

From the community: Would You Trust Your Elementary Student to Draft Your Honest Policy? HFCA Did!



HFCA Academic Honesty Committee (Back) Allan Kordas, Bennett Struckmeyer, Luke Maciejewski, Sarah Schmitt, Charlotte McHone, Danny Kopp (front) Hannah Justo, Madeleine Knudtson, Karen Salinas, and Lucas Wessel. (Posted by Holy Family Communications, Community Contributor)

By **Community Contributor Holy Family Communications**

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Problem solving and teamwork skills are hallmarks of Holy Family Catholic Academy's nationally and internationally recognized curriculum. Students master reading, writing, and math skills, but the Inverness school expands this knowledge by applying students' learning to solve authentic problems. It is this step that develops higher level critical thinking skills. Recently, students were asked to use their problem solving and teamwork skills to draft a school policy.

HFCA is the first suburban elementary school in Illinois to be authorized as an International Baccalaureate World School (IB). IB provides a framework of world-wide best practices in education that include instructional techniques and teacher development. IB also offers guidance that aligns schools' internal policies with internationally recognized academic best practices. All IB schools must develop an Academic Honesty Policy

that addresses the technical aspects of accurately citing and referencing sources. HFCA set out to align this policy with their faith-based approach to learning and concluded that involving students in drafting the policy presented an authentic opportunity for students to apply their critical thinking and teamwork skills.

Eleven students in third, fourth and fifth grades worked with Mrs. Colleen Biere, HFCA's IB Coordinator to draft HFCA's Academic Honesty Policy. States Mrs. Biere, "I was so impressed with the the students' dedication. They willingly gave up recess time one day each week for 10 weeks to develop the policy. They used critical thinking skills to meet the IB requirements, collaborated among themselves to ensure all perspectives were considered, and creatively developed different communication strategies to uniquely address their fellow students who range from preschool through grade 8." The result was a document that clearly defined honesty and integrity at HFCA.

"Faith is integrated into everything we do," states HFCA Principal Kate O'Brien. "We partner with parents in modeling honesty, respect, responsibility and the courage to do the right thing. Drafting this policy was not only an authentic problem that our students helped solve, but also a perfect example of how the core tenets of honesty and integrity are aligned with our work product."

Mrs. Biere explained that this student project is just one example of HFCA's future-focused curriculum which is intentionally designed to develop the critical thinking skills needed to succeed in jobs that have yet to be created. Equally important, HFCA provides a moral foundation that prepares students to navigate complex ethical, social, and emotional situations that they will likely face in high school and beyond.

Concludes Principal O'Brien, "We are so proud of our students who drafted our Academic Honesty Policy and all HFCA students and teachers who work together every day to support our mission to develop global thinkers, leaders grounded in faith."

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