



December, 2021

"Remember the past with gratitude, live the present with enthusiasm, look forward to the future with confidence."

- St. John Paul II

St. Cat's Counseling

Letter to Families

Amidst kickballs flying over our heads, Mrs. Katsandres and I were recently chatting on the playground about her joy-bringing strategy of listening to Christmas music early this year. It is her small way of combatting the on-going challenges that our COVID world presents. As an avid "no Christmas before Thanksgiving" guy, I surprised myself when I reacted excitingly, and even snuck in a verse of "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" on my drive home. Why was I so willing to let go of that desire to wait for Christmas season, and take the great advice of Mrs. Katsandres? I think it comes from what I have been seeing in our students each day.

Many of our kids have done such a great job of moving forward and accepting hardship, which is a testament to the support they receive at home. They've been taught how to act gritty through COVID in order to get back to school and activities they love. But a quiet side-effect of grit is when we feel indebted, hopeless, or less than. This comes when grit isn't paired with passion, gratitude for hardship, and most especially the unconditional love felt most heavily when we are down. Unfortunately, I see this materializing as self-doubt and a lack of zeal for challenge and life in our students. Not all the time, but quietly, and in the background. This leaves us with an intimidating question: how do we remind our kids of hope and instill gratitude?

This holiday season is especially important if we wish to move forward as a Catholic school community and as a world. We take extra steps toward relationship building, detecting the story behind each mask, and seeking joy rather than waiting for it to appear. Have a wonderful holiday season, we have much to be grateful for!

Kevin Ward, School Counselor kward@stcatherineschool.net

Updates From My Office

- **St. C's Parent-Counselor Learning Sessions**

Coming this Thursday, December 2nd! Join me on Zoom to discuss "Building Resiliency in Our Homes." Here are the details:

- Parents of students grades *PreK-3*: 6 pm to 6:30 pm
- Parents of students grades *4-8*: 6:30 pm to 7 pm
- Zoom information: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85855566115>
Meeting ID: 858 5556 6115

- **Classroom Lessons:** This month, we have been looking into how the practice of gratitude impacts our entire wellbeing, including our life satisfaction, strengthening of social bonds, and connecting with purpose. Moving from the normal practice of gratitude to “advanced gratitude” that calls us to not only feel grateful, but express gratitude.
 - **3 practical ways for kids to practice gratitude:**
 - **1: Make a list of 10 things you’re grateful for. When you’re feeling down or even right when you wake up, read the list!**
 - **2: For a few moments before you eat snack/start homework/jump online to game, write down a few things you are grateful for from the day to reframe any negatives.**
 - **3: Write letters, emails, texts of gratitude and send them to people.**

Resources of the Month

- Looking for Christmas gifts that engage your child’s creative side? Give [KiwiCo](#) a try! They’ve got cooking, STEM, crafting, and more.
- “Happier” is a fun, habit-tracking tool developed by Gretchen Rueben, a lead-writer on topics such as personal tendencies and happiness. It’s good to carve out easy-to-use tools for us adults to use, so we can be more willingly available for the kiddos in our lives. Check it out by clicking the image!



- Looking for resources to teach your girls about bullying and to build their resiliency? Get on the wait-list for this [Anti-Bullying Book for Girls Ages 8-12!](#) Coming out this December 14th.
- The holidays can bring some heightened emotional experiences with them. Identifying how we feel and giving your kids easy-to-use tools can go a long way. Try this printable, colorable version [here](#).
- “Catching a Guilt-Free Break” free series: [Calm the Chaos Parenting by Lemon Lime Adventures](#)
- “How to get your child to talk to you and communicate when it really matters” [Webinar Registration](#)
- Give your kids some sensory relief with these [Thanksgiving mindfulness coloring pages](#).
- Interesting opinion article from Jonathan Haidt on the impact of social media on teen girls. You can find it [here](#). We don’t have to be experts on social media in order to have healthy dialogue with our teens and community members. At the very least, these articles help conversation thrive!
 - If you are looking for more ways to help your teen girl at home, check out this resource:
 - [Ruling Our Experiences](#)

- Along the same line, here is an article to guide a conversation on smart phones with your child: [Screenagers Blog Options To Communicate With Your Kids Without A Smartphone](#)
- This week in class, we tried “music Mindfulness.” I love music and how it can be used to change the way I think and feel so dramatically. Here’s how you do it:



- Get comfortable, pick a peaceful song, & close your eyes.
- Play the music and listen closely
- Pay attention to the sounds of each instrument, the pace of the music, shifts in volume, & how you feel throughout the song.
- Reflect: how did you feel before the song began playing? Did any thought surface while listening?

- **Mental Health Professionals Resources:** If you are struggling to find mental health resources in the city, you are NOT alone! Mental health resources are more in demand these days, but you can still put your name on waiting lists, and check in periodically for new resources. Here is my updated list:
 - [St. C’s Mental Health Referrals](#)
 - Low cost from NAMI Seattle: [Low Cost and Sliding Scale Psych Providers](#)
 - Emergency lines from NAMI: [NAMI Helplines](#)

[School Counselor Home Page](#) – My page on the school site is the place I house all these resources and more.

As always, remember that it shows strength and courage to ask for help or advocate for the mental health of someone else. You can save these numbers to be prepared:

Crisis supports are available if your student is concerned for themselves or others. [Teen Link](#) can be reached daily from 6-10 PM at 1-866-833-6546; the following resources can be reached 24/7 365 days a year: [Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#): 800-273-8255 / Worried about someone on social media? [Support on Social Media - Lifeline](#); the [24-hr Crisis Line](#):1-866-427-4747; and the [Crisis Text Line](#) can be reached via SMS 24/7— simply text “HEAL” to 741-741.

And check this new free issue of Autism Parenting Magazine. Helpful tips for all parenting!

[Autism Parenting Magazine Free Issue](#)

If you have any questions, concerns, or you think someone needs help, please reach out to me and we can discuss how and when to reach out.