

# Office for Catholic Schools: High School Newsletter

Happenings around our Archdiocese and Catholic High Schools

## INSIDE

### **An Introduction to Catholic School Self Assessment for Equity**

Read more about the newly formed equity audit called the Justice and Belonging Audit that is created specifically for our Catholic schools.

### **Mental Health Resources for Catholic High School Suicide Prevention**

The program that is changing the way that Catholic high schools are supporting students with suicide prevention.

### **GRACE program for High School Leaders and other PD opportunities**

How to support your K-8 Catholic schools while taking on a collaborative spirit - announcements on upcoming PLC opportunities for all HS Teachers!



### High School Teachers!

It seems like just yesterday we had thought that this would be an ordinary school year. It seems like we were very, very wrong. Another year of illnesses, shuffling of staffing, and being asked to be flexible. Very flexible. It has been quite the year.

Thank you for your dedication to students and your schools – Catholic high schools have been declining in enrollment on a national scale our Seattle Archdiocese was not unique in that either; however, in the last two years, it looks like many of our high schools were able to grow in enrollment, which brings with it both incredible opportunities but also, creates some real cultural and academic hurdles.

GRACE teacher leaders brought to our conversations ideas about how to best help transition students from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade and the need for real differentiation in multi-learning classrooms. To that end, our focus area for teacher leadership next year will focus on supporting Exceptional Learners as it seems like our students are still reeling from gaps that were formed in the disruption of 2020. We look forward to having your high school participate in GRACE next year!

I hope that you will find the information in this newsletter informative and guiding; please always feel free to reach out should you have additional questions or inquiries for me – I am here to support you! Have a beautiful last month of school – here's to a smooth and quiet end of the school year.

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## Why So Many Racial Equity Initiatives Fail

According to management consulting firm McKinsey and Company, overall, equity initiatives must be systemic in their implementation. They say that the “evidence suggests that while the public, private, and social sectors have engaged in meaningful efforts to combat racial inequity, racial disparities are produced, reinforced, and amplified across sectors.

Black Americans face systemic disadvantages in the private sector, and market-oriented solutions do not fully meet the needs—or match the realities—of Black Americans. Similarly, while policy reform can have a powerful impact, government interventions alone cannot address racial inequities, especially given that public-sector tools and solutions are not equally available to Black

Americans. Civil-society organizations are unable to bridge these gaps on their own. In short, single-sector solutions cannot fully address the barriers to Black advancement.”

Read more at

<http://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights.org>



## New Archdiocesan Tool for Catholic Educators on Racial Equity – the *Justice and Belonging Audit*

While sitting on a committee with the Fulcrum Foundation for determining how to best distribute thousands of dollars generously donated for the specific task of creating more diverse, equitable and inclusionary Catholic schools a theme arose from the grants – many schools were eager to start this work but did not even know where to start. The result then was to apply for grants that would pay for Cultural Competency experts or consultants to first determine where a school was starting from.

Instead of funding various different options for our schools, OCS partnered with Courtney Caldwell and a small subgroup of BIPOC educators to create a unique Catholic equity audit to allow Catholic schools to begin by reflecting on the equity practices that already exist in their classrooms, schools and programs.

### What Exactly Is an “Equity Audit”?

When speaking with Ms. Caldwell, she provided the background and rationale for why this work is important especially as our country continues to reconcile the fact that racially-based violence has not subsided in the last couple of years, despite work that has been happening in organizations and communities. “In the USCCB’s pastoral letter “Open Wide Our Hearts” released in 2018, the bishops called for specific, tangible, and bold action for Catholic individuals and institutions to do the essential work of anti-racist work,” she said. “The bishops called for, “a genuine conversion of heart, a conversion that will compel change and reform our institutions and society.”

