

## Important Dates

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FIRST DAY OF  
SCHOOL  
AUGUST 14



FAMILY MOVE IN  
DAY  
AUGUST 11



BLESSING OF  
STUDENTS  
AUGUST 13

# FAMILY BULLETIN



## Back to School 2017

To the St. Benilde School Family,

Greetings and blessings to you!

There is something exciting about the start of a new school year. As I stroll the halls as Summer at Benilde comes to a close and the new school year comes closer to starting, I can sense that the time is right for the children to come back for another year of playing, praying, learning, laughing, and loving at SBS!

This year, we will continue in our ongoing efforts to create a more excellent, more supportive, and more *Catholic* school capable of meeting the complex needs of the world in which our children are growing. The tireless work of the faculty and staff to meet the unique needs of each learner is inspiring. It truly makes *the St. Benilde Difference*.

At the core of the St. Benilde difference is that we do not simply educate children... we *form* them in the Catholic tradition.

We form them in the following ways:

*Academic Formation:* Using our distinctive personalized approach to learning, we form each child's mind. We collect relevant data on what each child knows and can do, and use that data to design learning

opportunities that can better target each child's learning needs in the cognitive, physical, and social domains. We take a broad approach to academic formation, making sure that all the children at our school - whether they be higher performing, lower performing, or somewhere in the middle - have the resources and opportunities they need to succeed. This commitment is reflected not only in the data-driven and blended-model approach to learning we provide all students, but in this year's expansion of our Exceptional Learners Program to include both gifted students and students with developmental disabilities like Autism.

*Spiritual Formation:* Each and every moment of the day, we attempt to provide children with multiple opportunities to experience the saving presence of God in their lives. This is accomplished with constant classroom prayer, dynamic school liturgies, and regular opportunities to receive the sacraments. We also provide children with opportunities to go on retreat and engage in more prayer services, like stations of the cross and rosary devotions. All of these activities help form the child's soul.

*Human Formation:* Human formation goes beyond the catechism and forms a child's character through training in ethics, morality, and discerning the differences between right and wrong. Human formation makes all learning relevant because it directs a child to the essential understanding that all knowledge and technology is intended as a gift to benefit others, especially "the least of these." This year, we are adding a new religion textbook series - *Alive in Christ* - that includes studies on virtues and the lives of the saints - which will further help our work in forming a child's character.

*Apostolic Formation:* Jesus did not tell the apostles to sit still. He told them to get moving. He told them to go out into the world to heal the sick, comfort the afflicted, and spread His Word of love and salvation to the whole world! Through service to others and connecting their learning to how to alleviate evil and suffering in the world, St. Benilde School children are formed to be apostles... to be the next Catholic Christian witnesses to a broken world that remains in need of healing. This year's *Caritas Cup* competition (detailed below) is our newest effort to help form the apostles of tomorrow in the children of today.

Welcome to the 2017-2018 school year. On behalf of Fr. Cooper, the faculty, the staff, and the parishioners of St. Benilde Parish, I thank

## Upcoming Calendar

August 8: Teacher Professional Development Day

August 8: Grandparent's Club Faculty Appreciation Luncheon

August 9: Opening of School Faculty/Staff Liturgy & Meetings, 9:00 AM

August 9: Home & School Faculty Appreciation Luncheon

August 11: Family Move In Day, 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

August 11: New Family Orientation, 9:00 AM, Cafeteria

August 11: Principal's Town Hall Meetings, Noon & 7:00 PM, Cafeteria

August 13: SBS Family Mass - Blessing of Students, 11:00 AM, Church

August 14: FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL!!!

August 17: Parent Orientation Night, 6:30 - 8:30 PM

you for the opportunity you have given us to partner with you in the education of your children. I am excited for the year to begin, and look forward to the many blessings that God is sure to provide.

Your Brother in Christ,

John “Matt” Downey

Principal & Executive Director

St. Benilde School

## Nuts and Bolts

- ❖ **What is the Blessing of Students?** Each month during the school year, we celebrate the SBS Family Mass during the 11:00 AM Sunday Mass of St. Benilde Parish. Our choir sings, children lead the readings, and our school family joins with the larger parish family to give praise to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For the first Family Mass of the year - held the day before the first day of school - Fr. Cooper will include a special Blessing of Students (including those adults who may be in college or graduate school) during the Mass. Whether you are a regular Church goer or do not attend Church currently, we look forward to having you with us. At St. Benilde Church, all are welcome.
- ❖ **What are the Orientations?** We have two orientations scheduled. The *New Family Orientation* on August 11 at 9:00 AM is for all families who are new to the school this year. We will begin in the cafeteria, where you will be introduced to key members of the school’s leadership and administrative staff, take care of some final important paperwork, and then head to your child’s new classroom to meet the teacher and “move in” for the year. The *Parent Orientation* on August 17 starting at 6:30 PM and is for parents only (aka *not* designed to be kid friendly). This orientation should last approximately two hours. We will begin in the cafeteria at 6:30 PM, where Mr. Downey will speak about school procedures and what’s new for the school year. Representatives for the Men’s Club, Home & School Association, and Grandparent’s Club will also speak about their organizations and opportunities to get involved. At 7:00 PM, parents will go with their children’s homeroom teachers to have classroom orientation.
- ❖ **What is Family Move In Day?** Family Move In Day is when you can come with your child to “move in” to the classroom... get the desk set up right, get books ready in the cubby, meet the teacher, and more. It is a relaxed, open house environment that runs from 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM. During the day at Noon and then that night at 7:00 PM, Mr. Downey will host an Open House in the school cafeteria to answer the wide array of questions parents may have about the school year.
- ❖ **What time does drop off start?** Families may drop their children off no earlier than 7:00 AM at the school. Children from Prekindergarten 3 through Grade 7 are dropped off through the main drop off line and go to the cafeteria. Children in the Loreto Building and Prekindergarten 2 may park on the black top behind the Loreto Building and walk their children into class until 7:45 AM. After 7:45 AM, they must park in the main school parking lot and walk their children into school through the main office. Returning families, please note that we will no longer be providing drive through release for

