

Viking Connections

Spring 2007

A Return to School

Hello fellow VCHS and St. Joseph High School Alumni! My name is Jessica Nelson, and I am a graduate from the class of 2000. I spoke with Fr. John and Mr. McNellie and said that I would help them to revive the Viking Connections newsletter. Once I started going through old newsletters and getting new updates about the school and my fellow alumnae, I found that it wasn't difficult at all to get into the project!

I was surprised at how many memories returned when I began working on this publication. I was even more surprised by how many relationships were picked up that had fallen by the wayside. I had allowed myself to forget how much VCHS has shaped the person that I am today, and it was truly wonderful to be reminded.

Another great reminder of how VCHS and St. Joseph's High School have shaped our lives was the letter that I received from Bishop Trautman. I wanted to take this opportunity to share his words with you:

"Dear Alumni of Venango Catholic High School,

I am very pleased to greet you by way of this newly-revised newsletter. You look back upon your days at VC with fond reminiscences of friendship and carefree times that mark the days of youth, and for that I am grateful. Venango Catholic has been forming young people in the spirit and mission of Jesus Christ since its founding and continues to do so even today. Indeed, it is the hope of VC and of all Catholic Schools that the formation and growth in faith so important in the young continues even long after one leaves behind the halls of academic study and enters the work place, business, family life, and such. In whatever place you find yourself these days, continue to allow the seeds planted in your days at Venango Catholic to bear fruit. As St. Paul instructs us in the Scriptures, whatever you do, do it in the name of the Lord. Give thanks to the Lord for the opportunities he provided you at VC through the generous support of benefactors, family, and friends. May the Lord take those seeds planted in your life at VC and bring forth from them a harvest rich in justice and grace, a harvest thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold. May God bless you with the gifts of His peace."

- Bishop Trautman

Being a part of the Viking Connections was like pulling out an old, worn, and familiar photo album. I am so thankful that I had the opportunity to remember, and I am just as interested in your memories. I encourage you all to share your memories, the news about your lives, any events that you're planning with this old, worn, and familiar family. May this letter find you all happy and healthy, and I hope that we'll hear from you soon.

Where are we now?

I spoke with Danielle Karg Empson about the multi-level class reunion held last year at VC. The class of 1996 hosted a reunion for the classes of 1994 - 1997. Faculty, staff, and friends were also invited.

They started with mass at the chapel in the high school. The readings were done by Adam Ladaika, Sarah Ladaika Marcelo, and Danielle Karg Empson. Fr. Jay Schultz and Fr. Bill O'Brien were the celebrants.

After mass there was a picnic in the cafeteria, with a lot of joking about the name change that our school has gone through since they had attended!

A formal reunion was held later at the Quality Inn at Franklin. There were some games to raise money for the event, along with dancing and a general good time! There was a slide show with pictures from high school along with current photos. The fight song and alma mater were sung, and the speakers for the event were Adam Ladaika and Brad Collins.

Danielle said that the hope is to hold the next reunion in another five years instead of ten. If you can't wait that long however, you can reminisce at the reunion website!

<http://www.vchsclassof1996.com>

Please visit our website! <http://www.vchs.us>

A Letter from the Director of Development

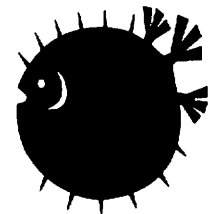
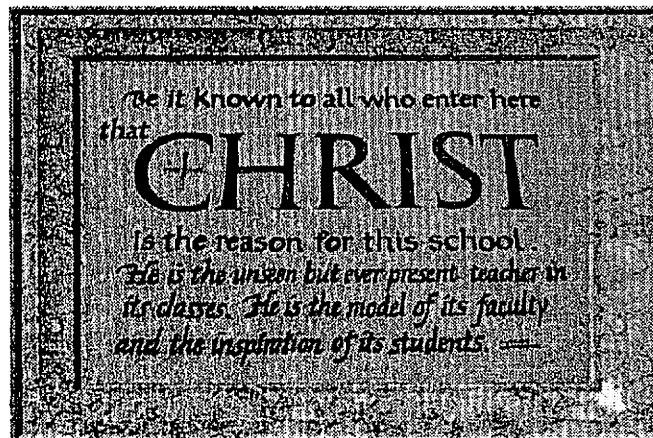
It is my pleasure to be able to write to you today. My name is Tina McMahon and I am the newly hired Director of Development for the Venango County Catholic Schools. My position was created when the three Catholic schools in Venango County, St. Patrick Elementary School, St. Stephen Elementary School, and Venango Catholic High School came together as a united group. The purpose for coming together is to continue to build strong bridges connecting the two elementary schools and VCHS. We recognize more and more the importance of Catholic education as a pre-K through 12 system that will serve the Oil City, Franklin, and surrounding areas. As a united group, there is much more we can accomplish. For example, we can more easily approach businesses about Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit program that is available them, apply for grants, and combine our resources to benefit one another. We are striving to make sure Catholic education will always remain a choice in Venango County.

