



Saint Timothy Catholic School
Chantilly, VA



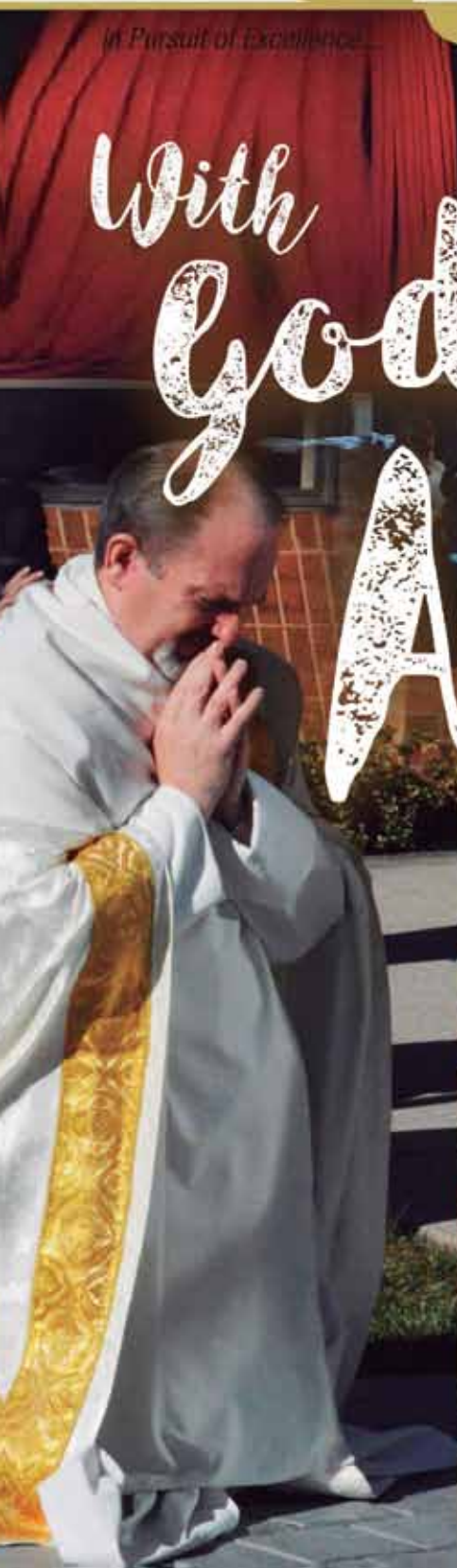
National Blue Ribbon
School of Excellence



tigertracks

In Pursuit of Excellence

With
God
All things
are
possible





13809 Poplar Tree Road. Chantilly, VA 20151

Phone: 703.378.9408 / 703.378.6932

Saint Timothy Catholic School

A LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Welcome to the fourth year of publication for our Saint Timothy Catholic School's Tiger Tracks Magazine.

This edition is dedicated to sharing more about and celebrating the one enduring principle that makes our school so special and unique, our amazing faith in and relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

For all who enter our faith-filled learning community, the first thing they will see is the following quote that outlines our charter and mandate for pursuing institutional excellence: "Be it known to all who enter here, Christ is the reason for this school." It's evident that the Holy Spirit is continually at work in our community, guiding and blessing our efforts. Throughout this publication we will share some of the special programs and initiatives that support our students' individual spiritual, academic and social growth, all rooted in the faith, with the understanding that our main objective is to work with the primary educators (parents), our best partners, to prepare each child to successfully identify and embrace God's plan for them.

It's fitting that our theme for this edition is based on the quote, "With God all things are possible."

This year our students will experience numerous opportunities to learn more and evangelize about the Catholic Faith. This includes service projects, spirituality retreats, middle school leadership workshops, character development activities, social etiquette lessons / competitions, and an infusion of our faith in all academic endeavors.

Our goal at Saint Timothy Catholic School is to model and inspire the pursuit of greatness in all of our students. True greatness and fulfillment can only be achieved and sustained by following God's individual plan for our lives. We are committed to working with parents to successfully guide our students on this journey.

Thank you again for choosing Saint Timothy Catholic School!

