

Happy Friday! Yesterday, I was privileged to attend the MANS (Michigan Association of Nonpublic Schools) Public Policy Day in Lansing, where I met with our local Representative John Reilly. John is a personal friend of mine, an active member of our parish, and an intensely prayerful and faithful man. We are lucky to have such an ally in Lansing. I carpooled with another great friend of St. Joseph School (and of myself), Mr. Jon Myers – we had a great time together!

As luck would have it, our School Improvement Committee met this week, and I was able to share with them what I gleaned from the Middle School Improvement task force meeting. I conveyed what a constructive meeting it was, and how many of the themes discussed were themes we could work on schoolwide. They were:

- The new Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS),
- Communication Improvement,
- Fostering positive relationships, and
- Smooth transitions between grade levels.

For each of these areas, I've been thinking and praying about practical ways to put these themes into action:

- I've begun asking our teachers their current familiarity with the NCSS's so we can begin finding appropriate training through Oakland Schools or other avenues, and just today I was privileged to attend the Michigan Association of Middle School Educators (MAMSE) conference in Swartz Creek, where I saw a presentation on an elementary school implementing the NCSS in exciting ways. Our goal is to make sure each teacher is properly trained with these newly adopted Standards. These standards dovetail perfectly with our goal to add a strong STEM program to our school.
- Also at the MAMSE conference, I attended a session on use of Google Classroom, which is one product schools use to both communicate and manage learning (what we currently do with Schoology). We may be forced to move on from Schoology, due to some issues it has with Powerschool, so it was exciting to see a strong possibility to replace it in action today. Regardless of which product we use, our goal is to have a uniform communication policy so all our communications are consistent.
- I've been thinking over the year what a good theme for our staff retreat in May might be, and I think I've landed on "Relationships." I told our staff when I first met them in August, that my educational philosophy is built on the Three R's – rigor, relevance, and relationships. Instruction should be rigorous, classroom activities should be relevant to the students' lives, and the foundation for both of these things is solid, positive relationships between students and teachers. Based on my observations in just the short time I've been here, our school is ahead of the curve in these areas in many ways, and it's exciting to think how much further we can go.
- I've talked with some other educators I know about making for smooth transitions between grades, and I've learned a lot. We've made some changes to the way 6<sup>th</sup> graders experience Specials classes, which I think will help the transition process, and we've already begun talking about our 6<sup>th</sup> grade orientation proceedings. I had a chance to talk to the 5<sup>th</sup> graders today to explain the Specials classes, middle school in general, and answer their questions. I plan to do the same with the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders soon.

All in all, I'm very excited to continue to help facilitate our school's growth and becoming the best version of itself.

Please remember that re-registration begins Tuesday next week – the sooner you register, the better for our school, as it helps us with budgeting and hiring purposes, so get those registrations and fees in quickly!

Next week, several teachers, staff, and myself will attend the MACUL (Michigan Association of Computer Users in Learning) Conference in Detroit. I will be out of the building Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday; several teachers will be out Thursday and Friday. I'm very nervous to be leaving for so long, so encourage your little ones to be on their best behavior!

Finally, don't forget about tonight's Fish Fry in Myrick Hall! My family thoroughly enjoyed it last week!