

Principal Study Tour to Finland

For the last 6 months, a group of 12 Catholic elementary and high school principals have been preparing for a unique professional development: a study tour to Finland. "The Finnish educational model has been on my mind for a number of years," was all Ryan Halverson, principal of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, had to say to convince Richard Billups and Kris Brough to partner with him in fostering this opportunity for educational leaders in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. "We were looking for ways to answer the superintendent's call to think outside of the box," said Kris Brough, principal of Our Lady of Lourdes.

They represent Catholic school communities from all over the greater Los Angeles area and are a great representation of the diversity that exists in our LA Catholic School system. These principals were selected following an application process based on their experience and commitment to growth and innovation in our Catholic Schools. It is for this commitment to growth and innovation that we look to Finland. "The unique structure of our Catholic school system allows for us to apply what we learn rapidly to suit our schools and the students we serve," added Richard Billups of St. Bernard High School.

Finland is considered by many educational experts to have one of the finest educational systems in the world. Simply type "schools in Finland" into a Google search and you will be met with a myriad of articles and books written on the wonders and accomplishments of this small Nordic country. The principals in this group are looking to Finland for inspiration and ideas that can be implemented in our Los Angeles Catholic schools. The goal of this journey is to think outside the box and look beyond ourselves. What can be learned from Finland? Can these lessons and observations be applied to our schools? If so, what, and how? These are the questions that this group of 12 hope to discern.

They will be traveling in March for five days to Tampere, Finland to work with LearningScoop Finland and take part in an intensive study tour, designed specifically for school principals. As part of this tour they will be visiting schools and meeting with Finnish students, teachers, and administrators. They will also be learning about Finnish school policies, curriculum, standards, and practices. The visiting team will gather information on student learning environments, the general school day, teacher well-being, professional development, and much more.

In addition to flying to Finland and taking part in this professional development, they will be returning to Los Angeles and creating a learning opportunity for their colleagues and fellow Los Angeles Catholic School principals. The group's goal is to find meaningful and implementable practices that can be adapted from Finland and straight into schools and classrooms here.

The small group of principals look to inspire their colleagues, teachers, and students and hope that this trip will be the first of many in examining international models of education, with the goal of inspiring our Catholic schools to continue to grow, be innovative, and be exceptional!



Participants include:

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| Erika Avila - St. Vincent (Los Angeles) | Patricia Holmquist - Our Lady of Refuge (Long Beach) |
| Richard Billups - St. Bernard High School (Playa Del Rey) | Nicole Johnson - St. Aloysius (Los Angeles) |
| Kris Brough - Our Lady of Lourdes (Northridge) | Allison Kargas - St. Anthony (Long Beach) |
| Ryan Bushore - St. Paschal Baylon (Thousand Oaks) | Beate Nguyen - St. Augustine (Culver City) |
| Carrie Ann Fuller - All Souls (Alhambra) | Raquel Shin - St. Patrick (North Hollywood) |
| Ryan Halverson - St. Cyril of Jerusalem (Encino) | Fidela Suetto - Holy Family (Glendale) |