



United in Christ to ignite the joy of faith, community, and learning.

August 8, 2021

Hello Families!

Welcome to the 2021-2022 school year. We are so excited to begin a new year. Although last year began with many unknowns and anxiety, we had an extremely positive and successful school year as a result of your prayers and support. This year will be even better! We welcome back all of our current families and staff as well as new students, staff, and families who will be joining the St. Stephen the Martyr community. We look forward to working together as a school that is “united in Christ to ignite the joy of faith, community, and learning”.

New Staff Information

This year we have some staff additions and some staffing changes. We welcome Mr. Greg Verraneault to the administrative team as our new assistant principal. His experience, commitment to education, and strong Catholic faith will be a great asset to our school. I communicated most of the below new staff members last spring, but I’m including them again below and adding some additional recent hires:

Welcome New Teachers:

- Mrs. Mary Lee (7th and 8th Grade Math)
- Mrs. Susan Baginski (7th Grade Language Arts/Reading)
- Mr. Terry Wenzl (TEAM Grades 5-8)
- Mrs. Carrie Gentile (Preschool M-W-F AM)
- Mrs. Sandra Watson has agreed to join the staff as our 6th grade Social Studies and Religion teacher. Sandy was a teacher associate and sub for the last two years at SSM. Prior to her “retirement” she taught middle school social studies and religion at St. Columbkille for over 20 years.

Welcome New Teacher Assistants:

- Sydney O'Shaughnessy (kindergarten)
- Robin Ruhl (first grade)

- Kelsi Lind (first grade)
- Tina Cockerill (third grade)
- Tisha Sonne

Existing Staff Members With New Roles:

- Susan Roche is moving from 6th grade to 4th grade this year.
- Julie Heaton (former preschool TA) has joined the TEAM/Resource department and will work with Mrs. Johnson, Mr. Wenzl, and Millard Public Schools to provide TEAM services.
- Mrs. Nicole Verraneault will be our full-time PE teacher
- Mrs. Amy Cowman will be full-time this year. She will continue teaching art (TK-8) and also do “Music and Movement” with TK and Kindergarten
- Mary Gill will continue teaching 2nd grade, but will also take on the role of “Lead Teacher”. She will help to oversee curriculum, professional development, work with grade level teams on alignment, and mentor teachers.

New Parish Staff Members:

- Fr. Ben Boyd is our new Associate Pastor. He will be visiting classrooms throughout the year.
- Logan Hepp is our new Liturgy Coordinator. He will be working with our children and faculty on liturgy.

Licensed Mental Health Practitioner:

We have contracted with Catholic Charities to offer counseling services from a licensed mental health practitioner. Carrie Broz worked with our students, families, and staff last spring after losing sweet Boden. Carrie will be with us once a week and will work with students who have suffered trauma, struggle with anxiety, and/or exhibit signs of depression or other emotional concerns.

New Curriculum Information:

Amplify Science: K-8 students will begin using Amplify Science. Please see link to learn more [amplify.com/science-caregivers](https://www.amplify.com/science-caregivers). This program is partially funded through the Millard Textbook Loan Program

Math Expressions: Our K-6 program will begin using Math Expressions. This program aligns with state and national standards and offers multiple ways to teach math so that all students can learn. It offers an amazing digital component that will match learners with skill building activities. This program is also partially funded through the Millard Textbook Loan Program.

Digital Subscriptions: Last year we added several digital subscriptions for our students’ learning experience. We added **RAZ Kids**, **SeeSaw**, **Mystery Science**, **Brainpop**, and **Freckle Math**. We also began using **STAR Assessments** to test students and align curriculum

accordingly. This year we will continue using the programs we implemented last year, but we are also adding **Type to Learn**, **Freckle ELA**, and upgrading to **RAZ PLUS**.