God bless you,

Joseph M. McLaughlin



- T
A
B
L
E
O
F
C
O
N
T
E
N
T
S
- 2 Principal Letter, "With God All Things are Possible."
 - 3 Building a Caring Middle School Community Through Spiritual Retreats
 - 4 Let it be known that all who enter here, CHRIST is the reason for this school
 - 6 Differentiated Instruction in Advanced Writing
 - 8 8th Grade Students reflect on their team building trip to Verdun
 - 10 Scholarship, Mrs. Vanderhoof, 4th grade. Planting the Seeds of Learning
 - 11 An Alternative Seating Classroom
 - 12 Alumni Focus
Dr. Opfer



BUILDING A CARING MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY THROUGH SPIRITUAL RETREATS

By Mrs. Beth Henry,
Pastoral Counselor,
St. Timothy Catholic School

In addition to offering our students the chance to pray and experience their faith, during this year's retreats we are also embracing St. Timothy's spiritual theme for this school year:

**WITH GOD
ALL THINGS
ARE POSSIBLE**

from Matthew 19:26 and the virtue of Hope. During our first two retreats this year have explored the ways in which God can use all of us, even in our brokenness, to heal and to build a community of love and gentleness.

It started out with a question and a desire to minimize some of the drama and pain that seems to be all too common in middle school. The question was, "how can we help them to become more caring in the midst of these challenging years of change and growth?" The answer for our St. Timothy middle school students was in finding new ways to remind them of the very real presence of Christ in their lives and in their interactions with each other. We found our answer when we reflected on our own experiences of purpose and of community our staff and personal spiritual retreats.

So last year we began a Middle School Retreat Program at St. Timothy School to give our students the chance to step away from their daily school routine, to reflect, pray and grow together. The program started with three Friday retreats, each one month apart. The first was held for 8th grade students, the next month we held one for the 7th grade and the third retreat was for 6th graders. We held separate retreats for the boys and girls led by youth ministers, myself, teachers, our parish priests and school administrators. Following our School Mass, the boys headed to one area of the school and the girls went to another.

Our first round of retreats focused on prayer, on listening and developing a deeper relationship with God and each other. The students experienced different ways of praying from lectio divina, to journaling and intentional prayer, and reflection on the writings of St. Teresa of Calcutta. The students reflected on God's plan for them and their response. These afternoons of prayer, reflection and team-building challenged our students to step outside of their routines and to invite Christ in.

There were tears and sharing, journaling, Scripture reading, and time spent in the Adoration Chapel. Our 8th graders were so moved by the experience that they asked for another retreat day before their graduation. The students shared their excitement about the retreat with their parents, who also asked if they could have a retreat. So we added two more retreats before the school year ended.

This year we decided to expand the middle school retreat program to six student retreats, one for each grade in the Fall and one in the Spring. We are also providing a parent retreat in the Spring. We have also invited several seniors from nearby Paul VI Catholic High School to join us for these retreats as small group leaders.

The high school students chosen for this role are active in campus ministry and have also participated in high school retreats and mission trips. These students lead small group Scripture study and share with the middle school students the ways in which they try to live out their faith in high school.

