons. His grandfather was an educator, and he also looked up to some special high school mentors. With his love of history and Catholic faith, teaching felt like a natural fit. He looks forward to teaching about current events, following major news stories, and hearing students' diverse perspectives and opinions.



Mrs. Flores



Mrs. Garnettt

We also welcome our new profesoras de Español: Mrs. Flores & Mrs. Garnett!

ARCHDIOCESE STATE CHAMPIONS!

22-0 Season



Coach Byran, Sophia, Ariel, Juliana, Lehanna, Mia, Livia, Sunnie, Lesmari, Lina, Selma, Isabella, and Coach Mike

Saint Mary's Tournament Champions

New Haven League Champions

STATE CHAMPIONS!

The Lady Chargers: Leaders of Basketball, Winning as a Team

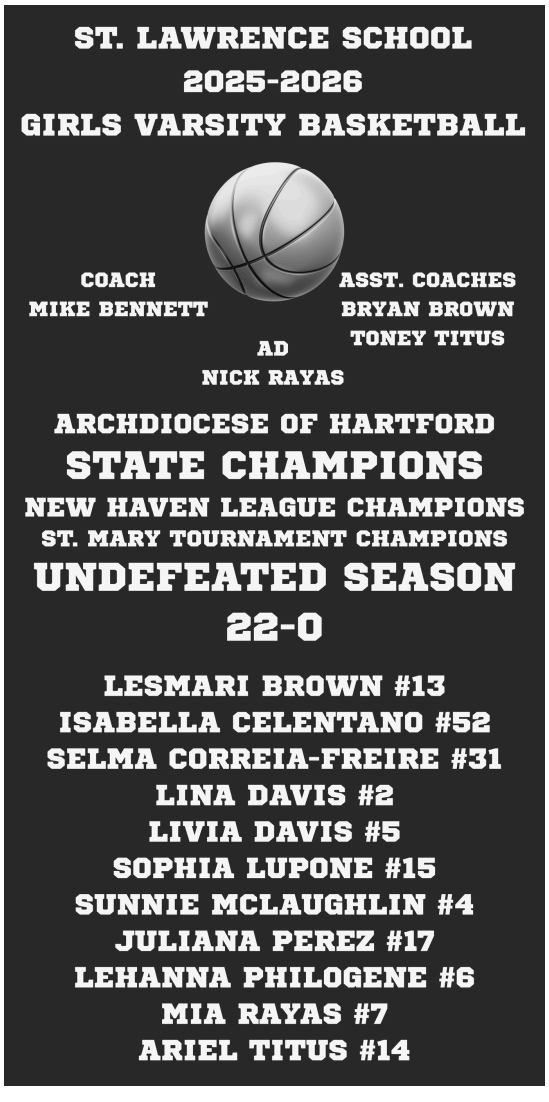
Sophia S-B & Alondra C.

We spoke with numerous players including our own Editor-in-chief Isabella C.(Basketball and Soccer player) and asked them **"What does teamwork mean to you?"** This topic is important because it shows the hard work and dedication our coaches and athletes put in to succeed. The girls unanimously agreed, "teamwork means a group of people working together to achieve a goal that they all want for each other and themselves." Coach Mike Bennett agrees saying, "this team had a great season, with everybody from the top to the bottom chipping in working together to win as a team. It has been a great experience coaching these girls, they work hard, they are good students off and on the court."

Sports: Spiritual and Mental Games

Isabella C.

An event that really seemed to impact our school was the girls varsity Basketball team, the Saint Lawrence Chargers. By playing basketball we learned the sport and how to work with others as a team. By playing as a team you and others can improve your physical health by working out. When winning a game your spirit goes high, you feel like a winner and you gain confidence in yourself. Sports can also be a mental game, in which you learn how to control emotions. You never show your emotions when you get off the court because that could determine how you do in the next game. You may celebrate when winning a game but you never show your emotions in front of the other team. It helps you stay humble and not get mad. By playing sports you can learn how to dribble, shoot, kick and you have good friends to lift you up along the way. So that's why it is a great joy to join a sport. Try it, join in!



Trying the fun- After School Basketball Open Gym

Doussouba C.

