



C.A.R.E. News

Newsletter – April 23, 2008

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Our Lady of Grace Catholic School *this week's Q&A's*

Mr. Mike Johnson, principal of Our Lady of Grace Catholic School, continues his efforts to prepare Our Lady of Grace to open this coming fall. Once again, Mr. Johnson also takes time to answer questions you have posted on the C.A.R.E. News web site.

Q: Will there be staggered drop off and pick up times for car riders? or some type of crowd control to direct people where to go?

A: While staggered drop-off / pick-up times have not been discussed, we have been discussing plans for traffic control and student safety. We will keep this on the front burner and let you know once we get a plan worked out. If necessary, we will consider staggered times (but I hope we don't need to do that).

Q: Given the size of the student population of our new school, the amount of automobile traffic will surely dramatically increase for those parents/custodians dropping off the students that will not be using the bus service. Can we have a school representative outside to cheerfully greet the student populace while helping to direct and maintain the traffic flow? This will definitely add another layer of security and protection for our children.

A: Thank you for the input! We will have people outside helping to direct traffic while ushering students into the building. We do need to ensure that parents/custodians feel comfortable pulling away from the curb. People moving efficiently through the car line is as much a convenience issue as it is safety. If the process is overly cumbersome, people get impatient and students are put at risk. Thanks again for the question.

Q: In your last newsletter, you discussed the Latchkey program. Will afternoon latchkey be available only to students who are enrolled on a regular basis (daily, or 3 days per week, for instance)? Or will latchkey be available on an as-needed, drop in basis for those families who need this only periodically?

A: This is something that will be dependent upon enrollment. I will touch base with our program coordinator and get back to you on this.

Q: I was unable to attend the PTO meeting on April 17. Who do I contact to volunteer or get involved?

A: If you are interested in the PTO for OLG please contact a member of your current PTO/PYO/PTA board.

Q: For those who were unable to attend the PTO information meeting, are there any minutes available which could be published on the website?

A: I will look into this. I am not sure if minutes were taken or not.

Q: Are there any plans for an open house or school tours? It would be great to see our new school. I am sure there are still many students and parents that have never been inside.

A: Yes, there are plans. They are not solidified yet, but the PTO and the Education Commission are on this.

Q: What are the plans as far as orientation for all students? Even though the St. Ann students know the "lay of the land" it may be different for them as well. Thank you.

A: We have plans in the works to get the kids in the building on a variety of different dates. One of the things we will hopefully do during mid-August is to have the school open for people to come in and visit. It would be a great chance for me to meet students and parents and for families to get the "lay of the land" as you mention. These plans are all, obviously, contingent upon us having the building ready.

Q: This was my child's first year at St. Ann's and I have to admit, we were completely lost. I had a lot of questions before school actually started. We have "Party Helpers" who call the parents and remind them of what to bring for class parties, why not have a "welcome wagon" for new students and their parents. The welcome wagon would call new students and their parents and give them the basics, such as where to drop off and pick up, make sure they knew what time school started and what the earliest they could drop off, etc. New parents would also have a contact if they had questions

A: Great idea! I love the fact that there are personal relationships being built through this recommendation. This is another great opportunity for both our PTO and Education Commission to work at building community while at the same time ensuring effective communication.

Q: My daughter is enrolled for the fall in kindergarten and I was wondering when there was going to be a meet the teacher night for us. Also, has there been any talk of language enrichment?

A: There will be a letter coming home soon regarding a variety of important Kindergarten dates. The one coming up is to learn about the program and meet the teachers (the date is being finalized as I write). We are discussing our Kindergarten enrichment opportunities and foreign language is a part of our consideration.

Q: Do all the teachers at OLG have a BA? Are they all certified to teach the subject and age level they are teaching? How many have a Masters degree?

