



# St. Agnes Academy News

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Headmaster – James Stankiewicz

## Headmaster Headlines...

### Catholic Schools Celebrate Success in the Classroom

We have just completed Catholic Schools Week. Throughout the U.S., our Catholic schools and parishes recognize the importance of Catholic education in the formation of young people.

Catholic schools perform an important function in our society. They integrate Catholic Christian values into all subject areas and lead others as disciples of Christ by the way they live their lives and by the way they treat others.

One of the questions I am most asked concerns academics - after all we are a school. The St. Agnes curriculum follows the rigorous Massachusetts Frameworks and our teachers are licensed professionals. Our graduates attend many different high schools and in a typical year our eighth grade students will leave us to attend Miss Hall's School, Wahconah Regional High School, Pittsfield High School, McCann Technical School, BART and others.

As to the rigor of our curriculum; 14 of our 18 eighth grade graduates last year earned honor roll status recently at their respective high schools. That is nearly 80% of the class! The schools of the remaining four students have not yet published their honor roll, so I can't report on their status at this time. We are very proud of our graduates who go forward from their Catholic education as scholars, teachers, college professors, engineers, physicists, artists, health care workers, musicians, parents, tradespeople, ministers, civic leaders, and missionaries.

I would like to acknowledge and thank our teachers and staff, along with Fr. Chris and our parishioners for their dedication, support, and service to our students and families.

*-Jim Stankiewicz*

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## NEWS BITS...

### Fun Events and Reflection During Catholic Schools Week

Catholic Schools Week (Jan. 28-Feb. 2) was a very busy time for St. Agnes students, families and staff. The week began with the Snow Ball Dance at Wahconah Country Club on Saturday, Jan. 27. This family dance, sponsored by the PTO, is one of the highlights of the year.

On Sunday morning Jan. 28, students participated in the 10 a.m. Mass as lectors, gift bearers, altar servers, greeters and musicians. There were several dress-up days including crazy hat day, crazy tie day and a day of free dress (non-uniform). On Friday, Feb. 2, students from St. Mary's School in Lee joined us for a Mass, activities, and a pizza lunch. It was a week of fun, celebration, and reflection about our Catholic school. Many thanks to our wonderful PTO, parents, staff and students for making this such a great time!

### Science Fair Participants Test and Analyze Results

Students have completed one round of testing. They analyzed their results so far, and have made adjustments to test their hypotheses for at least one more round.

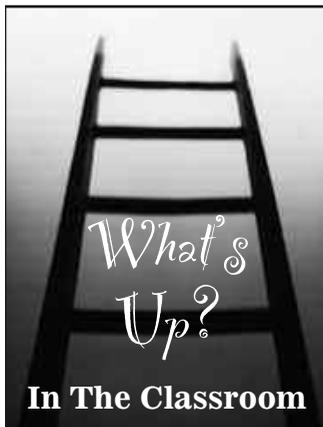
As a reminder, the annual St. Agnes Academy Science Fair will be held on Tuesday, April 10. There will be a session for the faculty, staff, and preK-5 students to see the results in the morning. Parents, families, and the general public are welcome to visit with students about their projects in the evening from 6 to 7:30 p.m.



*Middle School students visit Craneville Place for Mass and socializing.*

## Calendar of Events:

February 12 – Electricity Program Gr. K-2 2:30 p.m.  
February 14 – 9 a.m. Mass - Ash Wednesday  
February 4 – Floor Hockey - 2:30 p.m.  
February 16 – School Assembly - 1 p.m.  
February 19-23 – Winter vacation - no school  
February 26 – Electricity Program – Gr. K-2 2:30 p.m.  
February 28 – Floor hockey 2:30 p.m.  
March 1 – PTO board meeting 6 p.m.  
March 2 – First Friday Mass - 9 a.m.  
March 5 – Electricity Program Gr. K-2 2:30 p.m.  
March 7 – Floor Hockey - 2:30 p.m.  
March 8 – Pizza and Wings Night - PTO event @ 5:30 p.m.  
March 9 – In-service - 11 a.m. dismissal  
March 12 – School board - 6 p.m.  
March 12 – Electricity Program Gr. K-2 2:30 p.m.



In Mrs. Leja's and Mrs. Kulpa's pre-Kindergarten, we have had quite a variety of weather changes this past month from freezing cold to spring-like and back to snow and ice. We are hoping the groundhog won't see his shadow. We will be making predictions about whether or not we will have an early spring or six more weeks of

winter. During this month, both classes will be having a Valentine's Day party on February 14. We are also eagerly counting down to our "100th Day of School" celebration. We'll have stories to read, games to play, and popcorn to enjoy at the annual event. In addition to various Valentine's projects for both classes, the four-year-old class will be doing activities focusing on our healthy teeth and bodies. The three-year-old class will be learning about nursery rhymes.

