

Happy Catholic Schools Week, Cavaliers, Parents/Guardians, Alumni, and Friends of IHC!

And welcome to my new Principal's Page!

In this space, I will share what's happening around the school with you. I started out by sending quarterly emails to parents, but I found myself writing several reports a month to different audiences. What I discovered was that I was basically saying the same thing. So, here is the one-stop shop where you can learn about what is really going on from me.

Before I get to the meat and potatoes of the school, I would like to start out again with HAPPY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK (CSW)!

I want all of you to know that our faculty and staff greatly appreciate your love, patience with, and support of our school. We love all of you.

Here is how we are celebrating CSW at Immaculate Heart Central School:

Daily Themes

- Celebrate Our Parishes – Sunday
- Celebrate Our Community – Monday
- Celebrate Our Students – Tuesday
- Celebrate the Nation – Wednesday
- Celebrate Vocations – Thursday
- Celebrate Faculty and Staff – Friday

On Sunday, we kicked off Catholic Schools Week with the traditional and very beloved pancake breakfast at the intermediate campus. I would like to thank Kari Conklin, the Bombards, the Rathbuns, the Delaneys, students, and other volunteers for helping this year's breakfast be a success. Even with the turbulent weather, we managed to serve over 80 people. Should I also add the pancakes, French toast, and sausage were delicious? The French toast was my absolute favorite.

Monday

- Primary – Pajama and Movie Day
- Intermediate – Pajama Day
- High School – Lunch with Retired Priests and Nuns

Tuesday

- Primary – Teddy Bear Picnic
- Intermediate – Spirit Day
- High School – Students will create and hang posters around the school that show what they like about their school and Catholic education.

Wednesday

- Primary – Art Extravaganza
- Intermediate – BINGO
- High School – We will post a salute to our military families on a board in the lobby.

Thursday

- All Campuses – Bishop’s Mass at Holy Family Church – 8 am – Students must submit a permission slip for this field trip.
- High School – Create cards for seminarians, the Sisters of St. Joseph, and the local priests.

Friday

- Primary – BINGO
- Intermediate – Crazy Hat Day
- High School – Wear Red Day (the American Heart Association); Senior/Faculty Volleyball Game; Shout Out and Words of Appreciation for our custodial, office, and cafeteria staff

We will also be running an enrollment advertisement the entire week of Catholic Schools Week on the Froggy97, Z93, WTNY, WNER radio stations. The ads will run between 7 am and 10 pm across the stations.

Principal’s Main Job

My job is slightly different from my predecessors. I am the principal of the entire PreK-12 school. In addition to the instructional leader role, I have many other responsibilities. First and foremost, I must advance the mission of our school. We are a Catholic school before anything else. However, there is more to my job than some people know. Here are some of my responsibilities:

- Establish and carry out departmental or school-wide organizational goals, policies, and procedures
- Direct and oversee the school’s financial and budgetary activities with the help of the Education Council’s Finance Committee
- Oversee and manage general activities related to providing services to our students and parents
- Consult with diocesan leadership, the Education Council, the school pastor, faculty, and staff about general operations
- Negotiate or approve contracts and agreements with vendors
- Hire, supervise, and terminate employees
- Identify places to cut costs and to improve performance, policies, and programs
- Manage the day-to-day operations of the school with the help of the vice principals and other school leadership
- Ensure the buildings are functioning well

Vice Principal's Main Job

Manage the day-to-day activities and issues related to students, teachers, staff, and parents. The elementary vice principal is the main supervisor for the primary and intermediate buildings. With that said, we work as a team. We all help each other across the buildings.

I should also add that the vice principals do so much more than what is noted in the description. For example, I assign them many tasks that also fall under safety and security, building and grounds, curriculum and instruction, attend committee meetings, and lead diocesan-based projects.

Advancement

Our advancement department consists of enrollment management, marketing, communication, fundraising, including the Gala, alumni outreach and database management, and advancing the mission of Immaculate Heart Central School. However, the area of this department that is probably the most poorly understood is enrollment management.

The Director of Enrollment Management (DEM) position encompasses a few areas: recruitment, admissions, and retention across the K-12 school. In addition to attracting new students to our school, this person is also responsible for working with different areas of the school community to ensure the new students are making a smooth transition and understanding the issues that impact retention. This role proactively interacts with members of guidance, administration, and faculty to ensure the successful transition from enrollment to active student. Additionally, this person assists in identifying obstacles to student successes and helps to resolve them in a timely and professional manner.

