

# ♥ Welcome to Kindergarten

Welcome to Kindergarten at St. Mary's Catholic School! I thought I would take a moment to tell you a little bit about my classroom and myself. Parents are children's first teachers and the most effective way to educate children is by working with the classroom teacher to carry over what is done in school to the home. I believe open communication is imperative. I do not only call on when there are problems or difficulties but to also share the celebrations and achievements of my students. I have been teaching long enough to notice that the more invested the families are in their child's education; the more the children themselves are invested. Kindergarten is a very important year in a child's schooling because many times it sets the tone for the rest of their education. I want it to be fun and enjoyable but at the same time it has been said that they learn more in their Kindergarten year than any other grade. It is this year that we set the foundation for all other learning. (Yikes!)

I, myself, am a product of Catholic education. I actually attended St. Mary's for grades 1st -6th and then attended St. Vincent de Paul for 7th and 8th grade (due to St. Mary's closing these grades). I then graduated from Peoria Notre Dame. I have a Bachelors degree in Early Childhood Education from Western Illinois University and a Masters in Early Childhood Special Education from the University of Illinois. I had been teaching in Peoria Public Schools since January 2005. I spent the first 5 and a half years at Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Center; four and a half of these years was spent teaching a self-contained special education pre-k class. I then spent 5 years teaching Kindergarten at Glen Oak School in Peoria. I really view teaching as a vocation and not a job. It was a big decision for me to leave the public schools to come here three years ago because I felt that I was bringing the love of Christ to those who may not know Him by name. However, I have felt called to bring my experience and faith back to where it all started for myself here in Kickapoo. The past few years have been an amazing experience, and I look forward to what this next year will bring!

In my spare time I do a lot of volunteering in the local area as well as abroad. I love to travel! I have done long term mission work in Cebu, Philippines as well as in Ethiopia, Africa, and Australia. I have also done some short term mission work here in the states locally in Peoria, in the Bronx, and on an Indian reservation in South Dakota. I have traveled to Italy, Spain, France, Ireland, Brazil, and Portugal. I also love nature and being outdoors. I have done multi-day retreat backpacking trips in Alaska and Hawaii as well as in the Badlands of North Dakota. I only have 1 more state to visit in the US! I am very involved with the Community of St. John (a monastery with religious Brothers and Sisters) in Princeville. I coordinated the St. John Summer Conference for young adults the past 5 years where we brought together over 150 young adults ages 18-35 each year from over 17 states to go deeper in their faith. There is much more and hopefully I can share it with you as we get to know one another!

My faith has always been #1 for me and it has driven most of the decisions I have made in my life. I can not express to you in words how excited I am to share not **my** faith, but **our** Catholic faith, with my students. I feel honored and privileged to be teaching these children. I have taught various grades, pre-k through 8th grade, CCD here at St. Mary's off and on throughout the past 15 years. In addition to teaching, I am currently the part time DRE (Director of Religious Education) and will continue to work with the CCD program here this year as well as coordinating the youth group.