

Minutes from OLGC General PTO Meeting – 9/21/09

Alison Galbraith (President of the PTO) opened the meeting by welcoming parents, teachers and co-PTO Board Members. She then asked Fr. McGee to lead us in an opening prayer.

Alison then explained that the premise of the meeting is "OLGC 101." In other words, the PTO Board has collected questions from OLGC families and then divided them into specific areas (teaching philosophy, grade level questions, issues relating to specials, etc.) and these questions will be addressed tonight. The goal of the evening is to inform parents about the highlights of each grade level so they know what to expect in future years.

The first question, "***What is the Salesian philosophy and how does it influence the way our students are taught by the teachers and priests?***" was asked of Fr. McGee.

Fr. McGee began by providing the audience with a background of his education and positions as a priest. He explained that the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales staffs OLGC and some other high schools.

He pointed out the following important aspects of the Salesian philosophy...

- Accept people for who they are. Believe in their goodness and teachability.
- Establish peace and serenity around us.
- Teach our youth to listen to others - be a good listener.
- Educate youth to utilize media of the day. St. Francis de Sales is the Patron of Journalism.
- Stress gentleness and integrity.
- The OLGC school pledge is a reflection of the philosophy of St. Francis de Sales.
- Integrate actions of people with who they are.
- View interaction with students as an opportunity for growth.
- Become astute critics.

Other questions were presented and answered....

Do we use differentiated learning? Yes, with challenge work. This is elective when other work is completed. An award is given at the end of the year for challenge work. In smaller classes, students are grouped by ability.

What is curriculum mapping? It is a calendar-based approach to lessons. Curriculum based programs are shared across the world and helps identify gaps and approaches that have not been as successful. Math is being mapped first.

Grade specific presentations

Kindergarten: social skills are stressed as well as autonomy. Reading and writing are important and religious education begins.

First grade: Emphasis on greater independence, maturity and routine. Listening skills are further developed. Children responsible for articles like "Live Like Jesus" and reading via Word Study program.

Second grade: Highlights of the year are First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion as well as hatching chicks. The children continue to strengthen their fluency skills and comprehension. Field trips include the Kennedy Center and Frying Pan Park. Our neighbors to the north and south, Canada and Mexico, are included in the social studies curriculum. Posada is celebrated as well as the preparation of a Canadian breakfast.

Third Grade: Long division is introduced at the end of the school year as well as food chains in the science curriculum. Each student has to create a simple machine and the social studies curriculum includes State Fair Day.

Fourth Grade: Emphasis is on independent thinking. More responsibility and accountability is expected of the students. The teachers promote acceptance of one another. Organizational skills and time management are stressed in order to complete required workload. Cursive handwriting is refined and knowledge of basic multiplication/division facts is required. The philosophy in fourth grade is now we are "reading to learn, not learning to read." Highlights of the year are Colonial Day in May and field trips to Gunston Hall and Jamestown. Beginning band is offered in fourth grade.

Fifth Grade: This is the year of many "firsts"....students have Spanish with the Middle School Spanish teacher, Senora Mata, they become senior prayer partners and two full subjects are taught outside their homeroom. Social skills are critical at this age and group work is emphasized (for example, the social studies caravans). International Day is celebrated in the fifth day. Field trips include the Museum of Natural History and a 5-mile walking tour of Vienna. Religious education stresses spirituality and the Liturgy. The students make prayer books for the second graders.

Middle School: This is the bridge to high school. Middle school students are given lockers. The eighth graders sit with the first graders during Mass. Intramurals take place in middle school as well as CYO basketball.

Specials:

- International Day is a highlight of the Spanish curriculum.
- PE includes the Turkey Shoot, Jump Rope for Heart fundraiser and field day on 6/3.
- The art teacher participates in Artsonia. Our children's artwork is displayed on this website and purchases can be made. There is the annual art show.
- The librarian uses the five-finger rule to help students make wise reading selections from the media center.
- Science lab supports K-8 graders and is involved in the seventh grade science projects/fair.
- Computer lab teaches keyboarding and the goal is for eighth graders to graduate with typing at least 30wpm with at least 95% accuracy.

Mr. Weimer explained the "shoe" component of the school dress code. He also emphasized that each student is different and should be treated accordingly. The OLGK pledge card is on each student's assignment book and is a work in progress. Mr. Weimer stated that any negative lunch incident is recorded as part of the school's anti-bullying program.

Patrice Roe (OLGC Development) addressed the group and promoted the upcoming Annual Golf Outing. She explained that there are several ways to support the Annual Auction from donating a silent auction item to being a sponsor to volunteering in one of the many available volunteer roles. She reminded us of matching gift programs that many corporations offer to their employees.

Anna Mary Warden further described the benefits of the Annual Auction. She stated that in past years it has raised more than \$100,000. It is the biggest fundraiser of the parish and the school is the huge benefactor. There are five ways to get involved...

- Come to the auction.
- Donate an item, basket or make a financial contribution.
- Donate your time.
- Become a chairperson for one of the many committees.
- Participate in a class auction project.

Alison Galbraith ended the meeting by thanking all the attendees for coming and the staff who made presentations.