



# St. Agnes Academy News

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Principal – Fadia Makdisi

## Principal Notes:

### Back to School and Together Again

We are thrilled that St. Agnes Academy has reopened for the 2020-2021 school year. What a joy to see the smiles and happy faces of students who have reunited with their teachers and classmates.

The reopening was conducted with all health and safety protocols in place. Masks are worn by all students, social distancing is maintained, hand sanitizing stations and other necessary protocols have been instituted and are followed. It goes without saying - school is different now but we're all glad we can bring everyone together in a safe and healthy way.

Parents are advised that the COVID-19 handbook can be found online. We ask that families help us keep the school open by practicing social distancing, eliminating unnecessary travel, and encourage children to wear a mask and wash their hands. Also, we have started to use FACTS as a new student information system which includes tuition details. Each family should sign up and instructions have been sent to all families. We have a remote plan in case we need to do virtual learning. Each child has an account with log-in information. The platform is called LMS.

Our calendar is updated with changes to accommodate for the Massachusetts Department of Education reduction from the standard 180 days of school. All schools cut 10 days of school from their calendar. Since we started earlier, we added those days to extend our vacations and holidays. All changes are noted in the school calendar. We are also thrilled to welcome our new faculty. (See news story)

We continue to ask all families to maintain all safety and health protocols to ensure the safety of all staff, students, and families. We're excited for our school community and we will continue to be vigilant, always looking out for the welfare of our students and staff. Thank you for the confidence you place in us. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know.

–Fadia Rostom Makdisi  
Principal

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## NEWS BITS...

### New Faculty Members Appointed

St. Agnes Academy has announced the appointment of new faculty members and part-time school nurses for the 2020-2021 school year. The academy has named Margaret Chieffo as the new second grade teacher, Mrs. Katie Flanders as a new Middle School teacher, and Christine Zdon as the new pre- K teacher. The school also named Mrs. Lisa Stankiewicz, Mrs. Kathy LaPointe, and Mr. Justin Brown to the Middle School religion team. Mrs. Katrina Brennan and Mrs. Ashley Crockwell were named part-time school nurses.

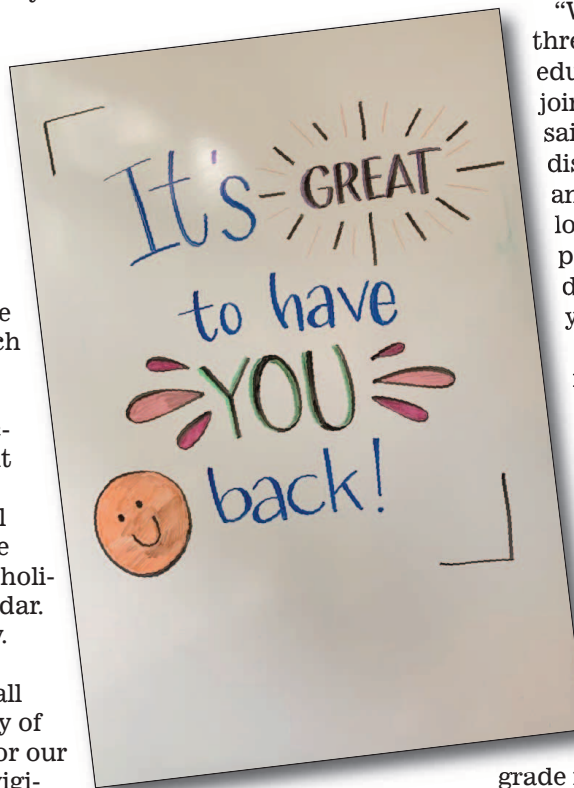
“We're thrilled that these three highly experienced educators and nurses are joining our staff,” said Principal Fadia Makdisi. “They are passionate and committed and I look forward to their important contributions during this challenging year.”

