



July 25, 2018

Dear Parents,

I hope you are enjoying a restful summer and enjoying all this season has to offer. It's hard to believe that we are almost halfway through the summer! This past school year was a terrific year with many achievements.

- Congratulations to our graduating 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Over \$400,000 in scholarship money was offered to students for our excellent Catholic high schools. In addition, thirty percent of our students were accepted to McNair Academic, High Tech, and County Prep high schools.
- Building security is on everyone's mind these days, and we have been busy here as well. Representatives from the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office – Security Planning Unit toured the facility and made several recommendations to provide enhanced building security. A separate letter will announce security policy changes before school begins.
- Sponsored by a generous grant from The Simon Foundation, we continued our Guided Reading program for grades K-4. This program provides a method of instruction designed to teach readers at their present reading level and move them forward at an appropriate pace. The program is supplemented with a part-time reading specialist to give us the ability to break out students for small group reading instruction. Altogether, our students achieved an average increase of three reading levels!
- Our 'Mission' contributions have helped a community of children in Africa who have been orphaned by AIDS/HIV. We also were able to make a donation to the Sisters of Christian Charity Retirement Fund. Our 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> graders organized a fundraiser to assist the St. Jude Children's Hospital. Right here in our own community, our Thanksgiving food drive and Christmas gift drive helped children and families in Jersey City enjoy brighter holidays. We also partnered with the P.A.C.O. Agency to help residents of Puerto Rico devastated by Hurricane Maria, helped the Hudson County Animal Shelter and several other causes.

Looking forward to the 2018-2019 school year:

- St. Nicholas School has been invited to participate in an exciting pilot program to measure student growth and proficiency. Through the Archdiocese of Newark's affiliation with NWEA's MAP Growth program, interim assessments in Reading, Language Arts, Math, and Science will determine student progress. When paired with Classworks on-line software, teachers will be provided with individualized digital learning paths that include instruction, practice activities, and assessment. Each student will be challenged at their own level and progress individually. The first year will include Grades 3-5, and we anticipate further rollout of the program.
- We will continue our partnership with William Paterson University's Scholars in Residence Program. Through this program, professors in Science/STEM and English Language Arts will work with our teachers to ensure the most up-to-date teaching methods are used to engage and develop our students.

- In conjunction with our STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) program, a new Maker Space classroom has been created adjacent to the science lab. The Maker Space has been outfitted with Chromebooks, robotics, circuit boards, a 3D printer, and many other tools to engage students. All students in grades K-8 will enjoy weekly lessons in 'making' solutions to design challenges. High tech and low tech will be incorporated into the program which requires students to 'think outside the box' in developing solutions to problems and challenges posed by teachers.
- St. Nicholas is partnering with the Archdiocese of Newark schools STEM initiative which will provide increased professional development for teachers as well as our participation in the Archdiocese-wide STEM Engineering Fair. This fair focuses on projects relate to The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. As you know, Mrs. Millan has been able to coach our students to gold, silver, and bronze I the Hudson County STEM Showcase for the last three years and we anticipate more success this year.
- A Robotics Team has been established by Mrs. Millan. The team is part of the FIRST Lego League <https://www.firstinspires.org/robotics/fll> . The 'FIRST' organization was established with the mission: ...”to inspire students to be science and technology leaders and innovators, ...by engaging them in programs that foster ...self-confidence, communication, and leadership”. We are excited to be a part of it!
- Technology offerings continue to be enhanced. We completed our program to provide new Internet accessible Smartboards in all classrooms which allows teachers to bring the world into their lessons. PreK students enjoy the addition of iPads on a weekly basis which allows them to practice their numeracy and literacy skills. Students in K-8 receive weekly technology lessons and additional technology infusion opportunities to develop 21<sup>st</sup> Century technology skills.
- The buildings are outfitted with Verizon Fios 150 mbps Internet along with new high-speed Internet access points and routers. The school's technology infrastructure will be further enhanced this year by partnering with Future Generation Inc. to identify additional opportunities for improvement.
- Junior High teachers will continue to integrate the use of Chromebooks and Google Suite for Education software into our Science/STEM, Technology, and English Language Arts program. Knowledge of these skills and the related applications are essential for today's 21<sup>st</sup> Century learner as they prepare for the challenges of high school and beyond.
- The Junior High Chromebook program is now enhanced with a second set of Chromebooks. A third set of Chromebooks will be purchased for our English Language Arts program making our Junior High essentially a 'One-to-One' Chromebook program.
- Security concerns are on everyone's mind and so we are working with the Archdiocese of Newark to select a vendor to install a second set of Main Entry doors. This will create a locked interior vestibule at the front entrance which allows more control over who enters when the buzzer releases the Main Entrance. Sometimes referred to as a 'mantrap', a second set of security doors is becoming the standard for K-12 school entry because of the increased security features. More information will be provided as we move forward.

- We will continue our emphasis on student service to others. Our Student Council, National Junior Honor Society, and teachers will organize a variety of service projects to assist the homeless and needy families in Jersey City, St. Jude Children's Hospital, the Hudson County Animal Shelter, the missions, and a number of other projects as we have always done.

Our school mission, '..to embrace, nurture, and educate all God's children preparing them for lives of service and leadership' is alive at St. Nicholas School!

Link to our Annual Calendar – updated monthly.

[http://snsjc.com/img/homepage/2018\\_yearly\\_calendar.pdf](http://snsjc.com/img/homepage/2018_yearly_calendar.pdf)

Enjoy the rest of the summer!

Bernadette Miglin

Principal