

Office for Catholic Schools: High School Newsletter

October 2021
Issue #2

Happenings around our Archdiocese and Catholic High Schools

INSIDE

The COVID vaccine mandate debate

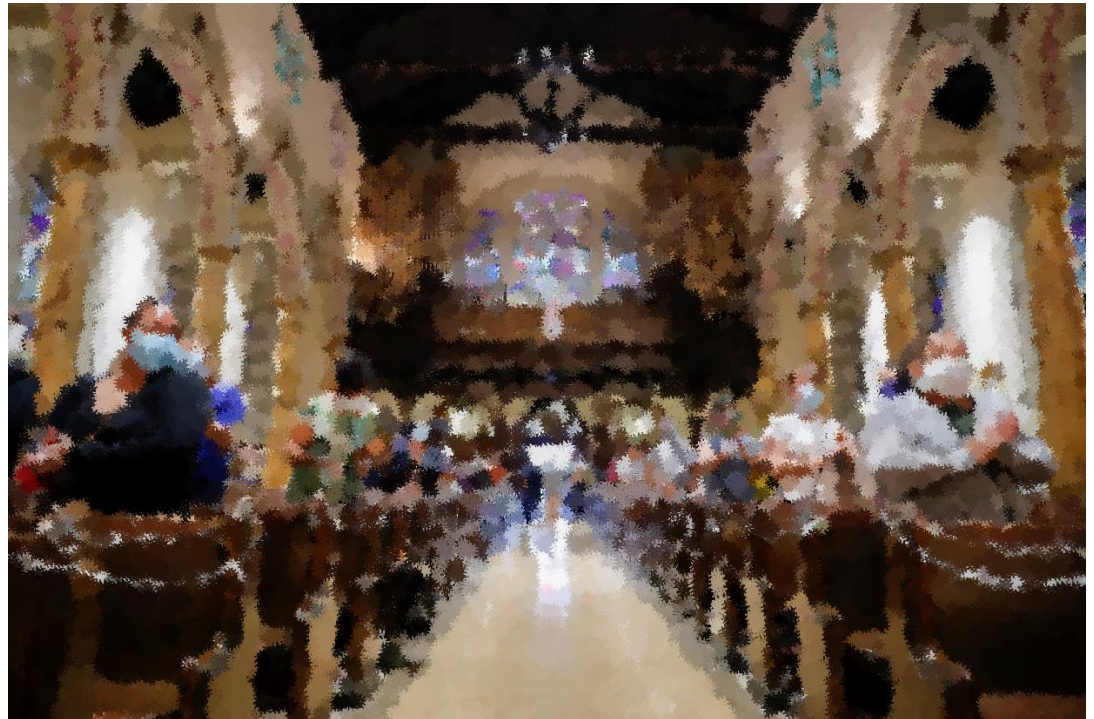
Since our governor issued a state-wide mandate, we investigate how the Catholic Church is responding

GRACE program for High School Leaders

A rundown from the September GRACE TL meeting - some unique and interesting insights!

Opportunities for PD around the Sound

There are many opportunities to get PD, get involved and continue learning!



High School Teachers!

One month into the school year and there are more similarities to last year than we had hoped. The reality that we are not completely out of the COVID woods yet is incredibly daunting. Yet, our teachers continue to move forward with academic endeavors while balancing the needs of students, families, and their own lives - just like they did pre-pandemic. Do not underestimate the gratitude that your administrators and leaders have for you and what you are doing in the classroom, online, and beyond the school day. Catholic schoolteachers are incredibly resilient and flexible; you are Christ-centered and good - and we are constantly thinking about how we can support you more - if you have ideas, send them my way; I would love to share your thoughts with administrators!

In this issue, we will be covering vaccine religious exemptions, real life equity issues in high schools, and leadership opportunities in our Archdiocese.

We are in this together - always rising higher as Catholic schools. Thank you!

Dr. Justyna King
Assistant Superintendent for Academic Excellence
justyna.king@seattlearch.org



What's the Latest in King County

From local news sources:

King County officials issued an order to further limit where unvaccinated folks can go without proof of a negative test, to “lighten the load on area hospitals that are seeing some of the highest rates of COVID-19 admissions ever,” This includes restaurants, entertainment venues and more.

To understand better where we are at with infections, you can find real time info documented on the [Washington State Department of Health COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#).

One King County resident is hospitalized for COVID-19 every hour, and one King County resident dies from COVID-19 every eight hours,

Paired with King County's 85% vaccination rate, officials said they preferred the vaccination order over bringing back capacity restrictions.

