



CATHOLIC SCHOOL CHRONICLE

MAY 2015

FROM THE DESK OF THE SUPERINTENDENT . . .

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- DIOCESAN SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT** 1
- PEER COACHING** 2
- MESSAGE FROM—OFFICE CAMPUS MINISTRIES** 2
- RESOURCES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** 3
- UPCOMING EVENTS** 4

May is the month of Our Lady. We honor Mary as the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. During this month, we crown Mary as the Queen of Heaven. It is also the month that we honor our own mothers on Mother’s Day. We look to our earth mothers to provide us with comfort and support when we are struggling with problems. We turn to Mary, our blessed Mother, to help us in so many ways and be with us at the hour of our death.

The liturgical calendar for May includes the solemnities of the Ascension of Our Lord, Pentecost Sunday and the Most Holy Trinity. Some of our children receive the sacrament of the Eucharist in First Communion and others receive the Holy Spirit in Confirmation.

May is also the month of transition as our academic year ends. Students change grades, move to new schools and graduate from high schools. We have a transition here at the Catholic Schools Office. Dr. Niyah Griffin, Associate Superintendent, is moving with her family to Dallas, Texas. We wish her and her family much happiness as they make new friends and adjust to living in a new community. My prayer for all of you is that the changes and challenges you face will bring you closer to God and that you will find time for reflection and renewal during the summer months. Our newsletter will not be published during June and July but we will greet all of you as the new school year begins in August.

DID YOU KNOW?

These are some additional tips designed to help principals (new and seasoned) fulfill their leadership roles:

- Criticize in private-** You can always praise an employee in public, but save your criticism for a private discussion.
- Don’t be a know-it-all-** If you don’t know the answer, don’t be afraid to say, “I’ll check on this issue and get back with you.” Give yourself time to get it right.
- Make personal connections with your staff-** Take time to really listen. Building a relationship with each one is essential in creating and cultivating your professional learning community.
- Be visible-** extracurricular activities, on the web, in the classrooms, at lunch. Communicate with the entire staff and constantly seek feedback and look to improve yourself and your school.

SimpleK12.com

DIOCESAN SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT . . .

St. John the Baptist Catholic School was established in 1996 dedicated to the spiritual, academic, and physical development of every child that has been entrusted to its care. The school is part of the educational ministry of the parish, serving students in K4 through 8th grade, while there are 4 catholic schools in Madison County; St. John’s is the only Catholic school in the City of Madison. It strives to foster an atmosphere of academic excellence rooted in a solid foundation of Catholic teachings during daily student life.

Saint John’s campus was planned and built in phases. The first phase began as one hallway and the main office, and that was completed in 1996. For the second year, phase one was completed, which doubled the size of the school with the completion of the bottom floor. The next phase was completed in 2002 and provided another wing of middle school classrooms, a cafeteria, youth room, and gymnasium. The current school year marked the completion of another building project to house the prekindergarten program. The two sections of K4 classrooms opened up on the fifth day of school. Room for an additional two sections is ready and available. The entire school building has been, and continues to be, available for use by church sponsored organizations and for the purposes of religious education providing excellent usage of the school building.

In addition to a strong academic program, St. John’s has an even stronger commitment to focusing on Catholic Identity. This effort began with an evening which provided a parent speaker while students participated in faith-based activities in the classroom. Family FAITH Night has grown and transitioned into home activities as well as a Family SERVICE Day. This effort is led by the Pastor, supported by the administration and coordinated by the School Board. As stated by the Mission: St. John’s is committed to Catholic formation and academic excellence, preparing students to be productive citizens and faith filled servants of God.

A NOTE FROM THE ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT. . .

As we come to the end of a successful 2014-2015 academic school year, let's reflect on the rich experiences that we've had. We received extensive training in *Differentiated Instruction*, *Technology Integration*, and were engaged in workshops on *Working with Diverse Students*.

After months of hard work and preparation, we distributed surveys to our stakeholders (parents, teachers, students) to identify trends, strengths, and weaknesses. We examined our schools in the following standards areas: Purpose and Direction, Governance and Leadership, Teaching and Learning, Resources and Support Systems, and Using Results for Continuous Improvement. We analyzed students' performance data from the IOWA tests, Assessment of Catechesis of Religious Education (ACRE), and ACT to discover our areas of notable achievements and areas in need of improvement. Based on this data, we created a plan for the next couple of years to assist us with becoming a premier Catholic school environment for students, teachers, principals, faculty, and staff. We were also recommended by the External Review Team to receive our re-accreditation through the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools (SACS). What a phenomenal year!

PEER COACHING . . .

The Diocese of Birmingham Catholic School District will be exploring peer coaching as a form of professional development. The magic question is, "*How can administrators support peer coaching?*" Just as athletic coaches instruct, train, and tutor players, teachers in peer coaching situations instruct, train, and tutor one another. Administrators can focus this collegial interaction on teachers' individual professional development, on improving school culture, and ultimately improve school effectiveness. The first task is to select an appropriate coaching model. Robert Garmston, professor at California State University, discusses these areas *technical*, *collegial*, *challenge* components, and shares the importance of actively supporting the coaching process.

