



Grace and peace, dear parents,

How exciting to have the 2019-2020 school year launched at St. Matthias. Today, we were able as a school family to welcome and embrace our newest members. Staff members of the PreK and Kindergarten classes along with the HSA held an Orientation for the parents. They are just beginning a journey that will be filled with marvelous adventures.

You may already know that Greg Johnson, our Physical Education teacher, fell ill during the summer months. He had an obstruction in the kidney that caused some serious infections. During his hospitalization, his doctors were able to remove the obstruction. As an out-patient, Mr. J will be treated to flush out any signs of the infection. Every day, he grows stronger and we are grateful for your good prayers and kind support of him. We are very fortunate to have a longtime friend of St. Matthias School, Mr. Charlie Hicks to substitute for Greg during his recovery. Charlie has been a substitute for Mr. J in the past and is able to hit the ground running.

I look forward to seeing each of you at Back to School Night on Monday, September 9 beginning at 6:30PM. For students in grades 1 through 5, there will be two 30 minute sessions (6:30-7:00 and 7:10-7:40). This will give parents the opportunity to attend more than one grade level presentation. The presentations in the first and second session will be identical. This meeting is designed as an overview of the year rather than individual parent/teacher conferences and we appreciate your understanding of this. Parents of Middle School students are asked to report to the Saint John XXIII room.



When you meet with your child's teacher on Monday evening, the teacher will share with you an expectation of behavior chart that is on display in the classroom. This listing of behaviors is a direct result of the collaborative work of the staff during their meetings on discipline.

The staff is in the process of rigorous research and implementation of a study based on the text, *Discipline with Dignity*. As a result of our study and past research and various learning experiences, we were able to articulate the relationship of student achievement, school culture

and discipline. All three factors working as one will result in a high performing school where students respect themselves and others. A school focused on student achievement with a well-defined schoolwide discipline plan presents itself as a school culture that is serious about learning.

We need to work together and I value our partnership in moving ahead. I know that achieving the status of Blue Ribbon is a value to many members of the school family. I am confident that we can reach that goal if each and every one of us takes responsibility in making the necessary changes. One area that we must change immediately is the drama from outside of the school that comes into the school and disturbs the learning and emotional growth of our students. It has been my observation in the past two years that relationships and events outside of school hours, such as parties, neighborhood get togethers and sports events have their own design and energy. But, there are more than reasonable times in the school year when that DRAMA comes into school. Such DRAMA has no place in the St. Matthias School learning environment.

The evolution of social media has complicated the life of many of our students. Students in elementary school do not possess the social developmental maturity to handle many of the social media interactions that occur on a daily basis. There is a reason that we do not allow phones in the hands of our students during school hours, including Middle School socials. This is a deliberate choice on the part of the school staff to prevent irresponsible behavior. I am aware that the behaviors of some of our students in their interactions in social media is less than gospel message. Parents, we have to work together on this issue.

I ask that each of you have a sit-down serious talk with your child in regard to your expectations for this school year. It is the expectation of the school staff that students give respect to one another. Criticizing, taunting others is totally unacceptable behavior. It is necessary for parents to monitor the activity of their child on social media. We are the teachers of acceptable behavior. We want more for our children than what they may see demonstrated in theater, TV or social networks. We are a gospel message family of believers. Let us be a cut above the norm. Let us be radical in the eyes of today's social behavior. Let's truly be a family who cares for another.

So, let's keep outside DRAMA outside of St. Matthias School, a school whose staff has pledged to provide student achievement in a disciplined environment with a school culture that speaks of growth and goodness. I thank you for this and you will see a change for the better with home and school working together. And, let me be clear, this message is meant not only for our Middle School students but for all students.

During my time in leadership at St. Matthias School I have been actively involved in a literacy initiative. Reading and writing, according to studies of our scores over the years and a needs assessment for school improvement, it is evident that we need to be more aggressive in our expectations of student reading and writing habits. The staff members have been provided extensive professional development in workshops and studies where we find a need to bring

our whole group instruction to grade level standards while at the same time work in small groups to move all students ahead. We should be seeing growth patterns in reading and writing for all students.

Our after school Book Clubs have been part of the initiative to move the student's level and volume of reading ahead. This year adding to our literacy initiative there will be a Book Club for parents. On Monday, September 23 at 6:30PM all parents are invited to a book study of *The Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell. Malcolm walks us through all the factors that we can control that lead to student success. I have used his work over the years, believe in much of what he has to offer us and now would like to share some discussion with you in regard to his points. There is a flyer attached to this Wednesday Envelope that you can use to register. I hope to see you there.

There will also be a Book Club for Middle School on Thursday, September 12 from 2:30-4PM on *Stepsister*, and one on Wednesday, September 25 from 2:30-4PM on *Maniac Magee* for grades 3-4-5. Flyers for each of these book clubs are attached as well.

Eileen Brett
Principal
Saint Matthias School