From 10/01/2021

Vaccine Mandates, Religious Exemptions and our Catholic Church

Midway through September, Governor Jay Inslee in support of OPSI Superintendent Chris Reykdal issued a state-wide anti-COVID vaccination mandate; regardless of the school, whether private, public, independent, or Catholic, all teachers, administrators, and school volunteers are legally required to provide proof of COVID vaccination by October 18th, 2021. Shortly, thereafter, Archbishop Etienne issued a statement in full support of the vaccination mandate.

Furthermore, our Archbishop made it abundantly clear that despite personal beliefs, receiving the vaccination is NOT anti-Catholic nor is it sinful. In fact, our church (going all the way up to the Pope himself) has repeatedly proclaimed that vaccination is highly encouraged and supported by our Catholic church leaders.

FURTHERMORE (yes, even FURTHER than before) the Archbishop stated that he would not endorse any sort of religious exemptions. Ay Caramba. Gone are the days of October when pumpkin spiced everything was our biggest concern.

Below is his official statement on the matter:

Religious Exemption Explained

Archbishop Paul D. Etienne

Some people have recently associated my actions in relation to the COVID pandemic with those of the state. While the state's guidance and declarations do have direct implications for us as Church and as an employer, I want to be clear — my actions are to protect life as a shepherd and pastor in the face of a worldwide pandemic that continues to take human life at an astonishing pace.

We are not yet living in a post-pandemic world, and we must remain vigilant.

We all have an obligation to love our neighbor, to protect our health and to protect the health of others. The immediate need to protect human life against the evil of the pandemic outweighs the remote connection to the evil involved in the testing and/or production of the vaccines.

According to our Holy Father and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, because the connection between receiving the vaccines and abortion is so remote, and the danger of the pandemic is so grave, the moral prohibition of cooperation with evil does not apply. Therefore, a Catholic may be vaccinated in good conscience.

Since the Catholic Church does not prohibit receiving a vaccine, a religious exemption to the COVID-19 vaccine mandate cannot be granted. However, to follow the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) language around “traditional religious views,” I am willing to consider accommodations on moral grounds, but not exemptions on religious grounds.

While *in principle* there is no moral obligation to receive a vaccine, there can be reasons in *particular circumstances* for saying that there is a moral obligation to place more weight on the common good than on the individual. Today, the best life-saving defense against the pandemic is the vaccine. It is important that the formation of the individual conscience be informed by and directed toward the *common good*.

Catholics have the moral obligation to form their conscience with the mind of the Church, which encourages us all to be vaccinated, with the exception of those who have valid medical reasons for exemption.

Please hear me loud and clear: I strongly urge all of us to be vaccinated.

Once an employee has seriously considered the weight of the Church's teaching and still chooses not to be vaccinated, then that individual may request an accommodation to continue employment on *moral* grounds. If an accommodation can be provided, the employee will need to agree to an extra set of protocols to ensure the safety of all.

[As a sidenote, Washington state has not made accommodations for exemptions on moral grounds]*



Equity Matters

This month's topic: disciplinary practices repair harm versus disciplinary practices that just continue to harm.

As an administrator at a large comprehensive public high school, I was given training that started scratching the surface of equitable disciplinary practices. What I found however, that my tools were limited; the district no longer allowed for suspensions or removing youth from classrooms as a disciplinary tactic, which meant that teachers were also left without some of their tools. What I found was a carousel of a handful of children who were continually sent to my office to “get dealt with.” As an administrator, I didn’t know exactly what the teacher’s expectations were of me, or the tools that they were hoping I would implement to “discipline” these children – and a part of me found that many did not care so long as those students were out of their classrooms and not distracting the other students from the learning environment.

In my first month of working at the high school, I had received over 32 disciplinary referrals for students. Of the 32 referrals, 27 were boys of color. And this was specifically for the 9th grade only. To say it was eye-opening is an understatement. When I brought this topic up at a staff meeting, it was met with defensiveness and frustration.

Teachers were frustrated that these same boys were constantly sent back into their classrooms and not “fixed” nor had their behavior improved. Some were honest in saying that the district’s new policy of doling out “restorative discussions” instead of detentions was a waste of everyone’s time, and ultimately did not hold the students accountable for their actions.

