



# ***FOURTEEN HOLY HELPERS SCHOOL***

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*Educating Children in the Way, the Truth and the Life ♦ Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 8*

## ***TEACHER and STAFF PROFILES***

***I will pray for you and I will teach you the way that is good and right.  
But be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart;  
consider what great things he has done for you.***

*1 Sa 12:23-24*

Fourteen Holy Helpers School is blessed in its community of parents, children, teachers, staff, parish and pastor. Together in Christ, we are many parts forming one body dedicated to providing an outstanding, Christ-centered academic environment for all our students!

It is a pleasure to introduce our faculty and staff to you!



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## ***Our Faculty and Staff***

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### **Mrs. Suzanne Gerard, PreK3 Teacher and Library Teacher**

*Elementary Education, SUC at Buffalo*  
*Provisional Certification (K-6)*  
*Moderator, National Junior BETA Club*

Mrs. Gerard joined Fourteen Holy Helpers School in 2007, after having taught at both St. Amelia's School and St. Bernard's School. While at Fourteen Holy Helpers, she has taught 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade English, reading, religion and health, and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade on a full-time basis. Mrs. Gerard currently works part-time as our PreK3 Teacher and Library Teacher. She is also the moderator of the National Junior Beta Club, a student service organization.

**Educational Philosophy:** I believe that all children can achieve their full potential as they follow the educational path, if they are taught with individualism and cooperative learning environments, Every child should given respect and motivation to reach their personal best while instilling Christian values in them.

### **Mrs. Judith Manuel, PreK3 Assistant Teacher**

*BA, History, D'Youville College*  
*MS, Education, Canisius College*  
*NYS Permanent Certification, Early Childhood Education*

Mrs. Manuel joined Fourteen Holy Helpers School in 1984 after working for five years in the Buffalo Public School System. She taught 1<sup>st</sup> grade and Kindergarten until her retirement from full-time work in 2009. Since then, Mrs. Manuel has continued to share her early childhood expertise as an assistant teacher in our PreK3 classroom. Her hobbies and interests include reading, music the theater, travelling, spending time with her family, gardening, and serving the community through Meals on Wheels.

**Educational Philosophy:** As a classroom teacher, my goal has been to assist each child to reach his/her fullest potential. I strive to help students grow spiritually, mentally, socially, physically through a varied curriculum that meets their individual needs. As a teacher, I keep in mind the importance of instilling Christian values in all areas. In my current position, I continue to support the teachers I work with in the classroom

**Mrs Lori Donnelly, PreK4 Teacher**

*BS, Education, SUC at Buffalo  
Post-graduate, SUNY at Buffalo*

After teaching 1<sup>st</sup> grade at Fourteen Holy Helpers School for nine years, Mrs. Donnelly took a leave to raise her own family, and returned to teaching in 2008. As one of our PreK4 teachers, Mrs. Donnelly presents all aspects of a pre-school curriculum including pre-readiness skills for Kindergarten in the areas of mathematics, reading, religion, social studies and science. Her interests and hobbies include golfing, skiing, spending time with her family and socializing with friends.

**Educational Philosophy:** My educational philosophy is to focus on helping children become self-motivated learners by acting in the role of a facilitator. I strive to create a safe learning environment that includes Christian values, hoping these principles become part of their everyday lives.

**Mrs. Cindy Szymanski, PreK4 Teacher**

*AAS, Early Childhood Education, Villa Maria College*

Mrs. Szymanski began her career at Fourteen Holy Helpers School in 1990 as a teacher's aide in the Pre-Kindergarten. After receiving her degree in Early Childhood Education at Villa Maria College, she became a full-time teacher in the PreK3 and PreK4 programs. She currently teaches all subjects for PreK4, including pre-readiness skills for Kindergarten in the of the areas mathematics, reading, religion, social studies, and science.

**Educational Philosophy:** I work to assure that my students will have a positive learning experience in my class. Learning is accomplished through a variety of creative hands-on activities that invite the children to learn and experience more.