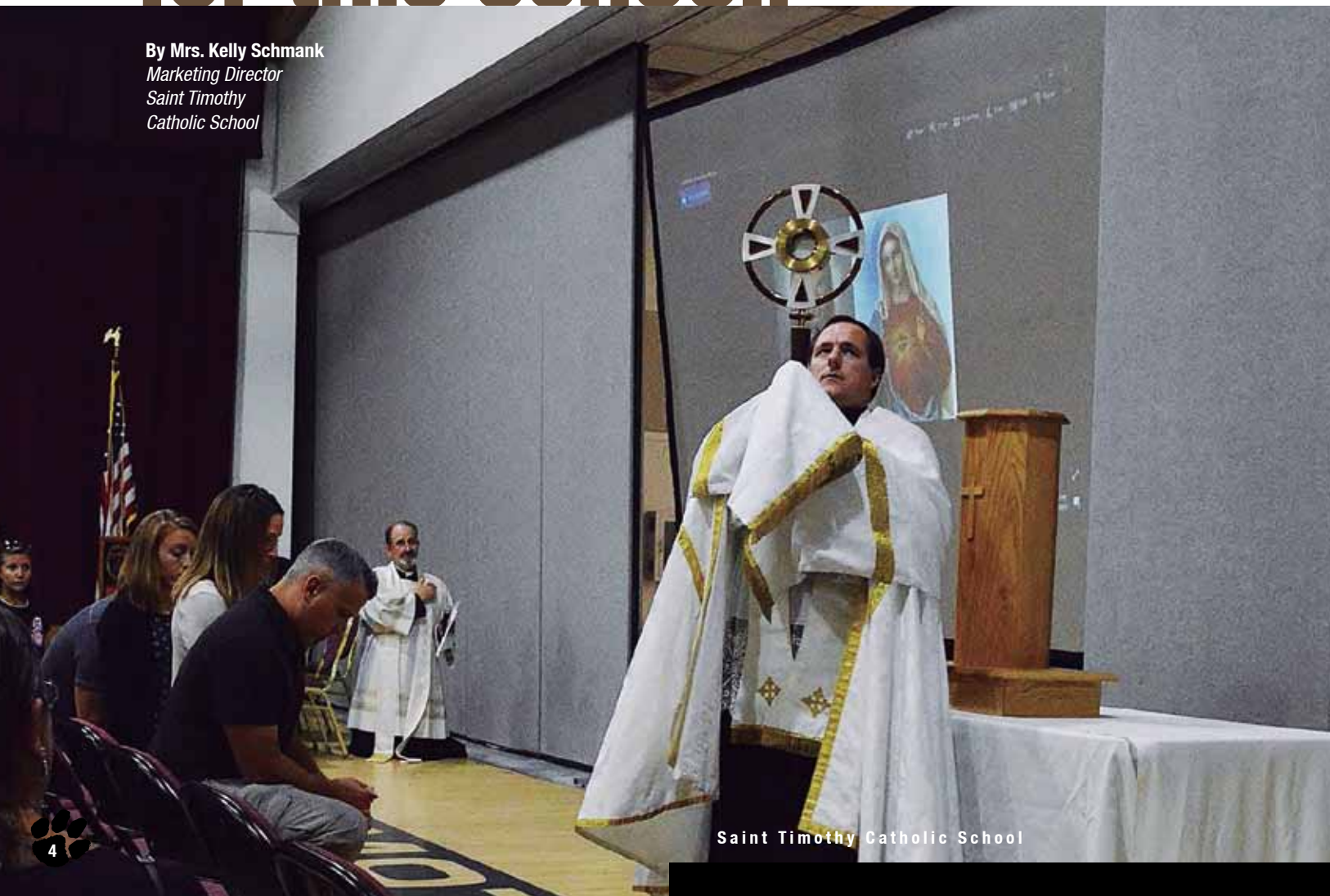


This quote is proudly displayed at the entrance of our school lobby. Knowing who is responsible for our joy and who we are serving each and every school day makes everything else seem to fall into place.



**“Let it be known
that all who enter here,
CHRIST is the reason
for this school.”**

By Mrs. Kelly Schmank
Marketing Director
Saint Timothy
Catholic School





Prayer is seamlessly woven into everything we do at STS. At the beginning of each school year, we enthrone our school and our families to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary during a solemn ceremony held during our Back to School Night.

Each new school day our students begin with the Morning Prayer to focus our day. As our students are praying, our parent prayer warriors also gather in the church after the morning carpool to lift our community up in prayer as they pray the rosary for the intentions of our families...

"in thanksgiving for jobs found... for the healthy arrival of baby Grace... for the repose of the soul of Jim who passed away last weekend, for the families who are suffering with the loss of loved ones, for Sarah who is battling cancer, for our students preparing for midterms, please give them peace of mind and clarity, for world peace, and for Christians being persecuted around the world..." We cover our families in prayer and ask for God's sovereign blessings upon our community that we might grow closer to his son Jesus.

