

BACK *to* SCHOOL



Supplement of The Catholic Commentator
JULY 17, 2020

A challenging year

The coronavirus pandemic has certainly challenged all of us since March 13 when the state of Louisiana ordered that everyone stay home to help control the spread of disease. Schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge continued to provide online learning support from the first day buildings were closed and finished the school year strong, maintaining rigorous learning standards and providing remote support and encouragement to families. We are so proud of our teachers and principals for their great work!

At the end of the school year students, parents, faculty members and administrators provided anecdotal stories about the experience of continuing to learn from home. Videos of these testimonies are posted on school websites and on the Catholic Schools

Office website csobr.org. The recurring theme for the videos is “Catholic Schools ... Always Learning and Learning In All Ways!”

Even though students were not on campus, they felt connected to their schools and supported by their teachers as they utilized technology for lessons. Connections were made through the livestreaming of teacher presentations, coaching via email, collaboration through Google classrooms and communication through old fashioned phone calls. Catholic school educators demonstrated great resolve in continuing their ministry, astonishing flexibility in delivering lessons online and steadfast resilience to accomplish the mission of completing the school year with integrity.

As we approach the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, we are mind-

ful of the need to return in a way that connects students to each other and to their teachers. Schools currently face the challenge of reopening buildings within health and safety guidelines. Principals did not get much of a summer break this year because they were constantly monitoring updates about COVID-19 in their areas, and committees at each school site met virtually to discuss details about reopening. Each school was afforded the opportunity to consult with a team from Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center to identify best practices to safeguard students, faculty and staff as the new school year begins.

What we know to be true is that students miss going to school, seeing their friends, and connecting with faculty members who provide relational support for learning. Catholic schools educate the whole child — Evangelizing Hearts Educating Minds and Encouraging Talent. Now we know that we can fulfill that mission in a variety of ways in addition to traditional attendance at school. Catholic schools help students learn in all ways!



From the Superintendent
Dr. Melanie Palmisano

Make the transition to high school easier

During the course of an academic career, the average student switches schools three to four times. Elementary school gives way to middle school or junior high. From there, students will transition to high school. If a student chooses to keep their academic journey going after high school, college or trade school awaits.

Adolescence is a transitional period when many students may be learning how to make decisions and taking their first significant steps toward becoming independent adults. That can make the transition from middle school to high school more complicated than previous transitional periods young people experienced.

Several changes take place in high school that can impact students' anxiety levels.

- Students go from being the oldest in middle school to the youngest in high school.
- The student body population typically increases dramatically.
- Curriculum becomes more demanding than it was in middle school.

SEE **TRANSITION** PAGE 12B



ST. JOSEPH

CATHOLIC SCHOOL









Welcome Back to School

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Diocese of Baton Rouge Catholic Schools

STATEMENT OF POLICY

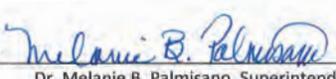
The schools of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, admit students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at its schools. They do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school administered programs.

Additionally, in compliance with Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, no person in the schools of the Diocese shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity except as permitted under said Title IX.

Finally, the schools of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, have adopted and will implement the imperatives of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act as amended, and will inform parents and students of their rights under this amendment to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The above stated policy applies to the following schools and institutions of the Diocese:

Ascension Diocesan Regional School Blessed Margaret of Castello REACH Program Special Education Program Catholic High School (Baton Rouge) Catholic of Pointe Coupée Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School Holy Family School Holy Ghost School Mater Dolorosa School Most Blessed Sacrament School Our Lady of Mercy School Redemptorist St. Gerard School Sacred Heart of Jesus School St. Aloysius School St. Alphonsus School St. John Primary & St. Theresa Middle School – EA/EI Partnership	St. Elizabeth Interparochial School St. Francis Xavier School St. George School St. Jean Vianney School St. John Interparochial School St. Joseph School St. Joseph's Academy St. Jude the Apostle School St. Michael the Archangel Diocesan Regional High School St. Peter Chanel Interparochial School St. Thomas Aquinas Diocesan Regional High School St. Thomas More School
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Signed: 
 Dr. Melanie B. Palmisano, Superintendent

Ashford Holy Family principal

After a thorough search process for a new principal, Holy Family Church in Port Allen pastor Father David Allen said the most qualified candidate was already in place.

Father Allen said interim principal Alise Ashford was appointed principal for the 2020-21 school year.

"I am pleased to announce that (Ashford) has been chosen to lead Holy Family Catholic School as principal for our 71st year," Father Allen said, adding that the Catholic Schools Office of the Diocese of Baton Rouge provided valuable assistance during the search.

He said the school was fortunate to have a number of applicants, and after vetting the applications for strength, a committee chose three for interviews.

"The committee very carefully reviewed each candidate's qualifications within the criteria and standards of the

diocese and our own school," Father Allen said. "At the end of the interview process, and after full discussion the committee made a unanimous recommendation (Ashford) be selected to be our principal with the title of interim removed."

He said the committee was impressed by Ashford's communications style, her commitment to Catholic education and the way her Catholic faith guides her life and decision making. Her references and evaluations from the staff at Holy Family were notable, especially the desire of current teachers and staff for her to return, Father Allen said.

"(Ashford) presented ideas for the continued development of Holy Family School and its staff in forming the whole child in the educational process," Father Allen said. "She also gave insights into more long-range planning and financial vision for Holy Family School in the coming years."



Alise Ashford

Faith inspires Fields

Zachary Fields, principal at Mater Dolorosa School in Independence, has extensive educational experience and a deep faith that has prepared him for his leadership role.

Fields earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in elementary school education and master's degrees in curriculum and instruction and educational leadership from the University of New Orleans. Additionally, he has a non-public teacher certification through the Louisiana Department of Education for grades 1-8 as a reading specialist and in educational leadership.

