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Jack E. Lynch, Principal

August 10, 2018

Dear St. James Parents and Guardians,

Summertime has been a busy and productive time at school. With our focus on academics and our Catholic identity, I have implemented a number of changes in order to support our mission to provide the highest level academics for our children, while keeping our faith and love of Jesus Christ at the core of all that we do at St. James School. With the changes I have planned so far, our year will be off to a solid start.

My office staff support team is undergoing a major transition, beginning with Mrs. Natalia Zamachaj, our long-time Business Manager, who will be retiring after 30 years of excellent service to our school. Thank you Natalia for your amazing dedication to St. James School and exemplary work ethic! In her place, we welcome Ms. Jessica Navarro. Ms. Navarro will be assuming the role of Bookkeeper, splitting her time between St. James and Assumption School in Fairfield; she will continue to work closely with the Diocese to keep our financial records in order.

Mrs. Julie Davis has moved onto to new challenges. Mrs. Davis has taken a position in Institutional Advancement at Notre Dame High School. Mrs. Davis was instrumental in moving St. James forward in our mission to this point, specifically with our Marketing program at St. James. Thank you Julie!

I am delighted to have Mrs. Megan Merwin join my support team. Mrs. Merwin has already been a most valuable contributor to our school community. Her connection is strong. Mrs. Merwin is an alumna of St. James, a parent of four children, a substitute teacher and, most recently, she served for two years on the SJPA as Co-Secretary. For those of you who follow us on Facebook, Mrs. Merwin has been the voice of St. James, sharing the good things that go on. She will continue in this capacity, helping us to bring new families into our fold and assist the office with the overall organization of events, especially supporting our fundraising initiatives. Mrs. Merwin also served as a teacher at Lauralton Hall.

Students at St. James will certainly benefit from the part-time addition to our staff of Mrs. Heather Lucibello. Mrs. Lucibello is a trained and certified social worker with an extensive career working with

students through Cooperative Educational Services and, before that, with Boys and Girl's Village. Her training and experience will be a tremendous asset for teachers, parents and students who may need situational guidance and support and to manage complex emotional or learning issues.

We wish all the best to Mr. Peter Rusatsky, our school custodian. Mr. Rusatsky, will not be returning. As an alumni parent and a dedicated employee, Mr. Rusatsky helped bring St. James into mechanical efficiency with great skill. We have retained DBS Building Solutions to handle all our building maintenance needs. They will provide us with a daytime custodian when school starts and continue to handle the nighttime cleaning needs of the school. I am very pleased with the operation of this service since we first brought them on last year.

Significant changes to our teaching team have been made this summer. These changes will move us forward in our objective of higher academics and focus on our Catholic identity.

I have asked Mrs. Janine Kyburz to be the Middle School Religion Teacher. The deep well of spiritual practice and Catholic doctrine that Mrs. Kyburz will bring to our students will deepen their understanding of our Lord Jesus and our mission as Catholics in the world today. Mrs. Kyburz will continue to oversee the Liturgical celebrations and the Living Stations of the Cross and will be an excellent resource for students and teachers at all grade levels to support their faith-based learning goals. In addition to my continued support, Mrs. Kyburz will also enjoy the spiritual support of Fr. Art (our new pastor) and Fr. Ruggerio on a consistent basis, in her teaching and with our special school Masses throughout the academic year.

Mrs. Gloria Davis, who spent one year with us as our Preschool 3-year teacher, will not be returning. Mrs. Jill Moyher is stepping up from Pre-K 4 Assistant to take over as Teacher in the Pre-K 3 year old program. With her first-hand familiarity with both programs, I know this will be a successful transition. The Preschool program will be overseen by Mrs. Merly, who will serve as our Preschool Coordinator. Our support team of Mrs. Gina Ayala, Mrs. Juana Rivera, and Mrs. Marie Holly will be returning. We will have one addition this year of a young lady I know will be a great asset, Ms. Victoria Ocasio. I am most confident that our preschoolers will benefit from the combination of youthful energy and solid experience that this group brings.

