



June 1, 2020

St. Jude of the Lake Catholic School The Year in Review

The 2019-20 school year marked my 3rd year as principal, and I am extremely proud of the growth we have achieved in our students and school. As always, our priority is to ensure our students are safe, nurtured, loved and inspired to learn, whether in our building or at home. The challenge at a school with as rich a history of excellence as St. Jude of the Lake is to maintain all that is excellent while also continuing to grow and improve. Over the past year, we have done just that, even remotely. We proved our excellence does not stop at the door! We are nurturing HAPPY PLACES no matter what the situation is. Most notable to me from this current year includes:

- Great and continued progress on enrollment:
 - A retention of 92% of our current students
 - An increase in student enrollment from 53 to 74 students (as of May 2020: 22 Kindergarteners and 81 students enrolled for next school year);
 - An off the charts increase in school spirit- WE LOVE OUR HAPPY PLACE!
- An increase in our NWEA Map Scores (Fall 2019)
- A continued focus by all teachers on infusing religion, technology, STEM, writing instruction and unique opportunities into all subject areas
- Continued growth of faculty in utilizing student data to inform instructional decisions and provide a tailored learning experience for students
- The continued support of a school-wide community service project, The Blessing Box, and many others throughout the year;
- Expanded financial support and merit scholarship opportunities for our students; and
- The continuation of the countless events, activities, and traditions that make St. Jude of the Lake Catholic School such a great and happy place for a child and family to be! It was truly heart-warming to see and feel the students' excitement and energy levels grow stronger throughout the year. Even in our current climate, we are thinking out of the box to continue the traditions the students and families love and look forward to:
 - Minnesota Water Shed Trout Tank- 216 trout released this year!
 - Saltwater experience
 - Aquaponics Lab
 - Herpetological Society partnership
 - SERVE-A-THON (2019: 30 Days of Random Acts of Kindness)
 - School/Parish Pop Ups
 - World Penguin Day (virtually!)
 - Partnered Events
 - Alumni and Institutional Advancement initiatives
 - LINKS Program (Life Involves New Kinds of Skills): 73 students+10 volunteers= 73 homemade wooden birdhouses!
 - Play Well Technologies and Curious Minds
 - All-School masses and other special celebrations

Our overall building improvements continue to grow in the Outdoor Classroom, Science and Engineering Lab and more robust programming in our library and Differentiated Learning Lab. St. Jude of the Lake will also be refurbishing the current playground facilities to better accommodate our growing community, both parish and school wide. Several other areas that are continuing to thrive are: The Parents Pray & Play (ECFL), Snack and Lunch, and Extracurricular Programs.

The Parish and School Communities made the decision to discern the re-instatement of the Middle School. Criteria has been set and shared with the community.

As we look forward to the coming school year, we have worked hard to analyze our progress, assess our needs and any possible gaps in our programming, and innovate to offer the best experience we can for our students. To that end, here are some highlights and items to note for the 2020-2021 school year:

- **Communication:** As a school, we are always looking for better and more efficient ways to connect with our families. This fall, St. Jude of the Lake will be implementing the unified cellphone app, ParentSquare, to better serve and insure the best communication with our teachers, parents, and greater community as possible.



- **Specialists:** All students will continue to enjoy Specialist Opportunities each week. That means each student will have time each week allocated to Art, Music, PE, and Spanish. The students will also have a regular rotation in the Science Lab and Differentiated Learning Lab/Library and Media Center on a weekly basis. We get very excited about finding a way to fit in everything that is important in elementary education into our schedule and particularly excited about the addition of our updated Outdoor Classroom and weekly Science and Engineering Lab.
- **Science and Engineering Lab:** Speaking of our Science and Engineering Lab, we are increasing our opportunities in that area. This is part of our effort to focus on Science and Engineering teaching and learning and ensure all teachers have access to the space and resources they need to make learning engaging, fun, hands-on, and inquiry based. St. Jude of the Lake was blessed to be awarded the Minnesota Independent School Forum Innovation Grant in 2019 and are super excited we were awarded it again in 2020. In 2019, the monies were used to install an aquaponics system and several vertical gardens. In 2020, the monies will be used for an outdoor greenhouse! The students are learning all about sustainable farming methods through soil and soilless practices. For the 2020-2021 school year, we will have one staff member taking the initiative to build out the program further. The plan is to dedicate a full-time teacher in the area of STEM. St. Jude will also continue to offer Family STEM Nights as a part of our parent involvement component. Our school was lucky enough to receive the Minnesota Watershed Grant again next year. We added an aquaponics component to it. We also received an opportunity to include some saltwater friends to our school family through Amanda The Tank Girl Aquariums. We have complete FOSS and Engineering in Elementary Curriculums on site and our teachers have extensively been trained. We look forward to igniting our students' love of Science, Engineering and Math even more!
- **Robust religious education program** through a Catholic Virtues and Saints Programs, and a Faith and Life parent involvement component to increase awareness and knowledge of our beautiful Catholic faith and how to be great disciples. We also added the Joi Friendly Emotional and Social Health curriculum to compliment the Blest Are We and MagnifiKID curriculums we already offer.
- **SuperKids Reading Curriculum** for OUR SUPER K-2 KIDS! SuperKids is one of the best comprehensive English language arts curriculums for grades K-2 using relatable characters and their ongoing adventures to provide an engaging framework for literacy success for a lifetime.
- **Technology throughout our campus:** We are a 1:1 iPads site and each classroom is fitted with both an Apple TV and Smartboard to integrate technology into the classroom. These resources and tools are effective ways to connect with students of all learning styles and were a lifesaver when implementing and executing distance learning. Families were welcome to check out the devices to help ease the stress and enhance the learning experience from home without any additional cost to them. We have found the studies to be true for our community: students prefer technology because they believe that it makes learning more interesting and fun. They especially like tablets. Subjects that students deem challenging or boring can become more interesting with virtual lessons, through a video, or interactive activities.
- **In House Snacks and Lunch Programs:** We continue to provide all our students with nutritious snacks during the school day and offer delicious well-balanced hot/cold lunch options for purchase 5-days a week.

As you can see, there is a lot in store for the 2020-2021 school year. In addition to all the above, we are also continuing to assess and improve the process of distance learning. Although there is continuing evidence that there is not a one approach fits all to learning during this uncertain and ever-changing time, we are assessing and improving the process. St. Jude of the Lake teachers and staff are also ready to address the possible learning loss as a result of the impact of the school closure on student academic achievement.

Our HAPPY PLACE experience could not occur without the endless energy, skills and devotion of the St. Jude of the Lake teachers and staff. Thank you, and well done to an incredible group of professionals.

I would also like to thank everyone for their continued support. Raising a family can be challenging enough without the added pressures of a global pandemic. Your willingness to rise to the occasion is inspiring.

Final words for our students: Thank you for all your hard work throughout the school year. I am so honored to be your principal; you make me proud to be a PengWINNER. You keep me laughing and energized every day. I am grateful for your joy, wise insights and amazing talents. Best wishes to our graduating fifth graders, whom I will miss greatly—please come back and visit—Once a PengWINNER—Always a PengWINNER!

Stay well...Stay safe...Stay connected...Stay active...Stay in prayer...and KEEP YOUR PENGUIN POWER SHINING BRIGHT!

Enjoy a safe and happy summer break!

Cheerfully In Christ-

Carrie Hackman, Principal