During the past 22 years, Fields has served at various schools as a teacher and as an administrator.

"This has prepared him for a deep understanding of the teacher and learning process that is central to educational ministry," said Father Ru-

ben Dykes, pastor at Mater Dolorosa Church in Independence.

Fields has served as an English language arts teacher at Madisonville Junior High School in Madisonville, as teacher, department co-chair and junior high assistant principal at Brother Martin High School in New Orleans and as fifth-grade teacher at St. Mary Magdalen School in Metairie. Most recently he was upper elementary assistant principal at St. Catherine of Siena School in Metairie.

"(Fields) believes that educational leadership is truly a ministry rooted in tradition and, at the same time, one that should be spread using modern technology as a tool for communication," said Father Dykes. "He is looking forward to joining the Mater Dolorosa School Family and connecting stakeholders in the common vision and mission of educating God's precious children."



Zachary Fields



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CLASS OF 2020 BY THE NUMBERS

NUMBER IN CLASS

245

DIFFERENT COLLEGES ACCEPTED TO

113

NATIONAL MERIT SEMIFINALISTS

6

AVERAGE COMPOSITE SCORE ON THE ACT

26.7

STUDENTS RECEIVING SCHOLARSHIPS
(92% OF THE CLASS)

226

NATIONAL MERIT COMMENDED STUDENTS

9

TOTAL MONEY OFFERED
(INCLUDING TOPS)

\$21.4M

RECEIVED A COMPOSITE SCORE OF 30+ ON THE ACT
(74 OUT OF 245 SENIORS)

30%



BACK TO SCHOOL! 2020

Kling embraces St. Elizabeth's tradition

Dr. Andrew Kling Jr., incoming principal at St. Elizabeth School in Paincourtville, will lead the school's staff in their commitment to loving their students, ensuring their safety, walking with them, growing them in their faith and expanding their knowledge.

Kling is a graduate of East Ascension High School in Gonzales. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in education from Louisiana State University and earned his educational doctorate from the University of Louisiana in Lafayette.

He's been in education for 20 years, teaching fourth-grade math and science, sixth-grade math, STEM and PE.

"I have had a chance to speak with staff and parents, and it is obvious St. Elizabeth School is rich in history and tradition,"

Kling said. "I expect this to continue. Personally I am thrilled to have the privilege to participate in the education of children while intertwining our Catholic values throughout the process."

He added, "Although the academic growth of a child is extremely important, building up the whole child spiritually, emotionally as well as academically is a much greater cause, one that I am proud to accept."

Kling and his wife, Jody, have been married 19 years and have two boys, Parker, 15, and Paxton, 11.

Kling said he is an educator because "that is where God has led me."

"I chose athletic training as a career but did not realize until later that this was God's way of connecting me to teaching. Af-



Dr. Alexander Kling, Jr.

ter teaching a few years, my principal encouraged me to consider a leadership path, which is ultimately what I did."

After six years of practicing as a certified athletic trainer, Kling gave it up and began graduate school.

"I am blessed to call education my profession. I have always had a desire to serve others, and my passion for teaching children and being a small part of their growth is beyond anything I ever imagined it could be," said Kling.

He spends his free time with family and friends, cooking "because he likes to eat," and sometimes dabbles in woodworking.

"I've lived in Geismar since I was 13, on land that once belonged to my great-grandfather," Kling, who is planning to commute to Paincourtville, said.

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Fontenot fills St. George's top spot

After serving as assistant principal at St. George Elementary School in Baton Rouge, Angele Fontenot is now filling the school's top leadership position.

Fontenot, who has also taught physical education and fourth grade at St. George, was chosen as the school's principal for the 2020-21 school year.

"In this position I hope to maintain the high academic standards that St. George is known for by enhancing an already rigorous curriculum," Fontenot said. "Technology and engagement will be used to increase the relevance of instruction."

Fontenot earned a bachelor's degree in education from Louisiana State University and a master's degree from Southeastern Louisiana University. She attended elementary school and high school in New Orleans and

also stayed at home for 10 years to raise her children.

"Working in Catholic education is my heart and my calling," she said. "I feel blessed to be able to influence lives not only academically and socially but also spiritually."

Fontenot used a quote from Pope Benedict XVI stating that a good school provides a rounded education for the whole person and that a good Catholic school should help all its students to become saints.

"This is a tall order but I believe when you have teachers, parents, administration and students all working toward this common goal then everything else will fall into place," Fontenot said.

She and her husband Murray have been married for 25 years and have two children in college.



Angele Fontenot

New structure at Catholic of Pointe Coupee

Catholic of Pointe Coupee School need only look internally to lead the school in its new administrative leadership structure.

Jason Chauvin, who served as principal of Catholic Elementary School of Pointe Coupee, was appointed principal of grades K-12.

St. Mary of False River Church in New Roads pastor Father Pat Broussard said Chauvin's appointment brings "our campus under one principal, consistent with other schools in (the Diocese of Baton Rouge)."



Jason Chauvin

Chauvin will work with an administrative team consisting of assistant principal Fran Olinde and dean of students Lauren Doucet. Father Broussard said the three administrators will provide leadership and service in a fresh, new way to better meet the educational goals of the school's ministry.

Chauvin earned his Master's of Education in Educational Leadership from LSU and has served Catholic of Pointe Coupee as a high school teacher and coach as well as an elementary school

administrator.

Because of his experience, Chauvin "offers a unique perspective on the bridge between the program in service to families," Father Broussard said. "With the new administrative structure, the school will more clearly fulfill that vision and continue to provide a religious, academic and disciplined Catholic education whereby students develop their talents in service to school, church and society."

