

# MAKING THE GRADE

NEWS FROM THE OMAHA CATHOLIC SCHOOL CONSORTIUM

SEPTEMBER 2016

## HOLY LAND TRIP PROVIDES "FAITH MOMENT" FOR PRINCIPAL

Holy Cross Principal Chris Nelson was one of five administrators and a teacher from Omaha Catholic schools who traveled to the Holy Land for 10 days in July.

The Nebraska contingency was part of a larger group of teachers and administrators from Kansas City and Cincinnati who all participated in the School of Faith, a nationwide program that was launched in the Archdiocese of Omaha in 2013. All archdiocesan schools are participating in the monthly, half-day training sessions. Facilitated by qualified instructors, teachers, staff and administrators come together to explore and learn about the Catholic faith, discuss real-world challenges and focus on personal faith formation. The trip was sponsored by the School of Faith, which is headquartered in Kansas City.

The group spent six days in Jerusalem and four days in Galilee to visit the places that Jesus lived and died in order to help them more deeply understand the roots of the Catholic faith.

Nelson said one of the highlights of the trip was celebrating Mass at Calvary. "It was a profound faith moment," she said. "When we go to Mass, we remember the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord. To be able to actually celebrate Mass in the very place where Jesus was crucified and died was such an honor and was so moving." Participants were able to kneel in reverence and kiss the ground where Jesus' cross was. Nelson said it was incredibly powerful. "If they would have told us it was time to go home, I would have felt completely full!"

The Sea of Galilee was also an important part of the trip for Nelson. "So much of Jesus' public ministry happened in this small stretch of land," she said.

The group spent time at the Papacy of Peter, the area where it is believed that Jesus and Peter reconciled after the resurrection. Nelson explained that even though Peter denied Jesus three times, Jesus forgave him. The group received the sacrament of reconciliation there. "We have the same gift (of reconciliation) available to us whenever we want it," said Nelson. "The grace and healing of reconciliation on the shores of Galilee was beyond words."



Nelson, standing next to the cross at the Papacy of Peter.

Nelson is speaking to other administrators as well as school and parish groups about her experience and what it has meant to her. She said that it's important to her to share this experience with others. On the last night of her trip, when she thanked the organizer for the opportunity to go to the Holy Land, he told her that it wasn't a gift but rather an investment. The investment is "to engage in intentional discipleship, bringing others to Christ through this experience," she said. "This is what is being asked of me in return for the experience, and as often as I can share it, I will."



## BLEND ED LEARNING TAKES SHAPE AT ST. BERNADETTE SCHOOL

Blend Ed Spanish is offering students at St. Bernadette an opportunity to receive Spanish instruction by connecting their classroom via computer feed with the Spanish class at Holy Cross.

The Blend Ed Spanish class is broadcast from Holy Cross to students at St. Bernadette and is taught by Mrs. Susanna Henkel. Henkel is in her eleventh year teaching at Holy Cross. Henkel took high school Spanish and recalls that the class was a struggle. An adult Spanish class at Metropolitan Community College during college ignited an interest in improving her proficiency in Spanish. "That experience, along with the knowledge that I am a quarter Mexican, got me interested in learning more," she said. Henkel plans to start prerequisites toward a Spanish endorsement this summer.

As the instructor at the main location, Henkel provides lesson plans to the teachers at St. Bernadette who then prepare the materials needed for their students. Class begins when both locations join a Google Hangout chat on the computer. Each location has a camera, projector, and speakers. St. Bernadette students see and hear Henkel in their two classrooms, and she can see and hear them in her classroom. Class usually begins with 10 minutes or less of whole group instruction. Students then rotate between two to three stations in their classroom for the remainder of the time. Dedicated Chrome books are used for online activities. Students at the main location and satellite location use Google Classroom to access activities that Henkel posts for them to complete. Students complete assessments and assignments and submit them electronically.

Henkel said she was initially nervous about the technology portion of linking with another classroom, but thanks to help from Jesuit Middle School teacher Mike Mansour, she received a crash course in using the technology and online tools. After a few hiccups at the start of the year the process has become much easier and students and teachers have adjusted to the new teaching model. Students at both schools say that it's fun to see students from another school, some of whom they know from sports or other activities. Using Chrome books and singing along to videos are two of their favorite parts of Spanish class. Students also say they have gotten used to the camera and the new process of joining a chat through video conferencing.