Zdon, who lives in Dalton, has worked in early childhood education for more than 20 years and in public schools for the past four years. She began her career at St. Agnes, working as the kindergarten aide from 1990-1993. She taught pre-school, kindergarten, and second grade in the Pittsfield,

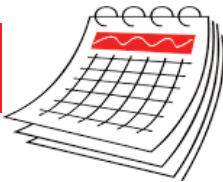
Adams, and Lenox school systems. Zdon has a degree in sociology from MCLA and is currently pursuing a master's degree in education from MCLA.

Chieffo, who lives in Peru, has more than 12 years of classroom teaching experience in grades pre-K to third grade. She has previously served as a volunteer and substitute teacher at St. Agnes.

Flanders attended the University of Connecticut and earned a master's degree in secondary education. She taught ninth grade civics at a National Blue Ribbon school. She has three children that attend St. Agnes Academy.



# Calendar of Events:

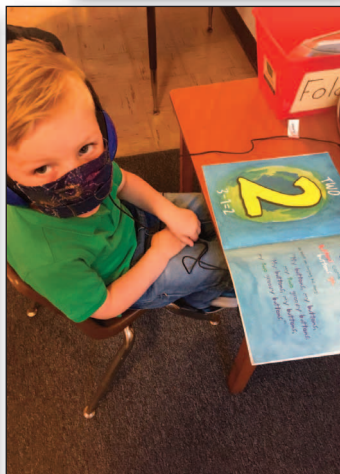


- October 9 – In-service - no school
- October 12 – Columbus Day - no school
- October 30 – Diocesan in-service - no school
- November 9 – SAA school board - 6 p.m.
- November 11 – Veterans’ Day - no school

## WHAT’S UP IN THE CLASSROOM

In Mrs. Kulpa’s pre-k three-year old class, the children are adjusting well and settling into the new routines of school. They are being very good at mask wearing and hand sanitizing and the teachers are very proud. We started the year with an "I Am Special" theme. We discussed how each one of us is special and unique as well as how similar we are. The remainder of the month was our Farm unit. Through songs, crafts, and stories, the children learned about various farm animals, harvesting crops, and how important the farmer’s job is. At the completion of the unit, we celebrated by having a "Hoe-Down Party." Students enjoyed playing many farm games and having a special snack.

In Mrs. Zdon’s pre-k 4-year-old class, students have adjusted well to the routines of the classroom. We started off the year talking about how friends keep each other safe. The children know that wearing their masks is helping themselves and their friends stay safe. They have all been wonderful about keeping them on! We are working on strengthening our fine motor skills and practicing name writing daily. We are enjoying getting to know each other and learning about our families. We are learning about how Jesus had a family and friends, too! We have explored apples using science, math, and literacy activities. We made some delicious applesauce and were apple scientists exploring our apples by weighing and measuring, observ-



ing, and recording our observations. We have started our letter-of-the-week program and will soon be starting a number-of-the-week program as well. We look forward to fall and all the learning opportunities it will bring us!

In Mrs. Patti’s Kindergarten, it was so nice getting back to school after being away for so long. The kindergarten children all arrived happy to meet their new friends and begin the school year! September has proven to be a very busy month in our class. We have had many new challenges with following the new rules and procedures, however, our students have worked seamlessly and have seemed to adjust to the “new normal” quite quickly. Along with the beautiful September days, we have been celebrating the arrival of autumn and learning about apples and the signs of fall all around us. We are well underway in our kindergarten curriculum and look forward to continue to learn and have fun, while staying healthy.



In Mrs. Capeless’ first grade, we are off to a great start! The children are excited to be back at St. Agnes Academy. First grade is ready and eager to learn. We are already learning about nouns and verbs and how to recognize them in sentences. We have also been learning all about apples and will begin our unit on pumpkins.



We had a car parade on September 11 where we thanked our police and firefighters for all they do for our community. The children had fun making posters and held them up proudly for all to see.