Olinde has extensive experience in education and has served as assistant principal at Catholic High of Pointe Coupee since 2013 until he became the elementary school principal in 2019. Father Broussard said Olinde is well-versed in aspects of school management to ensure the requirements of the school are met.

Father Broussard noted that Chauvin's focus has always been on his commitment to helping students reach their full potential in the classroom, in the field and within their community."

How to prepare kids to go back to school

The end of summer can be a bittersweet time for students. While many students look forward to seeing their friends, few want to say goodbye to the relaxing days of summer.

Parents know that getting their children back in the school day swing of things can be a challenge. The following are

some ways to make that transition go smoothly.

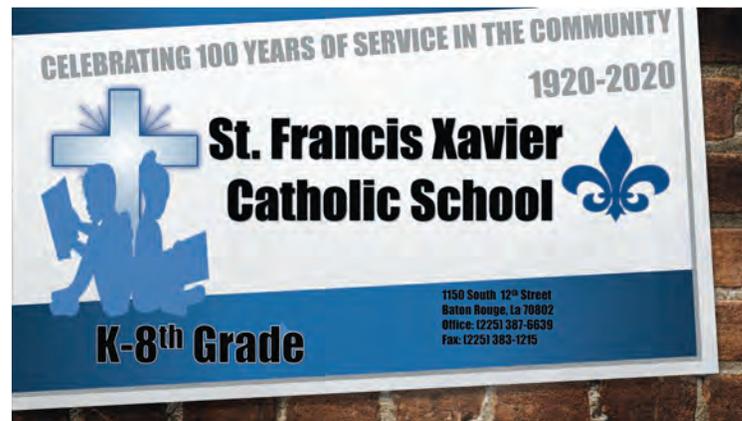
• Introduce more structure as summer vacation winds down. The chance to unwind in a structure-free setting can benefit students at the onset of summer vacation. Many parents grapple with the notion that their children's lives are

overscheduled, and the Cleveland Clinic notes that limiting organized activities clears up down time for kids to play and relax and spend time with their families. So it's important that parents afford their children this down time during summer vacation, only gradually

SEE PREPARE PAGE 7B



WORKING REMOTELY – St. Francis Xavier School in Baton Rouge like most other schools ended its 2019-2020 school year having classes remotely. Photos provided by Paula Johnson | St. Francis Xavier School



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Love One Another

Photo by Tim Mueller

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Sacred Heart's theme: Love One Another

Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Baton Rouge has selected "Love One Another as I Have Loved You" as its theme for the 2020-21 school year.

The theme is beautifully illustrated in original art that depicts Sacred Heart students playing on the playground in front of the school. The artwork is by retired Sacred Heart of Jesus School art teacher Dorothy Calandro.

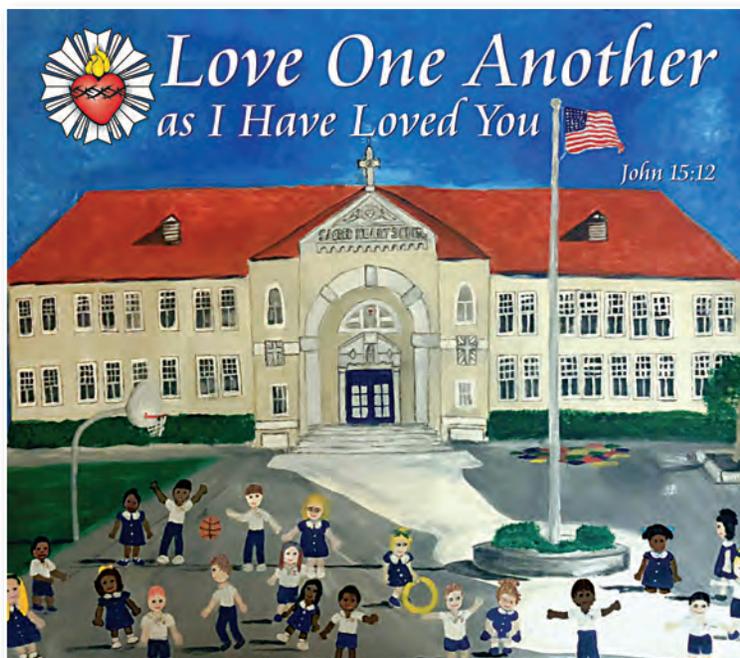
According to principal Cecilia Methvin, the artwork actually inspired the theme.

"Dorothy's work truly embodies the spirit of Sacred Heart," noted Methvin. "You can feel the love on the playground!"

The school will also incorporate the following prayer into the school year as an extension of the theme: "Turn the world, Spirit of Peace, until reconciliation is on the wind. We are your witnesses. Transform our hearts, Spirit of Life, until love is in each breath. We long for your restoration. Remain with us, Spirit of Liberation, until justice burns like a refining fire."

"We are blessed with an incredible student body, one diverse in so many ways, yet united in Christ," Methvin said.

The school theme is displayed in all classrooms and offices of the school and is printed on the



Original artwork created by retired Sacred Heart of Jesus School art teacher Dorothy Calandro. Photo provided by Sacred Heart of Jesus School

school's spirit T-shirts.

"We go to a school that every single day teaches the very things Jesus taught us... to love, to respect, to forgive, to see the value in all life, to stand up for injustice, to have conversations with our kids about how to be better and do better," said Sacred Heart parent Julie Massey.

Sacred Heart of Jesus School takes great pride in the diversity of its student body, its physical abilities, race, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomics and neighbor-

hoods.

"One of the big reasons I chose SHS was because it was more diverse than the other private schools," said Amanda Graves, a Sacred Heart parent. "And I was not disappointed. I believe it gave my girls real life experiences, as well as a great education, with knowledge how to interact with people of different backgrounds. It's the best decision I ever made."

Parent Meghan Bland said she believes "All of us who send our kids to this amazing school are raising our kids to be the change this world needs."