In October, during the month of the Rosary, students learn about the missionaries scattered around the world spreading the Good News of the Gospel. To celebrate their efforts and their vocation, we offer a school-wide living rosary for our World Missions. As we actively pray, our dynamic Catholic faith comes alive during this prayerful ceremony.

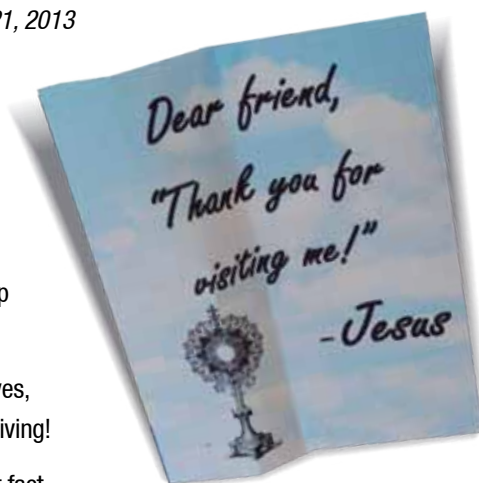
At the strike of noon each school day, our students pause to raise their hearts and minds to God recalling the moment when the Angel Gabriel told the Virgin Mary she was to be the mother of Jesus as we pray the Angelus. The prayer, which takes only a few minutes, is a short summary of the greatest event in human history that changed the world forever! It helps us to recall the Blessed Virgin's "Yes" in becoming the Mother of God when "the word was made flesh and dwelt among us." By doing this, it helps us to thank Mary for her perfect obedience to God's will in her life and to also imitate her "yes" in our own lives regarding God's will and plans for us. We want our students to learn to enthusiastically say "YES!" to God! – Keane, Judy. *"Remembering the Angelus"* catholicexchange.com/remembering-the-angelus June 21, 2013

At the close of our day, our precious first graders lead the school in the closing prayer:

"Thank you Lord for the blessings of this day, forgive me my sins and poor choices, please help me to do better tomorrow, I ask this through the intercession of your son Jesus." Simple words prayed by our youngest students in their sweet innocent voices are a great reminder at the end of the day, that no one is perfect and we all need to keep striving towards holiness with Jesus' help.

Indeed, "With God ALL things are possible..." especially when we put God first in our lives, and come to him constantly in prayer to offer prayers of petitions and of course thanksgiving!

At Saint Timothy, Jesus is the reason for our school and everything else builds upon that fact.



*"None of us, including me, can ever do great things.
But we can all do small things with great love,
and together we can do something wonderful"*
— Saint Teresa of Calcutta.

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION IN ADVANCED WRITING

By Mr. Michael Pryor,
Assistant Principal K
4th Grade,
Saint Timothy
Catholic School

St. Timothy School is blessed with a community of educators that is driven by collaboration and whose purpose is to educate the whole child. Over the past several years, St. Timothy teachers have been onto something wonderful, indeed. Their passion towards providing each of their students with an individualized approach to learning is what has motivated this collaboration and is what continues to set them apart.

Using a variety of resources and strategies, teachers are constantly finding new and meaningful ways to assess their students, to establish goals, and to track student progress in pursuit of those goals. Teachers also appreciate the importance of creating differentiated groupings for upcoming instruction. With these groupings, the teachers then begin to tailor their lessons towards the specific group in which they are working. In mathematics, teachers give pre-tests to determine which students have already mastered upcoming content.

What makes the math program unique is that the students must demonstrate their mastery of various topics at the beginning of each new unit. This structure shows that the teachers aim to provide remediation for

students in need, and project-based enrichment for those students who have already mastered the content for that particular unit. Aside from the math, teachers also assess the students' reading on a regular basis, and then proceed to create leveled reading groupings

based on the data gathered from these assessments.

The classroom teachers have especially had an impact on the Advanced Writing Program. Students in grades 3-5 have the choice of joining the Advanced Writing Program and participating in the cross-curricular writing

*"It was pride
that changed
angels into devils;
it is humility that makes
men as angels".*

Saint Augustine



We know the definition of differentiated instruction, and understand that all children have different learning needs and different abilities.

projects that are offered. With direct guidance from the teachers, these projects have been crafted to align not only with the language arts curriculum, but also the 6-Traits writing, and our Virtues Program.