The first open gym night was so much fun! New players went up against the returning champion varsity girls which gave us a great challenge. We learned lots of drills such as shooting, dribbling and passing. What made it great was the coach encouraged us, even if we made a mistake. Even though we joined in with an already established team, they were very supportive and positive, bringing everyone's spirit up. It was a fun night!



We look forward to hosting games in our renovated gym thanks to support from the Koch Foundation and Poncé Painting & Restoration!

ROOTED IN FAITH



A Catholic education is important to a family/child because it grows your relationship with God. It teaches you about your faith and how to love, serve, worship, and know God. A Catholic education also teaches basic moral values that help you make good choices every day.

We grow in faith, live with kindness, and follow Jesus wherever life leads us!

Faith in Action

Gabe L.

Religion is more than just a subject at Saint Lawrence School. It's part of who we are. Each day we grow in our relationship with God through prayer, Scripture, the teachings of the Catholic Church, and acts of kindness and service. Faith is woven throughout our school day. Students explore bible stories, learn about the saints, celebrate the liturgical seasons, and create meaningful projects. These daily lessons help build strong values while encouraging compassion, respect, and service .Religious filled lessons, meaningful discussions and inspiring experiences help shape our education, and also our hearts. God's love is present in every aspect of learning.

Together We Grow

Sophia S-B

At Saint Lawrence School, we have excellent teachers and students. The school community holds fundraisers to lower students tuition and maintain the school. We learn new things and get higher grades to prepare us to enter high school. Students can sign up for extra after school help, as well as in the classrooms during the day. Students demonstrate teamwork in multiple grades. 5th grade and Kindergarten participate in book buddies, we help the little ones read and do projects. Teachers inspire us to believe in ourselves and have confidence. According to our school motto, “Saint Lawrence provides academic, moral, social and educational excellence to all in a Christian environment". We believe this motto holds true. We work together as one big school family. We hear this motto and reminder that Christ is with us.



During this school year, Students of the Month will be recognized with a SON LIGHT Award for bringing the light of Christ into the lives of our school community!

After the Bell

Amir B, Mohamed C, Annabelle C, Calyse E, Faith K

At Saint Lawrence School, learning doesn’t end when the final bell rings, instead it continues to grow through a wide variety of after school clubs and enrichment opportunities that help students discover their talents. Exploring band, music, Newspaper, Garden and Cooking clubs fosters creativity. Problem solving clubs like LEGO, Coding, Science, and Math is where curiosity leads the way. Performing Arts, including Band, Choral Music, Drama, and Irish Dance celebrate movement, tradition and rhythm. Friendly competition in the chess club, basketball, and kickball clubs helps to build sportsmanship and teamwork. Through these opportunities, our school continues to live out its mission and Catholic values!

Safe, Happy, and Blessed

The News Crew

The school’s commitment to us as students continues through our welcoming after school program where Mrs. K provides a safe, caring, and fun filled environment for children whose families need extended care. Each afternoon is filled with homework help, creative activities, outdoor play and time to build lasting friendships. We are encouraged to use God-given talents through art and hands-on projects. Each year our creativity shines in a special art gallery displayed at the Saint Lawrence *Christmas in the Schoolhouse fair.* More than just a place to stay after school, our after-school program is an extension of the Saint Lawrence family, where every child is known, valued and cared for.

We hope you’ll come to visit this year’s Christmas in the Schoolhouse on Saturday, December 5th from 9:00am-3:00pm!

READ, WRITE, and LEARN!

Lorenzo H

The Cell Project

In 7th Grade Science, students make a 3D cell. It can be edible, and some people made styrofoam ones and others made cakes. A cell makes up everything. The vacuole stores water, waste, and nutrients in the cell, the animal cell has multiple, the plant cell has one large one. The chloroplast which is only in the plant cell makes the food for the plant. The mitochondria breaks down nutrients in the cell. The nucleus is what contains info about the cell. Cells form tissue, which form organs, which form organ systems, forming organisms.