Methvin said she believes Sacred Heart's unique diversity is why many parents have made the decision to send their children to the school. She said the administrating is hoping to part-

ner with the parents in helping students "navigate this world of indifference."

She is planning increased communication among the administration and parents with the goal of showing "other communities how to dialogue about our differences and find a safe space to share our stories."

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PREPARE ▼

From page 5B

introducing more structure as the school year draws closer. In the weeks before the school year is slated to begin, start waking kids up a little earlier and reintroducing bedtimes for younger children who may have been staying up later over the last couple of months. This can be an effective way to begin slowly preparing youngsters for the structure of the school year.

• Encourage children to read throughout the summer. A report from the education publishing company Scholastic found that 47% of parents are unaware of the "summer slide," which refers to the loss of academic skills that occurs when school is not in session. Scholastic notes that the slide is largely attributed to a lack of reading when school is not in session. By encouraging kids to read during their summer vacations, par-

ents can make sure youngsters' brains stay sharp and are ready to learn once the school year begins.

• Focus on the positive. Even kids who love school may be apprehensive about returning to the classroom. After all, summer vacation is fun. Parents can confront that apprehension by focusing on the positives of returning to school. Emphasize the chance to see friends every day or participate in a beloved extracurricular activity, like sports, band or a favorite academic club.

• Let kids do some of their own back-to-school shopping. The items that constitute back to school supplies may have changed since parents were in school. But many parents still take their children on back-to-school excursions.

Parents can take various steps to make the transition back to school a successful one for their young students.

St. Joseph's Academy celebrates Class of 2020

With schools across Louisiana closed during the last quarter of the academic year by the coronavirus pandemic, St. Joseph's Academy in Baton Rouge found unique ways to celebrate its 2020 graduates.

Seniors prepared for the end of their high school careers with several time-honored traditions held virtually. Ten seniors participated in the May Crowning ceremony from their homes, and members of the class of 2020 presented their Senior Poem and Farewell Skit online. The class of 2020 received a beautiful and poignant message from Father Michael Alello, whom they had chosen to preside over their Senior Mass, which was cancelled.

The seniors provided pictures of themselves with their college acceptance letters, wearing T-shirts or other apparel from their schools of choice. These images were featured on SJA's social media pages, as were detailed spot-

lights of each member of the class, including their portraits, biographical information and special memories from their time at St. Joseph's.

SJA celebrated the class of 2020 with the 54th annual Honors Convocation, pre-recorded by the leadership team on May 12 and shown on its originally scheduled date of May 15 on the school's Facebook page and YouTube channel.

Determined to host a graduation ceremony of some description, principal Stacia Andricain and her team spent countless hours devising a way to safely bring the class to campus.

"Many of the seniors would say they didn't know on that Friday afternoon of March 13 that they would not return to their campus they so dearly love," she said. "We knew that had to be our goal for graduation: to give them another moment on campus that would allow SJA to congratulate them on their accomplishments and



Graduates Allee Rogers, valedictorian Shreya Reshamwala and Madison Roy toss their caps after receiving their diplomas on May 17. Photo provided by St. Joseph's Academy

for the seniors to say goodbye."

On May 17, the 262 members of the class of 2020 experienced a unique graduation ceremony. Observing social-distancing and crowd-size restrictions, the graduates came to campus with

their parents/step-parents in groups of 16 or 17 in 30-minute intervals to receive their diplomas.

Following a tightly choreographed schedule, the first group of families arrived at 9

a.m. Remaining in their vehicles, they were arranged in alphabetical order; received earned medals, cords, stoles and certificates; then moved to an on-campus parking lot with
SEE SJA PAGE 13B



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St. George maintains tradition with a new twist

Most Catholic elementary/middle schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge have a rich tradition of events that mark the end of students' eighth-grade year. St. George School in Baton Rouge is no exception.

For several years, the eighth-grade classes have celebrated the end of their time at St. George with a field trip to New Orleans, a final Spirit Day, eighth-grade dinner and more. However, this past school year would prove to be much different.

The scheduled day of the last pep rally for the year was March 13. No one could have guessed that this would also become the last time students would be together during the 2019-20 school year.

Eighth-grade faculty member Shannon Landry said, "The end of the year was just surreal. We went from cheering at a Friday afternoon pep rally to packing up lockers at the end of the day. I don't think any of us thought that would be our last day of school on campus."

Keenly aware that every eighth grader looks forward to the end-of-year activities as they approach graduation, the St. George faculty and administration jumped into action, striving to make the most of a difficult situation as these students missed the traditional activities because of the COVID-19 quarantine. Creative and innovative celebrations began to come to fruition from a "Congrats Class of 2020" yard sign each student picked up during a drive-thru opportunity to another drive-by celebration as each student leaned out the window to take a picture with the famous Victor the Dragon mascot while proceeding to drive to the gym to pick up their graduation gown and special memory books.

Faculty member and eighth-grade parent Emily Dirks said, "As disappointing as it was that school couldn't end in the normal way gathered together as a community, St. George did a great job taking this celebration and making it last as long as possible. I felt like every time we went to school to pick up signs, gowns, memory books, take a picture with Victor or gradua-

tion day, we got to celebrate our children in our own way."

In the past, after prayer and the meal at the annual dinner, the eighth graders would sit on the floor and watch a special video which included their baby pictures and pictures from school events all the way back to kindergarten. Typically, chatter and laughter ensued as the students tried to figure out which student is in each baby picture.

This celebration normally includes a special skit performed by eighth-grade teacher, Mr. Malady. The eighth-grade video and a video of the skit were emailed to all families. The Dirks family chose to invite two families over to their house so the boys could watch the videos together. Other families chose similar at home activities or took their graduates out to dinner. Whether at home or in a restaurant, many students sat together and watched the videos.