More recently, third grade students were tasked with writing notes of encouragement to the teachers, but were asked not to sign their names. It was Saint Augustine that said: "It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels". This project focused on how to craft a well-written letter, but it also tied in the all-important virtue of humility. It is imperative to seize any and all opportunities to refine the souls of these young men and women as we are constantly preparing them for their eternal reward; there's no better place to do that than in the classroom.

Students of the program have also been given the opportunity to share their written word orally through the STS Tiger P.A.W. (Podcast of Advanced Writing). This new opportunity allows the students to reflect on their own work as they listen at home. It also gives them the chance to assess their own reading and writing and consider alternative approaches going forward. Most importantly, the use of these instructional technologies can transform a child's thinking about what it means to get assessed.

You see, differentiation is not just about finding more challenging material for those students who are ahead, or more basic materials for those students who are struggling; it is about discovering the students' interests and abilities, and then identifying innovative ways to shed light on those abilities in the work that they do. Students learn in a variety of ways, so just imagine the possibilities if every child had the opportunity to express their knowledge with that same variety. An engaged student is an excited student, and excited students lead to the finest results. Now, many outside teachers may hear the word "differentiation" and think that such demands are not realistic, but at St. Timothy School, we know that With God All Things Are Possible.



INVESTING IN OUR STUDENTS FUTURE BY PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL GROWTH

EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS REFLECTIONS FROM THEIR EXPERIENCE AT THE TEAM BUILDING FIELD TRIP TO VERDUN



"By attending a school that feels like it has been around for a million years, there are bound to be traditions. Some started the year Saint Timothy's opened, while others developed later on in the school's lifetime of teaching. The most well known one is Verdun. 8th graders are taken on a wonderful trip to Rixeyville, Virginia, to build their teamwork and test their abilities through various exercises, such as; the tightrope, the swing; also known as the flying squirrel, swimming, and kayaking. This starts off 8th grade with a kick!"

Regan O'Neill, STS 8th grade student

"You must go on adventures to find out where you truly belong." These words of Sue Fitzmaurice, an author, perfectly describes my experience at Verdun. Not many adventures like Verdun occur during everyday life, and I was very grateful for the opportunity, especially when it was with the people I'd known forever! Without any access to technology for the day we were able to unplug and enjoy ourselves the old-fashioned way! Overall, Verdun was a very beneficial and monumental event in my life.

The activities organized by the staff of Verdun were awesome! I am not just talking about the thrilling obstacles and the lake time, but the real task behind them. The staff had really gone above and beyond by incorporating team-work and trust into all of our activities. For instance, in the giant swing there was a mule-team that determined how high up and how fast you were going. The person in the harness had to trust the mule-team, after all their life was practically in the hands of the mule-team. The mule-team also had to be mindful of their team-work, and would have to communicate.

While the obstacles were thrilling and adventurous, they were only a fraction of Verdun. The facilitators at Verdun were amazing! Their mini-speeches were full of wisdom and even though we hadn't gone to school, I had learned multiple tips and advice that I will cherish. Their questions were also much deeper than the regular "How do you feel?". They pushed us to think deeper, and really understand what we're doing and why. Without them, Verdun wouldn't be the same!

Teresa Duong, STS 8th grade student





The first activity that my group did was the Cat Walk, a wooden beam without railings thirty feet in the air. I had to walk across it and jump off. I climbed up there all confident and saying to myself, "Please. This will be easy." When I got up there, however, things were slightly different. As you guys probably already know, I'm a little afraid of heights.

I started to have a mini heart attack and could only process three things:

I'm going to die. I'm going to die. I AM GOING TO DIE.

"Guys," I yelled from the wooden beam, "I don't think I can do this!" Sure I expected a few, "Don't worry! You can do this!" Type of things, but I wasn't expecting the entire team to cheer me on. I didn't even think they were paying attention. Instead, I was uplifted by the roar of "JUST WALK JACQUIE YOU CAN DO IT"s. And just like that, I started to walk.