Please Eat My Delicious Apple Slices

. . . or PEMDAS in MATH

You may know it as Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally, I made up Please Eat My Delicious Apple Slices, but no matter what we call it we all know PEMDAS. The P stands for parentheses which is what you do first in an equation. The E stands for exponents, which is what you do second in an equation. The M and D stand for multiplication and division. Our teacher Ms. Noyes taught us how you break this down to use this in math and everyday life.

A Fun 7th Grade Grammar Concept

First a fun grammar concept that you will never ever forget. Everyone has heard “To Infinity and Beyond!” by Buzz Lightyear from Toy Story. We can easily use this to learn what a prepositional phrase is. Why? That itself is a prepositional phrase. The part “To Infinity” is a prepositional phrase. To is a preposition and infinity is the noun, making the words *to infinity* a prepositional phrase. A prepositional phrase is the preposition, the noun it modifies, and all of the words in between.

History of the Cold War

The Cold War was a major period in American history that lasted from 1947-1991. During this time, The United States and the Soviet Union competed for global power through an arms race involving nuclear weapons, the Space Race, and political influence. Three major conflicts connected to the Cold War were the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the division of Germany. The Vietnam War escalated under President Lyndon B. Johnson, while the Korean War was fought from 1950-1953. President John F. Kennedy played an important role in the Space Race and Cuban Missile Crisis and also worked to land a man on the moon. Germany became a symbol of the Cold War when the Berlin Wall was built to divide East and West Berlin. President Ronald Reagan gave his famous speech challenging Soviet leadership to tear down the wall. The Cold War eventually came to an end in 1991. On December 26, 1991, the Soviet Union officially dissolved marking the end of a major era in world history.

Faith and Family beyond the School Day

Faith K

At Saint Lawrence, our community extends far beyond the classroom walls. Throughout the year, families, alumni, and parish members come together to share in joyful events. We begin many gatherings in prayer and School Mass. Service is also at the heart of our mission. Food drives, Veterans events, and walk-a-thons teach the importance of acts of kindness to live out Gospel life daily. Fun and Fellowship is an important part of our school. Family bingo, special person events, paint nights and family dances fill the gym with laughter and friendship. Athletics further unite students and families where we cheer each other on.

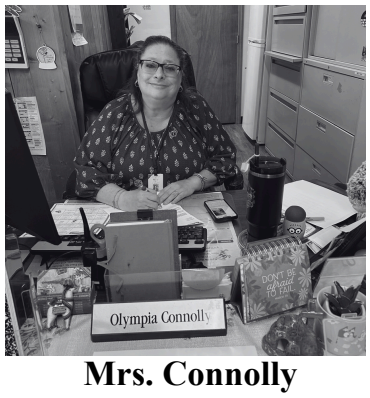
Our school community continues to grow stronger each year. Saint Lawrence remains a place where all students and their families don't just attend . . . they belong!

Community at School

Livia D, Mia R, & Ashlyn J

Our office staff plays an important role in helping our school grow together. We thank them from the bottom of our hearts for all they do. Here is a special message from them:

“The greatest strength of our school is the family-like atmosphere. There is a genuine sense of community. The older students interact with and lookout for the younger ones. There is a sense of responsibility, friendship and connection between the different grade levels. Our students grow together, support one another and feel they are part of something bigger. This type of atmosphere is one of the things that makes Saint Lawrence School special.”



Mrs. Connolly



Ms. Simmons

More Than Meets the Eye: Local / School News "Love, Serve, Defend"

Anthony M.

Have you ever wondered what the person sitting next to you does when they are not in school? Maybe they play an instrument, compete in sports, or maybe volunteer in the community or church. Our school is full of interesting students. In this column I will introduce myself to you. My name is Anthony Milano. I am curious, involved, and interested in the students around me.

No Need to Embellish: A State Spelling Championship Story

I won the Knights of Columbus State Spelling Bee on June 20th, 2026, at Saint Mary's Church in New Haven. I won with the word *embellish*, and the word that the other person spelled incorrectly was *curriculum*. To get to this moment, it took me hours of studying different words to get ready for the big test. It took a while to get to that point, through all the other competitions I had to go through first such as regional and class spelling bees. It is the first time in multiple years that Saint Lawrence School won the Spelling Bee! I did all the work to win the Spelling Bee because my mom has been having me enter spelling bees ever since I was in 3rd grade and it was always her dream for me to win at the state level because when she used to compete the closest she got was second place.