Historically, on the last day of school for eighth grade, the sidewalks are lined with second graders, the little buddies of the eighth-grade students. Unfortunately, this memorable moment was not able to take place, but eighth-grader Jack Dirks did receive a special visit from his little buddy, Bennett Knight, at home.

Graduation has always been such a special celebration at St. George so it was important to the administration to make sure the students would have an in-person celebration. The eighth-grade closing ceremony was held on May 28 in St. George Church, with only the students and faculty in attendance. Parents sat in their cars in the parking lot and watched the ceremony via the St. George Church YouTube channel. In advance of each student receiving their diploma, along with any other awards or scholarships, students' parents lined up in alphabetical order outside of the church. Just prior to students being called to the altar, their parents entered the back of church to see that magical moment, snap a picture or shed a tear and return to their vehicle to finish watching the closing ceremony.

"Even though the kids were spaced out in church, they were

all happy to be together in some capacity. For those of us who had been to a St. George graduation before with Mr. (Jack) Nelson and this administration, we were at first very disappointed at the thought of our kids not having that experience of hearing him speak about the class and seeing all the kids we have seen grow up together not make this big step together. Although this year's ceremony was very different, it was still a memorable one for the parents but more importantly for the kids. Doing it virtually allowed the parents to see it all

SEE **GEORGE** PAGE 13B

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STM continued to ‘inspire and serve’ during pandemic

For the past year, members of St. Thomas More Church in Baton Rouge ministries have used the expression “Be More” as a simple reminder of their need to continue developing additional means “to guide, to inspire and to serve” members of the STM community.

When the St. Thomas More School campus was closed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, STM faculty and staff members immediately applied an action plan that was in the making at least a month ahead of the school closure, and the school quickly mobilized its program of teacher supported online learning.

At the same time, STM teachers were not satisfied that they were doing everything that they could to address the needs of school families during such a challenging time. They began to consider methods of outreach to continue to build the school community, even during a time of campus closure. They asked themselves, “How can we ‘Be More’ for our students and their families?”

Their responses were creative, effec-

tive, loving and caring.

Morning Assembly: STM faculty members realized that much of their students’ lives were different as a result of their “stay at home” requirements. According to STM vice principal Ashley McDaniel, “In order to promote some sense of ‘normalcy,’ each school day STM administrators led a ‘morning assembly’ that closely modeled the daily school-wide assembly that occurred when students were on campus.”

Including prayer, the Pledge of Allegiance, birthday recognitions and special announcements, the morning assembly, posted on Facebook and YouTube, provided a structure for the rest of each school day’s learning activities.

“The three administrators took turns leading assembly, and we each took a slightly different approach in our efforts to stay connected with our students,” McDaniel said.

Bedtime stories: One of the most popular STM initiatives was the evening “bedtime stories” that were delivered by

faculty and staff members, frequently who were dressed in their nighttime attire. Librarian Sara Wisdom explained, “Our students are used to hearing their teachers read to them. This offered a nice way for our teachers to stay connected with their students through our YouTube channel and our Facebook page.”

Many STM parents have said their children would watch these stories repeatedly and at different times of the day because they enjoyed them so much.

Teacher Variety Show: Because STM typically hosts a student talent show, and that was not possible during “stay at home time,” teacher Kristin Baldrige developed the idea for a teacher variety show. “We had a great response from our STM team with 33 faculty and staff members participating in the variety show for the entertainment of the STM community,” Baldrige explained.

These faculty and staff performances, including a stirring rendition of “Sister Act,” drew rave reviews along with much appreciation from students and their par-

ents.

Spirit Week: In order to keep school spirit alive, PE teacher Ashley Llaneza and her enrichment teaching colleagues developed a Spirit Week during the last week of classes.

“We had Pajama Day Monday, Talent Tuesday, Wacky Hair Wednesday, America Strong (red, white and blue) Thursday and Dash Into Summer Friday (a family walk or run) for us to stay connected with our students and their families during this difficult time,” Llaneza said.

Enthusiastic participation led directly to STM’s closing activity for the school year.

End-of-the-Year Parade: Typically STM and other schools conduct some type of year-end activity to provide closure for a school year. Because the traditional gathering was not possible, music teacher Ruth Linder led an STM-hosted parade. All faculty and staff members lined up around the blocks surrounding the school so that they could express their love and

SEE STM PAGE 11B



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CLOSING CEREMONIES – SJV School kindergarten and pre-k closing ceremonies looked a little different this year. Families drove through the school’s parking lot and teachers handed them their certificates. Many families decorated their cars to celebrate the occasion. Photos provided by St. Jean Vianney School

STM ▼

From page 10B

appreciation for their students and wish them well until they all gather again for the start of next school year.

“Cars were decorated. Students were throwing treats to their teacher; one even threw face masks. Many teachers were dressed in costumes and set up tailgates in college football game style. Joy was our theme this year, and we certainly experienced great joy during this closing activity,” Linder said.

At St. Thomas More School, “Be More” is not just a catchy play on words using the school’s name; it is a call to action for all members of the STM community, and a call to which faculty and staff members responded exceedingly well during a difficult time.

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Photo by Darlene Aguilard

MBS ready for new school year

Ready or not, the 2020-2021 school year is upon us, and the Most Blessed Sacrament School in Baton Rouge's faculty and staff have been busy getting ready.

Like Helen Oxenbury's well-loved children's book, "We're Going on a Bear Hunt" says, "You can't go over it. You can't go under it. You gotta go through it."

COVID-19 or not, we will get through this year.

Last year, a master plan was created in consultation with MBS stakeholders. During this planning process, the importance of our school environment reflecting the mission of the school was discussed, and many changes were put into place that are now coming to fruition.