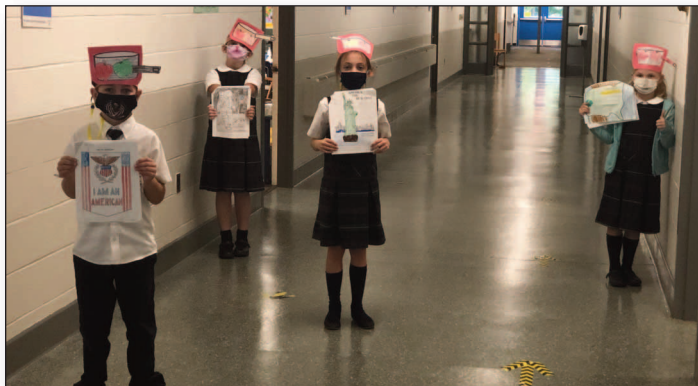




**In Mrs. Chieffo's second grade,** the class has hit the ground running! We are so happy to be back to school with our friends. We have been learning so many new things such as the subject and predicates of a sentence, math word problems, and new ways to add and subtract.

After reading *Stone Soup*, we made our own recipe for stone soup. During our social studies unit, *I am an American*, we learned about our country and our national landmarks. This week we celebrated Johnny Appleseed's birthday with a flurry of cross curriculum activities and crafts!

Second grade is a happening place and we are thankful for our school.



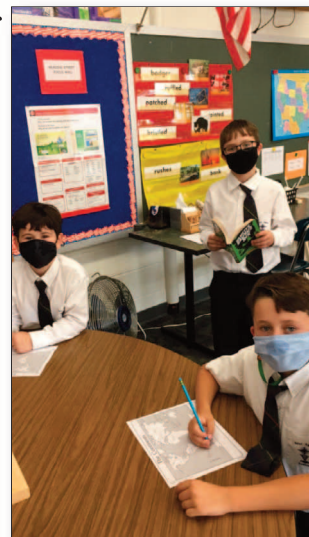
**In Mrs. Todriff's third grade,** the month of September has been a new experience for everyone. Third grade students seem very happy to see their friends and teachers! We were excited also to see the children's smiling faces. Students were eager to explore their new surroundings and begin work. They were looking forward to play outside with each other at recess. It is amazing how the children and adults have adapted to the new routines of cleaning, sanitizing, washing hands, social distancing, and wearing masks!



*Students display their "All About Me" butterflies.*

**In Miss Salatino's fourth grade,** the children are excited to be back at school. We have a wonderful class and are happy to welcome our new students. All have been working hard at getting organized and comfortable with their new curriculums. They have been doing a great job at being patient and cooperative as they follow and get used to our new safety protocols.

Time has been spent on learning how to access and use our new online programs. Technology will be used in all subject areas. Each child has their own device to use at school. Their computers or iPads will be used as resources for learning and completing assignments. We look forward to an enjoyable and productive school year!



**In Mrs. Ferraro's class,** we welcome back the fifth graders! It has certainly been a different sort of year so far, but we are glad to be back in the classroom. I love seeing all your faces every day! The first few days were taken to learn the new procedures we must incorporate to keep everyone safe at school. Once the second week began, fifth grade was off with their academics. They have been working on place value, addition, subtraction, and estimating in math. In religion, the class has been learning about how to respect and care for God's creation, along with how the sacraments give us God's sanctifying grace. They have been delving into realistic fiction, tall tales, and survival stories in reading. They have also practiced comprehension and grammar conventions such as character and plot, sequence, the four kinds of sentences, and complete subjects and predicates. In science, the class has been discussing the properties of matter, including the states and matter, metals and nonmetals, and beginning to visualize the atomic makeup of everything we know in this world.



**Mrs. Flanders' classes:**

Social Studies: 6th and 7th Graders

The sixth and seventh graders are getting immersed in all the social sciences since the beginning of the school year. They explored basic themes of geography and learned about GPS locations using their birthdays. They also had fun trying to locate where Mr. Soskil is in the world. Right now they are learning about economics, creating inflation bar graphs, and comparing family incomes in developed and developing countries. In the near future, they will explore primary sources and the students will get to complete an archeologist hands-on assignment involving clay pots. This will then lead to our next unit which includes the Paleolithic and Neolithic time periods.