This specific audit is a study of the fairness of an institution’s policies, programs, and practices. Ms. Caldwell says, “This is only a tool and institutions need to make a commitment and plan to do not only the audit, but the work that comes with it.” And to reiterate our commitment to supporting schools as fully as we can with this start, this project is multi-faceted in what is included in the product, including:

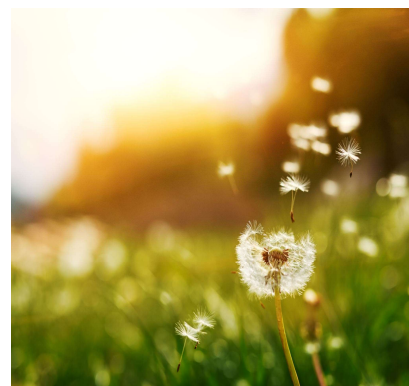
- A one-page introductory tool schools can use to get an overall picture of areas of strength and growth
- A full, more complete, audit/assessment that can be completed in sections or as a whole
- Adding 1 standard and 6 benchmarks to the NCEA accreditation measuring how schools are working on racial justice and belonging
- A self-reflection for teachers to use in their own goal-setting
- A student survey\*
- A background document - language for schools and parish to use about the importance of the work
- A video explaining best practice/ideas for how to do this
- Suggestions/tools/resources for facilitators and next steps
- Norms and sentence starter ideas\*

Clearly there is still work to be done and tools to be developed but our hope is that as school really look at their racial justice practices internally, this Catholic educator audit, which we are calling the Justice and Belonging Audit, will provide a starting point for work that must be ongoing and thorough. As an OCS, we are working with the Chancery to ensure all supports are in place to bolster this work, and we are hoping for a completed product to give to schools no later than this upcoming fall. Keep an eye out for the Justice and Belonging Audit!

## Catholic High Schools Participating in Suicide Prevention Programming

Right in time for May's Mental Health Month, the OCS partnered with [LivingWorks-SafeTalk Program](#) to ensure that students in our Catholic schools have training to be able to facilitate difficult conversations about suicide. The idea behind the Living Works Safe Talks Program is that most people who express behaviors, feelings and thoughts of suicide don't truly want to die but are struggling with the pain in their lives. Safe TALK-trained helpers can recognize expressions of those seeking help and act by connecting them with life-saving resources. This program especially helps our young adults become advocates for mental health as they recognize signals that someone might need help NOW. The program is about training, advocacy, and accompaniment to build "suicide safer Catholic Schools." Training is appropriate for anyone 15 and over.

Currently, representatives from Archbishop Murphy High School in Everett, WA and John Paul II High School in Lacey, WA are participating in the pilot of this program. You can read more about this initiative on [mycatholicsschool.org](#) here: [Mental Health: Catholic Lifesavers Corps - Cohort 1 SUCCESS! - My Catholic School](#)



If you are interested in bringing this program into your high school, it may be available to your students! Please contact Joe Cotton or Sandy Barton Smith for more details.

