EASTSIDE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

SCHOOL BOARD NEWSLETTER
FALL 2026

FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Mr. Jim Holstege

With much joy and gratitude to God, we have begun the work that is before us at Eastside Christian School, in this 2026-2027 school year. The hallway banner announces to all who enter the school, our theme for this year: **Sent of the Father into the World**, a phrase that is borrowed from our Lord's Supper form. With this theme we intend to highlight the amazing and wonderful words from the gospel of John 1:14 – "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." As we have already taken note in our staff devotions, the next phrase in the Lord's Supper form following our theme, states: "that He assumed our flesh and blood…". We expect to have a rich and profitable year while we focus on our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only begotten of the Father and who became Immanuel (God with us) for our salvation.

We are greatly pleased to begin another school year with many things remaining the same. The continuity of teachers and support staff is a wonderful blessing that should never be taken for granted. It demonstrates the work of the Spirit in our midst while we labor together in our roles, elevating the needs of others over our own. With that said, we are adjusting to changes this year with the absence of two staff members who have played a huge part in our school's successes; namely, Mrs. Lori Pastoor and Mrs. Anne Miedema. Mrs. Kristin Kleyn steps into the shoes left by Anne. We have asked Kristin to introduce herself to you in this issue. We are thankful for her diligence that is already plain to see.

I have begun my eighth year as Principal. When I think back to my first year, Mr. Andy Kuiper stood before a total of four students in his 7th/8th classroom, with a fifth student joining in January. This year is quite different, with eighteen students assembling each day in this same space. Additionally, when I think back even further to the early days of our school when my own children were students here and I served as a member of the school board, there were discussions then which continue to the present regarding preparation of our junior high students for their high school experience – discussions which are certainly not unique to Eastside. With Andy's help and consideration, we are always making adjustments and improvements to that end – to prepare our graduates for high school. We thank Andy for his efforts and for his contribution to this newsletter.

This school year marks another milestone, as it is our 30th year! Thirty years of existence gives us an adequate amount of time for reflection and retrospection. Eastside was born out of the principled belief that a new Protestant Reformed based school was necessary, in order to serve the families who live primarily in the northeast and southeast neighborhoods of Grand Rapids – and "to facilitate the maintenance of a Protestant Reformed presence on the east side of town". (Refer to the book *Stories of Grace*, recently published to commemorate the PRCA's centennial, pages 261-264. Thank you, Lori Pastoor, for contributing this article to the book.) As we consider our history from an earthly, human perspective, we admit that it is not glamorous. Through God's gracious care, however, in preserving us and providing for all of our needs, we rejoice as we open the doors each morning in this, our thirtieth year!

EASTSIDE AUCTION

A message from the Kindergarten class of Eastside Christian School:
Just a little reminder that the Eastside Online Auction **is Tuesday, December 1. It would be a shame if you missed it.** So mark your calendar. Tell your friends. And when you see something you like… **make a bid.**

We'd appreciate your cooperation. **The Kindergarten class remembers who helped them out.**

NEW SEATS, NEW ROUTINES

Andy Kuiper | 7th-8th Teacher

Part of the teaching profession includes constantly evaluating what went well and what needs improvement from day to day, week to week, month to month, and year to year. Sometimes that means making adjustments to a lesson as it is being presented, based on the atmosphere of the room that particular class period, or moving a student to a different seat so that they can better focus on the lesson. Bigger changes can also happen. There are times when updates are made to classes and to curriculum materials, allowing the teacher an opportunity to look at the material in a new light. At Eastside, we sometimes have to adjust to very different class sizes as well.

When considering how to fit 18 twelve-to-fourteen year olds in my classroom, I came up with a few different ideas on how to do things this school year. We had already moved away from a personal flip-top desk that students used to store some of their school supplies in, to desks that were a bit larger on the surface, but have no space for storing things in. We began working on storing some things in lockers and getting up between classes to gather the proper materials for the next class (a necessary skill to learn for those nearing high school age). I decided to take this a step further this year, and am having the students not only get up to get materials from the hall, but also have them change seats for every class. Desks are placed in a pods of three throughout the classroom. Each class period students sit with two other students for the duration of the class, and then sit in a different pod with different classmates for the next period.

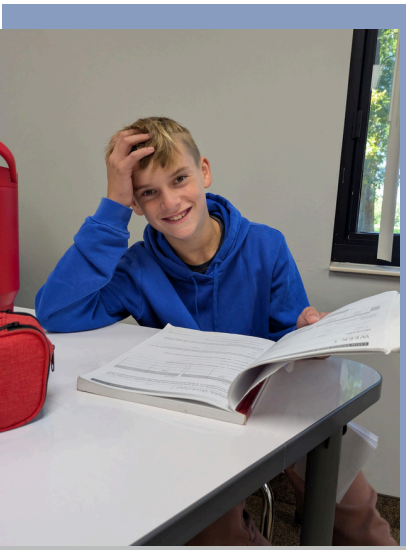
I explained some of my reasoning to the students on the first day of school. One: helping to prepare for high school. Two: learning to cooperate and work with different people throughout the day instead of focusing only on friends and ignoring everyone else. We talked about how adults do not always have a natural rapport with the people with whom they work, but are required to do their job in a professional manner and treat the other person well regardless of how they might feel. More importantly, we have been given two great commandments, the 2nd of which demands that we love our neighbors as ourselves.