Simple Solutions: SSM has been using Simple Solutions Math for many years with grades 3-5. This year, Home and School funding has given us an opportunity to purchase materials to implement the Simple Solutions Language Arts program for grades K-5. Please see link for an overview of how Simple Solutions works: simplesolutions.org/the-approach/

Theology of the Body: Last year our staff was introduced to Theology of the Body as a supplement to the religion program. This year all staff will be trained to ensure that lessons taught in TOB are also reinforced in all curricular areas and discussion. Here are some links to help you better understand the program. The below links provide additional information on the program:

- K-2 ruahwoodspress.com/curriculum/in-the-beginning
- 3-5 ruahwoodspress.com/curriculum/the-human-heart
- 6-8 ruahwoodspress.com/curriculum/the-resurrection

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd: Our Early Childhood classes will continue with the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program www.cgsusa.org, which was funded through a grant. We are so grateful for our many parent/grandparent volunteers who do an amazing job working with our youngest students. This is the 3rd year for this program.

Technology & Facility Upgrades:

Technology: So much is going on with our technology upgrades. We are so excited that all teachers will be using new **MacBooks** this year. We have added even more iPads to our PreK-3rd grade classrooms to put us even closer to the goal of being a one-to-one school. We have two new ChromeBook carts for 4th and 5th grades. Middle school will continue with the one-to-one ChromeBook program. We will also have updates to our projectors and Smartboards in all classrooms to enhance interactive learning. Mrs. Pennings will be getting a Green Screen for the technology lab. We want to give a very special thank you to Mr. Tom Marble who has worked non-stop throughout this summer to get everything ready for use. We also thank Mrs. Pennings and Ms. Garrett for helping him as well. Our firewall has been updated and we have enhanced our internet connection to ensure productivity in all areas of the school. We will also continue using **Go Guardian** to monitor student usage and keep our students safe while online www.goguardian.com.

Facility Upgrades: A special thank you goes out to our Operations Director , Dan Koenig, and his team. We are also thankful for the parish volunteers who have assisted by sharing their time and talents. They have been working all summer to upgrade many areas of the school and parish. We have beautiful new floors in the dining hall and commons area. Walls have been

painted, new ceiling tiles have been installed, and many not so obvious areas have been upgraded. We will have new dividers in our school bathrooms and dining hall. The team has also attended to the ventilation system to ensure compliance with COVID-19 recommendations.

These enhancements to our curriculum, technology and facilities wouldn't be possible without the generous support of our families and parishioners. Thank you to all of you. We could not be who we are without you. Thank you to all of our special donors who want to remain anonymous. Your donations help ensure that our students receive an amazing faith-filled experience here at St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic School. Most recently we received a \$5000.00 anonymous donation from one of our supportive grandparents. Also, as the school year begins, please remember to support our Home and School Association. The Home and School Association's efforts are essential to the operation of our school. Home and School has funded the school significantly by offering teacher grants, upgrading school technology, and directly contributing to the school budget for instructional materials. They also organize fun community events and feed our staff several times a year. I encourage you all to get involved and contribute your time, talent and treasure. It is a great way to support the school and also get to know our amazing families.

As you and your student(s) prepare for the beginning of the school year, here are a few useful links & reminders for you:

- **Back to School:** school.stephen.org/backtoschool
- **Back to School Rosary:** Join us Monday, August 16th at 3:30 p.m. or 6:30 p.m. to kick off the school year right by praying the Rosary together. Choose the time that works best for you and meet us in the main Church. All are invited!
- **First Day Coffee – Hooray!** (A welcome event for parents of our Kindergartners and 1st-8th grade students that are new to SSM): school.stephen.org/welcome-event
- **Link to the updated 2021/202 Family Handbook:**
school.stephen.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/2021-2022-St.-Stephen-Family-Handbook-Final.pdf
- **Pick Up/Drop Off Procedures:** school.stephen.org/drop-off-parking-procedures
- **School Families Google Calendar Link:** school.stephen.org/google-calendar
- **Add the SSM Calendar to Your Calendar:** school.stephen.org/google-calendar-link

Please say some extra prayers for our staff who will be working all week to prepare for the 2021-2022 school year. They are exceptional in every way and we are all so fortunate to have a supportive and committed staff. Thank you for all you do. The school is grateful and blessed to have all of you as part of the St. Stephen the Martyr school community!

Mrs. Perrault and Mr. Verraneault