

Vol 01 | January 2021

St. Michael School

NEWSLETTER



PRINCIPAL'S LETTER

We are very excited to present our inaugural newsletter in this new year! The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic has undoubtedly turned our world upside down and presented many new challenges for us all, and in particular, for our school. The theme we chose for this school year is based on the Serenity Prayer: God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.

This past year, teachers had to quickly adapt to a new virtual learning environment, while parents became co-teachers almost overnight. Students struggled to learn from home and many also felt the effects of isolation. Some of our families have been impacted by job loss and closure of their businesses. Health and safety became our top priority, but the reality of infection continued to plague our community. And unfortunately, many lives were lost over the past year.

As a Catholic school, we do not believe in just educating the mind, but also the heart, the place where the seeds of faith take root. We realized that much of the impacts of the pandemic were out of our control, but what we could control was our response to it. Academic well-being was equally important as emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being. Creating a path for our students to be back learning on campus was critical. Members of our school community helped support families in need during this time, and the need was tremendous. Most importantly, we knew that the only way to pull through what seemed like a "God-sized" problem was God Himself. So we turned to our faith and prayer to help us through.

Serenity. Courage. Wisdom. These three thematic words help us refocus on the things that are most important to us. Serenity in knowing that amidst the chaos our world finds itself in, God still has an awesome plan in motion. Courage to find new opportunities to evolve and advance the way we approach education while remaining firm in our faith. And wisdom to direct us choices. These words have set a foundation for us as a school community to pull through this pandemic while continuing our mission in Catholic education.

So we continue to thank all of our students, parents, families, benefactors, faculty, and staff for their continued support especially through this pandemic. This year, we celebrate 77 years of service to this community, and by the grace of God, we look forward to many, many more years to come. St. Michael the Archangel, protect and defend us. Amen.

MR. KAINOA FUKUMOTO
Principal



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Established in 1944, Saint Michael School is a private parochial Catholic school in the North Shore area on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. St. Michael views itself as an integrated part of a larger living faith community, committed to the goal of a Christian education.



A LIVING LESSON IN SUSTAINABILITY

A small patch of green grass sits in the heart of the school campus. In it, are the fruits of many hands — cucumber, okra, kalo, Mānoa lettuce, bok choy, bittermelon, eggplant, green onions, strawberries and more.

Encouraged by his father since the age of 8 to help him in the home garden, 9th grader Kamuela Dabaluz, wasn't interested at that time; he just wanted to play. But over the years, something rubbed off on him, and he now counts his father as the one who initially inspired him to begin cultivating.

The school garden is Kamu's passion project. When he's not in class, he's outside tending to the garden that took shape in early August and features something for all ages.

"There are three boxes in the garden," says Kamu. "The middle one is mine. I grow rosemary, parsley, mint and chives." The kindergarten and 8th grade classes each oversee a box of their own. "They water the plants, but I make sure it's alive and everything."

In addition to the container gardens, there's also an aquaponic aspect to the project. Its success has already allowed for two harvests.

"Aquaponics is a combination of aquaculture, which is raising fish, and hydroponics, which is soil-less gardening," explains Dallas Carter, high school director. Setting up the system is technical, but once it's set up, all you have to do is feed the fish.

"It's a self-sustaining system," says Dallas. "It's a beautiful marriage of two types of farming."

Self-sustainability is the lesson Dallas and Principal Kainoa Fukumoto hope to share with every student as both grew up with Hawaiian ideals and values deeply embedded from childhood. Dallas says that Hawaii was once a heavily agricultural place and should be again. (please check okina)

The arrival of COVID-19 exposed a weak link that is the state's dependence on tourism. And with that came other lessons on just how heavily Hawaii depends on imported food and goods.

"How do we respond?" asks Dallas. "How about we teach our children to be self-sustaining, how to grow their own food, how to barter." This is where the aquaponics garden comes in.

"Aquaponics has a high rate of return," he continues. "It grows very quickly, about two to two-and-a-half times faster than other methods. If you were to grow two plants side by side, one in regular Miracle Grow-type of potting mix, and the other with aquaponics, the aquaponics would win. And it's usually healthier as long as you take care of the water."

The ultimate goal of the garden is to show the students a path toward self-sustainability and how to provide for themselves.

There's also a side to this project that appeals to younger students — butterflies. Right next to the Crown flower plant is a tall cage that's home to caterpillars and a number of chrysalis. Since the beginning of the school year, about 10 to 12 butterflies have been released.

