



East & West Catholic Elementary School

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Catholic Futures Foundation Project Update

The past couple of years, we have strived to begin a Saint Family program in our school to help develop relationships between our students so that discussion of our faith and praying together become a routine part of who we are. We are so happy to say that we are beginning to see the fruits of our program. The relationships within our Saint Families are developing nicely, so much that we can see the ease at which they talk and work together. It is through these relationships that their relationships with Jesus will be fostered and deepened.

This year the grant has helped us expand these relationships into the greater Church community. While we know we must continue to foster the relationships within our student groups, our goal this year was to start to build these relationships with people in our Church community. We have a great group of people who have joined this program, we call them our "Spiritual Grandparents". We reached out to people in our community who no longer have children at our school or who may long to build a relationship with the youth of our parish. Each time they come, they are filled with enthusiasm and are eager to work with the students. For example, this past week, they were invited in to share personal stories with their Saint Family. We heard stories about their life when they were younger. We also encouraged them to share their faith stories. Some shared how Mass was celebrated differently when they were younger (for instance, Mass was said in Latin and the priest faced the High Altar). Some brought in pictures to share, some brought in memorabilia such as their 1st Communion dress, etc. The stories were priceless and the students enjoyed their time and the relationships they are building. At the end of our time together, I had several of the Spiritual Grandparents ask when they got to come again. Seeing the love they have for the faith and our students proves the success that this program is having and will have as we continue to build upon it in the years to come. From time to time, when the students see their Spiritual Grandparents at a week day Mass, they go and say hi to them or give them a hug. Building these relationships is the foundation for sharing the faith.

The generosity of this grant helped us purchase materials that we use with our Saint Families and also with our Spiritual Grandparents. Each Saint Family now has a box with religious supplies that are used for our time together. Some of the materials included are Rosaries (that we use every time we gather), Saint prayer cards with the patron of the Saint Family, materials to help the students learn about their Saint and how their faith impacted their life, and materials that help guide the activities with our Saint Families and their Spiritual Grandparents. Our thanks to the Catholic Futures Foundation seems mighty small compared to the impact that we are seeing this program have. We love our students and are excited to see their relationships with each other foster their relation with Jesus. Thank you for helping us fund this program!

In Christ –

Sonya Schroeder

Principal

East & West Catholic Elementary