This has been an exciting year for me. I have enjoyed learning some the history of Venango Catholic and am thrilled for my son who will be a freshman next year. I am so thankful for the benefactors that help support VC. Knowing that your annual gift is a "gift that keeps on giving" hopefully has an affect on you. It is your gift that helps to keep Venango Catholic a viable choice in our area.

We face the continual challenge of connecting our faith to the world around us, especially in a society that is often so alarmingly secular. Our young men and women are surrounded by so many negative influences. At Venango Catholic, students are given the opportunity to express, question, and talk about their faith. We are providing a safe, supportive environment so they will be able to make wise choices about their future.

Catholic education benefits the entire community, providing a Christian education to Catholic and Non-Catholic students alike. VCHS test scores are consistently higher than those of the state average. The graduation rate from our school is 100%. More than 90% of our students go on to post-secondary education. We can be proud of our students here at Venango Catholic.

I am honored to be a part of the VC family and will continue to do my part to keep the flame of faith alive in the hallways of Venango Catholic High School. Remember, your investment will bear dividends for years to come!



Fish Fry Dinner's
A VC tradition!

Go Fish!

The passing of Lent each year brings with it another VC tradition—the fish fry! Every year the fish fry's help to generate money for Venango Catholic—and they are also just a lot of fun! I think that every VC alumni over the past twelve years has a story about washing dishes, folding napkins, or clearing tables.

When I spoke with Monica Moore, I was surprised to find that the fish fry's that started in 1991 or '92 were not the original fish fry's. The original fish fry was cooked in the home ec room and was served in the library!

This year marked the most successful fish fry's to date, serving between 430-480 dinners in an hour and forty five minutes. They used approximately 1800lbs of fish, 1000lbs of french fries, over 1000 baked potatoes, and over 100lbs of coleslaw. Tartar sauce, sour cream, and sugar packets number in the thousands!

Monica said that her favorite part of the fish fry is the people who come back week after week, year after year.

The fish fry grosses around \$18,000, and expenses run around \$10,000-\$11,000.

Over the years, the money raised at the fish fry's has bought riding lawn mowers for the school, refurbished the computer room, bought draperies for the library, rewired the kitchen, bought new tables and chairs for the cafeteria, repaired buses, bought sports uniforms, sports equipment, and remodeled parts of the gym—just to name a few!

Thanks again to all of the volunteers who help with the fish fry - see you all next year!

Recent Accomplishments:

- VCHS is fully accredited by the Commission on Secondary Schools of the Middle States Association and our curriculum is in line with the Pennsylvania and Diocesan (Catholic Diocese of Erie) standards.
- We offer general education classes as well as Advanced Placement (AP) classes in Biology, Calculus, and English. 2006 graduates Harrison Zacherl and James Marshall received the designation of AP scholar by the College Board in recognition of their exceptional achievement on the college-level Advanced Placement Program (AP) Exams. They completed three or more AP examinations with grades of 3 or higher.
- Our relationship with the Venango Campus of Clarion University continues to grow as our students have the opportunity to take college credit classes at the campus through the Jump Start Program and the Dual-Enrollment Program.
- VCHS runs on the block scheduling method of four courses each semester. With the ability to run 80 minute classes we believe our students have the time and flex to increase their learning potential, especially in the areas of Science (Lab work), English, Mathematics, and Art.
- 90% of VCHS graduates go on to complete a two or four college degree and lead successful, fulfilling lives.
- A successful co-op with Oil City High School has allowed our students to participate in a competitive football, soccer, and track & field. VCHS offers cross-country, golf, boys/girls basketball, boys baseball, girls softball, girls volleyball, and cheerleading on its own.
- For the 2007-2008 school year we are offering the students the opportunity to attend the Venango Technology Center in their Junior and Senior years. This will give our students an opportunity to explore career fields they may feel that they have an interest in.
- Our outreach to the community has grown as our faculty/students are involved in a number of community outreach programs, and we have in place a service hour's program for all our students. Students have the opportunity to receive their hours through the Meals on Wheels program, St. Elizabeth's Center, or participating in the March of Life.