The DEM position at IHC reflects the trend of enrollment management across educational institutions. EM consists of many departments in one. At our school, the DEM, under the direction and support of the principal, functions as the admissions officer, recruitment and retention specialist, and most recently, the international students program coordinator.

Our DEM has been very instrumental in assisting the administration to troubleshoot any issues that impact or could impact the retention of students.

It cannot be emphasized enough the importance of ensuring that we assist new and existing students with issues that could be deciding factors in staying or withdrawing from Immaculate Heart Central School. Although it is important that we enroll new children in our school, it is even more crucial that we remain attractive and competitive enough for students to stay.

Yes, students will leave every year for various reasons. However, it should be noted that the school has managed to retain more students so far this year than the previous year. Mrs. Christin Filippelli's role to ensure our new and existing students are having a positive experience at IHC should not be understated.

Advancement Challenges

Engaging alumni and friends across the generations

- On the one hand, most of the people who enroll their children in school are millennials. However, most of our major donors come from older generations who communicate differently from younger groups. The leadership team is working to address these differences in communication—digital versus hard copy and presentation of content.

Developing a strategic plan with very limited data

- We are developing a strategic plan. Once it is finalized, we will post it on our website.

In the coming months, I will clarify other roles across the school. I know that no one will ever really know the depth of anyone's job, but I think it is helpful to have some sense of what people do at IHC to help it run smoothly. Moreover, we are still a relatively new team and most of us are in new roles ourselves, so we appreciate everyone's patience and support as we continue to move through one of the most important transitions in our school's history.

Other Updates

Gala – The Gala will be at the Italian-American Club. The theme is “Denim and Diamonds”. Sylvia Buduson is going to be the recipient of the “True Blue” Award. She is very excited about being recognized.

Cavalier Campaign – Amanda McIlroy, our Marketing and Communications Director, is reaching out to donors by phone to express our gratitude for their donations. So far, she has called every donor to date. Their receipts have also been mailed out. If you donated but did not receive a receipt or phone call, it is because Ms. McIlroy was out of the office last week completing professional development training.

Varsity Lacrosse – Tonino Alteri is our new Varsity Boys Lacrosse Head Coach. He is an IHC alum from the class of 99. He is very excited about coaching the team for the upcoming season. Christin Filippelli organized a sports assembly, so Coach Alteri could introduce himself to the team and the rest of the 7-12 boys. Amanda McIlroy posted photos and a picture of his introductory letter on Facebook. In 24 hours, we reached over 2,000 people with the news. The numbers continue to grow. Their team meeting was on Wednesday, January 23 at 6:30 pm at the high school. It was a success. What a turnout!

Coach Alteri is not only interested in coaching the varsity team, but he will also assist with providing guidance to volunteer coaches who will provide opportunities for boys in grades 6-8 to work on conditioning, practice, and even play games during and outside of lacrosse season.

News 7 Story – A 7th grader, Grace Lauren Nebie, and her family traveled to South Africa over the Christmas break. She and her family went there to build a well to provide clean water to an entire village of over a thousand people.

Recruitment Video – Amanda McIlroy and Christin Filippelli will be meeting with PBS to produce a recruitment video for the school. They will have their first meeting during the first

week of February. We will invite the Catholic Culture arm of the Education Council to assist us with ensuring that our Catholic identity is properly reflected in the script.

Finalsite – Ms. McIlroy scheduled a one-on-one webinar with a Finalsite representative to discuss creating an online application. Finalsite hosts our website.

Enrollment Website Content – The leadership team has been discussing the enrollment season, including improving our enrollment process and updating information on the website and in any related attachments. I will share more about the upcoming enrollment season next month.

Information Management – We currently use Power School and My Student’s Progress to manage student information, including grades and transcripts. Moreover, we use FACTS to collect tuition and determine financial aid. However, we recently learned that FACTS took over an information management company called Wren Web. If we adopt their new combined system, we will be able to manage our student information, tuition collection, and lunch and after school care payments through one system. If we decide to consolidate our information management processes through one system, parents will only need to access one system to make payments and track their children’s progress at school. Stay tuned for more information as we continue to learn more about the new system.

Kindergarten Screening/Enrollment – Christin Filippelli has been preparing for Kindergarten screening and enrollment with Kari Conklin and Kim Murrock.

Cavalier Leadership Team (Student Ambassadors) – Mrs. Filippelli will plan events with the leadership team to visit local and other parishes in the outer-lying areas to increase our school’s visibility, thank parishioners for their continued support, and boost awareness about our school. The administration will continue to work with Mrs. Filippelli to ensure she has the resources to share with interested families.