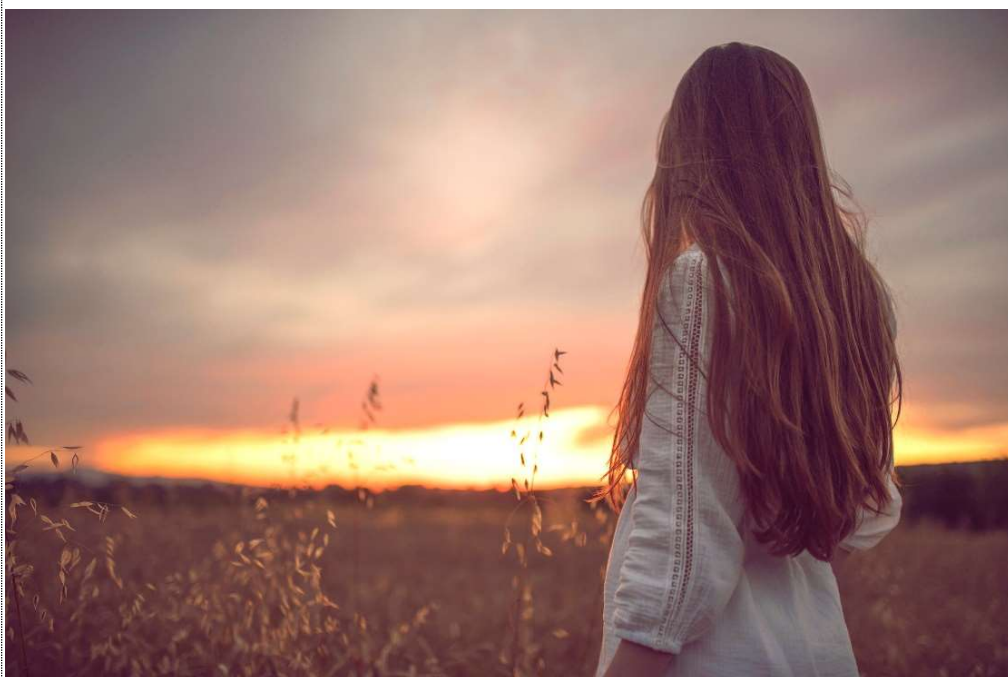
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# Research and Points of Interest ...

## **Marshall Memo 936: Building a Guiding Coalition (PLCs)**

In this *All Things PLC* article, author/consultant Bill Hall says school leadership teams usually deal with a broad array of issues – curriculum, budget, extracurriculars, hiring, facilities, athletics, and more. If a professional learning community (PLC) initiative is added to the agenda, it will be competing with lots of other priorities and might not get the attention it needs.

“There is consistent agreement among leadership experts and thought leaders,” says Hall, “that the best way to lead complex change is through a *guiding coalition*. This type of leadership team is structured differently, behaves differently, and leads differently than a standard leadership team. A PLC guiding coalition would focus on leading the initiative through “predictable turmoil,” showing teacher teams how to work collaboratively as they analyze student work and continuously improve teaching and learning. Hall suggests the following steps to a guiding coalition:

- *Assemble the right people.* The group should have representation from each grade level, department, and organizational area. There should also be a mix of people with positional power, expertise, credibility, and leadership ability. Possible questions when selecting members: Do they have a deep commitment to the school’s mission and core values? Do they readily embrace change and risk-taking? Are they reasonably self-directed, not needing to be micromanaged?

- *Build a high level of trust.* Hall embraces the definition of trust articulated by Megan Tschannen-Moran: “one’s willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent.” To maintain trust, any violations must be addressed immediately and forthrightly.

- *Create and pursue a common goal created and shared by all members.* The guiding coalition’s goal is distinct from districtwide, strategic, or school improvement goals. It’s best summed up in the SMART acronym: Strategic and Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented, and Time-bound.

“Transforming the School Leadership Team into a Powerful Guiding Coalition” by Bill Hall in *All Things PLC*, May 2022, Vol. 6, #2, pp. 4-6); Hall’s new book is *Powerful Guiding Coalitions* (Solution Tree, 2022)

## **GRACE TEACHER LEADERSHIP 2022-23**

Our GRACE teacher leader program is still rooted in the idea that all good teaching comes out of PLCs. We will have both in-person and virtual meetings next year.

Our program will focus on Exceptional Learners for the 2022-23 school year. We are hoping to partner intentionally with the Diversified Learners Committee within our Archdiocese that currently does intensive work on supporting students on the entire spectrum of needs.

Currently we have 11 high school GRACE teacher leaders on our team, with eight of the high schools represented.

Please email Kristin Kuzmanich, Regional Teacher Leaders, should you be interested in joining GRACE for 2022-23!