In Mrs. Patti's kindergarten, everyone had a wonderful and restful Christmas break and the children have returned ready to jump back into learning. January was an exciting time as the children have grown so much in the last few months and it is exciting to see such growth in their reading and writing. We are moving along in Unit 3 of our Reading Street and the theme is Changes All Around Us. In math, we have been busy learning to identify, and write and count numbers up to 31. The children are counting by tens, comparing groups and learning about estimation.

We began our unit on Arctic/polar animals and their habitats. We have also read about and celebrated Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. After reading about how he envi-

sioned the world and wanted peace for all, the children wrote about their dreams and how they can make the world a better place.

During Catholic Schools Week, the children wrote about why they love St. Agnes Academy with the help of their eighth grade big buddies. This week also brings some other exciting events to celebrate our wonderful school.

In Mrs. Shapiro's first grade, this is an exciting time as we watch the children grow in so many new directions. It is wonderful to see their reading take off. The children just finished the midpoint of their reading curriculum. They have come a long way in reading and are working hard every day. In literature, we recently finished our chapter book, *Mr. Popper's Penguins*. A classic of American humor, this house painter and his high-stepping penguins have delighted children for generations.

In math, we just finished Chapter 4: Data and Graphs and started Chapter 5: Tens and Ones, where we will learn about numbers to 100. The students continue to practice their addition and subtraction facts through 10 for fluency. In science, we are beginning to learn about the weather.

The children will be exposed to a wide variety of wonderful children's literature. We will learn about snow first and read about Willie "Snowflake" Bentley. In social studies, students learned how Dr. King used peaceful means to change our country. The class enjoyed listening to books about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and reading in their Scholastic News about this great man.

In religion, we are starting Chapter 11 in *Blest Are We*. In this chapter, the students will come to understand the importance of saying they are sorry when they have chosen to do wrong. They will learn that God is always ready to forgive them. They also visited the Dalton Public Library to help out with story hour project. January guest readers were James and Sy. We are looking forward to Catholic Schools Week. There are always some happy surprises that week that make us realize how special our school really is!



*Fun hats for these first graders.*

In Mrs. Blefari's second grade, the class began with a flourish! We are quickly moving onto many new and exciting concepts and the children are ready and raring to go. We have had lots of fun celebrating Catholic Schools

Week. Crazy hats, socks and ties have brought giggles to the class and made us truly excited about being part of the St. Agnes family.

In reading, we have finished the first of two reading textbooks for this year. The children have completed their third Benchmark Test and did very well for the most part. We are working on concepts such as sequencing, inferences, and parts of speech, as well as continuing our efforts in phonemic awareness. All in all, the children continue to work as diligently as they can every day.

In math, we continue our work in regrouping. Most have mastered adding two-digit numbers, now we are working on subtracting two-digit numbers. Although this is a bit tricky, most of the children are grasping this process very well. Next, we move on to geometry!

We have started a new reading incentive program this month. The children are given three short books to read each week and write a journal entry sharing their favorite books. The parents also get to join in the fun by also writing in the journals. This really helps the children to understand the importance of the written word and, as their child's best teacher, really models for the child how to get thoughts down on paper. Most responses from parents and children have been very positive.

We are making good strides in Reconciliation. We have been saying the Act of Contrition daily. Most of the children have already committed this prayer to memory. If your child still has not, I would respectfully ask for your assistance. The children really should know this prayer by heart by the time they make their First Reconciliation. We have been working daily on the parts of the Rite of Reconciliation, what is a sin, types of sins etc. Although this is a difficult concept for children so young, they continue to do their best. Please keep them in your prayers as we continue their journey to Christ.

Finally, the children are beginning to make the transition from manuscript to cursive writing and, boy, are they excited! We have started off with their names. Each child has a laminated name tag that can be cleaned with a tissue so they can practice repeatedly. We are also working on basic strokes in the handwriting textbook. Now if we can only get them to be able to read cursive, we'll be good to go! They are so funny. They are still having difficulties recognizing the cursive alphabet. But the more they see it, the easier it will get.



*Second graders sports some creative hats.*

**In Mrs. King's third grade**, the class thoroughly enjoyed Catholic Schools Week. Each child wrote a journal entry explaining why they feel lucky to be a student at



*Second graders show off their recent Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. projects.*

St. Agnes Academy. They all mentioned that they liked to be able to learn about their faith and talk about God. Some of the children said they felt very safe and knew that their teachers and principal cared about them. They also feel challenged and love learning new things every day.

In math, we just completed our unit on single-digit multiplication and division. We also worked on operational patterns and fact families. We are now moving on to Statistics and Probability. We will be starting off with graphs and will then move on to mean, median, and mode. We will revisit multiplication and division later in the year.