"I like that I am able to provide instruction for students who would otherwise be unable to have Spanish," said Henkel.

The use of Chrome books specifically for Spanish has been an effective tool that allows students to have consistent practice that complements direct instruction. Students have daily practice with vocabulary and often have the ability to do interactive exercises where they can hear Spanish being spoken.

## OUR LADY OF LOURDES WELCOMES NEW PRINCIPAL

Our Lady of Lourdes School has hired Megan Fiedler as its new principal. Fiedler has been in education for 20 years and has taught 7th through 12th-grade English, reading, speech, and drama; served as a literacy coach for a district working with kindergarten through adult education and was an assistant principal and principal at an elementary school.



Fiedler comes to OLL from Bellevue Public Schools.

She has worked in public school districts in Iowa as well as the Omaha Public School District. She comes to Our Lady of Lourdes most recently from Bellevue Public Schools.

Fiedler has a bachelor's in secondary education from the University of Nebraska Lincoln, a master's in reading from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and a master's in education, K-12 administration, from Concordia University.

She and her husband, Michael, and their two sons, Ethan and John, live in Papillion and are parishioners at Mary Our Queen.

"To begin my 20th year of my career at Our Lady of Lourdes and joining the Archdiocese of Omaha and the Consortium Schools has been a blessed transition. I am so thankful to serve the families of Our Lady of Lourdes and our community," said Fiedler.

"Megan Fiedler is a wonderful addition to the Consortium administrative team. Her educational background and experience in reading is a great benefit to the Consortium schools, our balanced literacy initiative, and goal of having every student on grade level in reading by the end of third grade," said Donna Bishop, executive director for the Omaha Catholic School Consortium.

## GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CONSORTIUM FAMILY

You might talk to them by phone or email them with questions. Here's a chance to know a little more about the people working hard to make your Consortium Schools run.

Debbie Novotny and Julie Goetzinger have been hard at work throughout the summer to help all our families navigate the process of registering and applying for tuition assistance. Thanks for your hard work!

### Debbie Novotny

As the Business Manager for the Consortium Schools, Debbie handles accounting and financial reporting functions for the schools and the Consortium office. She tracks payroll and benefits for employees, helps school families with questions and concerns about their tuition accounts, and works with our principals, school staff, and parish business managers on any other business needs.

Debbie grew up in Omaha. She has a bachelor's in accounting and finance and earned her CPA license. She is married and has three children who attended St. Thomas More, Creighton Prep and Mercy High School. When she's not working she enjoys travel and spending time at the family cabin.

### Julie Goetzinger

Julie is the Office Manager for the Consortium Schools. She processes all school registrations and payments for the five schools and processes and pays all cafeteria invoices and records cafeteria deposits. In addition, she provides general office support to the business office and the five schools.

Julie is from Omaha. She and her family enjoy spending most weekends at their cabin on the Platte River.

"My husband, Tom, and I made it a priority when raising our three children that we would make the commitment to send our children to Catholic schools. We felt that excellent academics and faith education were important, along with the real sense of community we felt at St. Thomas More School," said Julie. "All three of our children received a wonderful education at St. Thomas More. Now working for the Consortium, I see that sense of community spreading ... five schools working together. In general, I like the idea that a group of schools use all of their expertise and resources to work together to make improvements on how students are taught and nurtured in our Catholic school environment."

## COOL NEWS FROM OUR SCHOOLS

### CONSORTIUM HOSTS VISIONING SESSION TO HELP SHAPE LONG-RANGE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Omaha Catholic School Consortium will be holding a day-long visioning session on Oct. 19 to support Catholic education in southeast Omaha. During the session participants will collaborate to develop a three-year strategic plan supporting the organizational mission of the Omaha Catholic School Consortium.

"While our five Consortium schools are experiencing success, there is still much work to be done. We still face a number of challenges ahead in our effort to create long-term, viable urban Catholic schools," said Patrick Slattery, superintendent of Catholic Schools.

It is hoped that the session will help better identify and understand these challenges, shape the strategic direction, and define the organization's priorities and goals. Participants will represent both Catholic and public education, alumni of the Consortium schools, Consortium employees, community stakeholders, investors, and consumers.

