



The Year in Review

The 2020-21 school year marked my 4th year as principal, and I am extremely proud of the growth we have achieved in our students and school, especially this year. As always, our priority is to ensure our students are safe, nurtured, loved, and inspired to learn, whether in our building or at home. We learned an awful lot this year on how to be patient, adaptive, resilient, flexible, supportive, and faith filled. Together, we formed a routine that our students, staff, and community have embraced. This was and continues to be challenging for everyone, but together we made the situation healthier, more comfortable, and even joyful. We created awesome positive memories amid some pretty hard times. I am confident that our community can look back on our accomplishments and be very proud of the way we grew even stronger in our faith, and as a family and community. I LOVE being part of this community. You inspire me every day.

When a school has such a rich history of excellence as St. Jude of the Lake has been blessed to have, the challenge is to maintain all that excellence while also continuing to grow and improve. Over the past several years, we have done just that, even at times from a distance. 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:

- Great and continued progress on enrollment
 - A retention of 92% of our current students: and a 263% growth rate from 2018 to 2021!
 - An increase in student enrollment from 74 to 115 students (as of May 2021: 19 Kindergarteners and 148 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 2020 and Winter 2021)
- 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 such as the Mahtomedi Food Shelf, Encore Senior Living Center, Second Stork, and heroes throughout our community.
- 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!
 - Technology/Coding/Make Spaces
 - STEM Days
 - In-house all-school play production, The Wizard of Oz
 - Saltwater experience
 - Aquaponics Lab
 - Catholic Schools Week (activities galore, service, medallion hunt and carnival)
 - SERVE-A-THON (2020: 30 Days of Random Acts of Kindness)
 - School Pop Ups
 - World Penguin Day
 - Partnered Events- We have mastered drive-by fun!
 - Alumni and Institutional Advancement initiatives
 - LINKS Program (Life Involves New Kinds of Skills): 115 students+10 volunteers= 115 homemade wooden succulent gardens!
 - All-School masses and other special celebrations, like our virtual Christmas concert and Spring performance for both Encore Senior Living and virtual for our at home special guests.

Our overall building improvements continue to grow in the Science and Engineering Lab and more robust programming in our library and Technology/Media Center. St. Jude of the Lake will also be refurbishing the current preschool playground facilities to better accommodate our growing community, both parish and school wide. Several other initiatives that we are looking forward to getting back on the calendar are: The Parents Pray & Play (ECFL) and Extracurricular Programs.

The Parish and School Communities made the decision to re-instate the Middle School. We are so excited to welcome 21 sixth graders to the Upper Commons in our Middle School space. The current plan is to add a grade each year until eighth grade.

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 2021-2022 school year:

- **Communication:** As a school, we are always looking for better and more efficient ways to connect with our families. St. Jude of the Lake implemented the unified cellphone app, ParentSquare, to better serve and insure the best communication with our teachers, parents and greater community. The communication platform has helped us keep our entire campus, PreK- Grade Five families, informed of everything going on at our school.
- **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, STEM, and Spanish. The students will also have a regular rotation in the Science Lab and Technology/Media Center on a weekly basis. We get very excited about finding a way to fit in everything that is important in elementary education, and now our Middle School, into our schedule and particularly excited about Outdoor Classroom, Greenhouse and Apple tree area, and Technology/Media Center.
- **Science and Engineering Lab:** Speaking of our Science and Engineering Lab, we will continue to increase our opportunities in this 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. For the 2021-2022 school year, we will have two staff members taking the initiative to build out the program further. The plan is to eventually dedicate a full-time teacher in STEM. Post-Covid- St. Jude is planning 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 will continue our aquaponics component as well. We are also blessed with the opportunity to include some saltwater friends to our school family through Amanda The Tank Girl Aquariums. We have complete curriculums of FOSS- NEXT GENERATION, Engineering in Elementary, and Mystery Science 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, our students have an increased awareness and knowledge of our beautiful Catholic faith and how to be great disciples. We also enjoy the Joi Friendly Emotional and Social Health curriculum to compliment the Blest Are We, MagnifiKID, and NEW THIS YEAR, for PreK-1, OSV Kids curriculum.
- **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. NEW THIS YEAR will be 1:1 laptops for the Middle School students. 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 2021-2022 school year. In addition to all the above, we are also looking into differentiated assessment. 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 prepared and supported to address any possible learning loss as a result of the impact of distance learning 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. TOGETHER we made great things happen!

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.

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