A Patriotic Honor: Representing My School on the City Hall Steps

I joined Mayor Dorinda Borer on the front steps of City Hall to read the Declaration of Independence on 4th of July. It was important for me because I represented the school and our NJHS (National Junior Honor Society). I also handed the bell from our school to the mayor to ring. The bell was very old and used by the sisters who ran our school. I also handed out bells to other people that came and gathered around the City Hall with the cameraman, to listen to Mayor Borer and me read this historical document. I wanted to go to this to support the school and NJHS for America's 250th birthday!

Read to Grow Book Drive

I also ran a book drive on the second week of school to collect books for an organization called *Read to Grow*. I collected gently used books, or hard cover books for younger kids whose parents can't afford books or are low on income. It is also important for kids to be able to learn how to read as it's crucial and needed for life when growing up. It was important for me to host a book drive because it helps me be able to support kids and families and pass on the love of reading. We helped collect 213 books this year!

West Haven History by Brandon R.

The Chargers' Voice is now offering a new segment: West Haven History. We take inspiration from Mr. Dan Shine, for his writing, research, and coming out of retirement to write for the city of West Haven! And he made a website, named *Historian's Corner*. That has a lot of information about West Haven history. He also wrote *City of West Haven: Village to Town*. Mr. Shine has written many articles for the *West Haven Voice*, and put some people in his article like me! Mr. Shine was given assignments to work on by Mayor Borer, such as building a mini wooden boat. He also built a cross for a local church. He is now a historian of West Haven and is a veteran of West Haven who works hard and loves our city. If you are looking for facts about West Haven, research Mr. Dan Shine!

St. Lawrence School: The Golden Age to the Modern Era by Lorenzo H.

The 1950s-1980s were the golden age of St. Lawrence School. In 1948, Father Heller was assigned to St. Lawrence Parish. The enrollment at St. Lawrence School was growing. In 1955 he added 4 classrooms along with the gymnasium/auditorium/cafeteria. The school had 450 students at that time. A Mother's Club was formed in the early 1960s. The school library was enlarged. Even today our library is one of the best in the Archdiocese. The Gridiron newspaper was published monthly. In 1968 Father Mihalek succeeded Father Heller. During the 1960s and 1970s, it was changing times for the church. The higher cost of education forced many Catholic schools to close, but St. Lawrence School staff, parishioners, and parents worked hard to keep our school from closing. In the 1980s many ideas and activities with an active alumni association were established in the school. In 1981 the Kindergarten program was re-established. In 1989, the school added a pre-school program. The After School Program was created in 1990. In the spring of 1995 the Sisters of St. Joseph, who had served the school successfully for 78 years, informed the pastor that their religious community could no longer provide personnel for the administration of the school. The parish then engaged the service of the sisters of Notre Dame de Namur who assumed the leadership of the school. On June 30, 2000, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur turned over the leadership of the school to Mrs. Mary Pat Wirkus. This would also be a milestone in the history of Saint Lawrence School as she would serve as the first lay administrator of the school without any religious sisters on staff. Another milestone in the history of Saint Lawrence School took place in August 2007, when Paul R. DeFonzo was appointed the first male lay administrator of the school until his retirement in June 2022. Mr. Frank Arnone was the principal of the school from 2022 through 2024. In 2027 we celebrate 110 years of Catholic Education in West Haven! We are so thankful for our faithful alumni who keep these memories alive!

A Table Large Enough for Everyone

A Message from Father Israel

There is something beautiful that happens when people sit down together to share a meal. Conversations begin, laughter is heard, children play, and for a few hours, the things that often divide us begin to disappear. In our parish and school, we come from different countries, cultures, and backgrounds. Some of us speak English, others Spanish, and many of us carry different stories and traditions. Jesus did not gather people who were all the same. He brought together people with different personalities, backgrounds, and stories and taught them to become one family. Perhaps the first step toward breaking down prejudice is simply getting to know one another. Sometimes simple moments build the strongest bridges. A shared meal can become a conversation. A conversation can become understanding. Understanding can become friendship. Let us share our food, our families, our stories, and most importantly, our willingness to welcome one another. Because, when we truly come together as one community, we show the world what the Church is meant to be: One family gathered around the same table, with room for everyone.