The district office sent consultants who were experts in Restorative Justice and MTSS to our high schools to no avail – teachers wanted quick ways to discipline students for their behavior and instead, they were constantly asked to shift the focus away from discipline to relationship building. As one teacher said in frustration, “When I have Sally talking back to me and refusing to put away her iPhone in the middle of class, exactly how am I expected to drop everything and start building a relationship? Sally has to have immediate consequences otherwise she will continue to do the same thing and set a bad example for the rest of the class!”

According to the Rethinking Schools organization, “Restorative justice doesn’t work as an add-on. It requires us to address the roots of student “misbehavior” and a willingness to rethink and rework our classrooms, schools, and school districts. Meaningful alternatives to punitive approaches take time and trust. They must be built on schoolwide and districtwide participation. They are collaborative and creative, empowering students, teachers, and parents.” Essentially, it is not enough to simply implement a restorative conversation protocol as a “tool” without all in support for the entire system of restorative justice as a punishment alternative.

So, what do we do now? I would suggest that teachers and administrators take a step back, engage in a courageous conversation about concerns and collect data. All stakeholders should have an opportunity to speak to their concerns and be on the same page about how to acknowledge when discipline systems do not work, and how they can be better and create stronger relationships amongst and between students and teachers.

The Grotto will host an exhibit of Eucharistic Miracles from around the world in our conference center from October 1st through the 17th. The Grotto, the National Sanctuary of Our Sorrowful Mother, is located just off I-205 in North Portland.

The exhibit consists of illustrations and descriptions of 48 miracles (in English and Spanish) that have occurred around the world since the 3rd century. There is an illustrated board that answers the question, "What is a Eucharistic Miracle" as well as a board featuring Blessed Carlo Acutis. The story of Blessed Carlo may be appealing to students. There are also three short videos available for watching.

The exhibit is available for visiting:

Monday-Friday - 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with a break from 12-1 p.m. for Mass/lunch;

Saturdays/Sundays - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. with a break from 12-1 p.m. for Mass/lunch.

There is no charge.

Daily Mass is celebrated in the Chapel of Mary at noon Monday - Saturday. The Rosary is prayed before each Mass beginning at 11:30 a.m.

October Spotlight: Kristin Dixon - Superintendent for Catholic Schools



Kristin Dixon is our mighty leader in the Office for Catholic Schools. As the superintendent, Ms. Dixon reports directly to Archbishop Etienne and supervises all the assistant superintendents to ensure support for school principals, teachers, and programs. We are so grateful for her incredible leadership, unwavering faith and continual raising the bar in Catholic education. Currently, she is recommending that all educators delve into Pope Francis's latest book, *Let us Dream: The Path to a Better Future*.

The Archdiocesan Ministerial Covenant Task Force Update!

It was a year of exploration, data collection and discussion and the task force entrusted with collecting information about the covenant that educators agree to when working for the Archdiocese has been collected, analyzed and published online at mycatholicschools.org (see screenshot below).

Online you will find details about the entire process - the phases, work products, and data collection systems in easy-to-access informative panes.

The final report along with the recommendations put forth to Archbishop Etienne can be found under the "Phase Three" portion of the webpage. Archbishop has committed to reading through, discerning and praying about the recommendations and you can read through his entire response below the link to the recommendations.

Thanks to all of the hardwork of the task force for opening this up to discussion, debate, consideration and transparency.



The screenshot shows the My Catholic Schools website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'My Catholic School', 'Customize', 'New', 'Edit Page', and 'Events'. A user profile for 'Howdy, Justyna King' is visible. Below the navigation bar, a teal banner asks, 'Do you have questions about Catholic Schools? Kristin Moore, Director of Marketing & Admissions is here to help!' with a 'Contact Me' button. A dark red bar contains 'RESOURCE LIBRARY' and 'Welcome Justyna'. The main content area features a navigation menu with links for 'Careers & Employment', 'About Catholic Schools', 'Why Catholic Schools', 'News & Information', and 'For Catholic Schools'. On the right, there are buttons for 'SCHOOL FINDER' and 'PRESCHOOL FINDER'. The main heading reads 'Archdiocesan Ministerial Covenant Task Force' above a large, colorful image of a group of people.

Discussing Hot Political Issues with High-School Students

Originally: [“Can Debate and Deliberation Reduce Partisan Divisions? Evidence from a Study of High-School Students”](#) by Paula McAvoy and Gregory McAvoy in *Peabody Journal of Education*, Fall 2021 (Vol. 96, #3, pp. 275-284);

In last month's *Peabody Journal of Education*, Paula McAvoy and Gregory McAvoy report on their study of high-school students discussing controversial political topics. The research was conducted at a time of deep polarization in the U.S. (2019-20), with strong opinions on key issues, deep animosities toward those with opposing views, the diminishing ideological center, and a high level of citizen distrust toward elected officials.

