


# suburban life

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**La Salle College High School** fosters a culture of community, connection, and opportunity to help each student become "the best he can be." page 14



# Belonging and **Becoming**

**La Salle College High School** fosters a culture of community, connection, and opportunity to help each student become **“the best he can be.”**

## **“WHAT MAKES LA SALLE COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL SPECIAL?”**

Brother James L. Butler, FSC, pauses for a brief reflective moment when asked this question. Once he begins, however, there is a sense he could talk forever.

“The message to the boys from Day One is, get involved, find a place to make yourself better, and develop your passion,” says Brother James, serving his 10th year as president of the independent, Roman Catholic, college preparatory school for young men in Wyndmoor. “And that’s for all of our kids; there is no alienation here. At our size, about 1,080 students, we’re able to offer an incredible breadth of programming in terms of academics, fine arts, technology, athletically, extracurriculars, and all without straining our faculty.”

Brother James suggests much of the credit goes to La Salle’s “investment in a large and talented faculty,” referring to a 9-to-1 student-to-faculty ratio. These men and women help

students hone their talents and develop new interests, enabling them to truly shine.

“Our main goal here at La Salle,” he adds, “is to attract people who feel that our mission accords with their sense of self.”

La Salle has been committed to that philosophy since its founding in 1858 by the Christian Brothers. Enlivened by the tradition of Lasallian education developed by St. John Baptist De La Salle, founder of the Christian Brothers, the administration and staff are dedicated to developing each student to his fullest potential—intellectually, spiritually, socially, and physically.

“The words I use are engagement and connection when it comes to La Salle,” says James E. Fyke, who in June became the school’s principal. “The boys are engaged in what we offer, not just an activity, but to people. They connect to people here—Lasallians touching hearts. And that can happen in the classroom, but



*Here at La Salle, students feel a sense of belonging.*

—Brother James L. Butler, FSC, president of La Salle College High School



more of that connection is in the forming of bonds and friends on our service trips and in clubs and on teams.”

With a faculty of 121 and total staff of 150, La Salle College High School provides a rigorous college preparatory curriculum comprising more than 158 courses in nine academic areas, including 27 AP course offerings, all in grades nine through 12. The school also offers 61 clubs and student organizations, many of which have earned national, state, regional, and local awards. Boys can develop their physical well-being and self confidence in 47 athletic teams in 19 different sports. A comprehensive music and fine arts programs promote creativity and a sense of individual responsibility.

“Our students find their passions here,” adds Maura Diehl, La Salle’s assistant director of college counseling. “They find things that maybe they were not expecting when they got here.”

As an employee, as well as the mother of two La Salle graduates, Diehl would know.

“They both came in and did their own thing, which was great,” she says of her sons. “They’re similar students, but with different interests. Funny thing, as parents we think we know what our kids will gravitate to, but they sometimes surprise us. Our younger son got interested in art here, something he had never shown an interest in. He now has a website about art and does art as a side gig. Part of that was from me talking to him when he was a junior. He said he wanted to take six AP courses. I said, ‘Really? Is the Ivy League your

goal?’ He said no. So, I said, ‘Let’s use another part of your brain while you’re here.’ Part of that came from the offerings here at La Salle.”

The more engaged a boy is at La Salle, she adds, the better he tends to do later in life.

“La Salle helps provide that connection,” she says. “We foster independence.”

La Salle’s sterling reputation is evidenced by the fact that students chose to attend the school from 84 elementary schools and 65 ZIP codes—and China. Upon graduation, their education and personal growth experiences realized at La Salle led members of the Class of 2021 to attend 99 colleges and universities in 25 states, the District of Columbia, and abroad. That class claimed 84 National Honor Society members, and nine National Merit Scholarship finalists.

While La Salle’s over-arching educational and extracurricular brilliance is indisputable, its specialness is rooted in distinctive pockets where students can develop their passions.

“I always like to refer to La Salle as a community of communities amid the ecosystem,” notes Brother James. “There are a number of smaller niche ecosystems here. Boys don’t become one of 1,080. Rather, they become one of a group of 40 who are passionate about robotics, or one of 60 who enjoy running, or one of 240 who enjoy music, or one of 35 who enjoy drama. Here at La Salle, you’ll find a close community of people with similar interests. Students feel a sense of belonging.”

Very rarely does a La Salle student utter the phrase, “I am the only one.” Brother James suggests students almost always find others

who share their interests and experiences.

“Guys come in here and, because we have all these programs, maybe they’ll find something they never dreamed of doing,” Fyke adds. “A boy I taught years ago was a football player, a running back. A rugby coach was starting a team and was pestering him to join. After debating whether to join, he gave it a shot. A few years later, I’m watching him playing in a national rugby tournament on ESPN. So, how close was he to not doing that unless La Salle offered him that opportunity?”

In every classroom at La Salle College High School, there is a motto: “Boys will be boys, but La Salle boys will be gentlemen.” And educated. And inquisitive. And well rounded. And community minded, with a commitment to others and God. And prepared to explore the world.

So, what makes La Salle special?

“La Salle is not just a high school, not just classes,” Brother James says. “It’s a culture of competitive excellence and mutual support enlivened by faith. La Salle transforms the expectations of who a boy might become and who are the people he might want to have around him. We are committed to finding ways to make each student the best he can be.” ■

## → La Salle College High School

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