The Three Archangels

Gabe L

The Three Archangels were created in God's image to aid, heal, and assist other humans that he created. The names of them were Saint Gabriel, Saint Raphael, and Saint Michael. It comes from the word hagios which means "holy one". Now the archangels also have different things or meanings. Gabriel was the person you would think is a leader or a person who will guide you on your aid to learn about Jesus Christ. Saint Michael is the one who would fight for everyone and everything. Saint Raphael is who you would think is the best doctor. In the morning prayer we say, "Bless us, Protect us, and Heal us". That's why Saint Rapheal is the one we pray to if we are sick or hurt, and for other people who are suffering to everyday consequences. When you pray to them they answer our prayers and love us. What I feel about the archangels is that we are blessed from God to have the archangels. God loves us all and will do anything for human beings. The archangels love us too, they will always answer our prayers especially when we need it. Now they reside in Heaven with Jesus Christ.

Kindergarteners and First Graders Share their thoughts about Angels

Mrs. Collura Librarian

- They're pretty. They're big. I like their wings. They can fly – I'd like to fly like an angel.
- Angels watch over us and help us.
- Angels can help us when we're afraid.
- Angels help us to be good in school and at home.
- I like seeing pictures of angels at church or at the library.
- We learned the *Guardian Angel Prayer* from Ms. Mattiello: "Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here. Ever this day be at my side to light, to guard, to rule and guide. Amen"



A Message from Principal Messina

This issue is special for every member of *The Chargers' Voice* Crew. Together, we learned that great stories come from teamwork, creativity, and a willingness to grow. Mrs. Grestini and I are proud of your commitment, your enthusiasm, and the care you put into sharing the heart of our school with others. Thank you for going with the flow in this exciting adventure as we work together to engage our Saint Lawrence School Family!

The News Crew

Isabella, Doussouba, Bianca, Christa, Ashlyn, Zerah, Selma, Lorenzo, Anthony, Livia, Mia, Gabe, Ryan, Brandon, Calyse, Sophia, Alondra, Nfatoman, Santino, Annabelle, Amir, Angel, Faith, & Mohammed

Special Thanks To:

Mrs. Bambi Grestini, Mr. Chris DeFonce, Ms. Emily Emerson, Dr. Joan Venditto, Mrs. Annmarie Connelly, Mr. Thomas Lague, and Mrs. Tina Collura!

Fun with First Grade Mrs. Sylvain 1st grade teacher

Mrs. Sylvain asked her students, *What do you think Jesus loves about fall?*

Jack- "All the Fall birthdays get to celebrate together."
Moira- "When everybody is kind, and doesn't jump on someone under the leaves."
Tommy- "Nature and all the falling leaves."
Gabby- "Families praying together."
Ares- "Us!"
Amelia- "Jesus loves when we are having fun!"
Emma- "People helping each other rake leaves."
Sofia- "When we gather and spread friendship."

How Will You Celebrate Your 110th Birthday?

We are celebrating the School's 110th anniversary in many ways. We asked Mrs. K, Mrs. S., and the After School Program kids from Pre-K 3, Pre-K 4, and Kindergarten how they would celebrate their 110th birthdays:

- Arabella wants to celebrate by eating cake. She would play BINGO and bring her toys so everyone can play with them. For her outfit she pictures herself wearing a pink, sparkly, and puffy dress with pink shoes.
- Everly said she would bring stickers, five books, and toys. She said she would want to wear a pink dress with unicorns on it, plus pink shoes. She would also dance, and also wants to get balloons for the party. Finally she wants to bring her family, her best friend Lucas, and eat apples.
- Oscar would bring Mario games, big muffins for everyone, and a watermelon. He said he would wear his school uniform and bring his family with him.
- Steven would decorate with LEGOs and Minecraft and wear his school uniform. He would eat chicken wings and a sugary cake.

