

THE OFFICE FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS HIGH SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO 8 | APRIL/MAY 2021



CELEBRATING DIVERSITY IN OUR SCHOOLS

April was Autism Awareness Month and May is National Asian American Heritage Month

HOW TO LEARN FROM COVID SCHOOL

How to take this year as a learning opportunity to reinvent "school".

CELEBRATING THE END OF THE YEAR

Typical end-of-year celebrations may still have to be... atypical

Well the hallways are no longer empty. In fact, there are plenty of masked teens walking about in our high schools' hallways. It may be that there are half the amount of bodies in any given space on any given day, but the time has finally come when teachers and students are face to face once again.

Except, maybe not everyone. Our high schools are still accommodating students who are students from home, whether by choice or by circumstance. Our teachers are still trying to cater to the needs of students in person and those who are learning remotely. This is, as one teacher said "the worst of both worlds, because neither group is getting 100% of a teacher's best teaching."

On the other hand, teachers in our Catholic high schools are reporting more joy, overall better rapport with students, and generally, happiness over the fact that they get to teach kids in person. "it's not ideal, but it's better than being 100% remote."

In this issue of the High School Newsletter, we will delve into ways to better engage our students who are suffering from senioritis, provide some research on how to "reinvent" school from the learnings of COVID, and some ideas for how to celebrate the end of the year.

Teaching high schoolers is a calling, and our Catholic school educators were amazing. We are proud of all of our Catholic High Schools!

Celebrating the Diversity of our Communities in April and May

April was Autism Awareness Month

Autism Awareness Month in April aims to celebrate and promote acceptance for the condition that occurs in one in every 54 children as of 2020 in the United States. Autism, a complex developmental condition affecting the patient's ability to interact, communicate, and progress, has not one but many subtypes.

The Three Functional Levels of Autism

ASD Level 1 Requiring Support



difficulty initiating social interactions
organization and planning problems can hamper independence

ASD Level 2 Requiring Substantial Support



social interactions limited to narrow special interests
frequent restricted/repetitive behaviors

ASD Level 3 Requiring Very Substantial Support



severe deficits in verbal and nonverbal social communication skills
great distress/difficulty changing actions or focus

Did You Know?

Very few countries are home to more Catholics than the Philippines. As of 2010, there were about 76 million Catholics living in the Philippines – roughly the same as the number living in the United States. The two countries have the world's third- and fourth-largest Catholic populations, behind Brazil and Mexico. About eight-in-ten Filipinos (81%) are Catholic; a somewhat smaller share of Filipino Americans (65%) identify as Catholic.

May is National Asian-American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

It's a celebration of all Asian and Pacific Islanders from places like New Guinea, Fiji, Guam, New Zealand, Hawaiian Islands, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga, French Polynesia and more. A study completed by the USCCB indicated that our Asian American Catholics tend to be "the most devout" of all Catholics when looking at diverse ethnicities.

SPOTLIGHT: Holy Names Academy

The majority of our secondary schools are co-educational; within our Seattle Archdiocese, we have two all-girls schools (Forest Ridge 6-12, and Holy Names, 9-12) and one all-boys school (O'Dea 9-12). In February, in celebration of Women's History Month, I reached out to the staff at Holy Names to understand what makes it special to be teaching and leading in a school of all girls. Marianne McGah and Kim Dawson shared their thoughts:

What are you most proud of when telling people you are a part of the Holy Names family?

MM: I am most proud of working for an institution focused on empowering young women who go out into the world with a passion for learning and desire to work for justice.

KD: I am most proud of continuing the legacy of the SNJM charism which focuses on women's education and global justice.

What are the benefits of an all-girls education?

MM: The community and the sense of collaboration, both with current students and with the alumnae. It builds an environment where students feel comfortable asking questions, taking risks, and challenging themselves to grow

KD: So many! Students can be more academically engaged and truly be themselves which boosts confidence and builds meaningful friendships.

What are the challenges that an all-girls school has, that a co-ed program may not?

