

Principal's Message

Mrs. Gina Wagenblast, Principal

Introduction:

I am looking forward to my new role as principal of John I. Meister Elementary School. This is my second year as a part of the River Forest Community School Corporation. Previously, I served the district as the Director of Title Services. I hope that when you visit our school you will feel a strong sense of community and Meister Viking pride.

Background:

I grew up in Downers Grove, Illinois. I attended and graduated in 1992 from Valparaiso University with a Bachelor's in Elementary Education. I returned to Illinois after graduation and landed my first teaching job in Oswego, Illinois as a third grade teacher. I met my husband that year (he's from Valparaiso, Indiana) and we married in July of 1994. I continued to teach third grade in Illinois and also earned my Masters of Education in Curriculum & Instruction in 1997. Shortly after, we began our family. I took some time off from teaching to stay at home with my children, but soon returned to the profession. When I returned, I continued teaching third grade for several years. However, I caught the "bug" for change and was granted an opportunity to teach second grade. During my Illinois teaching tenure, I served on various committees and began to serve in leadership roles for the district. In April of 2009, we received an awesome job opportunity for my husband in Valparaiso. This was exciting as we were coming back to family and many long-time friends. I began my quest for new opportunities in education and enrolled in a program at Indiana State University to become a principal. I was fortunate to gain experience as a Title Director, assisted the principal and even was an interim principal in my previous district. All of these fantastic experiences have been wonderful preparation for this new role here at Meister.

Family:

My husband, Todd, and I have been married for 22 years. We have three beautiful children – Ryan (20), Nicholas (16), and Megan (14). Ryan is a sophomore at Wabash College and plans to double major in Economics and German. He's quite the world traveler and has already been abroad twice and is currently applying to study in Munich for a semester next year. Nicholas is a sophomore in high school and is an avid runner. He's on the cross country and track teams at his high school. He's got a knack for video editing and production. Megan is a freshman in high school. She is part of her high school gymnastics team and track team. She has been very involved in the sport of gymnastics since she was very young. She's competed with clubs in the area, but is excited to fulfill her dream of being on her high school team. Todd and I spend much time cheering on these three and supporting their goals.

Belief Statement:

I can attest to one thing for sure and that's my strong belief in Servant Leadership. Robert K. Greenleaf published an essay describing servant leadership. In that essay he states ..."The servant-leader is servant first...It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first." With that said, as a servant leader I will make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. As a servant leader I will share, put the needs of others first and help develop and perform as highly as possible. Such a belief will translate to Meister students, families, faculty, staff and all other stakeholders...as they will have value and will be treated with civility as well as trust and respect.

I look forward to an outstanding remaining 2016-17 school year. I will work hard every day to be courageous and be a true Servant Leader.