

November 8, 2018

Dear Parents,

This week's letter is intended to share some of the work going on behind the scenes that makes our school top notch. In one of my letters at the beginning of the school year, I shared that all teachers were involved in a Professional Learning Community (PLC). There are three PLCs running concurrently: primary math, Catholic Identity, and student engagement. All teachers were assigned to a group that best suited their grade level/subject/expertise and have already met several times. The primary math group, led by Ms. McKune has made strides in evaluating math expectations from one grade to another, incorporating more writing in math, and developing a common grading rubric for all elementary classrooms. These initiatives will benefit both our students and our parents as we streamline the process and develop common assessments.

Those teachers working in the Catholic Identity PLC are focusing on unpacking all the pieces to our new religion textbook adoption, increasing student participation at Mass, and reviewing vocabulary expectations across grade levels. Mrs. Tutwiler is leading the crusade and this group has also made visible progress. As I completed formal classroom observations this fall, one of the questions I asked was, "How do I know this is a classroom in a Catholic school?" I'm proud to say that there are always easy answers to be found besides the mandatory crucifix. While our students may be bombarded with a variety of questionable messages in the world today, they are supplied with messages of faith, hope, mercy, and love every minute they are in our school! Classrooms have prayer corners, bulletin boards promote bible passages, and religious artwork, statues and symbols abound. We are truly blessed with an environment rich in faith tradition.

Student engagement was a topic brought up in our last accreditation visit. While we scored above average in the team classroom visits, there were areas for growth as well. We strive to keep students engaged in the process of learning every minute. The PLC working on student engagement, led by Mrs. Westman, is looking at pieces such as bell ringers and exit slips, sharing concrete work examples, tracking assessment data, and fostering growth mindset. I believe we are ahead of the curve thanks to several factors, including our small class size, excellent teaching staff, implementation of best practices such as alternative seating, and our responsible use of technology. Our accreditation team will be returning in January and I think they will be pleased to see our work in action.

These PLC groups in and of themselves are also best practice, research based, and just plain smart teaching. We are following guidelines as outlined in the book *Data Wise* published by Harvard Education Press. The book can be summed up into the follow eight areas:

1. Organize for Collaborative Work
2. Build Assessment Literacy
3. Create Data Overview
4. Dig into Student Data
5. Examine Instruction
6. Develop Action Plan
7. Plan to Assess Progress
8. Act and Assess

All of these steps are being addressed as a whole school as well as by our individual PLC groups. Teachers meet before and after school, during planning, and our one early dismissal day to focus on these areas. And you thought teachers were just busy teaching! Well, they are! While classroom observations can make my schedule hectic, I also have the time to see amazing professionals in action. What do you do when you see something great? You share it, of course! This is why I've also implemented two new collaboration experiences for teachers. We now have a formalized peer observation tool so teachers can take time/make time to learn from their colleagues. There's also a 'Peer Pop In' program so teachers can just pop in another room to see just one brief idea in action. Providing these peer opportunities for growth and guidance makes us excellent stewards of our best resource—our faculty!

Teachers aren't the only ones working hard. You may have been following the minutes from our school board and rejuvenated marketing/enrollment committee. Just yesterday a short, five question survey went out to gather input as we look at offering school bus service. NO DECISION has been made, NO EXTRA FEE is being tacked on to your tuition bill. We are simply doing our homework to see if this is something parents need/want. Please make sure to complete your survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CQYPV2J> You also have the ability to share your marketing ideas with the group using this new email [marketing@staloyusipwv.org](mailto:marketing@staloyusipwv.org) We understand that everyone is overcommitted and may not be able to attend one more meeting. However, you may have great ideas to share. Here's your chance. We are especially interested in hearing from new families. What brought you to St. Aloysius? Were there things at your former school that you'd like to see here? All families can keep an "Eagle eye" open when attending other local schools and bring back ideas for us to incorporate. A few ideas in the works right now are a complete overhaul of our school website, improving aesthetics in common areas, and creating buttons that say, "Ask me why I'm a St. Aloysius parent!" to wear at parish and sporting events. Our recent open house was a success and we want to continue this momentum as we head into the enrollment process next January.

Speaking of next year, you will also be receiving your pre-registration form today. As in years past, the fee is \$50.00 per child (including incoming Kindergarteners) to hold your spot for next fall. This money is deducted from your book bill in August. While the form should be returned to the office, all money will be collected via Faith Direct. You will find Pre-registration Fee for Current Families under the Events tab, just like a field trip. We will be able to generate reports on who has paid what and keep everyone on the same page. All forms/fees are due by December 19, 2018. This helps us know class sizes both for budgeting purposes as well as enrolling new families. If there is a problem with using Faith Direct or with paying the fee in general, please contact Cindy Sullivan in the parish office.

Whew! Makes me tired just writing about it. And I didn't even mention weekly lesson plans, meetings, service projects, Blue Ribbon work, etc. We may be out in the valley, but St. Aloysius is definitely the place to be for excellent academics and faith formation. Be proud, Eagles! I certainly am!

*Mrs. Hayslip*