TECHNOLOGY

In 2003 the computer lab was started with 16 computers and a server. It has grown in leaps and bounds from there. In 2004, a grant was obtained to get equipment and text books to add computer applications to the freshman curriculum. SMARTBOARD technology was received through a grant and the lab was expanded to 20 computers. With the help of a Clarion University web class, the VCHS website was born. It was made by the students and is kept current by the students. In 2005, a state funded Palm handheld technology grant was incorporated into the English, Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education courses. Several teachers utilized and evaluated the effectiveness of the palm handheld technology as a teaching tool. The science department used this technology in conjunction with probes to collect and analyze data in classroom labs as well as two field stream studies. Four of the students presented the handheld and web design class at the state conference in Harrisburg that year. To support the technological growth, a Student Technology Assistant program was started. This program allowed students the opportunity to gain on the job technology training. These students under the guidance and instruction of the Technology Coordinator assist teachers with technology, troubleshoot hardware and software problems, and complete technology projects such as web site maintenance and graphics for advertising. The technology Coordinator and two of these students were selected to travel to Hershey for the Pete and C technology conference to present this program to other schools in the state. VCHS is considered a leader in integrating technology across the entire curriculum.

Beginning the 2006-2007 school year, the web design class started designing the website for the Oil City YWCA. There will be a link on the VCHS website (www.vchs.us) at the end of the school year. The students started a radio PODcast that can also be found on the VCHS website. A grant was obtained to purchase a new video and PODcasting station. Wireless internet is now available in every classroom. The use of United Streaming in the classroom has helped an already top notch program become more diversified. In February, 2007 Bridey Shawgo (Junior) was a finalist out of 400 entries in the Graphic Logo Design contest for the PETE & C conference in Harrisburg. In April, 2007 Andrea Duque (Senior), Nick Wren (Junior), Shannon Wiskman (Junior) all took 1st place in the Discovery Educator Network National Poster Contest. They swept the high school division of the contest. Currently there are 26 computers in our lab. As you can see, we have a great technology program and continue to be at the forefront.

History In Our Backyard

A documentary film produced, written and edited in the 2006-2007 school year by six VC students debuted the week of the 28th annual Oil Heritage Festival. The film ran continuously on a big screen television in the first-floor lobby of the National Transit Building the week of the festival.

The amateur film team of Jim Barber, Joe Drelick, Anthony Hugar, Joe Janidlo, Alan McBride and Lauren Wilhelm interviewed 15 professionals and historians from Oil City and surrounding areas. They were then matched up with Allegheny College documentary professor Michael Keeley. Once there, the students learned about production elements such as lighting, videography, scriptwriting and editing. 10 trips to Allegheny College and seven-and-a-half hours of video footage turned into a slick, professional-quality 17.5 minute film.

The documentary was filmed at several historic locations throughout Venango and Crawford counties including: Drake Well Museum, Oil City's National Transit Building and alongside the whirling and hissing sounds of independent oil producer Bill Huber's pumping rigs in Oleopolis.

The artist-in-residence program and project was made possible through the support of the Erie Arts Council and state funds received through State Representative Scott Hutchinson.

Their documentary charts the uses of oil by Native Americans and Col. Edwin Drake's fortuitous drilling in a small piece of ground near Titusville, meandering through the populations and industries that were born from Drake's 1859 spark that lighted the modern oil industry.

The team recently won 1st place in the Westminster College's annual History Day competition. An article in the March 29, 2007 edition of *The Derrick* stated, "VC team takes top honors at History Day competitions. The students' film on local history was a big hit with the judges - all college professors."

The article goes on to say that the VC students won first place and rave reviews from the panel of judges. The judges at Westminster lavished praise on the Venango Catholic students' documentary, noting the production showed "great use of interviews," "wide research," "good quality video and selection of music."

The filmmakers and "History in Our Backyard" are now entered in the state History Day competition, scheduled for May 16-17 at Penn State.