**[kkuzmanich@kennedyhs.org](mailto:kkuzmanich@kennedyhs.org)**



## **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!!!

### **Connecting and Sharing with MS/HS Science Teachers**

by Dr. Ryan White, O'Dea High School Science Teacher

As a freshman science teacher at O'Dea, I am blessed to work with 140 boys each year from across the Puget Sound area and 70+ zip codes. This geographical diversity brings with it a wide variety of previous middle school science experiences. Mostly, I see 14-year-old boys that are excited to learn more about the world around them. This year, though, has been more trying than any of my previous twelve. A significant number of my students this year seem apathetic towards learning. When I asked them why, they pointed to past traumas visited upon them by online learning and by schools/teachers that underserved them.

These past 2 years have been rough on all of us. For our precious young people, it has been especially difficult making the transition to high school in this environment. One reason is that the students are changing "systems, buildings and people." This leads to an inconsistent approach by the adults in their lives that are trying to help them succeed. For my own part, I realized that my ignorance about what happens in the middle school science classroom was adding to the problem.

This past January, a small group of MS and HS science teachers started getting together to chat about our practice and the conditions that we were witnessing at our schools. We shared about how most of us felt disconnected and ignorant about what was happening in other schools. We exchanged resources and curriculum ideas but mostly we chatted about our students and enjoyed being in a space with like-minded and caring science nerds. We realized how "alone" we had been feeling and how just having time to share with someone who understands your struggles can be healing.

In an archdiocese as geographically disperse as ours - where some teachers and content specialists are often the only person in the building with that role - in a time when we are all feeling a little bit lonelier, it can be comforting to know that there are ties that bind us. That's why it is so important to make the effort to connect with each other.

If you would like to connect with Dr. White,  
please email him at [rwhite@odea.org](mailto:rwhite@odea.org)



## CHECK LIST TO DO FOR JUNE – HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER EDITION:

Talk to your administrator about:

- PD – join us on an accreditation team for 2022-23; we have 8 schools going through the new Standards of Excellence protocol – ask your administrator if you could take three days off next year to join a team!
- PD – sign up for the Catholic Educator OSPI-sponsored virtual professional development opportunities on August 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> – see the OSPI website for more information – FREE to you!
- Join us for a discussion with Kim Marshall (Marshall Memo) on June 21<sup>st</sup> – ZOOM on PLCs and how to be more efficient in using PLCs in our Archdiocese! Sign up on [mycatholicsschool.org](http://mycatholicsschool.org)
- Join us for the Equity Book Study this summer – zoom edition. See more details on the right panel.
- Ask about GRACE teacher leadership program and how you can get your school involved.
- Welcome your newest colleagues hired for 2022-23 by reminding them that there is an OCS training on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 9am-12pm via ZOOM. Want to be involved in the programming for that? Email [justyna.king@seattlearch.org](mailto:justyna.king@seattlearch.org)
- Take a deep breath and relaaaaaaax. Turn off your computer in July (except on Tuesday from 11:30am-12:30pm when we will be participating in the book study!) and stop stressing about the work that will be there for 2022-23.

**HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!!!**

## Updates, Announcements and Prayer

### Participate in a Summer Book Study with a focus on equity in the classroom

Author Bronwyn Harris's book, *Literally Unbelievable* is the focus of this study and she will be facilitating weekly virtual meetings this summer specific for our Seattle Archdiocese Catholic educators. Meetings will take place via ZOOM on Tuesdays at 11:30am June-August. All attendees will receive a free copy of her text – please register here no later than June 18<sup>th</sup> : (GRACE teachers have priority, but this book study is open to all Catholic School educators): [GRACE Teachers and School Leaders - PD Opportunity to Participate in Equity Book Study - My Catholic School](#)

No need to attend every meeting. Clock hours provided for participation. Limit 100 participants.

#### A PRAYER TO BEGIN SUMMER

For more light in the day, we thank you,  
For gentle mornings, we thank you,  
For nighttime conversations,  
we thank you,  
For friends and family,  
we thank you,  
For gardens and all manner of creatures,  
we thank you.  
Help us, Creator and lover of our souls.

Help us love this earth.  
Help us dwell wholeheartedly in our lives  
this day.  
Help us pray as we walk, work, play, rest,  
and create.

**Amen.**