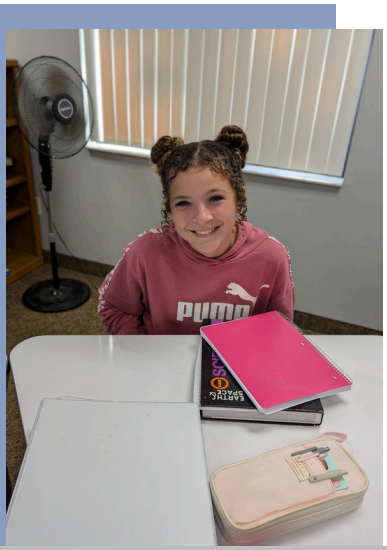
Overall, students are adjusting pretty well to the classroom changes that are helping prepare them for the transition to high school. A couple of weeks into the year, Mr. Holstege and Mrs. Thompson gave the students a chance to give opinions on some of these things and how they are going. All 18 responses to each of the 4 questions will not be included, but a few stood out. I will not include names, even for those who did include their name on the paper.

Question 1: What are your thoughts about the way your classroom desks are set up this year, compared to what you have been used to?

"... I like it for the most part. Their [sic] are people I like sitting next to and people I don't like sitting next to but I end up figuring out how to deal with it."

"I think this doesn't affect me because they just changed it from being straight to curved, but I do miss the traditional straight desks."





"Your [sic] always moving which is kind of good, because then your [sic] not stuck in one spot for 5-6 classes."

"I think it's fine, because you can see the teacher well from every desk."

"It's not as good because you are not always allowed to sit by your friends."

"I didn't really notice it since like [sic] *it was kinda* [sic] *like that last year."*

(The answers seemed to be split evenly among those in favor, and those who did not approve. Several noted that they didn't like it because they weren't always with their friends. One student expressed a concern that it would make it easier to cheat, which is something we teachers will have to watch.)

Question 2: How do you like sitting in groups of three? Explain.

"... a good number of people for group work."

"It's better than sitting in groups of two would be, because you might be by people you like."

"I like it a lot because I'm always next to a boy." (I am not sure of the gender of this respondent... no name was given...)

"I like it because you can ask for help from your classmates."

"I like it [because] *you can help each other but sometimes you don't want help from them."*

"I like it because I can have closer relationships with those who I don't really know."

(More of the class seems to be in favor of the groups of three than the setup in general. Progress!)

Question 3: How do you like rotating to different desks throughout the day? Explain what you do like or do not like about it.

"It keeps us organized."

"Its [sic] not that bad, just having to carry all my stuff to a different desk every period."

"I like it because it keeps the ground and desks clean."

"I like it sometimes because I get to go by a fan."

"I don't like it because I want to stay in one spot."

"That was a bad idea. I am always tired because of that."

(Some kids feel like it keeps the room neater, some people want to put down roots and "personalize" their desk space. Some students are just tired from walking 80 feet every 45 minutes or so.)

Question 4: Is the new seating and locker system helping you stay more organized?

"Yep."

"Yes I think it is helping me."

"Yeah it did but I think being organized is not a matter of having a better system. Instead I think it's a matter of our personality because there are still people who don't really organize."

"The new system is so bad I cannot go in the halls to get my stuff. I have no time."

"Yes, because it gives more space and does not allow you to dump all your stuff by your desk."

(Mixed reaction on this one, but still tending toward the positive. In today's political climate, I would call this a win.)

SEPTEMBER FUN

ROBINETTE'S FIELD TRIP

PICNIC ON THE PATIO

BIKE HIKE

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT TEACHER

Kristin Kleyn

If you have been part of the Eastside community over the last two decades, you likely already know the Kleyn family. This school year, however, I am pleased to reintroduce myself in a brand-new role: as Eastside's Educational Support teacher.

I am stepping into the shoes of Anne Miedema, who beautifully served in this role for the past ten years. Anne spent time with me this past spring, passing the torch and equipping me to manage our AimsWeb assessments, remedial reading program, and individual student plans. I am very thankful for her guidance and mentorship!

While this specific role is new, walking these halls again feels like a homecoming. After graduating from Dordt College and moving from my hometown of Edgerton Minnesota, I originally taught grades 1–3 here from 2000 to 2005. I have so many fond memories of those five years when the school was still young, the enthusiasm high, and Miss Lubbers was principal. The students I taught in those years still have a special place in my heart and it is special to see many of them now raising their own children.

Following those teaching years the Lord called me into a 21-year season of staying home to care for our seven children: Zachary, Ethan, Seth, Tyler, Annica, Jenna, and Jakob. While raising our family, Eastside remained a central part of our lives. Our four oldest kids each spent over a decade here and our three youngest are currently enrolled. My husband Phillip was active on the school board and other committees the majority of this time, while I served on the Education Committee, stepped in as a substitute teacher, and helped out in all the various ways moms do!

Now that our youngest child is in Kindergarten I am able to return as part-time support staff. I look forward to investing back into the community that has given so much to my own family. It is a privilege to partner with the parents, support the children, and watch God work in their lives throughout this school year!

SUMMER ART CAMP

Eastside Art Camp returned for its third consecutive summer on June 22–24. Eastside families came together with an incredible team of volunteers from beyond our community to create a fun and memorable camp. More than 150 students from 15 different area schools joined us for a variety of hands-on art classes, including acrylic painting, cake decorating, graphic novel writing, oil pastels, wood burning, ukulele lessons, and much more.