WE CONGRATULATE THE FOLLOWING STUDENTS:

The following students have received awards this year:

Renee Wolbert (Senior) - 1st place Gannon Poetry Contest (over 750 entries)

Shannon Wiskman (Junior) - Honorable Mention Gannon Poetry Contest

Maria Spadaro (Junior)/Adriene Neideritter (Sophomore) - 4th place Science Olympiad Competition

Anthony Hugar (Senior)/Alan McBride (Senior)/Jim Barber (Junior)/Joe Drelick (Junior)/Joe Janidlo (Junior)/

Lauren Wilhelm ('06) - 1st place History Contest

Bridey Shawgo (Junior) - Finalist Pete & C Logo design contest (out of 400 entries)

Andrea Duque (Senior)/Nick Wren (Junior)/Shannon Wiskman (Junior) - 1st place Discovery Educator Network National Poster Contest

Anthony Hugar (Senior) - 2nd place American Legion Award

Cory Hartzell ('06) - Eagle Scout Award April 22, 2007

Paige Kleinfelder (Freshman) - 2nd place Franklin Historical Society Essay Contest

Brianna Snow (Freshman) - 1st place team for Not So Trivial Pursuit at Youngstown State University Lit Festival



2006 National Honor Society Inductees

Anthony Hugar (Senior)
Joseph Maleski (Junior)
Eric Guth (Junior)
Skye Galey (Junior)
Christopher Delaney (Sophomore)

Dillon Hoeft (Senior)
Julia Zacherl (Sophomore)
Adrienne Neideritter (Sophomore)
Christopher Paskie (Senior)
Joseph Brooker (Sophomore)



Alumni Notes

I realize at this point most of these notes have a little mold on them. Please start sending in updates for the next edition of *The Viking Connection*!

Sr. Jerome Eustace, OSB, '43, Wrote that from June 23, 2005 to June 23, 2006, our OSB community celebrated 150 years of service to the Diocese of Erie.

Teaching has always been one of our main ministries; St. Joe's, St. Stephen's, and VCHS have benefited from our dedication. I have been a member of this community since January 1944. This year (2004) I will be a 60th Jubilee celebrant.

Pat & Mary Stone Fletcher, '67 are still living in Denver, CO. Mary is working as a circulating nurse in the operating room of a local hospital, and Pat is still flying for United Airlines. Their oldest son James is working as a property manager, Julia was a senior and Dan a sophomore at Colorado School of Mines (engineering school) and Barbara was a sophomore at Mullen Hirsch School—A Christian Brothers School in Denver.

Mary A. Parker, '70 wrote that her son, Nicholas Parker Palocios, was selected for the USA Select Team in ice hockey. He played in the Czech Republic in April '05 against teams from The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Finland, and England. Team USA was undefeated!

Dan Goodman, '65, wrote that he enjoyed seeing many old friends at the multi-year reunion at Yesterday's. He is still working, but the big news are his new twin grandchildren, Henry and Julia, born May 30th, 2005.

James J. Cihon, '64, retired in June 2004 after teaching math for 35+ years at Meadville Senior High School. He and his wife are enjoying traveling—Europe for the summer of 2004, and Alaska for the summer of 2005!

Abigail Collins, '98, was due to graduate with her doctorate of pharmacy in May 2005.

Joseph Burkett, '95, and Aletha (Hepler) Burkett, '94, live in Emlenton, PA with their three small children—Jude, Cecilia, and Magdalene. They have started a maple syrup business—Old State Farms. Though saddened by the news of Fr. Weibel's death, they say they retain fond memories of their time at VC with Fr. Weibel as a teacher and a coach.

Patricia Weidle Fesenmyer, '42, wanted to share a memory of Sr. Mary David. She graduated in 1942, one year after Sr. Mary David, and was reminded of how proud and boastful she was of St. Joseph's School, and then for Venango Christian.

Elizabeth Warcholic-Fossey, '67, continues as a psychologist in private practice, doing primarily neuropsych evaluations. She also consults for the Missouri Department of Corrections. Her daughter Brittany was finishing her degree at Minnesota State University. Her daughter Seella was beginning high school at St. Pius X H.S. in Kansas City, MO. She stays busy with work, two dogs (one is psychotic), gardening (flowers only), reading, and psych consultations with neighbors and friends!

