

St. Francis-St. Hedwig School History
Established 2011

Our history as a school is just beginning, and our future is bright and clear. We are a newly merged school of two educational institutions that have a rich history behind them. While both schools enjoyed separate facilities, and relative independence, there were times in our history that the two schools cooperated in both academics and athletics to build a strong bridge between the schools and offer a quality Catholic education to students in Naugatuck and surrounding communities. Today, we are a stronger community of students, staff, and parents under one roof and united in our efforts to build new traditions under the patronage of both St. Francis and St. Hedwig.

St. Francis of Assisi School was established in 1897 on Meadow Street under Reverend James Sheridan who recognized the need for a Catholic school to meet the needs of the large number of immigrants settling in the Naugatuck valley. In 1899, the cornerstone of a new and larger school was laid, and on September 3, 1900, the doors of the new school were opened under the education guidance of the Sisters of Mercy who staffed the school until 1975.

As the school became more expensive to operate with a full lay faculty, The St. Francis School Foundation was established to ensure the continuation of Catholic education in the parish. A strong Foundation was built due to the generosity of public donations and the support of the parish community.

One of the hallmarks of St. Francis of Assisi School was its dedication to service programs to benefit the Naugatuck community. This opened students to the responsibilities of caring for the citizens of their world and supporting them in their needs. In turn, this created a cadre of young people who put their Catholic faith into witness to create a better person in a better world.

St. Hedwig School opened in Naugatuck in 1914 under the leadership of the second pastor Reverend Paul Piechocki as a four-room school with an enrollment of 200 students. The school was first staffed by Felician Sisters. Faculty has also included Bernadine Sisters, the Daughters of Mary of the Immaculate Conception, and eventually, a lay faculty.

In January 1992, St. Hedwig School, under the direction of its pastor, Reverend Joseph Parzymies, began a consolidation process with St. Francis School in Naugatuck. St. Hedwig School would offer a Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade program, and each year sent its 6th grade students to St. Francis School. This was first done in June 1992 when the older students transferred to St. Francis School for the 1992-1993 school year. In September 1992, St. Hedwig School began a Pre-Kindergarten program for 3 and 4 year olds, and an all day Kindergarten program, and continued regular education programs for grades 1 through 5.

In 1995, plans for expanding St. Hedwig School back to eighth grade began. In September 1999 Reverend Stephen Bzdyra became pastor. Within weeks, Reverend Bzdyra had Archdiocesan permission to expand the school.

As a new school, the rich traditions of both schools are being blended into one strong, effective, Catholic institution with its goal to further enrich its students to become people who put their Catholic faith and beliefs into action and positively influence the world around them.