



# Our Lady Queen of Apostles Regional Catholic School

## The Catholic School in Center Moriches

2 St. John Place + Center Moriches, NY 11934 + 631.878.1033 + [www.olqany.org](http://www.olqany.org)

25 July 2019  
Feast of St. James

Dear OLQA Families:

I hope the summer is going well with a lot of time to adjust a different pace while also working on keeping our minds, hearts and spirits focused in preparation for a great year ahead.

I want to let you know about some new and exciting things that are happening at OLQA in the weeks and year ahead.

**Building and Grounds.** When you come back to school, you'll notice some more improvements to our buildings and grounds including some additions to Turpin Field as well as our new floor in the Auditorium. Entrance ways are being rebuilt, classrooms being painted and, as always, some behind the scenes work is well underway.

**Music and the Arts.** To tell you the truth, I do not sing. I played the clarinet in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade. It wasn't pretty. As a student, a teacher and an administrator, I see the need to expose young people – especially in the intermediate and middle school years - to the arts. You saw a bit of this push in the 2018-19 school year both in classes where we could and with the incredible production of *Seussical, Jr.* I heard from a number of students things like, "I didn't know I could do this!"

I want to inform you about some changes in our Band/Chorus program. Effective September 2019, each student in Grades 4-8 will participate in Band and/or Chorus. **THIS IS NOT OPTIONAL.** We have formally entered into a partnership with Jimmy Osborne Music, Inc. to organize our new band and chorus program. Here are some important highlights – **THERE ARE A LOT OF THEM SO READ CAREFULLY:**

- Band and Chorus will both take place during 9<sup>th</sup> period one day per week and be worked into the schedules for Grades 4-8. (Grades 4-5 on one day, Grades 6-8 on the other)
  - It will no longer be an after-school program. I hope this will allow even more students to participate in the band program.
- Each student in Grades 4 -8 will need to choose to be part of the Band and/or the Chorus.
  - Students **MUST** attend the Christmas Concert on Wednesday, December 18, 2019 and the Spring Concert on Thursday, May 23, 2020.
- Instrument lessons will take place during the day **by instrument.**
  - Students will miss a period per week for instrument lessons. This period will rotate so that they do not miss the same class.
  - As you know, academics come first. If a student is struggling academically, he/she will miss their instrument lesson.
  - Students are responsible to make up all work missed in their academic classes.

- The fee for students who sign up for Band is \$65.00 per month. This includes, on average, 3 to 4 small group lessons (with other students playing the same instrument) and 3 to 4 large group band practices per month. All fees are paid directly to Jimmy Osborne Music, Inc.
- OLQA students who wish to take additional lessons at Jimmy Osborne Music will have their registration fee waived.
- A sign-up form is enclosed for the band program. Students **MUST LIST THREE CHOICES**. Every effort will be made to accommodate your first choice. Please complete as quickly as possible so we can begin to create the appropriate music groups. Forms are due no later than August 22, 2019.
- Rental opportunities are available through Jimmy Osborne Music, Inc. You are not required to rent your instrument from Jimmy Osborne Music.
- This is a great opportunity for our school and for our students.

**Administration and Faculty Updates.** I want to introduce to you the new faculty for the 2019-20 school year (as of 7/25/19):

- **Mr. Joseph Conklin** – *Social Work Intern*
- **Mrs. Gina DePaola** – *Mission Mathematics, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Mathematics, REACH Project co-coordinator*
- **Ms. Margaret Frodell** – *Spanish*
- **Mrs. Helen Parisi** – *Art/School Support Services*
- **Ms. Danielle Miller** – *Mission Humanities (ELA and Social Studies)*
- **Mr. Javier Thompson** – *Physical Education*

Many of you have asked about me and my time at OLQA. The truth? The original plan was for me to leave in June 2019. After consultation with the School Board and the Superintendent of Schools during the school year, I will return for the 2019-20 school year. I have found this past year challenging and overwhelming but also incredibly life-giving. Returning to educational administration has been a blessing for me in many ways. I have loved coming to know the students and families and serving you to the best of my ability. Where I have failed you, I am sorry.

I also must be honest. The work of carrying out two full time jobs – Principal of a Catholic elementary school and the Pastor of one of the larger parishes in the Diocese – is not sustainable long term. I feel that both the school and the parish are not getting the attention they deserve. (If you know me, you know it is hard for me to admit this!)

Here is the plan I proposed to the Education Department and the School Board and it has been approved.

- Mrs. Dawn Waller, in addition to serving as the main teacher for 5<sup>th</sup> grade, will serve as the Assistant Principal in 2019-20. As the Assistant Principal, Mrs. Waller will assist with many of the day to day operations of the school, including working with parents and families and representing OLQA in coordination with the Education Department of the Diocese.

- We will carry out an extensive search for a new principal in the Winter of 2020 with the expectation that a new principal will be announced at that time. He/she will begin at the end of June 2020.
  - This will allow for a smooth transition in leadership. If it goes well, you won't even recognize the transition happened!
- At the end of June 2020, I will return to my full-time work as the Pastor of St. John the Evangelist R.C. Church and will remain as the Executive Pastor of Our Lady Queen of Apostles. I believe in OLQA and want to remain a part of all that is happening here.

One other change I have proposed to the School Board regards Mrs. Halversen. I proposed that we change Mrs. Halversen's title from Office Manager to Administrative Assistant. I think you would agree that Mrs. Halversen manages more than the office. She assists and manages so many parts of our school's life, even the Principal when needed. We have many reasons to be grateful to Mrs. Halversen for all she has done for us!

You know the title of Our Lady Queen of Apostles comes from the Acts of the Apostles (1:14). Mary is gathered with the disciples after Jesus' Ascension praying for the Spirit to come. My prayer is that this is one way the Lord is calling us to grow as a community of faith in the year ahead. My other prayer is that you're reading this letter and want to get into our summer gift card raffle – let me know! Let's pray for the Spirit to help us discern well.

**220 by 2020.** Please continue to share the good word about all that is happening here at OLQA! We do have some room in a few grades and a waiting list for others. Encourage family members, friends, co-workers, even total strangers 😊 to consider the Catholic School in Center Moriches!

**Feast of St. James.** Today, the Church celebrates the Feast of St. James. One of practices associated with St. James is the Camino de Santiago (or the walk of St. James). It is an incredibly spiritual experience of walking along with others sometimes up to 30 days to the tomb of St. James. (Google Camino de Santiago after reading this letter!) The walk often involves walking with people you don't know, times of silence, opportunities for quiet prayer. I have not done this (yet) but friends of mine who have said it is life changing.

Today, think about the journey you have been on in these days. How has God been a part of it? Where is he calling you and your family? Who has he placed on your path? Where do you hope God will lead you?

Let's continue to pray for our school community (remember one Hail Mary a day) and, if you can, please say a prayer for me.

Sincerely,



Reverend John Sureau, Ph.D., LCSW  
Principal