Eighth Graders – The class is exploring the basic foundations of government in their civics class. We have discussed the state of nature and philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. They have also completed a class assignment where they had to develop their own country. Once the students are familiar with all different types of government, they will start exploring the U.S. Constitution by debating and creating their own class constitution.

Academic Elective – All classes have been learning about the importance of a healthy growth mindset and coming up with individual SMART goals. Our next unit will be study skills. Each class is delving into this topic based on their weaknesses and strengths. Some will focus on organization and time management while others will focus on test anxiety and completing research projects.



**Mrs. Jamros' classes:** It's great to be back together again! We have been busy catching up with one another and working with the new Learning Management System.

Math 6 - we spent some time reviewing 5th grade concepts and have begun working on 6th grade number sense.

ELA/LIT 6 - we are learning a new way to do vocabulary and our class has already answered more than 4000 questions. The theme of our current literature unit is "Reaching Out."

Math 7 - we have been working with integers and exponents.

ELA/LIT 7 - we are working on vocabulary and have mastered 160 new words. We discussed *A Long Walk to Water* and are continuing with the unit on non-fiction.

Math 8 - we are almost finished with our unit on rational numbers. Next, we will be working with square roots and irrational numbers.

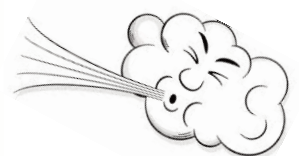
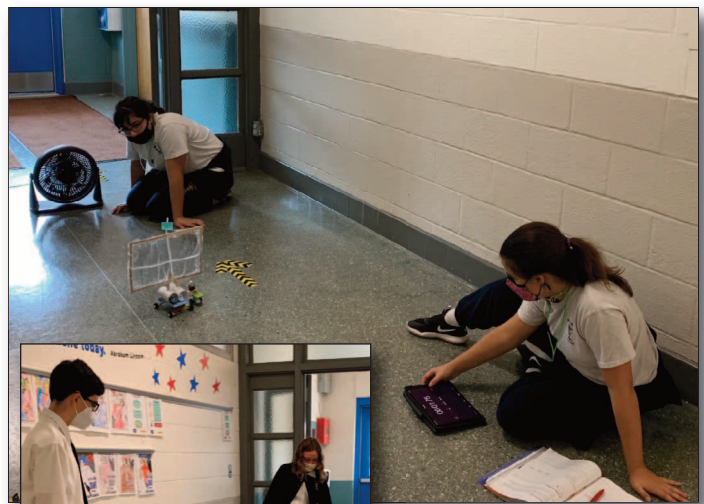
ELA/LIT 8 - we are once again participating in the Vocabulary Bowl and are currently in fourth place out of all Massachusetts middle and elementary schools. We reviewed and discussed *The Pearl* and have begun our literature unit "Quest for Justice."

**Mrs. Scaduto's science classes:**

The sixth graders have been focusing on learning the characteristics of living things to kick off their first year of Middle School science. In addition, they are gaining a better understanding of the steps of the scientific method, and have recently been applying these steps in their first laboratory assignment, which studied the surface tension of water.

The seventh graders have been studying energy concepts for the first portion of the school year, including work, power, and calculating potential and kinetic energy. Recently, they completed a virtual skate park activity to demonstrate their understanding of potential and kinetic energy, and carried out a physical lab assignment that focuses on work and power (photo attached).

The eighth graders have been learning physics concepts thus far, which have included speed, acceleration, and forces. They recently applied these ideas, along with a bit of engineering in the "Sail Away" challenge, where each group was asked to design, build, and test an air-powered, wheeled vehicle (a sail car). After the initial building and test phase, each group quickly realized that they would need to alter different aspects of their vehicles to achieve their goal, which was to harness wind power from a fan to move their car over a distance of 4 meters. After much redesigning, countless modifications, and retesting, they were all left with functioning, impressive prototypes, along with an appreciation and better understanding of engineering!







