

Office for Catholic Schools: High School Newsletter

January 2022
Issue #4

Happenings around our Archdiocese and Catholic High Schools

INSIDE

Omicron's Influence Over Decision Making

Latest CDC Guidance for High Schools and all students K-12

Banning Books in Libraries and Schools

The intersectionality between Nextdoor, TikTok and Captain Underpants

GRACE program for High School Leaders

How to support your K-8 Catholic schools while taking on a collaborative spirit

New Year Resolutions are the Worst.

And yet... there's something wise about starting off the year with some new goals and renewed spirit for the rest of the school year.

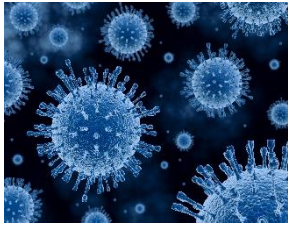


High School Teachers!

It's 2022 and we're still dealing with a global pandemic, balancing continuously changing recommendations for student and teacher exposure threats, and not a quite "back to normal" school year. In addition, we are fully aware that teaching is increasingly becoming more political and stressful, while support for our classroom teachers school leadership is waning. Everyone is tired. And yet, we must maintain the faith that what is happening in the hallways of our schools is incredible; our teachers are resilient and deserving of continuous support. I hope that the (three) teachers reading this know that we appreciate the hard work.

In this issue, we will be covering Omicron guidance (which is changing at lightening speed, and could be completely outdated as this goes out to print), my opinion on the latest book bans, and a discussion as to why New Years resolutions, while often criticized for being trite and damaging, might be just what we need to start the year anew. Remember friends, we still have 6 months to go!

Dr. Justyna King
Assistant Superintendent for Academic Excellence
justyna.king@seattlearch.org
(206) 245-9174



**Latest
Recommendations
from the
Archbishop's Office
on COVID-19:**

**Vaccines and
Boosters**

Given the highly contagious nature of the Omicron variant, the medical team that advises the Archdiocesan COVID-19 Taskforce, indicates that it is very important for everyone to get their boosters, which are necessary for protection against this variant.

It is important for people to recognize that, while vaccines are proven to lessen severity of illness and death, they are only one single layer of mitigation. We need to continue using our layered approach to mitigation, which includes avoiding close contact, masking, distancing and staying home when sick.

More information can be found [here](#).

Coming Back to an Uncertain New Year – Covid-19 in 2022

In addition to all of the uncertainty after the New Year with the Omicron variant of the COVID-19 strain, we are continuously trying to adapt to the guidance of many different counties that make up our Catholic high schools geography. We have schools in Snohomish, King, Thurston, Pierce and Clark counties; all tend to have their own definitions and interpretations of guidance for what is best for kids. The overarching themes, however, remain the same – in-school learning is BEST and the most effective for students. There is a strong support for keeping students in the classroom to the safest extent possible.

According to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “Given new evidence on the B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant, CDC has updated the [guidance for fully vaccinated people](#). CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. Children should return to full-time in-person learning ... with layered prevention strategies in place.”

Despite the unknown, our school leaders in the Archdiocese are grappling with different scenarios and how to best deal with the combination of post-holiday travel and indoor exposure rates, both of which are at all time highs. Here are some of the options that our school leaders are considering:

- In-school testing for negative COVID tests – instead of blanket quarantines, some schools are accessing the Learn to Return program. The Learn to Return Program partners the Washington State Department of Health, in conjunction with Health Commons Project, to make it easier for schools across the state to do both diagnostic testing and screening testing for COVID-19 on site.
- One week delays – a couple of our Catholic schools are considering implementing quarantine periods post-holidays (either the first week back or weeks following when exposure symptoms might be higher) to help slow down the spread of the highly contagious variants of COVID.
- Back to business – most schools will get back to campus, business as usual, until symptoms are visible and/or positive COVID tests are confirmed. Schools will continue to abide by CDCs guidance and their local Health Department's recommendations for quarantining large-scale groups.

Regardless of which route your high school site decides to go, the reality is that the learning program may be disrupted in some capacity in the next couple of months. Unfortunately, as it has been for the last two years, flexibility and pre-planning remains imperative. If you have questions about COVID related guidance or how the Office for Catholic Schools is supporting your high school site, feel free to reach out to Pam Schwartz, Assistant Superintendent for Catholic Schools at pam.schwartz@seattlearch.org – she is working closely with all local health departments to ensure our schools are aligning with local guidance, aware of overarching research, and supported during this crazy time in education!

Banning Books and Nextdoor Apps – Opinion

The issue of censorship is alive and well in 2022, friends. What started out as a leisurely click on my Nextdoor app turned into a heated debate amongst neighbors on what books our local KCLS should be promoting to young adults in my neighborhood. To give some context, “Nextdoor” is an app that links neighborhoods together to share in news, requests, up-to-date happenings in one’s immediate neighborhood area. What little old nosey grandmas used to do by sitting at their windows and observing around the town is now hoisted into a virtual lookey-loo of sorts, combined with the ease of virtual trolling and political banter with a thousand of your closest neighbors on a digital platform. I go onto Nextdoor when I’m feeling particularly feisty and when I want to ensure that I am not the craziest one in my neighborhood.

