

How the Principal Sets the Tone and Culture for the School

May 28, 2026

A Little About Me and My School

- 33 years, all with the Archdiocese; 8 as a teacher and 25 as a principal
- The merge
- Tough year for leadership
- Alumni - bearers of culture and a whole new meaning to accountability
- “Choose your own adventure session”

Ideas to Explore

- The Words - why they matter
- Buy in - the gold standard - what is best for kids?
- Communication - words and actions
- Fairness and Consistency
- Visibility and Availability
- Authentic Innovation

The Words - Take the Time To Choose Just the Right Words

- The “words” become the foundation for who we are, what we believe about Catholic Education, teaching, learning, and purpose.

A rectangular image with a background of a sunset or sunrise sky, featuring soft, glowing clouds in shades of purple, pink, and blue. The text is written in a black, casual, handwritten-style font, centered on the image.

There is a lot of
power in good and
positive words

The Words - Vision

Who we are

- We are Mater Dei Catholic School, the home of the Knights
- Our students come from many different backgrounds and experiences

What we believe about Catholic Education

- We are united in one mission - to grow closer to Jesus everyday and to see the face of God through our exploration of His creation

The Words - Vision

What we believe about teaching:

- Our teachers challenge us, support us, guide us, and stand beside us.
- Every classroom is a proving ground, a playground, a place to dig deep and do hard things.

What we believe about legacy:

- Each of us bears responsibility for a legacy that spans more than 150 years, and we are foundational pieces of our future

The Words - Vision

What we believe about learning:

- Information is only the beginning of knowledge.
- True learning is putting what you know into action, asking questions, taking chances, making mistakes, considering a new perspective, giving our best in every situation
- Journey of exploration in the classroom, on the court, in a moment of prayer, an act of kindness, a leadership opportunity, a new idea.

The Words

Mission, Vision,

Motto, Goals,

Everyday Words



Buy-In: Why It Matters & How to Get it

- When faculty, staff, parents, students, and parishioners embrace the vision, the sky's the limit!
- Leading by example
- Listening
- Creating a space for mistakes
- Integrity - words, actions, and beliefs align
- The Gold Standard - what is best for kids?

Communication: What We Say, What We Do

- Consistent messaging is critical
 - Consistent in terms of content
 - Consistent in terms of regularity
- Say what you mean and mean what you say
 - For example, if we say that mistakes are a path to learning, then we gently correct and move on; if we ask teachers to plan tiered instruction, then we protect tier time

Fairness and Consistency

- Backbone of Policy
 - Only include policies that you can enforce
 - The quickest way to lose “good behavior” is to tolerate “bad behavior.”
- Consistency builds foundational trust; safety
 - Inconsistency creates confusion and hurt feelings
 - I don't want 10 “Andreas” in the building; but I do want all of them to know with confidence what I would do in any situation.

Visibility and Availability

- Visibility
 - Drop off/pick up (ask for my “pick up” thoughts); classrooms
 - The first three weeks
- Availability
 - Fact: you have too much to do
 - Also Fact: seizing every opportunity to build relationships will in the end save you time and allow you to focus on mission
 - Conducting vs. playing an instrument

Authentic Innovation

- Defining who we are and what we do is freeing
- In education, the pressure to “do all the things” is incredible
 - and we’re going to do a lot of things
- Building our school culture allows us to choose the new ideas that best fit our needs.
 - We accept that we will be walking away from certain opportunities so that we can walk towards others

Questions?