children in Prek 2 or the Loreto Building; you must walk in to get your child. Breakfast is served in the Cafeteria from 7:00 - 7:20 AM for Prek 3 - Grade 7. Breakfast is served to all other children in their classroom starting at 7:30 AM.

- \* **What time is tardy?** The tardy bell rings at **7:45 AM**. Children from Prek 3 - Grade 7 are expected to be ready and in their seat by this time. Otherwise they are considered tardy. As school attendance is compulsory in the State of Louisiana starting at 6 years old, excessive tardiness starting in first grade may result in disciplinary action, including making truancy referrals to appropriate state authorities.

## New for 2017!

St. Benilde School is constantly striving to improve the number and quality of programs we provide to meet our responsibility to form children in the holistic Catholic school tradition. Below is a sampling of what we are working on...

Gifted Program: St. Benilde School is proud to welcome Mrs. Carol Newman to our faculty. Mrs. Newman recently retired from Jefferson Parish Public Schools, having worked over the past ten years as a certified Gifted and Talented Teacher. She will be heading our new Gifted Learners Lab - which is part of our Exceptional Learners Program. The GLL moves beyond our Enrichment Program by providing more focused support to high performing students than what has been provided in prior years. Prior to this year, students who scored in the 90th percentile or higher in reading or math on either the STAR or ACT Aspire test were eligible to join Enrichment. While scoring in the 90th percentile will remain one requirement, we will be then test students with additional aptitude tests, which will determine if a high performing student meets the most rigorous standards for qualifying as gifted. If accepted into the program, the student will receive official school designation as a Gifted student and receive access to the GLL where they will work on complex cross curricular projects that will challenge them to think deeper and more creatively than is possible in a regular classroom.

Caritas Cadres & the Caritas Cup: This year, students in Grades 4 - 7 will be divided into three multi-grade level "cadres" and compete for the inaugural Caritas Cup. Each cadre will earn points for their accomplishments in the four areas of Catholic formation: Academic, Spiritual, Human, and Apostolic. For instance, cadres will receive points for the number of members who make alpha or beta honor roll and participation in school activities. Central to their work as a cadre will be a comprehensive service learning project, where the students chose a social injustice to research and then work to combat it through works of charity and efforts to raise awareness in the local community to its presence. The cadre that earns the most points will be awarded the Caritas Cup at the end of the year. The Caritas Cadres and Caritas Cup are at the heart of all the formation we do at St. Benilde School. It teaches and requires students to work together to take their learning, gifts, and talents and use them to relieve the suffering of those Christ called "the least of these" in Matthew 25. As Catholic Christians, we understand that we exist "not to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45).

Exceptional Learners Program, Phase Two: In addition to our new Gifted Learners Lab and continued enhancements to our Reading and Math Exceptional Learners Labs, we are proud to add an additional

level of service to children who would otherwise have no access to Catholic education in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. This is through our Phase Two classroom for children who have developmental disabilities such as Downs Syndrome and more mild-to-moderate functioning forms of Autism. This self-contained classroom, which is limited to six students, will provide these learners with the targeted support they need to grow in body, mind, and soul while also giving them numerous opportunities to participate in the life of the St. Benilde School Family.

Towards a Safer Digital Environment: Thanks to a generous gift from the people of St. Benilde Parish, St. Benilde School is looking forward to enhancing our digital security footprint this year. During the month of August, we will be replacing all of our current wireless access points and adding to their number. This will allow two things to occur simultaneously. First, students will have faster access to the internet with significantly fewer “dead zones” in their classrooms. This will enable each classroom to have reliable access to the internet when students are utilizing digital resources. Second and much more important, each access point is effectively a mini-server and filter. This means we now have the ability to tailor filters to the classroom level that are also stricter than the Archdiocese of New Orleans filters. For instance, while the Archdiocese of New Orleans does not block “Google Images” and Youtube, we can block those sites for students, as both sites are ways in which students in the past have unintentionally accessed inappropriate web content.

Raising Awareness/Limiting Access: The *average* age for a child to first access pornography is currently 12 years old, and it is getting younger. And the pornography they are accessing isn’t “your dad’s Playboy.” The internet - where children now first encounter pornography - is giving them access to more frequent and more explicit images and video than has ever been encountered by youth at any time in human history. Researchers into addiction and neuroscience have extensive evidence that this early access to sexually explicit videos and images can fundamentally alter brain development and lead to the scourge of sex addiction, which ruins careers, marriages, and lives. Archbishop Aymond has charged the Archdiocese of New Orleans with taking the lead on responding to the challenges to human life presented by the ease of access to pornography through the internet. St. Benilde School is taking part in this effort by better limiting access to pornographic material on campus through updating our digital footprint and filtering abilities. During the 2017-2018 school year and beyond, look for further efforts to educate you and our wider community regarding the real dangers of early and easy access to pornography through the internet.