This particular exchange between neighbors caught my eye immediately as one neighbor posted in large screaming font “IS THIS WHAT YOUR TEEN IS READING??!!?” followed by a passage from a young-adult novel, presumably recommended by the local librarian at our town’s public library. The text was... well, poorly written enough to see that it was not an excerpt from a known literary classic but steamy enough that I won’t be re-printing it here. Regardless, banter from all corners of the neighborhood weighed in, most of which seemed to indicate that many of my neighbors are, indeed, in favor of salacious Young-Adult texts, but more importantly, against the banning of any books – regardless of their context and audience. There seemed to be a consensus that adults these days are reading books at all, regardless of the content, because if they’re zoning out to the literary hemming and hawing of mopey (sexually repressed) peers, then at least they’re not engaging in brain-damaging TikTok challenges. Fair point.

According to the ALA (American Library Association) the top 20 banned books for the last decade have been:

1. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie
2. *Captain Underpants* (series) by Dav Pilkey
3. *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher
4. *Looking for Alaska* by John Green
5. *George* by Alex Gino
6. *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell
7. *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier
8. *Fifty Shades of Grey* by E. L. James
9. *Internet Girls* (series) by Lauren Myracle
10. *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
11. *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini
12. *Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins
13. *I Am Jazz* by Jazz Jennings and Jessica Herthel
14. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky
15. *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
16. *Bone* (series) by Jeff Smith
17. *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls
18. *Two Boys Kissing* by David Levithan
19. *A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo* by Jill Twiss
20. *Sex is a Funny Word* by Cory Silverberg



I have not researched a good part of this list, but I can say that I have copies of the *Hunger Games*, the *Kite Runner* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* in my home library right now. Who knew I was a literary rebel of sorts.

It’s worthy to note that although according to my extensive research (via Nextdoor) indicate that the adults in our neighborhoods are extremely open-minded in terms of literature, access to books at each school is a reflection of the immediate community (and at times, neighborhoods). Perhaps this lends itself to a larger discussion around our Catholic schools and censorship—are any of these books “banned” in your school’s library? Perhaps we simply need a Nextdoor app for Catholic high schools so that we can determine what our closest educator friends and neighbors REALLY think about the moral undertones and virtue-deficient mores from the latest episode of *Captain Underpants*. Until then, let me know your thoughts about censorship, banned books, and how we can get more teens off of TikTok and more educators onto Nextdoor apps. - JPK

Serving on Accreditation Teams for 2022-2023

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!!!

GRACE Teacher Leader Program 2022

The GRACE Teacher Leader program has officially launched its pilot High School cohort this year and we are so proud to welcome eight of our eleven high schools to the team. We hope to get ALL high schools to participate for the 2022-23 school year, so if you are interested, please talk with your administrator about joining in on the (educational) fun! Here are some of the highlights:

- LEARN about Professional Learning Communities and how to effectively implement a PLC process in your school, how to lead staff meetings and support your school administrators in peer evaluation protocols
- LEAD the path for your fellow teachers in deciphering data, creating spaces for discussions around educational and instructional methodology and protocols for supporting courageous conversations.
- LEVERAGE your role in the GRACE program to implement new and exciting programs and protocols at your school for the benefit of students, staff, and your entire Catholic school community.

Our next virtual meeting is on **February 15th at 3:30pm** – reach out to Kristin Kuzmanich (GRACE High School Regional Leader) and join us! You can email Kristin at kuzmanichk@kennedyhs.org and let her know that you're interested in learning more.



CALLING ALL 9th GRADE TEACHERS – We are looking to coordinate a meeting of 8th grade teachers with 9th grade teachers to discuss what to expect for the upcoming 2022-23 school year in terms of student preparedness and supports needed. If you are interested in a virtual meeting, please reach out to Justyna King at justyna.king@seattlearch.org and we can coordinate times to collaborate.

Middle School Science Collaboration and Support

The goal of these workshops is to join together and converse about how we can best support our students as they transition from MS to HS. We will be working on curriculum alignment, best practices, technology use, and just have a chance to network with other middle school science teachers. There are four sessions from 3:30 - 4:30 pm on January 24th, February 28th, March 21st, and Monday, May 2nd. The sessions will be hosted by teachers from Holy Names and O'Dea. If you have any questions you can email Ryan White at rwhite@odea.org or Becca Shope rshope@holynames-sea.org.