Wear Red – The IHC community will support the American Heart Association on Friday, February 1 by wearing red. This will be a free Out-of-Uniform-Friday.

Upcoming PreK-12 Professional Development Activities for February

Social-Emotional Learning Training – The Diocese of Ogdensburg requires that all schools within its jurisdiction receive social-emotional learning training. The administration received training over the summer. We are still moving through the modules as a school. By the end of the school year, the faculty will be ready to integrate the 5 competencies of social-emotional learning into the general curriculum. Once we finish the training, we will share more information about it with the families.

Math Coach Workshops, Meetings, and Observations – The Diocese of Ogdensburg received a grant to train a member of our faculty or staff across the diocese to become a math coach. In addition to providing instructional support to K-6 (and sometimes 7-8) math teachers, the math coach has been trained to train the teachers in an instructional strategy called Number Talks. Sister Gregory graciously accepted the offer to share her expertise in mathematics through this very important position. Research has shown that using Number Talks at least three times a week in class helps students develop mathematical fluency so they can better think through any

type of math problem. Math coaches will hold their positions for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years.

Emergency Response Training by an Emergency Room Doctor – Emergency room doctors will train faculty and staff to assist a wounded person in the event of an active shooter or other emergency. The goal is to try to keep a person alive until emergency personnel arrives on the scene. The Friday, January 25 training was canceled due to a snow day at school. It will be rescheduled.

Safety and Security – Watertown Police Department – We already had two successful lockdowns across the buildings this school year. This spring, we will have two more.

Active Shooter Training – In December, the Watertown Police Department conducted active shooter training for three days at the high school over the Christmas break. Faculty, staff, and Education Council members participated in one of the drills.

Staff Updates

Grade 5/6 Teacher – Sarah Windmueller surrendered her role as the intermediate administrative assistant and assumed the position as the new 5/6 social studies and religion teacher. She earned an undergraduate degree in print journalism and minored in communication studies. She is also over halfway finished with completing post graduate work in elementary education.

In addition, she has worked as a substitute teacher, long and short term in other states. Mrs. Windmueller has also student taught.

We are very grateful that Mrs. Windmueller followed her heart and answered the call to be a Catholic school teacher.

Molly Borland, 5/6 English and Brittani LaJuett, 7/8 English will resign from their positions during the second semester. Mrs. LaJuett's last day is February 8. She accepted a position at a public library. Moreover, Mrs. Borland will move back home to Maryland with her husband who is in the Army.

The teachers notified the families by email. Mrs. Borland, Mrs. LaJuett, the intermediate and junior high teams, and the administration will work to ensure the children transition between teachers as smoothly as possible.

We will post the positions this week.

Intermediate Administrative Assistant – Jodi Ramos, administrative assistant, moved from the high school main office to the intermediate office. She is transferring her international student responsibilities to Christin Filippelli and her substitute and attendance responsibilities to Corrine Mercer, our new high school administrative assistant.

High School Administrative Assistant – Corrine Mercer, a parent of 3 IHC students, is our new administrative assistant in the high school main office.

Hiring Challenges

There is a severe teacher shortage in our area. Public and parochial schools are having great difficulty finding qualified candidates to teach—especially in math, science, and special education. However, our school has difficulty filling positions for elementary teachers, too.

Whenever a position needs to be filled, we advertise and look for candidates in a variety of ways, including posting the positions on our website and through social media and other sites like Indeed.com. The administration also has reached out to local school districts and universities, like Potsdam and Oswego.

We make sure we find the most qualified candidates in the quickest way possible. However, the families need to be aware of the current challenge with hiring qualified candidates for teaching and other positions.

The Virtual High School (VHS) – Exploring

We are currently exploring the possibility of allowing our students to take courses through the Virtual High School. The Virtual High School is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing access to high quality courses in a virtual learning environment. They are accredited through The Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools, Advanced Ed, and the NCAA.

Through the Virtual High School, students will have access to over 150 elective and non-Regents courses. Students as young as the seventh grade will also have opportunities to take classes online.

The school must overcome 3 major challenges associated with expanding our course offerings through VHS:

1. In order to qualify for the very steep per seat, per semester discount, a certified teacher from our school must teach for this organization.
2. We are developing a policy, so we can offer the courses before students select courses for the new school year.
3. There is a cost associated with the VHS. If we can find a certified teacher who is willing to be trained by (for free) and teach for VHS, we will incur a charge of \$160 per seat/per semester. However, the regular cost is between \$375 and \$475 per seat/per semester. Our goal is to keep costs down.