Jacque Barbaretta, STS 8th grade student

Verdun Adventure Bound was an adventurous and exciting place. With teambuilding exercises and thrilling, and daring exercises, Verdun will help you grow closer to people you weren't even friends with and you will learn to trust other people to take care of you. It was a beautiful scorching hot day filled with adventurous fun and a dip in the lake. I was very happy to have gone on the Verdun field trip!

As you sit on the bus for the ride back to school, all the excited and satisfied chatter fills the air. Kids are smiling and laughing while remembering their adventures that had happened a few short hours earlier, sad but pleased that it is over. Some people are fast asleep, exhausted, while other cheerfully chatting about the memories that they will cherish forever. Verdun brings us closer to each other, and makes us stronger together.

Faith Dailo, STS 8th grade student

After going on this amazing field trip, the 8th grade class work together to write their class mission statement. This statement gets printed on a special plaque in the 8th grade hallway and becomes one way that identifies the unique qualities of this class.

The Class of 2018 wrote this for their mission statement after their trip to Verdun:



**"WE CAME AS STRANGERS, GREW AS FRIENDS AND LEAVE AS FAMILY...
WITH GOD, OUR FATHER, AT OUR SIDE."**

STS CLASS OF 2018



PLANTING THE SEEDS OF LEARNING

By Mrs. Elizabeth Vanderhoof,
4th Grade Teacher,
Saint Timothy
Catholic School

At St. Timothy Catholic School we are able to plant seeds for our students' future not only academically but by providing a foundation for a dynamic faith life. Through cross curricular instruction, teachers are able to seamlessly weave faith into differentiated learning that encourages critical thinking.

During weekly reading skill practice, Bible stories can be incorporated to demonstrate cause and effect, sequencing, or main idea. As the students create graphic organizers using chrome books and iPads, technology skills are enhanced. Not only are the students analyzing an authentic text, they are familiarizing themselves with the Bible in a unique way.

Throughout the Lenten season, the entire school comes together every week to pray the Stations of the Cross. In both the middle and primary grades, the children then put their knowledge of word choice, sentence fluency, and voice to work and write prayers and reflections about the Stations.

The individualized attention the children receive through one on one writing conferences allows the teachers to continually assess improvement and challenge the students to take their work to the next level.

At STS, not only are the students challenged to think creatively, but teacher collaboration opens doors for co-planning as we strive to create engaging and meaningful lessons. The specials teachers use their expertise to enhance the classroom curriculum with the grade level teachers. For example, the students are able to take their science lab skills back into the classroom and design experiments about neutralization of acids and bases.



Students have also been able to apply the technology skills learned in computer class by creating digital animations of novels for their classmates to preview. In both situations, several teachers came together to allow these ideas to come to fruition.

As Saint John Paul II stated so beautifully,
"It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives... the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society."

At St. Timothy Catholic School, teachers have the unique ability to combine academics and faith as they use their talents and passion to inspire future generations.

AN ALTERNATIVE SEATING CLASSROOM

By Mrs. Jessica Kurtis
Middle School Literature Teacher,
Saint Timothy Catholic School

"Your room reminds me of the days I spent studying at the library. It's very homey and comfortable."

Dear Mrs. Kurtis, I was in your room for a Youth Group meeting and was absolutely floored! What a great idea you have in putting students at tables. And I love the chairs by the fireplace!

Mrs. Kurtis, you have the coolest lassroom!

These are the comments I love to hear when I embark on something new. So, when did it all begin? Just after Christmas last year, the middle of my twentieth year of teaching at St. Timothy School, I started to feel frustrated. Where was I going with my career? Had I reached my limit as an educator? I expressed these feelings to some colleagues, and one of them forwarded a link about "flexible classrooms." And, what started as a dream soon blossomed into reality.

The idea behind arranging the classroom as I have, is to foster creative thinking and group interaction. I wanted to get away from a teacher-centered room to one where students are the focus. Instead of desks and chairs facing the board and me, I wanted "pods" of learning centers. My vision was to make my classroom look and feel like a home.