Five Ways Teaching Can Continuously Improve

In this online Solution Tree article, curriculum expert Elliott Seif says five facets of teaching are key to preparing students for future success in a changing and uncertain world:

Developing a positive climate, culture, and environment for learning – This includes building relationships and trust with students, fostering their interest and curiosity in the content and skills, and encouraging a growth mindset. Some specific teaching moves: focusing on compelling essential questions, providing meaningful tasks and examples of successful work, giving specific feedback as students engage in multiple opportunities to improve, and praising effort (versus ability).

Focusing on relevant and significant content and vital skills – “Often teachers try to cover too much material with too little meaning for students,” says Seif. It’s vital to focus on the “underlying, foundational concepts, ideas, understandings” framed by compelling questions. The goal is to build students’ understanding, thoughtfulness, communication and collaboration skills, and ability to conduct research.

Helping students apply and deepen learning and become increasingly independent – This happens when teachers challenge students with authentic and complex tasks, independent research projects, classroom debates, and writing persuasive essays – holding them accountable for finishing what they begin, and for seeking help when they need it.

Broadening and enriching students’ experiences, interests, and talents – This includes reading and projects; field trips to museums, zoos, factories, and supermarkets; learning to play a musical instrument; joining a choir, band or orchestra; playing chess; getting involved in academic competitions; traveling to new and different locales; interviewing people inside and outside the school; doing community service; apprenticing with a local employer; and more – building in increasing amounts of choice.

Giving students feedback vis-à-vis high-quality standards – In-the-moment affirmations and corrections are essential to continuous improvement; they also let the teacher know about errors and misconceptions and suggest ways to improve learning experiences. Drafts of writing assignments, partially completed performance tasks, and portfolios are ideal opportunities to fine-tune students’ work, improve research, writing, and thinking skills, and build independence. And students should have regular opportunities to share their projects, writing, and other products with peers and a broader audience.

New Year 2022



New Years Resolutions can admittedly be the worst. They’re trite, they’re over-used, and they’re depressingly ineffective. And yet, every year that starts anew is a chance at re-looking at what has been going well, and what has been crashing and burning. And although research shows that 90% of people who start the year off with New Year’s resolutions end up giving up by March 1st, to me that shows two months of potential progress in place! (Half full, anyone??)

As educators, you can think about this new year time and clear out the clutter in several ways:

Pedagogically - what curriculum have you been able to cover so far this school year? What are essential standards that you can commit to teaching, and what are the extras that can be let go?

Emotionally - what are the emotional bags that are weighing you down? Do you think about your critical areas of growth too much? What areas of success can you commit to focus on instead?

Spiritually - what are the barriers put in place that disconnects you to your spiritual self? How can you eliminate those barriers? You’re in a Catholic school every day - what are the tasks that can be eliminated or delegated to make time for your spiritual health?

Personally - write down one goal that you have for your personal development. Plan out how you intend to meet that goal. Whether it is career related, health related, relationship-based, experts recommend starting with ONE goal; plan and execute.

Although it goes without saying that no one is required to resolve to resolute this year, it is a good practice for all educators to take a moment to reflect upon their own needs periodically, regardless of what the calendar says. You are worth the time you need to take to reflect!

Updates, Announcements and Prayer

Interested in **Educational Leadership Programs**? Deadlines for applying are in early 2022. Visit our leadership webpage, complete with links to our 8 Catholic university partners programs, listings of virtual open house sessions, and Fulcrum grant opportunity:

<https://mycatholicschool.org/for-catholic-schools/professional-development/leadership-academy/>

Professional Development and Curriculum Day 2022 – 2/11/22 (8:30-3:30pm)

virtual sessions, clock hours, and fabulous professional learning opportunities

Join us for PD on Equity, Catholic Spiritual Practices, Assessments K-12, and STEM related trainings. See more at mycatholicschool.org – registration opens on 1/18/21!

A Concluding Prayer

138. We pray that our Catholic people will be set ablaze with a desire to live their faith fully and share it freely with others. May their eagerness to share the faith bring a transformation to our nation and, with missionary dedication, even to the whole world. We ask God to open the heart of every Catholic, to see the need for the Gospel in each life, in our nation and on our planet.

139. We ask Mary, the one through whom Jesus entered our world, to guide us in presenting Jesus to those who live in our land. May her prayers help us to share in her courage and faithfulness. May they lead us to imitate her discipleship, her turning to Jesus, her love for God and for all. May the compassion that Mary has always reflected be present in our hearts.

140. We also pray that, like the disciples walking that Easter morning to Emmaus, all Catholics may feel their hearts burning through the presence of Jesus.⁵⁹ As those two disciples felt the presence of Jesus in their journey, we ask that the ministry of evangelizing help believers feel anew the presence of Jesus and that it help others discover his gracious presence.

141. We pray that the fire of Jesus enkindled in us by God's Spirit may lead more and more people in our land to become disciples, formed in the image of Christ our Savior.

[A Concluding Prayer - Go and Make Disciples | USCCB](#)

