

Good Evening Everyone! Welcome to Back to School Night for the 2019-2020 school year!

I want to thank you all for being here tonight as we gather together in partnership, all for the sake of your children.

Before I share with you our exciting news and updates for this school year, I want to thank you as parents from the bottom of my heart for all of your kind words and actions, which have helped me feel so welcomed and embraced in my new role as Principal here at St. Joseph Elementary School. As many of you know, this is my 7th year here at St. Joseph's, and I feel incredibly blessed to be able to continue serving this school community that I love so dearly. St. Joseph's truly is a special community of families, and I am honored to be your school leader. Know that I love each and every one of your children, and I will work hard every day to put them first and ensure that our school provides them the best education possible.

Enrollment

This year, we give a warm welcome to 59 new students from 32 new families. Welcome to our St. Joseph's Royal family! I am proud to share that our current enrollment for the 2019-2020 school year is 264 students. This is the largest number of students we have had enrolled at our school in over 5 years. I believe this growth in enrollment is the direct result of how each and every one of our families appreciates the effort and results of our school community. Our high enrollment speaks volumes about the quality of education that our teachers and staff work tirelessly to provide your children every day.

Themes for the Year

When I wrote to all of you on July 1st, this was when I first shared with you our theme for the school year: Positivity. As I mentioned when I wrote to you last week in the Friday Bulletin, when I selected this theme I knew I needed to create a plan for how to make this tangible and actionable for our students here at school. To do this, every trimester our students and staff are focusing on a Positive topic. By now I hope that your children have shared with you that our topic for Trimester 1 is "Kindness." You can see this topic all over our school right now! I introduced our focus on Kindness to the students at Town Hall, and we will continue to discuss it weekly at Town Hall and

additionally in the classrooms. Our first Faith Family activity focused on Kindness, and what this means and looks like to the students. Each Faith Family created a poster on this topic, and they are displayed in the Learning Center on the second floor railings. I encourage you to take a look at them when you go over to the main school building later this evening. Also, in the classrooms, students can earn “Kindness Coins” and “Caught Being Kind” awards when their teachers catch them demonstrating acts of Kindness toward others. This helps us spread Kindness and Positivity throughout our school community. Seeing how proud our students are as they earn their Kindness Coins, and seeing how our SJES students and staff have embraced our focus on Kindness and Positivity, truly warms my heart!

When Trimester 1 ends, our Positive topic for Trimester 2 will be about Growth Mindset and Setting Goals. We will be working with the children to help them set and achieve goals by maintaining a growth mindset. The idea of Growth Mindset states that people can take their basic abilities and develop them through dedication and hard work. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment. Here at St. Joseph Elementary School, we want to help our students develop a love of learning and a desire to grow by setting and achieving goals.

Our staff will be working together later this year to determine the focus topic for Trimester 3. I hope you can see the Vision we are working with, to spread Positivity throughout our school community in a tangible way. I encourage you as parents to use the same language at home to help us reinforce these skills!

TRIBES

I am happy to share with you that our school has adopted a school-wide Social Emotional curriculum across all grade levels. The program is called TRIBES. By having students work in classroom tribes on engaging and reflective guided activities, the TRIBES program helps us create a positive classroom and schoolwide environment. The purpose of the TRIBES process is to assure the healthy development of every child so that each one has the knowledge, skills, and resiliency to be successful in a rapidly changing world. Our school’s Mission Statement and Philosophy speak to our focus on educating the whole child - mind, body, and spirit. I am confident that this new social emotional curriculum will continue to help us meet this goal. By the time our students graduate, we hope that they will be good, kind people who know there is a larger world beyond them.

Data Analysis and WCEA

Just like how we are pushing our students to continually learn and grow, we are a professional learning community who strives to do the same. All Catholic schools go through a re-accreditation process, in which they identify goals for themselves to grow and evolve. As a staff, we have been working very hard over the past 3 years on 3 specific goals: integration of technology, curriculum mapping, and data analysis. I want to share with you that we are proud to have made significant progress in all 3 areas in recent years, and especially in the area of data analysis last school year. Our teachers have implemented a system to analyze our STAR standardized testing data, and then in turn use that data to inform instruction for whole group, small group, and individual student levels. We are seeing good results of how this data analysis helps us determine where students need extra academic support or enrichment, and by providing this support we are helping your children thrive.

Because of the progress we have made in our 3 goal areas, I am proud to inform you that at the end of last year, the WCEA visiting committee determined that St. Joseph Elementary School is making excellent progress towards all 3 goals. All 3 of these goals help us ensure that your child stays the focus and center of what we do at our school. Our next accreditation visit will be in 3 years.

Parent Partnership

We know that this success and our other successes would not be possible without you, the parents. We believe wholeheartedly that you as parents are the primary educators for your children. Parent-School partnership is crucial in order for your children to meet with success here at St. Joseph's. The wise African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" is certainly true in our experience, and so on behalf of all of the staff at St. Joseph Elementary School, please accept our sincere and heartfelt gratitude for the partnership that you as parents show us daily. Along these lines of parent partnership, similar to how we want to teach our kids to be kind, we also want to ensure that there is kindness within our working relationships as parents and educators. We all have the same goal in mind - to ensure that your children receive the best education possible.

Along these lines of Parent-School partnership, I believe that we have so many gifts and talents within our parent community that can benefit our school. Whether your gifts are related to your career or a passion, I know you all have so much to share with our school. When it comes to building maintenance, fundraising and marketing, providing enrichment programs for our kids, and so much more, we can use your help. I want to invite all of you to share your gifts and talents to help bring this school to the next level of great. In the next few weeks, we will be pushing out a survey to you - the parents. Please help us by completing this survey, so that we can get to know more about your gifts and talents.

One way we are choosing to increase Parent-School partnership from a school point of view, is by adding a second set of Parent-Teacher conferences in February. These are optional conferences that will be held during school hours. We look forward to having this extra time with you, to share how your child is doing here at school. Please remember you can always set up a meeting with your teacher by contacting them, should the need arise.

Lastly, a housekeeping reminder, but an important one - last week you received a packet with the signature pages required for our Student-Family Handbook. As mentioned in this packet, our Handbook will not be printed this year, but you can find it on the Parent Portal. Please make sure that review the Handbook fully and return the signed forms as soon as possible. To all of the returning families, know we have made changes to the Handbook, so please make sure to review it before signing. The signed forms are due tomorrow.

Thank you again for your partnership, thank you for being here tonight, and most importantly, thank you for entrusting your 264 amazing children to us every day. GO ROYALS! Thank you.