MM: Pre-covid: having enough chairs during lunch in both the Walt's Club (Disney focused), Robotics club, and the Multicultural Student Union 😊

KD: The main challenge is finding a variety of ways to socialize with boys.

If you could have one famous female (alive or dead) come visit your campus and speak to your students, who would it be and why?

MM: Mother Marie Rose, the foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. She was an inspiring educator and leader who worked to create inclusive educational communities focused on justice. I think our students today would love to hear her perspectives of standing up for what you believe in, working to end injustices, and standing on the side of the poor and marginalized.

KD: I would love to have Michelle Obama come and talk to the students. Her messages, uplifting, and faith filled.

Holy Names Academy was founded in 1880 by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary (SNJM), an international congregation of Catholic Women Religious, Associates, and Lay Consecrated who are dedicated to the full development of the human person through education, social justice, contemplation, and the arts. The SNJM congregational headquarters is located in
■ Longueuil, Québec (near Montréal).



REINVENTING SCHOOLS FOR THE “NEW NORMAL”

(Originally titled [“A Found Year”](#) by Jay McClain)

In *High Tech High Unboxed*, Virginia school administrator Jay McClain says that many believe this has been a lost year. “It certainly has been a year of great loss,” he says. “Loss of an incomprehensible number of lives. Loss of the basic human connections and interactions that we crave and take for granted. But a ‘year of loss’ and a ‘lost year’ is not the same thing. When we say ‘lost year,’ the loss we are describing is ‘normal school.’”

But was the old normal so terrific? Fundamentally unchanged over the last century, our pre-pandemic schools failed to engage more than half of students by the time they reached high school, and didn’t come close to producing equitable results for students of color. The coronavirus has compounded these long-standing deficiencies, widening health and achievement gaps. “Can we really respond to these two crises by just returning to ‘normal’?” asks McClain. “Let’s look at this year as a welcome jolt to find the soul of what education should be for our students and families.” He suggests four “persistent elements” in education – time, place, group, and curriculum – that we should now rethink:

- **Time** – During the pandemic, following the traditional bell schedule was not sustainable, and schools experimented with a mix of synchronous and asynchronous activities with more choice for students, more sleep for adolescents, and more deference to the needs of working parents. As regular schooling resumes, McClain believes we should open up choices for when older students are in school – morning, afternoon, or evening. “Think of the impact that this could have,” he says, “for high-school students who need to have a job, watch their siblings, or whose parents work a late shift. We are due for a mindset shift in which the time of school gives students and families the best options for success.”

- **Place** – With schools closed by the virus, learning was no longer linked to classrooms, a school building, or even an attendance zone. As “normal” returns, many families will exercise choice on a sliding scale from full-time in a building to full-time remote, sometimes crossing geographic boundaries. “All of this depends on ensuring that we have the WiFi infrastructure and accessibility to technology across communities that has been so lacking,” says McClain. “Access to the Internet is understood now, more than ever, as not only essential to commerce and the operation of government in a pandemic, but also to the learning of students.”

- **Group** – Over the last year, most schools didn’t change how they grouped students; third-grade classes still functioned as such, as did algebra groups. But there was some loosening up – students grouped by needs, teachers specializing in areas of strength, students from different schools being taught together. Returning to “normal,” says McClain, “the potential to rethink learning/class groups goes far beyond this.” With time and place more flexible, there’s potential for a variety of groupings in synchronous and asynchronous settings, from lectures to lessons on topics chosen by students to small-group activities to individual teacher-student check-ins. In addition, teachers can work across boundaries with colleagues and students and have much more flexibility regrouping students during the year.

- **Curriculum** – “A fundamental shift that has long been needed,” says McClain, “is with the balance between a common curriculum and the context of each child – [their] needs, interests, styles, and passions.” He believes that now is the time to pare each grade’s curriculum standards down to a smaller set of high-leverage standards in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies, and give students more choice in how they master them while pursuing their passions. “In this way,” he says, “we can be more culturally responsive to our students and cause our students to feel a sense of belonging and purpose and not just be taught how to conform.”

