

THE FULL CURL



Monroe Catholic Ram Athletics

Announcements

- There are no announcements at this time.

Kudos

- A big thank you to all those who showed up last week to listen to my thoughts on our school.
- A big thanks to my mom and dad for their willingness to purchase the podcast equipment. It is my hope we are able to put this to use in the next couple of weeks.
- A big thanks to Ronnie Bennett for joining the girls cross country running team, which now gives the girls a complete team!
- A big thanks to Lisa Sundborg who is crushing it as our accounting extraordinaire in the HIPOW office.



Dear Parents:

Why?

This word is perhaps the most critical word an educator must consider when teaching in today's world. If you are of a certain age – my age -- this word was not part of your vocabulary when you grew up. If my dad told me to clean my room, I didn't get to ask "Why?" Had I, things wouldn't have ended well for me. Today, explaining the *why* is central to successfully teaching our youth, and in fact has become of great importance when working with adults as well.

Growing up in an age when asking "Why?" was frowned upon, I have had to learn to adjust in the classroom and most especially on the court as a coach. Thirty years ago, a player asking "Why?" would have made my eyebrows burn. Today, I make a point of telling my players to feel comfortable stopping me at any point and asking "Why?" This was not an easy transformation, but my goal as a coach today is no different than it was 30 years ago – to help develop young people into highly functioning adults. Somewhere along the way I decided if explaining the *why* was a necessary component to succeeding in today's world, then I needed to adjust my teaching style. It turns out, explaining the *why* gives context to the learner and context ultimately gives clarity. Clarity, in my mind, helps lead to greater purpose. The more people moving in the same direction, with a greater purpose, the more likely your group will not simply succeed, but thrive.

School Needs

- We could use way more **volunteers in the HIPOW office!**
- **We could use about 1 million Alaska Airline miles** to help with a variety of travel needs at the school. The miles would help with HIPOW packages, but also help possibly provide an opportunity for our students to travel for school related items, such as faith based Jesuit Retreats.
- **Patty Walter, who heads up the Development Office in HIPOW, could use a volunteer who wants to work about 5-10 hours a week on some special projects.** If you are interested, let me know and I will put you in contact with Patty. Patty is so great to work with, I considered taking on the position, but Mrs. O said I had enough going on.
- **PTO would love to have more folks who are interested joining their organization.** Info on how to join is in this week's column if you are interested.
- **HIPOW** is also looking for auction items!
- **Mrs. Wallace is always looking for quality substitute teachers.** Please notify her if you are interested.

I am not sure we have done an extraordinary job of explaining the *why* in regard to many aspects of our school, including dress code, more rigorous academics, Mass, service hours and even our use of FACTS. The need to explain the *why* to our parents and students is vital for one very important reason – we need both our parents and our students to be our greatest advocates in the community, sharing with as many people as possible how special the Catholic Schools and this Community are. If you don't know the *why*, how could you possibly do that effectively? You would not know how to answer questions regarding various aspects of our school and possibly – and certainly worse -- you might even be disillusioned yourself.

So, I thought as the Director of Schools, it would be of paramount importance for me to share the *why* on a few of the topics mentioned before.

Let's begin with two big ones: dress code and our more rigorous academics. Both of these fall under the Standard and Expectations category of the *why*. I have had the pleasure of talking to our staff, school board and donors, and parents in the last two weeks and one aspect of all three talks was my thoughts on standards and expectations. I don't see society improving; I see a steady erosion of basic human decency. Basic concepts such as compassion and kindness have gone the way of the Polaroid. It is my belief that much of this is due to a lack of standards and expectations in today's world. Nobody is held accountable anymore. It is my hope that all parents who place any value on standards and expectations in the lives of their children, and understand the significance of accountability, see the Catholic Schools as an oasis. Simply put, it is my expectation we will do this better than anyone.

One goal of our schools should be to provide an education that opens as many doors as possible for our students. We all know that standards of appearance have declined over time, both in schools and in some places of work. This is evident when we play an away game. I am flabbergasted at what I see kids wearing in public schools. However, there are still plenty of career fields in which appearance matters. A higher standard of dress not only opens more doors, but also leads to a greater level of self-discipline and potentially, self-confidence.

Before anyone emails me to say clothes or appearance are far less important than substance and character, please know I have for years taught an entire lesson – to include the world famous Nile River Tour Brochure Project – around this concept. No one is saying clothes or appearance define who a person is. My point is simply this: having a higher level of standards for appearance can open more doors and ultimately allow others to find out just how wonderful your substance and character really are.

The ability to adhere to a dress code goes far beyond the opening of doors due to appearance. Even if our students get through a door that allows them to wear jeans with holes in them, rest assured they will

MCHS Sports Trivia

TRIVIA QUESTION:

Name the nieces who attend CSF, of my replacement.

RULES

To win the trivia contest, you must give me the answer IN PERSON. Emails, texts and phone calls will not suffice! Remember, only one guess per household. The first person to correctly answer the trivia question will win an MCHS T-shirt.

LAST WEEK'S WINNER

Ms. Bristow, Mrs. Halvarson, Ms. Ward and Mrs. Atkins were all present prior to my appearance at CSF.