We are learning about the difference between weather and climate in science. We are studying the different tools that scientists use to measure and describe weather. The children made their own replica of an anemometer to better understand how scientists use this tool to measure wind velocity. We will also be learning about staying safe in all types of severe weather.

In social studies, we are learning about the American Revolution. We are focusing on the important events that took place in Massachusetts including the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party. Our focus in religion has been on the Blessed Trinity. We have also learned that we should never be afraid to ask God for help.

We have been reading the book *Wonder* and the kids love it. We just finished our historical fiction book reports which focused on problems and problem resolution. We are studying pronouns and learning the difference between a subject and object pronoun. We have just finished writing imaginative stories. It is great to see the progress the kids have made with their writing since the beginning of the year!

#### **In Mrs. Adams' fourth grade:**

**Religion:** This month we learned that God's justice can be quite different from our own; God forgives those we don't necessarily want to forgive. We learned that God's Kingdom is an eternal gift, we don't "work" our way into it and as God is generous with us, so we should help make God's Kingdom a reality by being generous and compassionate toward others. We studied the Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit filled the Apostles with new knowledge about Jesus and about God as Trinity; how he strengthened their faith and empowered them to spread the Gospel message. We learned that the Holy

Spirit continues to be present in the Church today and helps us to make good moral decisions.

**ELA:** We finished up Unit 3, "Patterns in Nature." The guiding questions were: What is the value of looking at patterns in nature? What patterns in nature guide the lives of animals? How have people explained the pattern of night and day? How do weather patterns affect our lives? What causes changes in nature? The students particularly enjoyed *Paul Bunyan*. Activities included: action and linking verbs, subject verb agreement, and possessives. Also, graphic sources, word structure, homophones, generalizations, and compound words. The fourth grade presented their Cereal Box book reports and did an amazing job.

**Social Studies:** We learned about The Nation's Economy and how the economy meets our wants and needs. Also, how businesses supply goods and services to match demands. On a global note, we discussed how innovations in transportation and communication have increased trade between countries. We began our study of the U.S. regions with the Northeast; its coastal regions and landforms; its natural resources and how it was the birthplace of our country. We read about the growth and change with the immigrants and industrialization and about the Northeast today.

**Math:** We covered multiplying two-digit whole numbers and money amounts by two-digit multipliers without and with regrouping. Also, we multiplied three-digit whole numbers and money amounts by two-digit multipliers with regrouping.

**In Ms. Young's fifth grade,** religion class has included the discussion and study of how God is present in both the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. We also learned how the authors of the Bible were all inspired by God to write down what we know as sacred scriptures, a variety of new and known names for the celebration of the Eucharist, and how Saint Jerome translated the Bible into Latin.

In math, students have finished their study of fractions and number theory. They will be moving on to lessons in geometry next. In reading, students have read about making sacrifices for others within various stories including *The Chi'lin Purse* and *A Summer's Trade*, as well as presenting panel discussions for their peers.

In science, the girls and boys have been studying



*Third grade students completed projects on the Native American culture.*



*Fr. Brian and Fr. Chris celebrate Mass with St. Mary's and St. Agnes students during Catholic Schools Week.*

minerals and rocks, the rock cycle, testing which minerals float, and learning about the difference between deposition and erosion.

#### **In Mr. Lange's sixth grade:**

**Social Studies:** We are finally wrapping up our unit on South America with a chapter on Brazil. We've learned all about the Amazon River, the Brazilian rain forest, and the unique history of this interesting country. Our next unit in geography will take us to Asia.

**Literature:** Our most recent book was, *Call of the Klondike; A True Gold Rush Adventure*, by David Meissner and Kim Richardson. This was a nonfiction selection which focused on the challenges faced by two young prospectors during the Yukon Gold Rush in the 1850's. Our final project for the book is a short research paper which will help students learn about a topic of interest associated with the time period, the region, or the process of mining gold.

**Math:** Grades 6 and 7 have begun units on expressions and equations. Grade 7 has a more extensive look at solving equations involving all operations, integers, and decimals and fractions, both positive and negative. Grade 7 also did more extensive work on combining like terms. This is all to prepare them for eighth grade math and algebra, and high school math as well.

**Science:** Sixth graders have finished studying geologic history. It was the final section of their earth science unit. Now they are moving onto learning about biology: living things, how they are classified, cells, and how human body systems interact.

#### **In Mrs. Dudziak's seventh grade:**

**Language Arts:** We continue to expand our vocabulary and improve our writing. We recently completed an autobiographical essay and will begin working on our Real Woman essays.

**Social Studies:** We have finally started our exciting unit on Ancient Greece. Currently, we are learning all about the political configuration of city states and how they functioned. We are paying special attention to the origins of the democratic process in ancient Athens, and the students are fascinated by the militaristic nature of ancient Sparta. Very soon, we will learn about the cultural achievements of the Greeks and how those achievements have influenced modern culture.