Many of the teachers who posted articles on this kind of classroom were on a tight budget. However, after pitching my idea to Mr. McLaughlin, he became as excited as I, and he appealed to the PTO Board. They gave me an extremely generous grant to purchase good quality, well-made pieces. They helped me make my vision a reality.

So, what does this have to do with teaching? Everything! Students have embraced the concept. I could tell that they understood from the very first day that this was something different. They immediately bought into my goal to make this a

true learning environment. The behavior issues I thought I'd encounter – like the ones I did when I put student desks into a group – were at a minimum. Their work is far more productive too. Normally, I am asking students to work together, which fosters both independent thinking and collective learning.

One of the articles I read about flexible or alternative seating talked about the student as a "21st century learner." I truly believe that, although students are engrossed in technology and instant gratification gadgets, they still crave comfort. They are relaxed in my room – taller students are not fighting to fit under the desk, and shorter students are able to sit in a higher position and not feel lost in the furniture. Now, it's too early to tell if this is making an impact on standardized testing scores, but it certainly has helped them learn reading skills which are the most important benchmark.

If you haven't had the opportunity to check out this new space, please come on by! You will see original artwork (I have a painting that my mother did about 50 years ago) in addition to classic posters, "shiplap" behind the bookshelves, and, best of all, a fireplace (non-working, of course). I think you, too, will feel at home.



FROM STUDENT TO PRINCIPAL



"My Catholic education helped my formation as a leader in always remembering Christ is the center of the faith and Catholic education exists to educate in the faith and calls us to go forth and evangelize!"

The advice that Dr. Opfer has for our students as they prepare for high school is: "always strive to be a life-long learner and listen to the advice of your current teachers."



Follow us on
Facebook

[www.facebook.com/pages/
Saint Timothy Catholic School](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Saint-Timothy-Catholic-School)



Alumni and Friends
on Twitter @STSTigers

Long before he was named Principal at Paul VI Catholic High School in Fairfax VA, St. Timothy alum Dr. Thomas Opfer had a moment on the stage of PVI's auditorium way back in 1983. Tom was an STS kindergarten student dressed as an angel and performing in the traditional STS Christmas paraliturgy, with our very own Mrs. Jane Venefro playing the piano. Our drama and musical productions were always held at PVI in those early days. Little did anyone know that the little red head boy named Tom, with a halo and big voice, would someday become Dr. Opfer, Paul VI Principal!

Dr. Tom Opfer graduated from Saint Timothy Catholic School in 1992 and from Paul VI Catholic High School in 1996. He earned his undergraduate degree from James Madison University with a BS in Computer Science and Mathematics, and received one Masters

from George Mason University in M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction and a second from Marymount University in M.Ed. in Catholic School Leadership. His continued thirst to learn propelled him to complete a PhD from George Mason University last spring, in Education – Teaching & Teacher Education.



Dr. Opfer poses with STS alumni from the Class of 2012 during the PVI Junior Ring Mass.

The Catholic education Dr. Opfer received at St. Timothy Catholic School helped form him as the person and educator that he is today. His favorite memory from his time at STS was when the entire-school choir rehearsed every Thursday afternoon in the church. Dr. Opfer uses the beautiful voice God has blessed him with to lead worship during PVI school Masses and on weekends at the Bellarmine Chapel at his alma mater George Mason University.

During his days at STS his favorite subject was Math (not surprising given that he went onto major in math!). Before becoming principal, in his role as a teacher at PVI he was a favorite PVI math teacher to many of our STS alumni. Dr. Opfer's favorite memories from his days as a student at PVI include meeting new people and making life-long friends. Former teachers and students alike all have wonderful things to say about his excellence and passion as a teacher and a man who inspires others to grow in their relationship with Christ. In addition to encouraging students to excel in academics and leadership, he often cheers students on at their athletic events. Dr. Opfer attends football, basketball, softball and other home games and often travels to track meets and swim meets to cheer on his students. He encourages all students to grow in faith, love Jesus, and treat others with respect! Something that he does on a daily basis in and out of the classroom!