Tim Frick, '58, said FYI - For all of us "older" and long removed from the Oil City area,

the "Connection" kept us better connected. I miss it! His daughter Emily was attending the University of Fla., pursuing her degree in Forensic Psychology, with the goal being her Masters.

Dolores Sonoski Bettcher, '59, Her daughter, Susan, was due to graduate from the OSU college of medicine, and was set to begin her residency in family medicine at the University of Michigan in July '05. Her daughter Catherine was due to complete her residency in family medicine at the University of Michigan in June '05.

Ron Dolecki, '63, writes that he retired from the CIA in January, 2004, after 35 years of government service. He is currently a consultant for a private company - Boaz-Allen-Hamilton - working on counter-terrorism issues.

John Hopwood, '59, retired from US Airways in Indiana, and is now living on a small farm in Indiana. He has six children, thirteen grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

W. Russ McDaid, '85, resides in Lebanon, PA, with wife Terri and daughters Rose and Grace. Russ is the Vice President for Public Policy at PANPHA PA's statewide association for nursing homes. His wife Terri teaches 3rd grade in the Cornwall-Lebanon school district.

Daniel J. Drozdo, '64, wrote that he really enjoyed the class reunion in 2004. Friends are like fine wines - they get better with age. He often reflects on the times shared at VCHS as fulfilling and rewarding. He is proud to have been a part of her heritage.

Mary Kay McKinney, '79, writes that she is married to Daryl McKinney and they celebrated their 25th anniversary in Feb 2006. She is working as a registered nurse with the Veteran's Administration. Her oldest daughter Stacey is also an RN, and is serving with the U.S. Airforce in Wright Patterson AFB in Ohio. Their daughter Kristi graduated from West Virginia University and majored in exercise physiology. Their youngest daughter Julie is attending Kent State University in Ohio and is majoring in interior design. Mary Kay notes that she is truly saddened at the passing of Fr. John Weibel. Many fond memories of those "basketball days" will live in her heart forever.

Also, after celebrating the 25th class reunion in 2004, she is hoping to organize a 30th class reunion (perhaps with the classes of '78/80). If anyone is interested, please contact her!

Joan Fletcher, '01, and Josh Pierce, '99 are planning to marry in July of 2008 at St. Michael's Church in Fryburg, PA. Josh is a 2003 graduate of the University of Pittsburgh and is currently attending graduate school in the pursuit of the Ph.D in organic chemistry. Joan is a 2005 graduate of the University of Pittsburgh and is currently working for Merch and Co. in Rahway, NJ.



*"He who walks
with the wise
grows wise."
- Prov. 13:20*

If you have your own updates, please share them with the class! You can either forward a note to the school:

Venango Catholic High School
c/o The Viking Connections
1505 West 1st Street
Oil City, PA 16301

Or you can feel free to send me an email at
jessicalnelson@hotmail.com

We would love to hear from you! Also please check the VC website for more updatesó we are hoping to add to the alumni page very soon!

News/Changes (marriage, birth, anniversary, special recognitions, career advancements, children, grandchildren, etc.)

Name _____ Phone _____ Class Year _____

Address _____

News you would like to share _____

Venango Catholic High School
1505 West First Street
Oil City, PA 16301



VENANGO CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

A Regional School of the Diocese of Erie

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Greetings! As I finish my eighth year as Headmaster at Venango Catholic High School, I look back with pride as to how we have grown and look forward with hope as we continue to embrace our mission to educate our young people in light of the Gospel message. As you know, VCHS has been serving Venango County and the surrounding region for almost 45 years! When you add the number of years St. Joseph High School had its doors opened, it is clear that the presence of Catholic education has made a profound difference in the lives of so many people for such a long period of time. Catholic schools offer superior academic challenges *for* their students and accountability *from* their students. Along with this, Catholic schools offer the kind of moral and religious instruction that I believe is most necessary for the development of those in the teenage years preparing to step out into the next chapter of their lives when they will be called more and more to stand on their own.

