

THE ICRS INSIGHT

*The official newsletter for alumni, supports and friends
of Immaculate Conception Regional School*



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State of the School

Dear ICRS Supporters and Alumni,

ICRS is bursting with good news, and I'm excited to share some of it with you.

First, we completed our accreditation self-study with the WCEA (Western Catholic Educational Association), earning outstanding marks. This quote is from their executive summary. "ICRS offers a solid academic program, while infusing a strong Catholic identity in the culture and climate. The faith formation and growth of students is evident and palpable at ICRS."

We are grateful for our staff and families who share their faith in a loving and merciful God. This faith is the foundation of everything we do at ICRS. The fruits of this Catholic identity are evident as we see school families returning or joining the local parishes.

At ICRS, we also focus on social emotional skill building. We use an array of resources, interventions, and traditions to help students develop their social skills, respond





positively to their emotions, develop leadership skills, and connect. These include our Top 20 SEL curriculum, monthly assemblies, buddy classes, family groups, retreats, and Student Council-led service projects.

Another positive - enrollment is up! We have several full classes for next year, and ICRS is brimming with students who are learning to be kind, faithful learners.

Finances are strong. Thanks to our strong enrollment, the fiscal guidance from our finance council, fundraising,

and distributions from the endowment, we have been able to expand our programming and give our staff substantial raises. While public schools have had to cut programs, we have strengthened our extracurricular programs, including Spanish, art, web design, outdoor ed, paid sports coaches, STEM club, chess club, choir, and music.

Our parent/school partnership works. Our teachers send home weekly emails, parents are encouraged to communicate their concerns with teachers and the administration, and we have several bilingual staff to help our Spanish-speaking parents.

-Sarah Rutherford

Alumni Highlight: Michael Baldwin

by Sarah Rutherford

Michael Baldwin ICRS class of 2014.

Michael graduated from Gonzaga University with a sports management degree and a promotion minor. He briefly worked for Nascar in Florida and recently started a dream job at the Oklahoma City Thunder as a research coordinator for guest relations. He responds to guest surveys, gives feedback to staff, and helps with special events.

When I asked Michael how his ICRS education influenced him today, Michael answered that his core values are rooted in Catholic beliefs. He believes that every person is a child of God. Michael strives to be the person others can lean on and to foster strong community relations





where people are supported and feel that they belong. ICRS activities such as the Syria Rice Day helped Michael see the world from others' perspectives, and he uses this worldview in his work every day. For example, when thinking about OKC fans, he asks himself, "How did they get here? Did they drive across the state? Did they have to save money to buy this ticket?" He tries to be 100% open-minded and sensitive to others' stories.

Michael says that ICRS also taught him to be a lifelong learner (one of our Student Learning Expectations, go Michael!). He asks people at work how he can get better at his job, and he believes that failure is a stepping stone for learning. He also credits ICRS with helping him gain confidence, take personal responsibility, and have a positive self-image.

Michael has a brother with special needs, and this has had a profound effect on him – teaching him values of empathy and service. At times, he uses this life experience when supporting fans who have challenges in the loud and sometimes overwhelming atmosphere of a pro basketball game.

Some of Michael's favorite memories of ICRS are the Science Fair, field days, the Wax Museum with Mrs. Van Selus (he doesn't remember who he dressed up as, but he was a hunter who fought a boar), playing the recorder in the Christmas program with Mr. Fejeren, and talent shows. He had shout-outs for his buddies Tommy Dudek and Jason Norman.

Finally, Michael approaches life with gratitude. He is thankful for his faith, his parents, his family, and his safety net. He feels that he can take risks and try new things because he has a safe base to return to if needed.





Teacher Spotlight: Mr. Bell's Retirement

"Well done, good and faithful servant". This is the Bible verse that comes to mind when I think of Kasey Bell's retirement. Kasey has taught at Immaculate for 31 years, first in P.E., and then in 6th grade homeroom and middle school science. Needless to say, Mr. Bell's time here has made a lasting impact on the

school community and the many students' lives he has touched.

Instead of listing Mr. Bell's achievements, I am including some thoughts from former students. Here is what Betsy Ploudre, class of 2018, had to say:

"I am forever grateful to have had Mr. Bell as a teacher. I don't think I fully appreciated him when I was in sixth grade, but the further away I get, the more I understand how incredible he was. He was patient and kind, and I always appreciated how he took the time to listen to each of us. Anytime I went to him with a concern, I left feeling better. To be able to make your students feel seen is truly a special skill. His most lasting impact on me was his ability to make me feel that he understood me, respected me, and wanted the best for me. This always inspired me to try my best."