*Students pack bags for food pantry.*

**Religion:** Our current chapter focuses on the importance of cathedrals in the culture of medieval Europe. This week, students will choose a famous cathedral to research, and find a creative way to share what they've learned with their classmates.

**Science:** Students in grade 7 have completed learning about energy resources, both renewable and non-renewable. Our next lessons on Earth's resources will focus on water: water cleanliness, the water cycle, and the effect of flowing water or technologies on the environment. Mr. Aldrich will make a special visit the week before vacation to present on water cleanliness.

**Literature:** We completed our unit on myths, tales and legends, and will begin reading *The Time Machine* by H. G. Wells.

**In Mrs. Jamros' eighth grade:**

**Social Studies:** Students are currently learning about the importance of Islam in the medieval world. We've discussed the basis of Islam, and compared it to both Catholicism and Judaism. When we finish this unit, we will begin to learn about the Byzantine Empire and its influence on modern culture.

**Math:** We completed our unit on inequalities and have begun working with polynomials.

**Religion:** We defined vocation, and discussed being servants of God through the Sacrament of Matrimony and the Sacrament of Holy Orders. We also did activities on serving others and performing good deeds.

**Language Arts:** We are working on refining our writing skills. We completed a narrative essay and have begun working on our annual Real Woman essays.

**Literature:** We wrapped up our unit on myths, legends and folk tales, and began our unit on drama with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

**Science:** The eighth grade has finished a chapter on the weather and predictions. Now they will learn about

climate, climate change, the difference between weather and climate, how the ocean dictates climate, and how human activities may affect the climate. They just finished a chapter about the atmosphere, which provided them with a lot of background information to further understand how weather and climate work.

## Student Corner

### A New Way to Learn Vocabulary

*By Elizabeth Pfeifer and Julia Wheeler*

Seventh and eighth graders have been learning their vocabulary words using a website called [vocabulary.com](http://vocabulary.com). This website allows them to learn new words in a fun way. Instead of memorizing words, you study the words, and then practice them by answering multiple-choice questions about the word's definition.

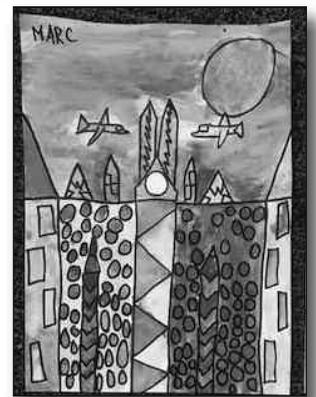
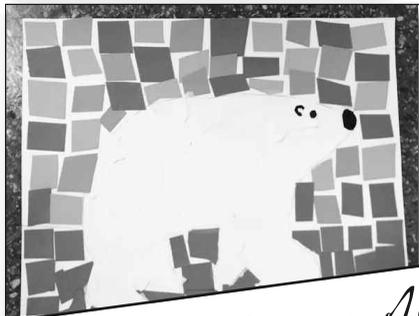
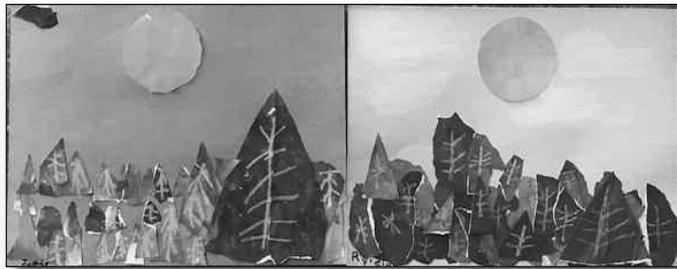
You can also spell the word repeatedly. When you get a question correct you earn points. These points will move you up on a leader board for your class, as well as a school leader board. St. Agnes is on the school leader board and is participating in the site's "Vocabulary Bowl." This is an event where you can compete with other schools in North America who use [vocabulary.com](http://vocabulary.com).

Once all your assignments are complete, you can search the lists of words from movies, books, newspapers, and more. Practice vocabulary from each of those and eventually you'll master those words. If you want, you can create your own list and choose the words you want to master. You can also participate in a "vocabulary jam" where you can practice vocabulary words in a competition with your classmates. You can create your own account with a username and password to secure your personal information.

Since we began competing in the vocabulary bowl, St. Agnes has achieved recognition as a Massachusetts State Top 10 School. We have answered over 300,000 questions and mastered more than 18,000 words. Overall, [vocabulary.com](http://vocabulary.com) is a great website for learning new words and improving your vocabulary.



*All smiles for this Middle School class.*



Academy Artwork

NATURE



MAD