Pre-Kindergarten through first grade have increased the number of homerooms to al-

low for smaller class sizes and more individualized instruction. The middle school, consisting of grades sixth through eighth, will now have four temporary classrooms, one of which is in the new science lab. The Accelerated Math program has also been expanded to include fifth- and sixth-grade students. The school, as a whole, will now be utilizing the FACTS web system for admissions, enrollment, grading and everything in between.

Our usual summer practices are taking place as well. New faculty members have been hired and will soon participate in the new teacher mentoring program, Pelican Pals.

Current teachers are participating in professional development focused on the use of technology both in the classroom and

remotely. Student ambassadors are being chosen and trained to help with school functions.

Schedules have been created, furniture and supplies are being delivered daily and retreats and religious programs are being planned. Perhaps most important this year, classrooms and facilities are being deep cleaned in an effort to improve health and safety practices.

MBS is fortunate to be supported by a loyal community of families, many of whom are alumni. While some things will look a little different in the fall, we will go over, under it and through it together.

We will continue to honor our promise to serve our church, families and community by nurturing Gospel values, academic excellence and a lifetime of prayer and service.



Learning at home is different from being in a traditional classroom environment, but with some effective strategies, students can persevere without missing a beat.

TRANSITION ▼

From page 2B

- School hours change, often requiring students to wake up earlier.

- A new school may mean students are funneling in from different feeder schools. Long-time friends

may be separated depending on where they ultimately choose to go to high school.

A 2016 survey from the Pew Research Center found that 70% of teens say anxiety and depression are a "major problem" among their peers.

To help make high school a positive experience and less likely to induce anxiety, students and their parents can employ these tips.

- Establish a consistent routine. The education resource CollegeVine advises students to build good study habits, create a calm and organized homework environment and focus on studies while keeping distractions at bay.

- Encourage extracurricular activities. Activities outside of the classroom are a great way for students to make friends and involve themselves socially with their peers. Such extracurriculars can lead to strong friendships that flourish throughout high school and beyond.

- Buddy up. Just as they might have done upon entering kindergarten, students on the cusp of starting high school can find someone who will be attending the same school and go over schedules and potential meet-up times. They can make plans to sit together at lunch as they both get acclimated to their new environments.

- Attend open houses. Families can tour the campus to get a feel for the layout of their children's school. Ask for a map of the school grounds so students can get an idea of where their schedules will require them to be throughout the course of the day.

The transition to high school is a significant one in the life of a teenager. Families can employ various strategies to make that transition go smoothly.



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SJA ▼

From page 8B

numbered parking spots. When directed by an SJA representative to exit their vehicles, families moved through a series of carefully spaced tents toward the back of St. Joseph Hall.

There, each young woman, accompanied by her parents, was announced by longtime SJA faculty member Jill Abadie and the student received her diploma from Andricain. Each graduate then received a red rose, courtesy of the SJA Alumnae Association, from SJA president Jan Breen. Graduates then posed for a family picture and received a miniature bundt cake, courtesy of their little sisters from the class of 2023, and five copies of the keepsake graduation program.

Families returned to their vehicles to exit the parking lot, making room for the next group's arrival. The last group of graduates received their diplomas at 5 p.m.

A video of the commencement exercises was produced by

the SJA Communications Department. It featured the conferring of diplomas, the salutatory address by Mary Catherine Daniels, the valedictory address by Shreya Reshamwala, the sending forth by Breen and the singing of the alma mater by Annie Blanchard. The video was shared on several media platforms on Sunday, May 31.

While the spring of 2020 will never be forgotten, Andricain said SJA will continue to come together as a school community to ensure a successful start to the 2020-2021 academic year. The leadership team worked diligently during the summer to create best strategies for teaching and learning while keeping all members of the school community safe.

"We continue to develop the lessons we learned, both the successes and the challenges, and move forward," Andricain said. "The fall semester will look unlike any that has come before it, but we will forge ahead to educate our young women in the spirit and charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph."

GEORGE ▼

From page 9B

as well," said eighth-grade parent and St. George athletic director Ashley Bourgeois.

Nelson, outgoing principal, spoke to the class saying, "I'm sure this is not the way any of us envisioned closing out the school year together. It would be easy to look at all the negatives, the things that we missed on, the events and be a little discouraged or disappointed by that but let's not do that, let's not dwell on the things we can't change, that are out of our control, but let's look at the positives and there are many positives and lessons that we learned during this time. I think that we have all learned valuable and important lessons; we learned to persevere; to keep working through the challenges; to not give up. We learned to be flexible, to make adjustments, to find new and innovative ways to succeed when roadblocks were put in front of us and there were many. I also think that we learned to step back and reflect and ponder on what is really important in our lives God, family and friends. When each of you entered the church today there was an energy, there was love,

there was happiness, as you connected with your friends and classmates once again albeit a little more different."

St. George parishioner William Day penned the lyrics to an original song dedicated to the Class of 2020 titled "Under the St. George Oaks." "I had a feeling and needed to write something. The St. George Class of 2020 needed to know that they are the roots of St. George Catholic School community. They have endured something no one has ever had to endure during a school year," said Day.

St. George Church director of music and liturgy Blake Bruchhaus composed the song and pastor Fr. Paul Yi, along with director of development and communications Ashley Fabre and youth minister Catherine Stewart, sang the song at the end of the closing ceremony. Fabre said, "It was emotional singing this song from the ambo overlooking these resilient students that have been through so much these last few months. To sing a song in their honor was the least we could do in hopes to uplift their spirit and remind them they left an imprint at St. George and they will forever be a part of the St. George community."

Our Lady of Mercy welcomes new leaders

In the midst of planning for the opening of the 2020-21 school year, Our Lady of Mercy School in Baton Rouge has adjusted its leadership team.