Mr. Bell's focus on outdoor education is something else that really impacted me. The seventh grade backpacking trip was the highlight of my year. I never felt so connected with the other students in my class as I did when I was on that trip. It made me branch out from my usual friend group and talk to students that I usually didn't, which was beneficial for my relationships when coming back to class after the trip. When I was in seventh grade, I did not realize how unique of an experience it was to be able to go on a trip like that. I remember Mr. Bell stopping us to demonstrate which mushrooms were edible and then cooking them for us with dinner. Being able to eat the mushrooms that we had found and picked ourselves made me appreciate more how we interact with the natural world around us. He made foraging so exciting to me that I spent time researching it on my own after. Now, I teach plant identification to the kids at the summer camp I volunteer at, hoping to continue this incredible legacy of introducing kids to the beauty of nature. And I still do a reunion each summer to go backpacking with a group of my former ICRS classmates. We are still connected by our shared love of the outdoors that Mr. Bell helped to instill in us.



Mr. Bell's science classes were legendary. He made them engaging and hands on, especially the labs. We would hear about certain assignments from the students in the grades above us, and then eagerly anticipate it being our turn. His astronomy unit was particularly memorable for me. He made me love outer space, and now I teach stargazing seminars at my college. Safe to say, Mr. Bell's teachings are still having a positive impact on my life in a number of ways."

Cady Natoli, class of 2023, recounts her time with Mr. Bell. "Mr. Bell's dedication to his students and their learning is unparalleled. Middle school science was always engaging; whether it be chemistry labs or plant research. An especially fond memory of mine is the outdoor trips to Oyster Dome and Padilla Bay. These contributed to my increased interest in the outdoors and all our world has to offer. Mr. Bell is an incredible teacher who will be missed and will always live as one of the best facilitators of my learning."

In retirement, Mr. Bell wants to spend more time doing the things he loves: gardening, hiking, sailing, biking, and volunteering. He plans to hike the west coast of Vancouver Island this summer and the Pacific Crest Trail from Mexico to Palm Springs this fall.

ICRS Facilities

by Erin Kohlhaas

ICRS will begin construction on a new facility on campus - the covered play area. This structure will replace the bus barn and be a welcome space for children to get outdoors and play during inclement weather. The covered play area will include basketball hoops, space to play wall ball as well as jump rope and socialize with friends while staying dry. Not only are students excited for this long-awaited project, but teachers are also huge proponents. "Our mission supports the whole child. We know that fresh air and exercise promote learning, and this pavilion means no more indoor recess!" - ICRS Veteran Teacher Stephanie Twedt



The covered play area is part of a capital improvement campaign that also includes upgrades to the St. Joseph Center, which is now 25 years old. Our goal is to preserve the facilities for school, parish and community use into the future. Thank you to all the donors who have already contributed to this important project. If you would like to make a gift to our capital campaign, please use the link to

[DONATE NOW](#). Interested in spreading out your donations over time? Commit to a three-year pledge. Please contact Mrs. Rutherford with questions at rutherford@icrsweb.org.



2025 ICRS Auction

by Erin Kohlhaas

Thank you to all our generous supporters for making the Run for the Roses ICRS Auction a record-breaking success! We are very grateful to our entire community for their generosity in helping us raise more funds than ever before – what a way to celebrate the school's 75th anniversary! Thank you to everyone who participated, from donating incredible auction items, to volunteering your time, or attending in full Kentucky Derby-themed attire, to all of the amazing donations towards tuition assistance for families who need this support in order to send their children to ICRS – you made a positive impact on the lives of our students.

This year, we raised over \$300,000 to support ICRS and we are just blown away by the generosity. Of the funds raised on auction night, \$105,000 will support our capital improvements campaign, making our dream of having an outdoor covered play area a reality.

Thank you again for your support of Immaculate Conception Regional School and helping us to exceed our goal for this year's auction!



Meet Our School Commission

The ICRS School Commission is a consultative body that represents the parishes that support ICRS financially. Commission meets monthly to provide guidance and assistance to the principal and pastor. The areas of responsibility are planning, policy formation, finances, selection of the Principal, development, including public relations and marketing, and evaluation of the School Commission goals. School Commissioners promote participation in the ministry of Catholic education, develop ownership and stability for the future, offer financial advice, develop and defend policy, serve as a good public relations source, enable the principal to spend adequate time as an educational leader, provide parents/guardians with a voice in their children's education, and encourage strategic planning. Our Commission Board consists of a president, vice president, secretary and several members at large.



Paul Dunn:
President



Carrie Cammock:
Vice President



Brock Veltri:
Past President



Kiera Wright:
Secretary



Stephanie Bachmeier



Armando Cobena



Viry Delgado



Dan Fisher



Steve Nicol



Tracy Ouellette



Dates to Remember

May 19th: Middle School Art Show and Band Concert at 6pm in St. Joseph Center

June 10th: Talent Show at 12:30pm at St. Joseph Center

June 11th: Celebration of Excellence at 6pm at St. Joseph Center

June 12th: 8th grade graduation at 6pm at Immaculate Conception Church

June 13th: ICRS Field Day

June 18th: Last day of school for the 24-25 school year

September 2nd: First day of the 25-26 school year

Stay Connected

Follow ICRS on social media to stay connected with school news and events and link up with other alumni. Click on the icons below to be directed to our social pages.

Know someone who would like to receive information from ICRS? Please contact Erin Kohlhaas at ekohlhaas@icrsweb.org to be added to our mailing list.