Technical coaching helps teachers transfer training to classroom practice, while deepening collegiality, increasing professional dialogue, and giving teachers a shared vocabulary to discuss their craft. Technical Coaching generally follows staff development workshops in specific teaching method; the model compares consultants to teachers or teachers to one another. Teachers practicing this model generally will practice new strategies more frequently and develop greater skill, use the new strategies more appropriately, retain more knowledge about the skill, teach new strategies to students and understand their purposes and uses more clearly. Technical coaching assumes that objective feedback given in a nonthreatening and supportive climate can improve teaching performance.

Collegial coaching assumes that teachers acquire and deepen career long habits of self initiated reflecting about their teaching when they have opportunities to develop and practice these skills. The major goals of collegial coaching are to redefine teaching practices, deepen collegiality, increase professional dialogue and to help teachers think more deeply about their work.

In challenge coaching, it helps teams of teachers resolve persistent problems in instructional design or delivery. This model assumes that team problem solving efforts for those who are responsible for carrying out instruction can produce insightful, practical improvements improvement.

Administrators can support Peer Coaching by selecting a coaching model, demonstrate that they value it, provide a focus for coaching activity, provide training for coaches, and model positive coaching behavior.

-Educational Leadership, Robert Garmston

MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF CAMPUS MINISTRY . . .

The Catholic Campus Ministry exists to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the arena of higher education. It addresses the needs of the students, faculty and staff at the 29 institutions of higher learning in the diocese. Contact: Rev. John McDonald, 205-838-8303, or by e-mail at directorofeducation@bhmdiocese.org for more information or assistance. www.bhmdiocese.org



"The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away."

--Anonymous

RESOURCES

As we continue to feed our minds with professional food, think about digesting Baruti Kafele's new book and watch how well we grow professionally. In [*The Principal 50: Critical Leadership Questions for Inspiring Schoolwide Excellence*](#), veteran school administrator Baruti Kafele guides motivated school leaders through 50 self-reflection exercises designed to yield a deeper understanding of the meaning behind the work that they do. If you are looking for thoughtful answers to the myriad questions that accompany the challenges of school leadership at all grade levels and in all environments, this book is for you.

Why do we lead? With this deceptively simple question, Kafele begins a powerful examination of what it takes to make a school community achieve the greatest success in the classroom and beyond.

Along with many other insights, this book shows how best to

- Inspire and motivate students, teachers, and other school staff to approach their work with vigor and purpose;
- Ensure that all students, regardless of color, creed, or origin, are valued and represented in the school culture;
- Focus mission and vision statements to address students' most critical needs and integrate shared values and objectives into the fabric of the school; and
- Engage parents and other community members so that they feel a stake in the school's success.

Brimming with passion, written from the heart, and informed by hard-earned experience, this transformative book is essential reading for principals and other building-level administrators determined to reinvigorate their practice, revitalize their staff, and—most importantly—guarantee the strongest outcomes for students.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Summer Professional Development Opportunities w/ NCEA: Register at www.ncea.org

NCEA New Directions Blended Learning Symposium: June 22-24, 2015

One thing is clear: blended learning is a pedagogically valuable method of instruction that uses online technology to not just supplement, but to enrich and improve the learning process. This conference will enable teachers and school teams to supplement traditional instructional methods while using our faith as a foundation to promote critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity in our students.

Wisdom & Witness Symposium: Digital Discipleship: June 25-27, 2015

The only national gathering for religion teachers, campus ministers, service directors and Catholic high school administrators; Wisdom and Witness is a three-day learning symposium featuring national experts and practitioners convening on matters such as Catholic identity, vocation awareness, social justice, and more. This year's event focuses on the best practices in digital discipleship, enhancing the communication and collaboration skills of our religious educators in teaching the Catholic faith.

Education Law Symposium: July 16-19, 2015

The symposium offers presentations on the law as it applies to Catholic education and ministry.

NCEA Information for Growth: Assessment of Children/Youth Religious Education (NCEA IFG: ACRE Edition) Customized and Regional Trainings - Year Round

The Religious Education Department team provides one- or two-day customized training opportunities to assist Catholic schools and parish programs with implementing and administering the assessment. Contact [Mickie Abatemarco](#) at NCEA for more information.

UPCOMING EVENTS/DEADLINES

- ⇒ May 5th –Principals’ Meeting
- ⇒ May 5th – ACRE Testing to CSO
- ⇒ May 8th –Toy Bowl Field Day
- ⇒ May 22nd –Last day of school
- ⇒ May 25th –Memorial Day (CSO Closed)



OUR VISION AND MISSION

OUR VISION:

Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Birmingham provide an excellent educational experience in the Catholic tradition enabling all students to develop their God-given talents.

OUR MISSION:

The mission of the Diocese of Birmingham Catholic School System is to educate our students to seek God in Truth and for loving service by teaching the message of the Gospel, forming a community of faith, providing the whole child with a Catholic and Christ-centered environment, and inspiring all to reach their full academic and spiritual potential.

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