"With Kristy Monsour leaving to become the administrator of the REACH program (Diocese of Baton Rouge Special Education Program), it was a perfect time to put together a new leadership team," said principal Chris Porche.

The new team has been assembled by changing the roles of some current employees, as well as, bringing on a new director of early childhood education. Allyson LaBorde, current Upper School Assistant Principal, will have the new title of Academic Assistant Principal. Her new role will have her working with teach-

ers in the upper and lower schools.

Duane LeBlanc, current Dean of Students and band teacher, will now be Assistant Principal of Student Life.

The newest addition to the leadership team is Belinda Baker, Director of Early Childhood Education. Baker began her teaching career in 1981 in the Archdiocese of New Orleans as a second-grade teacher. She also spent many years in the classroom as both a kindergarten and prekindergarten teacher.

At Holy Cross Primary School in New Orleans, Baker had the experience of opening a school for boys in Pre-K through fourth grades. She spent her first year at Holy Cross choosing curriculum, furnishings, working on ad-

missions and hiring the faculty and staff. When the school opened, she served as the director of the Lower School.

A long portion of her career has been spent at Ursuline Academy in New Orleans, first as a teacher and then the early childhood director. She had the unique opportunity to help with the development of the Early Learning Center at Ursuline and to manage the instructional program for the toddler 1 through kindergarten classes.

"I am excited about our new team. (LaBorde), (LeBlanc) and (Baker) bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to our team. I feel this team will be instrumental in providing leadership to help bring our school into the future," said Porche.

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Internet safety tips for students

The classrooms of yesteryear are distant memories. Gone are chalkboards, which have made way for smartboards. Even textbooks are slowly being phased out in deference to online curriculums. Modern classrooms are outfitted with

digital devices that connect students to the internet.

A 2017 report from Common Sense Media said that children up to age eight spend an average of two hours and 19 minutes every day on screen media. Children between the ages of eight and 12 spend an average of four hours and 36 minutes on screens. Much of that time is spent online.

While the internet can be a useful tool for students, it can also puts students at risk of falling victim to online predators. The internet also keeps students in constant contact with their peers, which can be troublesome for students who want to get away when they get home at night. These reasons and more are motivation enough to practice good digital citizenship and follow these safety tips.

- Exercise caution with photos and videos posted online. These images, even when posted harmlessly, can weigh on a student's reputation. They may even impact acceptance to schools or career opportunities in the future. Always think before posting, as content remains in cyberspace indefinitely. And remember, many schools screen for inappropriate content. Sending harassing or inappropriate material to others may result in disci-

plinary action.

- Recognize the threat posed by online predators. The Crimes Against Children Research Center says one in five teenagers in the United States who regularly uses the internet has received unwanted sexual solicitations through the web. In addition, 25 percent have been exposed to unwanted pornographic material online. Students need to be aware that not everyone on the internet is an upstanding citizen.

- Keep personal information private at all times. The service eMarketer says that 75 percent of children are willing to share personal information online about themselves and their families in exchange for goods and services. Students need to be better educated about protecting their passwords, ages, addresses and other personal information.

- Stop cyberbullying before it starts. Students can be educated about the correct way to use the internet and how to report cyberbullying. Students also can take pledges to never make others feel uncomfortable online.

Online safety is a growing concern for students, but there are ways to keep kids safe.

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Tips for effective remote learning

An increased reliance on virtual home instruction has many students rethinking their organizational strategies and daily school schedules. Learning at home is different from being in a traditional classroom environment, but with some effective strategies, students can persevere without missing a beat.

Stick to a schedule

Many students are successful because they follow a schedule. The Center for Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning says that routines and schedules are important because they influence a child's emotional and cognitive development. Children feel secure

with schedules, which may help them recognize what's expected of them.

When learning at home, students should strive to maintain as consistent a schedule as possible, including bedtimes, wake times, hours devoted to learning, and time to get outside or engage in downtime activities.

Connect live if possible

There are many free tools and resources available that enable teachers to provide live video lessons or to record them so students can watch them later. Similarly, social networking apps and virtual meeting programs enable students to connect digitally. This can be helpful for collaborative learn-

ing assignments or just to see a familiar face.

Stick to tools that work

Once students find apps or systems that work, they should stick with them, offers Khan Academy, an educational tutoring resource. There are many factors outside of one's control during virtual instruction, but maintaining consistency with tools and schedules is one way to feel more confident and secure.

Check student accounts frequently

Just like students, teachers may be learning as they go in

regard to remote learning strategies. Students should be sure to check school email accounts or other places where teachers post assignments a few times per day so that they stay on top of all assignments and are aware of due dates.

Reach out to instructors

Allegheny College suggests students contact their teachers if they are unsure of how to participate in remote learning environments. Ask questions about assignments, get clarification on key topics and be sure to tune into any remote chats or virtual "office hours."

Stay in touch with guidance, if needed

Remote learning is a new experience for many students, and there may be certain struggles or road blocks. It can be easy to grow frustrated with equipment failures or lack of in-person interaction. Schools employ qualified therapists and guidance counselors who are just a click, call or email away if issues need to be talked through. Students should utilize all resources made available to them.

Virtual home instruction can be made even easier with some extra assistance and guidance.

Tips for a successful homework area

High school students have a lot on their plates. Today's parents often lament that kids' schedules are far more hectic than their own schedules were when they were teenagers. But for many high school students, a familiar foe their parents have no doubt encountered is proving a considerable source of stress.

Homework has long been the bane of high schoolers' existence. Studies regarding just how much homework is being assigned to teenagers are somewhat outdated, which makes it difficult to determine just how much work kids are being asked to do after school lets out. A survey in 2014 from the University of Phoenix found that high school teachers assign, on average, 3.5 hours of homework per week. Multiply that figure by five, which is the number of different teachers many high school students have in a typical school day, and the survey concluded that high school students may be expected to complete as much as 17.5 hours of homework per week.