In short, McClain concludes, we have the opportunity to build a great deal more choice and customization into time, place, groupings, and the curriculum. “Choice does not mean we need to take away the elements of our current system that work for some families,” he says. “Rather, it means we provide a variety of pathways that will work for all families... The needs of families, the passions of our students, and our own humanity demand that we meet students and families where they are and give them choice so that we wrap around them, not the other way around.”



DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that the Office for Catholic Schools provides an online resource for all of our Catholic school educators through <https://mycatholicsschool.org> – here we store all of our important information including Catholic Curriculum Standards, Accreditation documents, task lists and calendars of upcoming events. Every teacher should have access to this webpage through an individual log in. If you do not have a log in yet, please email Janeal Grosinger at janeal.grosinger@seattlearch.org and she will hook you up!

WHICH COVID-TIME PRACTICES WILL WE CARRY OVER TO THE NEW NORMAL?

In the *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, Beth McMurtrie shares pandemic-driven innovations instructors say they will keep using when in-person classes return.

- *Make connections* – Several instructors told McMurtrie that taking time to “simply talk to students” before and at the end of classes “paid off in ways both expected and surprising.” Giving students time to talk about what was on their minds helped build relationships and know “the competing pressures in their students’ lives.” It’s part of teachers’ realization that the teacher/student ratio of classroom talk needs to bend more toward student talk. “My bet,” says Clay Shirky of New York University, “is that the biggest shift from Covid will not be any one tool or technique, but a broadening sense that engagement is not merely something that students ‘bring to class,’ but is a result of the environment of the class itself, and that environment can be designed to better support or encourage engagement.”

- *Online guest speakers* – “I know I could have been doing this for years,” says Andrea Bixler of Clarke University in Iowa, “but I was never forced to, so I never did. Now I have guest speakers from around the region (and they could be from much farther afield) join my classes to discuss various topics.” And, she added, it’s more environmentally responsible because there’s no travel.

- *Online tutoring* – Several instructors reported that offering one-on-one instruction via Zoom greatly increased the number of students who showed up. Continuing this after the pandemic seems worthwhile for tutoring, advising, coaching writing, and other individual support. “Definitely a keeper!” said one instructor.

- *Flexibility with due dates and grading* – The concern here is accusations of unfairness or favoritism when an instructor “goes easy” with some students. But during the pandemic, being flexible with deadlines has not been seen as giving students a pass. Kari Morgan, an instructor at Kansas State University, started giving full credit for late work. She checked with her students on adopting that policy going forward, and hearing no complaints, she plans to continue flexible deadlines with no penalty when regular classes resume. “Treating students with respect and care builds trust,” says Morgan. “This serves as a foundation for learning. It also allows me to focus on the ‘big’ issues, and not the nitpicky ones. I mean, really, if I am not going to grade at the stroke of midnight, why does it matter if their work is a bit late?” But she is strict on assignments that need to be handed in as preparation for a specific class, and explains why.

- *Virtual faculty workshops* – “We have gotten double or triple the attendance we used to have,” says Karyn Sproles, dean of faculty development at the U.S. Naval Academy, “and the workshops have been even more interactive through chat and small groups... Not only did they answer questions we asked them to respond to in chat, but they asked questions, answered each other’s questions, and posted links to resources.”

[“Teaching: After the Pandemic, What Innovations Are Worth Keeping?”](#) by Beth McMurtrie

G.R.A.C.E. FOR HIGH SCHOOLS?

The G.R.A.C.E. program –Guiding Regionally Advancing Catholic Education, is an OCS led PreK-8 program designed to develop leaders through PLC training. Within the program, teacher leaders are asked to lead one staff meeting a month in a PLC model, focusing on data (typically from MAP testing) analysis, peer evaluations based on the CEL 5D+ framework, and starting 2021-22, equity work within each school.

High schools have not been introduced into the GRACE program. However, as evidenced by several high school teacher go-getters, there may be a need for a program similar to GRACE to provide a platform for cross school collaboration, especially in singleton courses (think Economics, or Calculus).

