

Saint Michael School

80 N. High Street, Greenville, PA 16125



Phone: 724-588-7050 * Fax: 724-588-7056 * Email: stmikes@neo.rr.com * Website: www.saintmichael1.org

Saint Michael, an accredited Catholic Elementary School, partners with families in the education of the mind, body, and soul of each child.

+J.M.J.

Dear Prospective SMS Family,

As you plan and dream about your child's future, I recognize what an important decision you have before you. There are so many factors that you are taking into consideration: from the biggest decision of "Where do I send my child?" down to logistical decisions like, "How will my child arrive and depart from school each day?" As you are thoughtfully and prayerfully considering these questions, I would like to offer you a glimpse of what your child's Kindergarten – 8th Grade experience could be at St. Michael School.

As a Catholic school, and one that is partnering with the Institute for Catholic Liberal Education (ICLE), we have already started and will continue to offer an education that is fundamentally different from the one children receive in a public school. Our end-goal of eternal life with God in heaven is different from the public-school model of being a contributing member of society. Therefore, the way in which we approach education, including our curriculum, instruction, and assessment is, at its core, Christo-centric.

Each day, our students say, "Our foundation is Jesus! Our goal is to help each other get to heaven! To be Saints!" Looking at Jesus and how he taught, as well as the model on which schools were founded (our current school system – private and public was born from the Catholic Church), we find story at its heart. Jesus taught with stories and asked probing, thought-provoking questions. He often led His followers to ponder for themselves the great mysteries around them, and He awakened a sense of wonder and curiosity in hearts to learn and ask more questions.

Our new curriculum focuses on those same things. In Reading/Literature class, we not only care about our students learning to read fluently, but also make sure we are putting excellent stories in their hands. Instead of a reader with excerpts from many unrelated sources, as in public-schools, we are giving each child an entire book in their hands from *Frog and Toad are Friends* up to *The Hobbit* that they can delve deeply into, befriending and learning life lessons from the characters.

Instead of merely teaching Social Studies, with an emphasis on being a good neighbor and citizen, our students are learning the History of Western Civilization and where they fit into that story. Kindergarten starts with the Cradle of Civilization, 1st Grade focuses on Ancient Greece, 2nd Grade learns about Ancient Rome, 3rd Grade is the Medieval year, 4th Grade gets into the Modern Era, 5th Grade delves into American History, and 6th-8th Grade cycle back to the Cradle of Civilization and beyond, seeing and learning again with fresh eyes, now having the whole scope of the story of Western Civilization. No part of what they would learn in Social Studies, such as government, map reading, etc. is lost. What they learn in History also spills over into other subjects, especially Art, to study and create pieces in the style they would have used during the time period about which they are learning.

Next year we are going to explore Nature Studies, instead of just Science. Studying the natural world around us, learning and appreciating the order, logic, humor, and beauty with which the world and the heavens were created naturally points to the Creator. Instead of just learning “this is the way the things are” in a lecture style, our students are going to have opportunity to “get their hands dirty” and dig into what they are learning about, awakening a sense of wonder and leading to deep questions.

The Diocese of Erie has been and will continue to focus on Math for the next several years. The professional development that the teachers and I have been attending for Math have been some of the most practical and exciting trainings we have ever attended. Again, awakening that sense of wonder for Math all around us, students are focusing on concrete manipulatives, moving to pictorial representations, and finally ending at abstract formulas for each lesson: thus being able to touch, manipulate, see, and play with the numbers and shapes to better understand why we do such things as carry the one into the tens column. Our Math scores on NWEA Map Growth Assessments reflect the growth our students are making with these methods.

All of these subjects, including those not yet mentioned such as Gym (beauty of form and movement) and Music (beauty of logic, rhythm, harmony, and so much more) are all presented in such a way as to evoke and draw out the Truth, Goodness, and Beauty inherent in all subjects, thus pointing us to God. Being able to correctly identify these Transcendentals while they are young will keep our students from falling for imitation, false, or worldly versions that leave us unhappy and unsatisfied. These lessons too are not relegated to Religion class but become the very fabric of each lesson taught. We are not simply preparing our students for a test like the PSSAs or SATs (which our students and students educated in this way historically do very well on), but to be intelligent, curious, and engaging adults.

Because our students have been so well formed, they find no difficulty in transitioning to high school, whether it be private or public. We recognize that community-based and public- school sports programs are not only well run, but also provide an excellent opportunity for our students to meet and interact with more children in our area. Through these athletic activities as well as groups like Boy Scouts, our students are able to expand their friend-base and be ready to walk into their first day of 9th Grade already knowing so many other students.

At St. Michael School, your child will not be an anonymous number, but an individual with a name, known by each of the teachers and adults in the building, greeted personally and dearly loved. Please know that I am praying for you, your child, and your family. Know that our doors are always open to you! May the Holy Spirit be with you as you make this momentous decision.

If you have any questions, please let me know! St. Michael, pray for us!

Grace and Peace,

Miss Emily Zgonc

Principal