Though the study, which is the only one of its kind to be conducted in recent years, is older, there's little reason to suspect today's high school students are being asked to do any less than

their predecessors were in 2014.

While parents might not be able to do much to lessen their children's homework workload, they can take steps to ensure their homes are as homework-friendly as possible. The following are three ways to do just that.

1. Create a communal homework table.

The Harvard Graduate School of Education notes that youngsters who seem reluctant to do their homework may benefit from doing their afterschool work at a communal table. With parents nearby, such students may feel less lonely and may be less likely to procrastinate if they know mom or dad are nearby. Students who are not reluctant to do their homework may benefit from working quietly in their bedrooms.

2. Clear the area of distractions.

Distractions like televisions, devices that are not necessary to complete assignments and even younger siblings can make it hard for teenagers to concentrate on their work. Designate a time each day for homework, ensuring that the television is off and that devices have been placed on "Do Not Disturb." In addition, high school students with younger siblings can ex-

SEE TIPS PAGE 16B



Child Nutrition Program

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On behalf of the Diocese of Baton Rouge Child Nutrition Program, I am excited to welcome you and your children to the 2019-2020 school year. I feel both honored and privileged to continue to be your Child Nutrition Program Director and to work with highly qualified and

dedicated staff, students, and all of the supportive parents and community members that make our schools great. We are committed to serving your children the highest quality, nutritious and great-tasting meals that support their achievements in school and promote healthy lifestyles.

Healthy for Life is our commitment to create healthier environments and communities, by providing comprehensive nutrition and wellness education. This year we will continue to expand the program with more freshly prepared meals to better serve our students and their families; and this year as part of this expansion, we have updated the program design to better reflect the sophisticated tastes of today's students.

For your students, we offer a variety of meal choices with one goal in mind: to provide outstanding service and high quality "child-friendly" meals that meet or exceed the latest federal and state requirements. Our School menus are designed to ensure that students receive a balanced meal, consisting of foods from all major food groups in the right proportions to meet calorie and other nutrient needs. The products and the cooking methods we use conserve food quality and nutrients, while limiting the addition of fats. So although you may see popular items like hamburgers, pizza and chicken smackers on our menus, be assured that your child's school meal selections contain healthy grains and are lower

in fat and salt than what you find in grocery stores or restaurants.

We will also be offering some different foods that your child may not have tried before: Mini Meat Muffins, Cheesy Beef Pasta and Cajun Chicken Stew just to name a few; so please en-

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3	\$40,182	\$3,349	\$1,675	\$1,546	\$773
4	\$48,470	\$4,040	\$2,020	\$1,865	\$933
5	\$56,758	\$4,730	\$2,365	\$2,183	\$1,092
6	\$65,046	\$5,421	\$2,711	\$2,502	\$1,251
7	\$73,334	\$6,112	\$3,056	\$2,821	\$1,411
8	\$81,622	\$6,802	\$3,401	\$3,140	\$1,570
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courage your child to taste these items. They just might become a new favorite! Also, we invite you to have lunch with your child so you can try these tasty new menu items too.

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We hope that you and your child have a great year! Please feel free to call us at 225-387-6421 with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,
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Manage hectic school mornings

If a typical school morning sees your family rushing around and out the door with nary a moment to spare, only to be left feeling like you ran a marathon by 9 a.m., a new approach to your routine might be necessary.

Mornings, especially in households in which parents

who work outside of the home and have one or two kids requiring drop-off at their respective schools, can often be hectic. Starting off the morning feeling harried and stressed can carry over into the mood of the day, affecting productivity as a result.

According to Dr. David An-

derson, PhD, senior director of the ADHD and Disruptive Behavior Disorders Center at the Child Mind Institute, busy mornings can be the most stressful moments of the day. Homework hour and getting prepared for bed are other typically stressful times of the day



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If less stressful mornings are a goal for your family, try these strategies.

Start the night before

Doing as much preparatory work the evening before can make quite a difference in taming hectic mornings. Things that can be done in advance include checking and stocking backpacks, signing paperwork, making lunches, setting out clothing, showering and having breakfast foods ready to go.

Establish a 'launch pad'

Ann Dolin, a Virginia-based education specialist, suggests having a launch pad, or a place where all school-related items are prepped and stored. It can be a basket, box or another container big enough to contain school items. Children can drop and pick up the items as needed.

Make the routine the boss

Positive Parenting Solutions founder Amy McCready says families can implement a "when-

then" routine that sets the tone for the morning. "When everyone is dressed, hair combed, breakfast eaten, and school supplies packed, then you can watch 10 minutes of an educational cartoon." This puts the routine in control rather than making the parents the bad guys.

Make kids responsible

Too often parents add more stress to their plates by showing up at school with forgotten lunch boxes or band instruments. Instead, parents can stop rescuing their children and help train them to be more responsible — an essential trait.

Chart wake-up times

It may seem like micromanaging, but scheduling wake-up and bathroom times can help everyone know where they should be and when they should be there. It also helps avoid bottleneck situations in the bathroom or kitchen.

Keep morning madness to a minimum with some simple strategies.

TIPS▼

From page 15B

pect their brothers and sisters to be finished with their homework first. Make sure youngsters recognize the importance of staying quiet until everyone has finished their homework. Encourage younger siblings to leave the homework area and play quietly or read elsewhere in the home.

3. Include a break between school and homework time.

Much like parents may like a few minutes to unwind when getting home from work at night, kids likely won't want to dive right into their homework after getting home from school. A break between the school day and homework time can help kids clear their heads so they're more capable of concentrating when they sit down to do their work.

A good work environment at home can help kids live up to their academic potential.