



Monthly Messenger – February / March 2022

Monthly Newsletter from the Secretary of Elementary Education



Message from Dr. Andrew McLaughlin

Dear Catholic School Educators,

Although February is the shortest month of the year, it is a month of celebration and anticipation. We celebrated the end of the Christmas season, Valentine’s Day and President’s Day. As we look forward to March, we anticipate the beginning of Lent, the coming of Spring and, hopefully, a return to a more normal life. During both months, we honor the cultures of many peoples. During these past several months and years, we could easily have identified with the Psalmist who prayed, *Out of the depths I have cried to thee, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice. Let thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.* Moving forward, our hope is to move toward a prayer of praise and thanksgiving as reflected in Psalm 100: *I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears.*

The months of February and March are prime months to focus on Civics, Culture and Catholic Identity as identified in our Social Studies curriculum. Keeping in mind that our country is a “melting pot” of nationalities and ethnic groups, it is a good time to reflect on the saints from these countries whose feast days are celebrated at this time and to honor the cultural origins of the students in our schools. It is also a good time to instill in our students a sense of patriotism and see ourselves as the “One Nation Under God” that we profess to be. Look for suggestions in this edition of the Messenger. You will also find in this edition suggestions for helping your students embrace the Lenten season as well as with testing skills as they prepare for the annual Terra Nova testing,

At the beginning of March a day is designated as “Unsung Heroes” Day. In many ways, you are all unsung heroes. As always, we are most grateful for your perseverance and courage during these challenging times.

God bless you.

Dr. Andrew McLaughlin
Secretary of Elementary Education

Upcoming Events

- Feb 26 - Early Childhood District Meeting
- Mar 2 - Ash Wednesday
- Mar 4-11 - Terra Nova Testing
- Mar 11 - End of Second Trimester
- Mar 14 - Third Trimester Begins
- Mar 15 - Early Childhood District Meeting
- Mar 22 - Phila South & Delaware District Mtgs.
- Mar 23 - Phila North & Montgomery District Mtgs.
- Mar 24 - Bucks & Chester District Mtgs.
- Mar 26 - Catechetical Convocation - Archbishop Wood HS



Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 2. During Lent, it is important to teach students some of the prayers and practices that have been a part of Church tradition such as the *Anima Christi Prayer*.

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me.
Within your wounds conceal me.

*Do not permit me to be parted from you.
From the evil foe protect me.
At the hour of my death call me.
And bid me come to you,
to praise you with all your saints
for ever and ever.
Amen.*

A special prayer form used during Lent is the Way of the Cross. There are several things you can do:

- Include the short prayer from the Stations as part of your daily prayer during Lent:
 - *We adore You, O Lord, and we praise You.*
 - *Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world*
- Include this short video [Way of the Cross](#) during prayer times in the upper grades.
- Use the [Way of the Cross During the Pandemic](#) for a school-wide celebration.

This [visual](#) that can be used by younger children.

Lenten Calendars

Prepare/use a calendar, [such as this one](#), to help the students keep a record of their Lenten practices.

Grade - Level Lessons on the Eucharist

Teachers are encouraged to teach [these lessons](#) during this season.

February

Focus on the C's in Social Studies

During February we celebrate President's Day, a reminder to focus on patriotism and civic responsibility. Have you spent time focusing on the Civics component of your Social Studies curriculum? Have you taught the required memorization pieces and patriotic songs for your level?

K	Pledge of Allegiance	God Bless America
1	American symbols; images on money	My Country Tis of Thee
2	Presidents	Star Spangled Banner
3	The American's Creed	America the Beautiful
4	Pennsylvania Symbols, cities, rivers, landmarks.	Pennsylvania State Song
5	Western Hemisphere capitals including States and Capitals	God Bless the USA
6	Eastern Hemisphere capitals	You're a Grand Old Flag
7	Introduction to the Declaration of Independence, Preamble to the Constitution, Bill of Rights	This Land is Your Land
8	Gettysburg Address, MLK I Have A Dream Speech	Battle Hymn of the Republic

Celebrate Culture



February and March are months that we celebrate the feasts honoring saints from many different cultures. We are all familiar with the following saints and their representative cultures:

- Cyril and Methodius were dedicated to the ideal of expression in a people's native language
- Katharine Drexel was known for her dedicated service to the Black and Indian missions.
- Bernadette was privileged to be in the presence of Our Lady in Lourdes, France
- Paul Miki was a martyr from Japan.
- Patrick brought faith to Ireland.
- Joseph is recognized as a favorite saint of many Italians.

Have the students research the [cultures of different saints](#) honored this month.

As much as we look forward to traditions of specific cultures, organize a "Culture Day" and allow students to dress in clothing representing their own ancestral culture or the culture of the saint they researched.

Take a world map and put a pin in the place each person represents showing the diversity of cultures. Have the students create flags for the countries they represent.



At this time of year our thoughts begin to focus on the standardized testing that the students will be taking next month. We all want our students to do well during testing, as test results are a reflection of how well we have prepared them to master the skills expected of them. Testing results are especially important in order to plan for future instruction which will be appropriate to students' needs.

We are often asked by teachers how they can best prepare the students for these tests. While some may think it appropriate to give the students "practice

tests,” the best way to prepare them for testing is by providing the them with models of similar testing modes during classroom activities. Practice tests have little meaning. It would be much better to prepare the students by teaching them good testing skills using the free resources available in the Interactive Reporting System.

Teach them:

- How to eliminate answers in a multiple choice question.
- To answer constructed response questions by rephrasing the question as part of the answer in order to arrive at a logical conclusion.
- To focus on what a question is asking and to go back and make sure that they are answering what was asked.
- Techniques for pacing their work since these are timed tests.
- Legible handwriting since they are penalized for handwriting that is illegible. Do not encourage printing, as printing takes more time than cursive writing and, as a result, a poor practice during timed testing.

Project the materials on your interactive Whiteboards. Take the time to review and analyze what they are doing during the review you provide. Also model the type of questions they will experience in standardized tests using the curriculum you are teaching at the time.

Terra Nova Scheduling

Thanks to Terri Power, principal of St. Margaret School for sharing [schedule sheets](#) that can be used for the Terra Nova testing. These grade-level schedules are a wonderful resource.

Visit the [Terra Nova page](#) on the AOP Elementary website for more information.

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