Sounds like wonderful 110th birthday parties!

Trivia

1. **What year did the sisters of Notre Dame de Namur become the leaders?**
2. **What year did Mr. DeFonzo become principal?**

SCHOOL SUBJECTS WORD SEARCH by Ryan S.

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WORD BANK

Science Spanish History Gym Mathematics Literature Religion Music Grammar Geography Art Study Hall

Trivia Answers: 1. 1995 2. August 2007

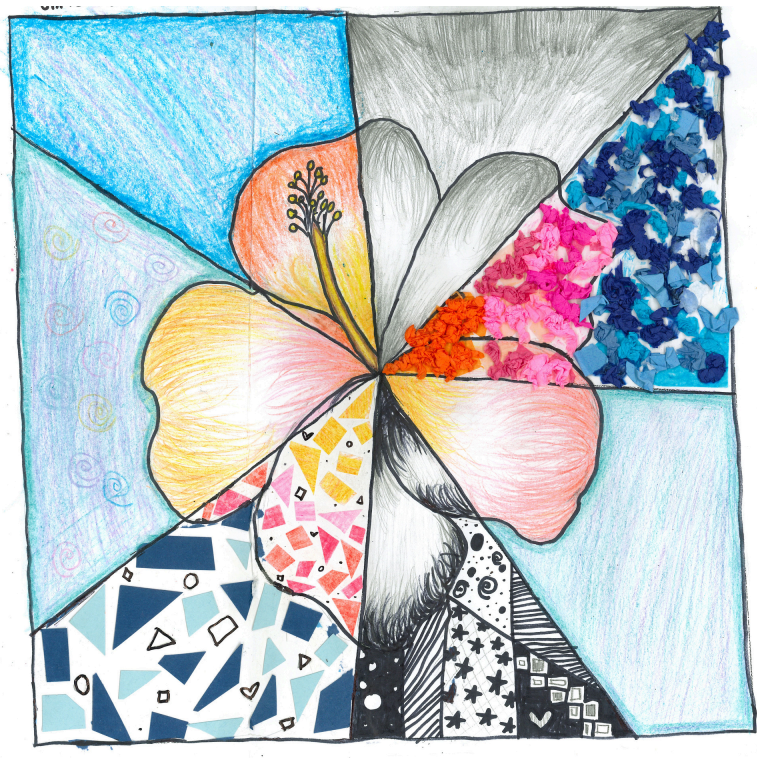
From our Halls to your Hearts - *Happy Anniversary*!

Classes of . . . 1946: 80th 1956: 70th 1966: 60th 1976: 50th 1986: 40th 1996: 30th 2006: 20th 2016: 10th

My First Art Project: Elements of Art

Christa O.

For our first art project of the school year, I created a flower design that represents the seven elements of art: line, shape, color, value, texture, form, and space. I divided my paper into different sections, and each section shows a different element of art. I used colored pencils to add color and shading to the flower petals and background. I also used different patterns, such as shapes, stripes, and dots to show line and shape. For texture, I glued small pieces of tissue paper onto my artwork to make certain sections stand out. I used different shades of colors to create value and make parts of my drawing look lighter or darker. This project helped me learn how artists use different elements to create unique and interesting artwork. Overall, I enjoyed being creative and learning new art techniques, and I am excited to see how my art journey grows throughout the year.





Alumni Update

Congratulations to Mrs. Margaret Sauvage - age 104
Class of 1936 - 90th Anniversary Year!

Religious Sisters of West Haven 2026

Gabe L

In 2027, Saint Lawrence School in West Haven will celebrate 110 years since it first opened in 1917. The City of West Haven and the entire Catholic community are blessed with Catholic education during which many religious sisters, priests, and brothers committed themselves as teachers and administrators. Saint Lawrence Church and School were staffed by The Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chambery. They were followed by the sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. Our Lady of Victory Church and School had Sisters of Mercy until 1946 followed by the Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk until 1996. The Daughters of the Holy Spirit served Saint Louis School.



If you are interested in sponsoring or purchasing tickets / tables, please visit our website. Early patrons will receive special recognition on the invitations!

SCAN ME

https://sls110thgala.auctria.events