All this puts social studies educators in a “precarious position” as they work to develop their students’ civic skills and dispositions. Some teachers avoid discussions of hot topics for fear that things will get out of hand. “But keeping politics out of the curriculum does little to help young people understand and critically examine the political issues of the day,” say the authors, “nor does it help them to imagine what a stronger democracy will look like.”

Handled well, classroom discussions can teach students to give reasons for their opinions, listen to opposing views, see disagreements as normal, become better informed, and clarify their own opinions - all with the aim of coming to agreement for the common good.

The McAvoy's conducted their study at the Close-Up program, which brings high-school students from all 50 states and territories to Washington, D.C. for a week of activities, working in geographically mixed groups of 20-24. Two evenings are devoted to 90-minute discussions of controversial issues, using these structures on each successive gathering:

- *Deliberative discussions* - Groups of 30 students are given a topic, randomly assigned to groups of six, read about the issue, consider various policy proposals, come to consensus about a policy they can all endorse, and present their ideas to others.
- *Team debates* - Groups of 20-24 students read about an issue, choose a side, form two opposing teams, prepare arguments, and then each student is required to stand and give a one-minute persuasive statement, followed by a back-and-forth exchange. A panel of three peers decides on the winning team.

Among the issues discussed and debated: criminal justice reform, climate change, gun regulation, abortion, health care, homelessness, the minimum wage, English as the official U.S. language, and immigration.

McAvoy and McAvoy conducted pre- and post-activity surveys and interviewed students (165 participated, a 76 percent response rate). While students overwhelmingly said they enjoyed both formats and became more interested in the issues they discussed, there were important differences:

- With the deliberative format, 90 percent of students felt respected, and 91 percent felt good about their comments. This format resulted in more students changing their views and moving toward consensus.
- With the debate format, 76 percent felt respected, and 70 percent felt good about their comments. More students reported feeling more anxious and hesitant to speak, as compared to the deliberative format. And more students hardened their previous positions, moving away from consensus.
- In both formats, female students were significantly more likely to report hearing something offensive, and said they were hesitant to speak. “They were also significantly less likely to say that they felt good about the comments they made,” say the McAvoy's. Analyzing the data by race, ethnicity, and social class, the researchers found no significant differences between the two formats.

[“Can Debate and Deliberation Reduce Partisan Divisions? Evidence from a Study of High-School Students”](#) by Paula McAvoy and Gregory McAvoy in *Peabody Journal of Education*, Fall 2021 (Vol. 96, #3, pp. 275-284); the first author can be reached at pmcavoy@ncsu.edu.

HOW IS YOUR SOCIAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT HANDLING THESE DISCUSSIONS IN THE CLASSROOM?

OFFICE FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS - LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The Office for Catholic Schools and the Fulcrum Foundation offer the Leadership Academy, a yearlong leadership development program for aspiring and new principals. Recognized Catholic school leaders and shareholders will provide sessions in spiritual, academic, managerial, and strategic leadership. Working in solidarity to ensure a system of excellent Catholic schools, the Leadership Academy will provide the knowledge, skills, strategies, and best practices for current and future school leaders.

WHO: New and aspiring principals?

WHEN: 2021-2022 Dates:

October 13th
November 17th
January 19th
February 9th
March 9th
April 6th

The Leadership Academy meetings will be held from **3:45pm-5:00pm**

Outside of these listed meetings are several *optional* leadership development opportunities, beginning in August.

WHERE: Zoom

WHAT: Leadership training in the following National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools ([NSBECS](#)) areas:

Mission & Catholic Identity
Governance & Leadership
Academic Excellence
Operational Vitality