A: Great question ... 10 of our faculty members have at least one Masters Degree! The rest have at least one Bachelors Degree. Two of our teachers are teaching off of non-tax certificates and the rest have licenses through the Ohio Department of Education in the areas they teach. Non-tax certifications allow us to bring in qualified teachers through non-traditional routes (whether coming out of industry or coming out of other academic teaching experiences). All of our teachers are highly qualified for their subject matter.

Q: Once the teaching assignments for OLG are announced, will parents have the opportunity to request that their child/children not receive a certain teacher?

A: Parents always have the opportunity to request what they think best for their son/daughter. I will always listen to that. I can not promise that we will always agree on the answer! As I have said before, this is a new school and new situation. People often times change in the midst of such transitions. I hope that we all give each other the opportunity to work together and develop relationships with one another that facilitates open and honest communication. Our parents want what is best for our students and so do our teachers.

Q: What are your general thoughts on how much homework each grade level should have? I know it takes some students longer and others are quicker.

A: Homework is an instructional tool. As with any tool it must be used well. For us to use it well requires, in my opinion, a high degree of coordination among grade level teams. These are discussions we will be having. At this point I don't feel comfortable giving a concrete answer to the question until I work with the faculty on the issue.

Q: Right now my kids are in 5-8, and the teachers have the kids help correct tests. If the teachers needs help because next year they are going to have so many more students is it possible that a parent could volunteer? Just didn't know how you felt.

A: My experience has been that if students are grading tests it is because the teacher is looking for an added educational component. Sometimes correcting tests becomes another opportunity to learn the material. I would need to hear from the teachers doing this to understand their intentions. While I don't know that I feel comfortable with parents grading work, the questions around grading, homework, assessment, etc. are big ones that we as a faculty will be discussing.

Q: Have the enrollment numbers from each parish been released?

A: I am not sure how many students from each parish are enrolled in OLG. As we get information put into the computer and begin to form our databases we should be able to figure that out.

Q: I heard you dropped Religion as a core class at OLG. And if any religion is taught, it will be taught by the homeroom teachers in some way. Or if you haven't dropped Religion, why are you not hiring teachers that specialize in Religion to teach it? I have also heard you are hiring teachers that specialize in a certain subject but they are being told they will be teaching another subject.

A: All teachers at OLG are qualified for the positions they are teaching. When we hired our faculty we were aware of their current and previous experiences and brought teachers on board who would be able to serve OLG well. Religion is in no way being slighted at OLG. The faith formation of our students is the reason our various communities support Catholic education. Our current plan is to ask each teacher in the building (who is qualified) to teach Religion not because it is unimportant but because it is SO important. I want each teacher to participate in this most essential aspect of our life together as OLG school. For each qualified teacher to spend part of their day focused on our rich faith tradition centers us all and I believe adds focus and depth to our total educational program. Nobody at OLG is teaching in an area for which they are not qualified and Religious Education is at the core of who and what we are as a school.

Q: Will the employees of the new regional school be offered a discount on tuition?

A: This is an issue that I think deserves a thorough consideration. The conversations will not happen for this year but going into next year we will know whether or not this will happen at OLG.

Comments:

★ I'm deeply appreciative of the fact that Kathy Smock was hired as the Latch-Key director. My children currently attend this program, and she is fantastic! Kathy is very organized-she plans carefully for each day, and integrates opportunities for the children well beyond the scope of a typical Latch-Key program. She has even arranged for visitors from the Cincinnati Zoo! Not only is her program superb, what I really appreciate is the way that Kathy always shares her faith with the children. Thank you for continuing her employment!!

★ Man, you ROCK! Every time I get ready to send a question you already answer it. Thank you so much for the hard work you all are doing.

Mr. Johnson will continue to keep parents & parishioners updated using the C.A.R.E. News web site (www.carenews.org) and the C.A.R.E. News email.

To have the C.A.R.E. newsletter emailed to you automatically as they are issued, go to www.CareNews.org. While you are there, you can also ask questions or leave comments and feedback for Mr. Johnson and the Steering Committee.