**Mrs. Kathy Makar, PreK4 Aide**

Mrs. Makar assists in teaching all subjects for PreK4, including pre-readiness skills for Kindergarten in the areas of mathematics, reading, religion, social studies, and science. Mrs. Makar is also a member of the Fourteen Holy Helpers Food Pantry. In addition to the children, she enjoys gardening, baking, jigsaw and word search puzzles and crocheting.

**Mrs. Suzanne Walsh, Kindergarten Teacher**

*BA, Elementary Education, Canisius College*  
*MS, Elementary Education, SUC at Buffalo*  
*NYS Permanent Certification, Pre-School, K-6*

Mrs. Walsh was an elementary teacher for eight years prior to joining Fourteen Holy Helpers in 1993. She has taught in both 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade and Kindergarten. In addition to her current responsibilities as our Kindergarten Teacher, Mrs. Walsh manages the After School Homework Program for grades three through eight, and is also our textbook distribution coordinator and Liturgy scheduling coordinator for the weekly school masses and morning intercom prayer schedule. Mrs. Walsh enjoys reading, crafts, family time and being an active grandmother!

**Educational Philosophy:** Teaching is a calling that can directly impact the future. I take this calling seriously and strive to help the students entrusted to me to grow into social, intellectual, and faith-filled individuals who will be positive productive citizens in the future. Children need to know that they are valued for their own individual unique talents, personalities, and backgrounds. By incorporating Christian Values into our daily routines, we acknowledge one another's uniqueness and become more accepting of one another.

**Mrs. Colleen Provino, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Teacher**

*BS, Sociology, Niagara University*  
*MS, Early Childhood (B-6) and Childhood Education (1-6), Niagara University*  
*MS, Educational Literacy Instruction (1-6), Niagara University*  
*NYS Initial Certification, Early Childhood (B-1), Childhood Education (1-6), Literacy Instruction (1-6)*

Ms. Johnson began teaching in 2005 and joined Fourteen Holy Helpers School in 2006. She brings her wonderful classroom presence, sense of order and spirit of kindness to our growing 1<sup>st</sup> Grade students. Ms. Johnson's students will benefit from her background in Literacy as she stretches and expands their experiences in preparation for the years ahead!

**Educational Philosophy:** My philosophy of education is that as a teacher I make sure that each child is able to enter my classroom everyday knowing that he/she will be offered consistent stability, compassion, and encouragement. Children confront learning in their own individual way. I believe that all students should be taught through example to respect one another so that positive learning can take place. "Learn as they learn" is one of my strongest beliefs. As an educator, I want to become an active learner right along side the children I teach. I use active listening and observation to monitor my students' approaches to learning. My students will be informants. Through my eyes and ears I will be able to learn from their stories, wishes, how they solve problems, what does and does not work, their dreams of a better classroom, and what they need to be successful in the areas that I am teaching. I believe the more a child feels known, the more learning will occur. My philosophy is based on the idea that the art of teaching is based on the art of continuing to learn. Teachers are the most important learners in the classroom. I realize that I must do more than teach subjects. It is far more important to teach the individual child. My ambition is to teach students how to learn and encourage them to be worthwhile human beings toward themselves and others.

**Miss Stephanie Kraengel, 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Teacher**

*BA, Psychology and Elementary Education, Canisius College  
MS, Elementary Education, SUC at Buffalo  
NYS Permanent Certification, N-6*

Miss Kraengel joined Fourteen Holy Helpers School in 1979 as our 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Teacher, and never looked back! She has mastered the art of teaching 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade, and has additionally served our school as Textbook Coordinator and Assistant Principal. Her day begins with our earliest students as moderator of the Morning Extended Day Program. Miss Kraengel enjoys reading, drawing, painting and crafting.

**Educational Philosophy:** The students in my class are offered a structured atmosphere where they are encouraged to do their best in all things. Christian values are an integral part of lessons, in developing life skills, and are expected in attitude and behavior.

