

LESA (Lutheran Elementary School Association)

News:

Metro Area Lutheran School Enrollment Increases for Fourth Consecutive Year

January 12, 2024 –

For the fourth consecutive year, Lutheran schools in the St. Louis metro area have increased enrollment. The 36 member schools included in the Lutheran Elementary School Association (LESA) encompass early childhood through high school and have seen a 3% increase during the 2023-2024 school year. Since the 2019-2020 school year, LESA schools have experienced a 19% overall growth.

“We are thrilled to report these increases as part of overall enrollment successes,” said Libby Gutberlet, LESA CEO. “We believe that that our upward trend in enrollment speaks to the needs of Metro Area to seek safe, Christian-focused education that is both excellent and affordable for all families.”

Our Savior Lutheran School in Fenton experienced the largest growth among the 32 LESA schools serving early childhood through eighth grade. Principal Linda Dehn attributes the need for safe, values-based preschool education with consistent staff as reasons for their increased enrollment numbers “We hear stories of a high turnover in preschool staff in the community. Our preschool teachers are full-time teachers. This means that the same teacher that greets your child in the morning is the same one that says farewell at the end of the school day. This allows a special relationship between a family and their teacher.”

Another area school that experienced significant growth of 11% this school year is St. John’s-Arnold. Head of School Brenda Spieler agrees with the need for consistent staff. “Our preschool staff is caring and qualified. They consist of teaching professionals, college students earning a degree in education, and retired teachers. For our staff, teaching isn’t a job. It’s a calling.”

(over, please)

Spieler and Dehn have also noticed a renewed desire for a faith-based, traditional curriculum in a safe environment. "Many families appreciate the way we incorporate Christian values into our school. It truly affects not only the way we teach and learn, but also the way we think and act. And the fact we make our school financially accessible to all is also a pleasant surprise for many."

Laura Montgomery, LESA's Director of Educational Resources attributes the growth as a positive outcome of the Covid pandemic. "Many of our schools increased enrollment during the pandemic because our schools remained open, providing consistency for families amidst a time of chaos and unpredictability. Families that came from public schools discovered the affordable benefits of a Lutheran Christian school environment, fell in love with the teachers, curriculum, and family feel of the school and not only re-enrolled their students, but also told others about their positive experiences. As part of that success, LESA is blessed to aid in the upward trend by awarding over 2,600 scholarships totaling over \$2.19 million in tuition assistance to families over the past four years."

Enrollment is ongoing for Lutheran Schools, with many open houses occurring on Sunday, January 21, 2024 as a kickoff to National Lutheran Schools Week. A listing of open house dates and times can be found at lesastl.org/schools. Private tours are also available at all schools by appointment.

About LESA

More than **9,800 children** attend LESA member Lutheran schools in the St. Louis Metro Area, making Lutheran schools the **second-largest private school system** in the Bi-State area. A Recognized Service Organization of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, LESA represents **36 elementary and high schools** and five related agencies. For more information, visit www.LESAstl.org.

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