

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

St. Joseph Catholic School



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—Shannon Karaba, mom of two St. Joseph Catholic School students

With a nearly 70-year history of serving students and families, St. Joseph Catholic School approached the future with a bold vision for deeply connected community—but they knew their piecemeal technology approach could undermine their goals. They needed a connected school with integrated technology. With a trusted partner in Blackbaud, they transformed the school experience for families and staff—just before they faced the COVID-19 pandemic.

St. Joseph School realizes full potential of an integrated, total school solution.

As Principal Joe Zmikly considered how to bring to life his vision for a deeply engaged parent and student community at St. Joseph Catholic School in Lake Orion, Michigan, he knew his school needed an integrated, cloud-based technology solution—one that would make staying informed and connected easier than ever. But with the school's initial attempt to leave behind a piecemeal approach of disconnected technology that required a reliance on manual data entry, paper records and multiple logins, they chose a vendor with a flawed, unfinished system—a move Zmikly described as “maybe the worst decision I’ve ever made in my professional career.”

St. Joseph Catholic School is powered by Blackbaud solutions for:

- ✓ Enrollment Management
- ✓ Student Management
- ✓ Tuition Management
- ✓ Learning Management

Plagued by persistent parent log-in problems and other unpredictable “funhouse” twists, the principal and his team took the bold step of abandoning that system mid-school year, using the transition as an opportunity to rethink change. The stakes were high. “Whatever we selected next would have to be a home run, or I thought they might ride me out on a rail,” said Zmikly, who researched the options extensively. “I knew that Blackbaud was going to do what it said it would, and it worked the way that a system should work.”

Zmikly’s decision has paid off. A year after adopting Blackbaud’s cloud-based education management solution, St. Joseph School scored better than the average of Archdiocese of Detroit schools in 14 of 18 parent satisfaction categories during the pandemic. “A huge reason for that was what we could do with Blackbaud,” the principal said.

Benefits of Integrated Solution, Strong Support

Blackbaud provides St. Joseph Catholic School with integrated solutions for enrollment, student and learning and tuition management—all available to the user with a single sign-on. In addition, schools can utilize partner solutions



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that integrate with Blackbaud’s open, standards-based APIs, allowing users a single sign-on experience. For example, St. Joseph’s uses pickAtime for scheduling conferences.

Carolyn Westmoreland, St. Joseph’s technology director, appreciates the simplicity for users and said the integration of solutions has saved her time and improved key school processes. In the past, the school lacked an organized system for enrollment inquiries, and Westmoreland suspects the school may have lost track of some emails and phone calls from interested families. Now, Blackbaud Enrollment Management System™ ensures systematic follow-up, and once a family joins the school, their information seamlessly carries over into Blackbaud’s other solutions, including financial arrangements with families.

St. Joseph School also was able to deliver an integrated contract-to-tuition billing management process with Blackbaud Tuition Management™ that significantly reduced paperwork and manual data entry. “We’ve got the whole parent record right there in our system,” Westmoreland said.

She also praised Blackbaud’s “superb” onboarding process, including training provided by Blackbaud University and the honesty of the timetable she received. “When I implemented this, I had an entire schedule laid out for me.”



Staying Connected During the Pandemic

When Michigan schools switched from in-person to distance learning in March 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, St. Joseph School's teachers had the advantage of Blackbaud Learning Management System™ for posting assignments, entering grades and day-to-day communications along with Blackbaud Student Information System™, which facilitates attendance, grading, report cards and more in-depth reporting.

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Blackbaud's total school solution also helped St. Joseph School promote a sense of community as it shared daily updates and prayers. Even as the school returned to in-person learning in the 2020-21 school year, Zmikly kept Fridays as distance learning days, and thanks to Blackbaud, could easily direct families to a livestream of Friday Mass, in addition to schoolwide Rosaries and other resources. That faith connection is important to the school, which is affiliated with St. Joseph Catholic Church and draws over half of its 350-student enrollment from active parishioners.

"(Blackbaud) has allowed us to reach out to parents to build their faith in ways that we couldn't have otherwise," Zmikly said, highlighting another way their technology partner's total school solution has proven its worth that goes beyond ease and efficiency to enhancing families' overall experience. "It's transformed everything."



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Blackbaud provides St. Joseph Catholic School with integrated single-sign-on solutions. Plus, the school can select technology partners from the Blackbaud Marketplace that also sync up without extra log-in credentials.

Strengthening Ties with Parents

To Shannon Karaba, who has a fifth-grader and a seventh-grader at the school, the transformation from the days of outdated, disconnected communications with parents has been “absolutely night and day.” She helped test technology options for St. Joseph School, so she paid close attention when the school switched to Blackbaud’s education management portfolio, which allows her to access everything she needs with a single log-in. “It’s a fantastic system,” she said.

“As a parent, I have definitely saved time compared to what I used to do in surfing for information, and all the papers that had to be filled out.” She recalled how forms used to spill out of her children’s backpacks once they got home. Now she communicates with the school easily and efficiently through Blackbaud’s total school solution. “The fact that I can go to the computer, there’s a little button, click it, read through, sign what I need to electronically—for me, it’s a godsend.”

She locates much of what she needs through the Resources Page, and through the Assignment Center can see details of each child’s progress and even access videos that help her explain math concepts to her fifth-grader. “You can find it all very easily,” she said.

Other families have shared similar feedback, said Principal Zmikly. “If you are a parent at our school, and there is something that you need to know or have access to, you know exactly where to find it,” he said.

Drive digital transformation and impact across your school.



“It’s transformed everything.”



—Joe Zmikly, St. Joseph School Principal

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About Blackbaud

Leading uniquely at the intersection point of technology and social good, Blackbaud connects and empowers organizations to increase their impact through cloud software, services, expertise, and data intelligence. We serve the entire social good community, which includes nonprofits, foundations, companies, education institutions, healthcare organizations, and the individual change agents who support them.