My purpose in writing to you at this time is two-fold. First, I ask that you read the content in the enclosed newsletter. We believe that by bringing back the Viking Connections Newsletter a much needed line of communication will be restored with you, the alumni of St. Joseph School and VCHS. Our goal is to share with you the many good things that are happening at VC today as we want you to feel "connected" to what we hope will always be considered a special part of your life - your high school years. In this newsletter you will see by the curriculum offered that the students at Venango Catholic High School are indeed receiving a top-notch education that is preparing them well for their future. You will see that our students are being introduced to educational opportunities that go well beyond the classroom. You will see by the numerous awards received by our students that VCHS has much to shout about. As Headmaster, I am proud of our accomplishments as a faculty, student body, and community. VCHS does make a difference in our community! Many people, from our Diocesan Bishop Donald Trautman to the Pastors in our area to a dedicated staff to committed friends of the school work very hard to see to it that Venango Catholic remains a viable option for the young people in our area. A good example of this would be our annual Lenten Fish Fry dinners. Those who have had the opportunity to attend a recent Lenten Fish Fry can attest to the spirit that comes forth from the VC community. We are who we are...dedicated, committed people trying to do our best to keep the halls and the values of Venango Catholic High School alive and well because we truly believe this is God's call for us in this given space and time.

This leads to the second purpose for writing to you...to ask for your support. Venango Catholic High School is very fortunate to have so many grateful and generous alumni and friends who make it a point every year to support the mission of our school. Supporting VCHS is a real and personal investment in the future of many young men and women. The future is not abstract. It is educating and preparing young men and women right now! I feel a sense of excitement when I see first hand the curriculum to which our students are exposed on a daily basis. I feel a sense of joy when I watch teachers and students interacting and the "light bulb" goes on. I am humbled when I see students given the opportunity to express, question, and dialogue about their faith. Your annual gift directly affects the quality and strength of our program, provides more opportunities

for our students, and develops our faculty in ways that make a tangible difference in educating our young people.

On an annual basis, the cost to educate a high school student here at Venango Catholic High School is \$6,500.00. Our tuition for the 2006-2007 school year was \$3,300.00. As in the case in many areas, our tuition can only be raised so far and the Diocese and local parishes can only find so much money to offset our expenses. Venango Catholic feels the pressure of balancing the costs-expenses scenario most acutely as we have no dedicated parish to which our school is tied. Each year presents itself with new challenges and continued hope. I believe we meet those challenges with a committed spirit. I believe we are working diligently along with the elementary parish schools to foster collaboration to insure a Pre-K through 12 Catholic school system for the area. I believe in who we are and what we are doing. I only ask that you believe in us as well by responding positively to this year's annual appeal. I hope and pray that what we are doing will compel you to be as generous as your means allow. Our goal this year is to raise \$50,000.00. Your gift is tax deductible and gives you the opportunity to enjoy future success stories. Enclosed is a 2007 annual appeal envelope that allows you to indicate exactly how you would like your gift to be used.

I know that all of our hard work is paying huge dividends when I talk to the kids and visit with the many recent alumni who come back to share their lives with us. It makes me happy to be part of the VC tradition. I hope you will join with us to help keep the flame of faith alive in the hallways of Venango Catholic High School. **We need your help NOW!**

Thank you for the time in reading this letter.

Peace,

Fr. John

COURSES OFFERED AT VENANGO CATHOLIC

Theology *Scripture *Morality *Church History *Senior Theology Philosophy Faith & Philosophy Apologetics Campus Ministry	English *Lit/Comp 1 *Lit/Comp 2 *American Lit Honors American Lit *English Lit AP English Lit Creative Writing Newspaper Literary Experience	Science *Biology Chemistry 1 & 2 AP Biology Earth Science Environmental Science Physics Anatomy & Physiology Competition Team	Phys. Ed Health *Health Consumer Science Foreign Language Spanish I, II, III, & IV Latin	Mathematics Basic Math *Algebra 1 *Geometry Algebra 2 Pre-Calculus Algebra 3/Trig Statistics Calculus AP Calculus Consumer Math
Social Studies *Ancient Civilizations *Modern European History *US History *Principles of Democracy Psychology	Library Science Fine Arts Art I, II, III, IV Handbells Theatre Arts Photography	Business/Technology Computer Programming 1 & 2 Computer Applications 1 & 2 Accounting Technology Assistant 1 & 2 Web Design & Yearbook		

***Required courses**

PLEASE NOTE: Course availability is based upon enrollment; therefore, not all courses are offered every year.

We also offer dual enrollment/Jump Start in approved courses through Clarion University to Juniors & Seniors who have a 2.86 QPA overall.