SMALL PRINT

The spouse of the Director of Athletics, parents and STAFF who work directly inside CSF are not eligible for participation in The Full Curl trivia competition for 24 hours after the emailing of The Full Curl.

still have to adhere to some level of rules, guidelines, and expectations. By providing some basic standards for our students to adhere to on a daily basis, we are providing them with a greater level of self-discipline and ultimately not just the ability to walk through more doors, but to succeed once they do walk through.

Challenging our students at a greater level in the classroom is not much different than challenging them to dress better. I have taught a myriad of classes during my time at Monroe, including sophomore World History, 6th grade World History, Life Skills, and Leadership. Whether teaching sophomores or 6th graders, I always asked my students if they could explain the value of homework. Rarely did anyone, without prompting, answer correctly. Yes, there should certainly be value in developing the academic skills to do the work. However, I personally believe the experience of being given a task, doing the task well, and doing the task on time, is of far greater importance than anything else. This particular skill set will serve our students much better in life than knowing the collective works of the Renaissance artists. Our school's expectations and the holding of our students accountable when they don't reach these expectations should separate us from others.

What about the *why* of Mass? It's not challenging to explain the *why* of weekly Mass to a Catholic. However, about half our school is not Catholic. Explaining the *why* to someone of a different faith, or to a person who is not a practicing member of any specific faith, can be a bit more difficult and is very important. It would be easy to simply tell someone "We are a Catholic school, so if your child is going to school here, they are going to Mass." However, this answer would be no better than a player asking me why we are playing man-to-man defense and my replying, "because that's what we do."

There are many aspects of being a good person one can learn *through* religion. We can probably all agree that compassion, kindness, selflessness, and empathy are characteristics we would like our children to possess as adults. I was raised in the Catholic faith, but I would be willing to bet most religions share a belief in these specific characteristics. Jesus Christ modeled each of these throughout his life and listening weekly to the readings and the homily during Mass could not possibly hurt in the potential for our student's growth.

Now, it's possible this is not a sufficient enough *why* for some. Perhaps a family is not religious and questions whether their child is going to listen to the readings or the homily. I think I can also provide a very good *why* in this instance as well. Spending an hour doing something you may not be excited to do is a skill every child would do well to learn. It will make you a better employee, parent, and spouse. Look, I don't want to watch Judge Judy or 90 Day Fiancé for an hour, but if I want to stay married, I'm going to have to do it and do it reasonably well, from time to time (Mrs. O would probably argue I don't do it well enough). For a child to spend an hour learning to be respectful and quiet, while not staring at his or her phone, does not seem to me to be a bad thing. Yes, I hope every child will engage in Mass, sing along, and participate. But, if one can

sit quietly and respectfully for an hour, well, that's a life skill that will serve them well for a lifetime – and it is likely not a skill they will learn anywhere else.

I contemplated skipping the *why* of Service, since I would like to think most of you reading this not only get it, but live it. However, your children may fight you on this and I suppose someone who inquires about our school might also need some context. First and foremost, one of our goals should be to develop adults who move forward in life and, regardless where they choose to raise a family and call home, make their specific community better. In my 2016 graduation speech, I mentioned there is great value in writing a check to love and support others. Goodness knows the Catholic Schools of Fairbanks relies on this generosity at the highest level. However, I also challenged our graduates to never stop giving of their time and talents. Volunteer to coach a team. Join their school's parent teacher organization (our PTO would love to have more members). Work at a soup kitchen. Essentially, make a difference. The ladies in HIPOW are desperate for more help. Find a way to give of your time.

Service though, goes beyond making a community better. The gift of Service can also benefit the individual. When have you ever helped someone and not felt better for it? Service at Monroe is an opportunity for us to teach this. Service is also a great way for your child to separate themselves from others in the competitive world of being accepted to a university or getting a scholarship. This may sound self-serving and the opposite of what we are trying to accomplish. However, there should be no shame in one benefitting from serving others, so long as the desire to serve is both true and honest. I would be willing to bet the ability of Monroe's Class of 2023 – a class made up of 23 students -- to qualify for \$5,669,566 in scholarship money had something to do with their willingness to serve others.

For some seeing the word FACTS may bring about feelings of angst or frustration. I was not on the front lines of our move to FACTS, which is the system used by our schools for everything from registration and tuition to grades and attendance. What I can say is that this system, though perhaps not perfect, has been transformative for our school. The system has saved the school a great deal of money and played a significant role in our having become more financially stable. FACTS provides an amazing level of service to our administration, especially Mrs. Wallace and Mrs. Jones, who both serve as vital cogs in the Catholic School's machinery.

We do appreciate your feedback. For instance, we did make sure the weekly Happenings was sent via email and not just through FACTS. Our goal is ultimately to figure out how to best to serve both you and the needs of the school. We are hopeful this system will become even easier for you as time goes on. Our goal is for FACTS to be a victory as much for parents as it has been for the viability of our school.

It is my hope this column not only helps you as a parent understand the *why*, but also helps you explain it to others who may be interested in providing an extraordinary educational experience for their child. Next week, I will sit down with every grade from 7th through 12th to discuss the *why*. I am hopeful the context will help them understand not only why we do things the way we do them, but to take great pride in knowing they are on a path that will lead to greater success in life. This may be a bit more challenging, but as I said, context can lead to clarity, and clarity can lead to greater purpose. The more people we have moving forward with purpose, the more amazing the future.

I'm looking forward to a very, very bright future.