For more information about The Virtual High School, visit <https://vhslearning.org/>.

I will keep you posted as we draw closer to course selection time.

March for Life

Immaculate Heart Central School students joined thousands of others to promote the right to life in Washington, DC.

Safety

STAT has begun the process of installing a keyless entry system at the high school. After the installation, STAT will assess our current needs and add other components as needed. We are also waiting to hear from experts/vendors about reinforcing or removing one of the glass doors by the patio. The police continue to remind us that it is one of our most vulnerable areas around our school building. We are currently looking for a vendor to assist us with this reinforcement.

Once the installation is complete, Jeff More, Head of Building and Grounds, will remove the existing cores on all the external door locks and replace them with new ones. We are making these moves to increase the security of our school.

In addition to the high school, STAT will also install a new PA system to improve communication around the primary building, including between individual classrooms and the main office and between the primary building and the Greystone building. We also want to install the keyless entry system there after the installation process is completed at the high school.

The Independent Study Program – Pilot

We will pilot the new Independent Study Program for junior and senior high students starting the second semester.

At least one student from Ryan Edmond's Introduction to Business class will complete the course through an independent study. Jake Johnson from Jake's Lawncare will mentor the selected student(s) and guide them through a project related to business. Mr. Edmonds will work with Mr. Johnson to ensure the student(s) completes the course as it is reflected in the course description.

Once we complete the pilot, Mr. Edmonds, Mr. Johnson, the student(s), and the administration will discuss what worked well and what we should consider moving into the future. The program will officially begin the 2019-2020 school year.

The draft of the program can be found below:

THE INDEPENDENT STUDY PROGRAM

IMMACULATE HEART CENTRAL SCHOOL

DRAFT

There may be times when Immaculate Heart Central School curricular offerings do not align fully with a given student's academic, professional, and personal development goals or circumstances. In those situations, students may opt to pursue independent work for academic credit with the permission and guidance of an Immaculate Heart Central School faculty member, department chair, Guidance, and/or the administration.

Independent study is just as rigorous, if not more, than a traditional, seated class. Students who choose to follow this path should be highly motivated and have excellent time-management skills.

There are many traits associated with independent study that colleges/universities/employers perceive as desirable from potential candidates. Students will improve their research, writing, reading, critical thinking, and leadership skills by completing an independent study project. Independent study will allow students to lead their own studies or projects under the guidance of a faculty member. In some cases, students may have to ask volunteers to assist them with tasks. To complete the course, students must submit a digital portfolio of their work—from beginning to end. Students can then showcase their portfolio to prospective college recruiters or admissions officers.

The independent study program at Immaculate Heart Central School also connects students, faculty, staff, the administration, alumni, and community members to help students get the most out of their projects and learn from professionals and business leaders who can share their experience, expertise, and help guide students through their study or project. Alumni and community members can serve as mentors for the students under the guidance of the teacher of record.

Another skill that students may develop depending on their project/study is budgeting. Although there is no additional fee for this course, students may need materials that cost money. In those unique cases, students will have to figure out how to raise the money.

Independent study can be taken for credit for non-Regents and elective courses.

Types of Independent Study Projects:

Application-Based Independent Study

Student addresses a complex, real-world, unstructured challenge or opportunity faced by an organization outside or within the Immaculate Heart Central School. He or she identifies a specific problem, chooses a goal or goals to serve as the performance standard for alternatives addressing the problem, evaluates all viable alternatives, and outlines a recommended course of action complete with an implementation plan, timeline, resource requirements, anticipated outcomes, and risks and contingent actions. Students must submit a digital portfolio of their work to receive full credit for the course.

Academic-Based Independent Study

At times a student may be interested in pursuing a traditional academic course that is not offered at Immaculate Heart Central School. In such a situation the student may secure a syllabus from an existing course at another school, complete the work outlined on the syllabus, and author a paper which critically evaluates the content domain of the course. Again, students may receive humanities, social science, science, or any other elective or non-Regents course credit for this course. Students must submit a digital portfolio of their work to receive full credit for the course.

Research-Based Independent Study

Student conducts independent research related to a topic of academic and/or professional interest and creates a Harvard-style teaching case to illustrate the concepts in question. Students must submit a digital portfolio of their work to receive full credit for the course.

<https://www.hbs.edu/mba/academic-experience/Pages/the-hbs-case-method.aspx>