

SCHOOL YEAR 2021-22:
Interview with Katie Bennett, cont.

What do you see as any particular challenges for San Jose as a school this new year 2021-22? Are there any special goals you (as a faculty) hope to achieve given the continued atmosphere of virus uncertainty, e.g. making school and in person learning as accessible as possible, etc? and for you personally as a teacher?

For this new school year we are looking forward to our Christmas programs. Although we may be wearing masks and socially distancing we can still hear and see the wonderful moments brought together with our children performing again. Lower School will be telling us and showing the true meaning of Christmas, the Birth of our Savior Jesus Christ with a Nativity play. Upper school students will be performing in The Nutcracker Musical. This tradition of acting, singing and dancing in the program, 4th - 6th graders this year will experience a classical symphony of Tchaikovsky. The Nutcracker, his beloved works have been performed countless times throughout the world and through many generations. We have been rehearsing in the drama room for drama club on Wednesday afternoon and the challenge has been the mask wearing. It could be a blessing since a student is having to project and enunciate behind the mask. My hope is that muscle memory will be present when we finally don't need to have masks over our mouths. We are presenting and currently rehearsing Seussical Jr. for the spring musical.

Does your work with students and drama intersect with what is offered in the school worship?

In our weekly Wednesday Day School Chapel 6th graders take on many leadership roles throughout the service. Acolytes, ushers and readers are all student led in our weekly Eucharist. Keys to the Kingdom is our school wide character development program.

*“Jesus says to his disciples... I will give you the keys to the kingdom.”
Matthew 16:19a*

Keys to the Kingdom are the virtues that help children recognize the skills that come easily, but also challenges them to grow and strengthen new abilities. The students learn that it is easy to excel at the things you are naturally good at, but life and faith both call us to acquire more skills than just those that come most naturally. Monthly Keys are chosen to be highlighted to understand and practice. 6th graders will be making a short movie each month to help to teach each of the character traits and keys. The movies will be shown to each classroom during morning class meetings. A key is given in recognition of seeing a student using a particular virtue. Each student has a key chain in their classroom visible and where each key collected is hung. Reflection and introspection is encouraged regularly in each

classroom for students to recognize where they may personally need to work on a particular good character trait.

How do the school and the San Jose Episcopal Church interact? How does the school interact with the local community? [What is the local community?].

We have some wonderful programs offered to the school by Church Children's Ministry leader (Melissa Spediacci) and Church Youth leader (Caroline Bennett). Gospel and Grits is a student favorite that invites students to enjoy breakfast together while learning scripture before school once per month. Cubby Club is offered for the youngest children ages 1-3 and their caregivers are invited to join us monthly for songs, games, art and more. This is a wonderful introductory time for family's to get to know both the School and the Church. Service learning is at every grade level in the school and each month a particular Charity is chosen for a "Jeans Day" where students and faculty bring one dollar to wear jeans and a spirit shirt. The money collected is donated to the given charity. Also, each year group has a service learning project which they adopt. During December for example, each student in 1st grade make and fill up Christmas stockings for St. Mary's Episcopal Church Christmas Shop. 6th grade raise money all year for "Dreams Come True", with bake sales and an amazing night of fun with Bingo. The students lead the event with planning and purchasing the prizes. In December they tie fleece blankets for Wolfson Children's hospital and enjoy delivering them directly except for the last few years due to COVID restrictions.

Is there anything else you would like to share with us?-- and please feel free to adjust the questions as helpful to you in sharing with us what you feel interesting and important to share.

We are looking forward to Episcopal Schools Celebration in October and gathering with all of the Episcopal schools again at St. John's Cathedral. It will be wonderful to share in communion and to see the children worship together. The theme for this year and the chosen verse is just perfect for this time and so very true.

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly; *Isaiah 58:8*

Children are resilient and for me when they are on the school campus their light shines bright and hope and truth are present. This makes any of these difficult times a lot brighter and reminds me daily, I have the best job!