Ms. Shannon Duffy, our Grade 2 teacher for the past three years, will be leaving us. We wish Ms. Duffy success and blessings in the future. To fit our current enrollments, I have restructured our lower grade teaching assignments. We will have one First Grade classroom taught by Mrs. Beth McCormick. Ms. Livia Olsen will move from First Grade to fill the void of Ms. Duffy's departure in Grade 2. Her grade partner is Mrs. Kathleen DellaVecchia. Grade 3 will be a single classroom, with Mrs. Lisa Flader teaching.

Grade 5 teacher, Mrs. Malissa Farnen, has elected to spend more time with her family and baby daughter, while continuing to further her teaching skills through studies and as a substitute at St. James. We support Mrs. Farnen fully in her choice and have asked Ms. Kristen Barrett to move up from Grade 3 to assume the vacated 5th Grade position. Mrs. Barrett is familiar with the curriculum and is a proven educator. She will partner with Mrs. Claire Casey in Grade 5 for the coming year.

With a heavy heart, Ms. Deanna Caruso has chosen to accept a position teaching in Stamford public schools next year. I have found a wonderful, bright and positive young individual, Ms. Allison Wheeler, who is as excited about joining our team as I am to have her to teach Middle School Language Arts.

Joining our team this year is a well-respected Math Specialist, Mrs. Naomi Macari, who comes to us from St. Lawrence/Holy Trinity in Shelton. Mrs. Macari will be working closely with the 5th graders in developing and furthering their Math skills. She will be teaching 6th and 7th Grade Honors Math. Ms. Macari will be an integral part of the newly instituted Honors program, which will come to fruition this year after a year of preparation. Ms. Macari will support Mr. Tyrell and Mrs. Barrett with the acquisition of higher Math skills for our students.

Collaboration, challenge and support will be the mantra for our teachers this year. Teachers will be working in mentor teams, collaborating on classroom management and teaching skills. Middle School teachers will be coordinating and offering support to 4th and 5th grade, specifically with the goal of raising Math and Language Arts levels in our future Middle Schoolers. I anticipate that the pay-off will be evident in our students' progress as we continue to fortify both staff and student growth.

The implementation of the Honors Program in Middle School will challenge our students at all learning levels. Students will be placed into either Honors or Level 1 groupings for all classes. I invite you to view your children's schedules to see what their day will be like. Middle School is operating on a modified Block Schedule. Student's schedules for grades 6-8 will be posted on the parent portal under their homeroom and available to view on Monday, August 13th, with the opening of the Portal.

Placement into the Honors Program is based on specific academic criteria. As the term progresses, we will continually evaluate student progress. The initial assignments have been made with much thought and care for the benefit of your children. Criteria used for placement included standardized testing, teacher recommendations, previous academic performance and grades.

Another step towards high school preparedness that I am exploring is the possibility of instituting the National Junior Honor Society (NEHS) this year in Middle School. This is an academic and service based student leadership program. You can learn more at <https://www.njhs.us/students/>.

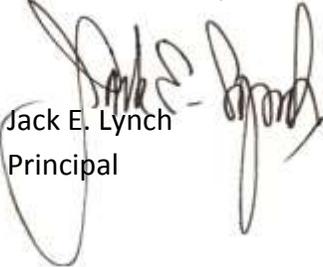
Changing gears, we are pleased with the installation, which is near completion, of the new bottle-filler water fountains that our families and friends made possible through the Walk-a-thon fund drive last year. There is one new bottle-filler fountain in the cafeteria and one on each floor on the north side of the building. These will allow students to fill water bottles for clean filtered water as needed throughout the day. Thank you to our St. James Parent Association and our Health and Wellness Team for spearheading this effort.

With student and staff safety of foremost concern, I have begun one final initiative to put in place greater exterior security. I will report more on this plan soon.

The St. James Parent Association will host a “Meet and Greet” on Monday, August 27th, at 6:00 p.m. in the gym. Please save the date. Join me in welcoming our staff members as we all set forth together for a new year with great positivity!

Don't hesitate to reach out to me at jack.lynch@sjsst.org if you have any concerns.

Sincerest wishes,


Jack E. Lynch
Principal

Cc: Dr. Steven Cheeseman, Superintendent of Schools, Diocese of Bridgeport