# PTO Happenings

We are so excited to be Back to School - In School! and we have shared that excitement with students and staff. Before students arrived, we were busy painting the bathroom stalls with positive messages. We've heard that they make the students smile and they LOVE it! The PTO helped with purchasing supplies for the classroom - including agendas, mask lanyards and seat cushions to support outdoor learning. Smart TVs have been installed in each classroom and are helping teachers to access unlimited learning resources.

The "Uniform Closet" is now located on the third floor of the Pastoral Center. We have already provided gently used

uniform items to more than

35 students through your donations. We are working on setting regular hours for the closet. Contact [pto@saintagnescc.com](mailto:pto@saintagnescc.com) to schedule an appointment or to volunteer to help. Donations may be left with Lisa Fusini at the front desk at any time.

**SAA Car Decals** are again on sale for \$2 each. Order forms are available at school or on our website. The PTO Bulletin Board has been moved to the vestibule area across from the new front office. Check out the Bulletin Board, our Facebook page and emails for PTO News.

**Our Cash Calendar fundraiser** will be sent home during the first week of October. We are counting on your support to enable us to continue doing great things for our school!

Although we aren't able to host many of the events we are used to, we have lots of fun things in the works! Keep on the lookout for details. If you are not receiving emails from the PTO, please let us know.

ALL parents and teachers are a part of the PTO and are welcome to join us for our first **Meeting on October 5th at 6:30 via Zoom**. Support our school! Be an active part of the PTO!!

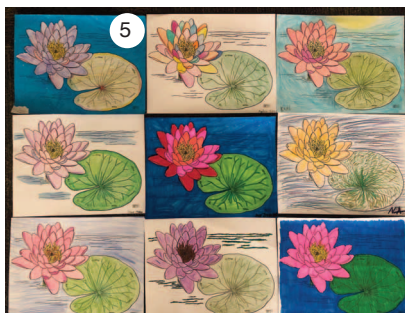


## Mrs. Pollard's art classes:

Students have been learning about Artists from the impressionist era: Vincent Van Gogh, Claude Monet and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.



Academy Artwork







## Letter from Burkina Faso

*Sr. Linda Answers the Call*

October 2020

### *Faith is the Constant Amidst the Uncertainty*

What crazy times we live in and yet we feel the presence of the Lord in all that we do. It is the one thing we can rely on.

COVID-19 forced Ruth and I to return to the states earlier than we had planned. We had to move quickly to get a flight out of the country before the airports closed in late March. The only flight we could book brought us from West Africa to East Africa and through Ireland before finally arriving home. We spent five months at home.

Ruth and I have been in Burkina Faso since the beginning of September and are so happy to be able to continue our work here. Some things have changed though. And we are sad that we are unable to travel to some villages because of safety issues but we are ever hopeful that with God's help peace will return to this country. We are ever grateful to our local partners who have carried on the work in those areas for us without skipping a beat.

The generous donations of sponsors allowed us to prepare 210 children to return to class spanning from second grade through university. This included paying tuition, buying uniforms, backpacks, books and school supplies. Each child also received 100 pounds of rice and some soap. Twenty-four widows were also blessed with rice and soap. The gift of rice is especially welcome right now. This year's harvest is not yet complete, and many crops did not produce the expected yield due to erratic rain this season. People are struggling to feed their families. Often the heavy rains produced flooding and caused mud brick houses to collapse sometimes killing the occupants inside. The rainy season tapers off in October but sadly many people do not have the resources to rebuild their homes.

Our milk program, which provides formula for malnourished and vulnerable babies, continues to meet the needs of infants in our area. Just last week, three-month-old twin girls weighing four pounds and five pounds respectively were enrolled in the program. Often the mothers die in childbirth or are unable to provide milk for their babies.

Thank you for your prayers and support. Please continue to pray for us and all the precious people we serve in Burkina Faso.