"We let the little kids put the butterflies on their fingers when they're ready and they let it go," says Dallas. "It's a big highlight for them."

He goes on to share a story about Kamu.

"Mrs. Craycroft is the music teacher on campus and she normally brings her instruments from class to class on a cart. The cart's really loud, so everyone can tell where Mrs. Craycroft is. So the other day I needed Kamu to move cans from one place to another. He was pushing the art cart, which is also loud. One of the kindergarteners inside the class asked if Mrs. Craycroft was coming. So one of the other kids stuck her head out of the classroom — her name's Jenna — she looked and saw Kamu, and said, 'Oh no, it's the boy who lives in the garden.' And that's how he's known by the younger students here, the boy who lives in the garden."

The boy who lives in the garden may not think of himself as a leader, but he is. He acknowledges how his desire to establish a garden and cultivate it has changed him.

"I've become a better person, nicer to people, making everybody feel welcome," says Kamu.

Many students are involved with the garden, but he invites more involvement with this advice: "If they are into this kind of stuff and they want to help me or do it by themselves, just do it. What are you gonna lose? A couple of plants may die, but you can always get more. Or if they flourish and get big, you can use that. That's yours now. You can be proud of yourself for raising that plant."



UPCOMING CALENDAR

Monday, Jan. 18	Martin Luther King Jr. NO SCHOOL
Sunday, Jan. 31-Feb. 5	Catholic Schools Week
Friday, Feb. 5	Annual Conference of Catholic Educators NO SCHOOL
Friday, Feb. 12	Valentine's Day/Kids Heart Challenge
Monday, Feb. 15	Presidents Day NO SCHOOL
Wednesday, Feb. 17	Ash Wednesday
Friday, Feb. 19	Teacher In-Service Day NO SCHOOL
Tuesday, Feb. 23	Spring Picture-Taking



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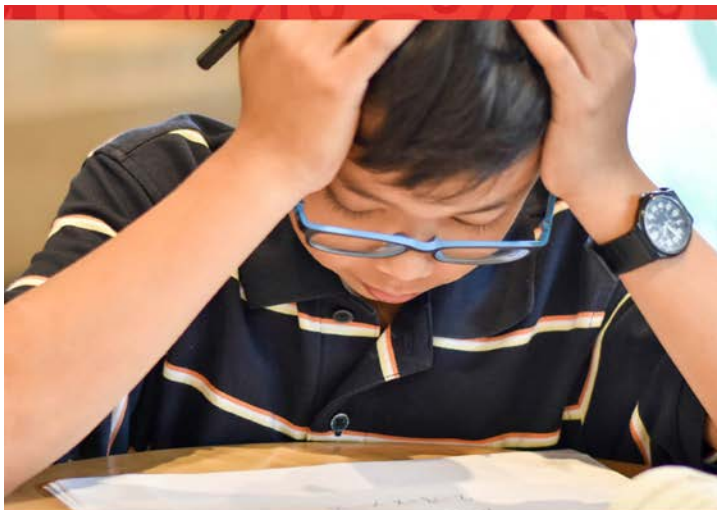
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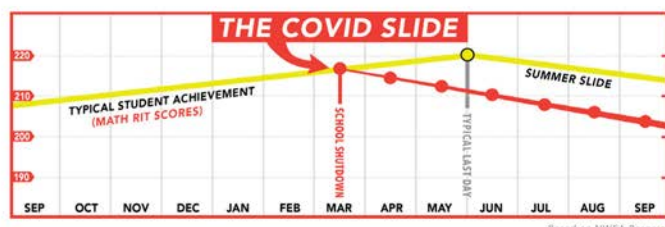


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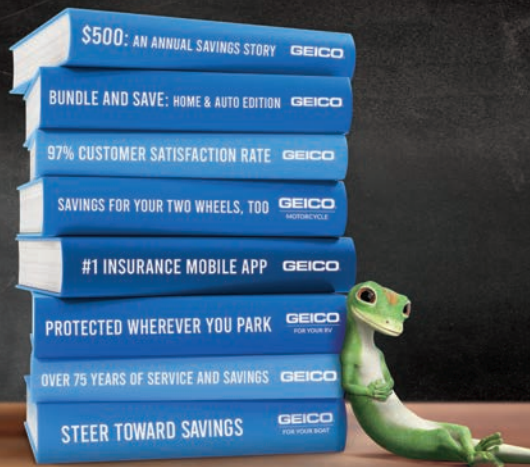


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