#### *The objectives for the session include:*

- Determine how to best achieve a sustainable funding model for the five Consortium schools.
- Review the organization's purpose and structure.
- Outline tactics to provide more effective communications to all audiences.
- Position Consortium schools to excel in academic and educator excellence.
- Identify ways to promote Catholic identity and the holistic formation of each student in order to differentiate our schools from others.

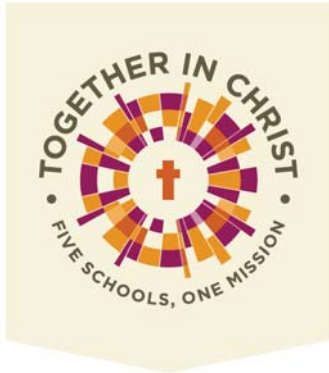
Special thanks to CHI Health for sponsoring this event. If you are interested in knowing more about the session and our strategic planning efforts, please contact Nicole Evans at 402-590-2815.

# CONSORTIUM SCHOOLS LAUNCH ANNUAL FUND

On Nov. 1, the Omaha Catholic School Consortium will launch its first-ever Annual Fund – *Together in Christ: Five Schools, One Mission*. The *Together in Christ* Annual Fund is a collaborative effort to sustain our schools financially, strengthen our tradition of academic excellence and ensure affordable tuition. Tuition covers less than half of the cost to educate a child at our schools. The remaining amount is covered by parish support and through development efforts like the *Together in Christ* Annual Fund.

When you support the Together in Christ Annual Fund, you help:

- Cover our tuition gap. The cost to provide a Consortium school education is \$5,500 annually per student. With our tiered tuition model, the average tuition paid per student is \$2,100. This means we have a \$3,400 per student “tuition gap” to cover annually.
- Increase tuition assistance opportunities. Forty-one percent of our students receive tuition assistance. All families pay a portion of their child's tuition.
- Stabilize tuition costs. Our tuition rates are among the lowest in the Archdiocese of Omaha.
- Provide industry-leading curriculum to prepare all of our students for future academic success in high school and beyond.
- Enhance the use of technology and individualized instruction to support each student in achieving his or her personal best.
- Provide staff development opportunities to encourage professional growth and staff retention.
- Inspire an environment where students can grow in their faith and relationship with Christ.
- Give families a choice in their child's education.



Omaha Catholic  
School Consortium  
Annual Fund

Please consider a gift to the Together in Christ Annual Fund. Gifts can be designated to a specific Consortium school, or to the area of greatest need. Remember, every gift matters. To make your gift today, contact the Development Office at 402-590-2815 or visit [www.omahacsc.org](http://www.omahacsc.org) to make a secure online donation via PayPal. Thank you for your support!

## Alumni, we want to hear from you!

If you attended Assumption, Holy Cross, Holy Ghost, Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Agnes, St. Bernadette, St. Bridget, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Mary, St. Peter, St. Stanislaus, St. Thomas More, or Sts. Peter and Paul - we want to hear from you! Let us know where you are today and we'll keep you in the loop about what's happening at our schools. To register, email [nlevans@archomaha.org](mailto:nlevans@archomaha.org) or visit [www.omahacsc.org](http://www.omahacsc.org).

## Like us on Facebook!

Be sure to check out the Omaha Catholic School Consortium page on Facebook for updates, events and information from our member schools!

This is a publication of the Omaha Catholic School Consortium.

To submit a story idea contact: Nicole Evans, director of Development at [nlevans@archomaha.org](mailto:nlevans@archomaha.org)

Visit our website at: [Omahacsc.org](http://Omahacsc.org)

## Mission

The Omaha Catholic School Consortium provides academic, administrative and financial support to its member schools to ensure students have access to an exceptional education in a nurturing and culturally unique environment, where they are encouraged to explore their Catholic faith and become Disciples of Christ. We are committed to Catholic education that will thrive in our community for generations to come.

## Vision

We will be recognized as a sustainable model for Catholic education with schools that challenge students of many abilities to excel and become faith-filled leaders in service to God and others.

Omaha Catholic School Consortium

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Para hablar con alguien en Español, favor llamar 402-557-5570.