If you are interested in developing this idea more thoroughly, or have feedback about the idea of creating a high school program facilitated through the OCS, please reach out to Justyna King at justyna.king@seattlearch.org



Announcements, Opportunities and Other Information for High School Teachers

Leadership Openings: Administration Openings in the Archdiocese of Seattle can be found on the OCS Website here: <https://mycatholicsschool.org/careers-employment/>

Educational Leadership Partners: Fulcrum and OCS Educational Leadership Partner Programs (including Educational Leadership Grant) can be found here: <https://mycatholicsschool.org/for-catholic-schools/professional-development/leadership-academy/>

University of Notre Dame fACE to fACE webinar series: A free and interactive Zoom series with weekly conversations focused on critical issues impacting Catholic schools and educators

Whether you're looking to renew your own "yes" to Catholic schools, or are trying to find the language to invite others into Catholic education's unique mission, culture, and experience, we hope you'll choose to join us for this final FACE to FACE that will remind us what we're all about.

Past and future sessions can be found here : [FACE to FACE sessions](#)

Accreditation—*One of the greatest professional development experiences is being a part of an Accreditation Visiting Team.* The Office for Catholic Schools is now registering people for the 2021-22 Accreditation visits for the fall and spring. Click here to learn more: [Join an Accreditation Team in 2021-22](#)

Changing Our World, Inc-Advancing Our Church Podcast:
<https://advancingourchurch.com>

See Vivian Shannon, Executive Director of the Fulcrum Foundation and Kristin Moore, Director of Marketing and Enrollment, podcast sessions.

If you have any announcements or opportunities to share with your high school colleagues, please let me know for our June Newsletter!

Professional Development and Formation Opportunities:

BLiCSS 4.0= Blended Learning Symposium organized by the University of Notre Dame:

<https://my.eventcadence.com/e/BLiCSS>

Rand-informed Guidance for Summer Programming from Kentucky Ed. Department:

<https://education.ky.gov/comm/Documents/Summer%20Learning.pdf>

Seattle University, Center for Social Transformation and Leadership On Demand Easter Retreat:

<https://www.seattleu.edu/education/cstl/learning-programs-and-events/webinars/>

Free teacher resources to spruce up your Social-Emotional curriculum – especially for Teacher Appreciation Week from CharacterStrong –

[National School Counselors Week \(characterstrong.lpages.co\)](https://characterstrong.lpages.co)

Following the success of the Center for Holocaust Education's presentation at the OCS's PD and Curriculum Day, the team has excitedly agreed to adapt their broader workshop series into one, two-hour PD session we will be featuring **Thursday, May 6th at 3:30pm, [From Reflection to Action: Teaching for Civic Agency](#)**. In addition to the registration link just provided, here is the [clock hours link form on PD Enroller](#).



And in the end ...

End of Year Celebration Ideas:

Prom – although few high schools are offering a traditional prom, several of our Seattle area Catholic high schools are reimagining this special evening, pairing it down to a simple dinner and celebration amongst small pods of friends – no dancing allowed

Senior Award Nights – a virtual platform lends itself well to this kind of celebration (a la Golden Globes 2021 but less awkward) where students can still tune into be celebrated and their favorite teachers can still be a part of the end of year festivities.

Virtual Graduations – large scale companies who specialize in senior swag and celebrations (think Jostens) have adjusted options for high schools, including providing a virtual graduation option – socially distanced, individually recorded asynchronous virtual graduations were the rage in June of 2020; they have since spruced up their offerings

Graduation: Many of our Catholic high schools have opted for an in-person graduation this year, albeit limited in attendance and socially distanced by way of large outdoor stadiums.

What is your high school doing to celebrate the class of 2021?



The Light at the End of the Tunnel is Amongst Us

A prayer for the last full month of high school and for our incredibly dedicated teachers and administrators

When the time is flying and yet, not budging – let me see the light o Lord

When the students are restless and seemingly anxious – let me see the light o Lord

When the tasks keep piling and time keeps flying – let me see the light O Lord

When I'm physically, mentally, emotionally spent – let me see the light o Lord

For the end of the school year will wrap up soon, and the memories made and lives affected are worth the tears; I pray to you O Lord – please keep me in your light.

AMEN.