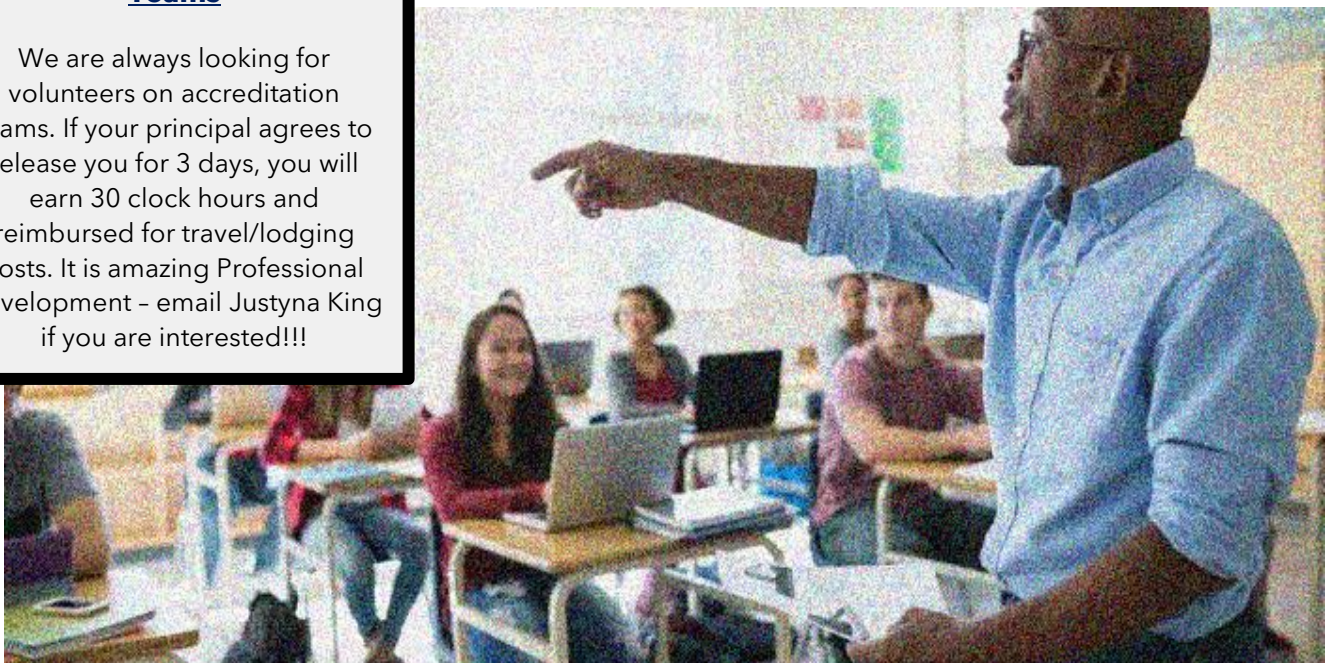
If you are interested in the Leadership Academy for the 2021-2022 academic year, contact Kelly Surapaneni at kelly.surapaneni@seattlearch.org.

MARK FRIDAY, **FEBRUARY 11TH 2022** IN YOUR CALENDARS - THE OCS IS HOSTING A FULL DAY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT VIRTUAL CONFERENCE WITH MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN FROM PEERS, EXPERTS, AND LEADERS. THIS IS OPEN TO ALL CATHOLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS. SESSIONS RUN 8 AM - 4 PM.

(Clock hours available for both attendees and presenters.)

Serving on Accreditation Teams

We are always looking for volunteers on accreditation teams. If your principal agrees to release you for 3 days, you will earn 30 clock hours and reimbursed for travel/lodging costs. It is amazing Professional Development - email Justyna King if you are interested!!!



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“The nature of relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character and quality of that school and on student accomplishment than anything else. If the relationships between administrators and teachers are trusting, generous, helpful, and cooperative, then the relationships between teachers and students, between students and students, and between teachers and parents are likely to be trusting, generous, helpful, and cooperative. If, on the other hand, relationships between administrators and teachers are fearful, competitive, suspicious, and corrosive, then *these* qualities will disseminate throughout the school community.” - Roland Barth



POPE FRANCIS' PRAYER TO MARY FOR PROTECTION FROM CORONAVIRUS

O Mary, you shine continuously on our journey
as a sign
of salvation and hope.

We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick.
At the foot of the Cross you participated in
Jesus' pain,
with steadfast faith.

You, Salvation of the Roman People, know
what we need.

We are certain that you will provide, so that,
as you did at Cana of Galilee,
joy and feasting might return after this moment
of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform ourselves to the Father's will
and to do what Jesus tells us:

He who took our sufferings upon Himself,
and bore our sorrows to bring us,
through the Cross, to the joy of the
Resurrection. Amen.

We seek refuge under your protection, O Holy
Mother of God.

Do not despise our pleas – we who are put to
the test – and deliver us from every danger, O
glorious and blessed Virgin.