**Ms. Mary Zelasko, 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Teacher**

*BS, Education, SUNY at Geneseo  
NYS Initial Certification 1-6; Children with Disabilities 1-6*

Miss Zelasko joined Fourteen Holy Helpers School in 2010. She is an energetic and engaged teacher in an energetic and engaged classroom. She incorporates kinesthetic learning and loves to watch the children grow! Her special interests include reading, running, learning, cooking, and Buffalo sports.

**Educational Philosophy:** I believe the purpose of school is not only to learn math, reading and writing, but something more. I also prepare students for the real world. My classroom provides an environment for children to grow up together while developing crucial social skills, common sense, decision-making skills, and acknowledging the difference between right and wrong. I strive to enrich every moment a child is in my classroom by combining educational goals with Catholic values.

**Ms. Melissa Denecke, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher**

*BS, Childhood Education, Medaille College  
MS, Literacy, Medaille College  
NYS Initial Certification, Childhood Education*

Miss Denecke began teaching at Fourteen Holy Helpers in January 2010. Melissa also teaches Grade 5 Science. Hers is an active classroom where care and concern for the individual is modeled. Prior to joining us, she was a long-term substitute at Notre Dame Academy, where she taught junior high science. Miss Denecke loves to cook, travel and watch hockey!

**Educational Philosophy:** I cherish my Catholic education and now have the honor to bring that faith and knowledge into my classroom. I believe that all children can and will learn in my classroom. I always work on meeting the needs of every child in my classroom. I also believe that it is important that each child learns in a safe, fun, and academic environment.

### **Mrs. Liz Pollak, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher**

*BA, Canisius College*

*MS, Education SUC at Buffalo*

*NYS Initial Certification Early Childhood (B-6), Childhood (1-6), Special Education (1-6), Math (7-12)*

Mrs. Pollak served as a substitute teacher for three years prior to joining Fourteen Holy Helpers School in 2010 as our Kindergarten teacher, and now teaches in our middle school. Her classroom is a peaceful yet busy environment for some of our most active students. In addition to her work here, Mrs. Pollak enjoys travelling, reading, scrapbooking and cake decorating.

**Educational Philosophy:** The foundation of my philosophy as a teacher is the belief that every child has the ability to learn with a supportive, welcoming environment. My goal is to create a positive classroom environment where every student feels welcome, is challenged, and comes to school excited to learn. I feel open communication, parental involvement, and engaging curriculum that incorporates Christian values is essential. As a result, students will gain knowledge, self-esteem, responsibility and independent thinking skills.

### **Mrs. Tina Krzyzanowski, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher**

*AS, Education, Villa Maria College*

*BS, Elementary Education, SUC at Buffalo*

*NYS Provisional Certification, (K-6)*

Mrs. Krzyzanowski began teaching in 1974 and has been with Fourteen Holy Helpers School since 1992. She is an outstanding and experienced teacher who also teaches Grade 4 Math. She enjoys reading, needlepoint and is an avid Sabres fan!

**Educational Philosophy:** I believe that children have a natural curiosity and desire to learn. I enjoy teaching and love to see students' faces light up when they catch on to something new or are able to relate to a specific situation. I want children to look forward to coming to school, but I also want them to know that to be successful, they have to work at it. I feel children need a Christian atmosphere in order to live a Christian life. I hope that, I teach this by example in my classroom. Hopefully, students know that they are valued and respected in my classroom and that they will do the same towards others. Kindness is Catchy!

### **Mrs. Peggy Hycner, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Homeroom, Junior High Science Teacher**

*AS Trocaire College*

*BS, SUC at Buffalo*

*Science Mentor Program, Canisius College*

*NYS Provisional Certification, Science*

*Co-moderator, Student Council*

*Co-moderator, Student Store*

*Co-Moderator, Student Newspaper*

As a member of our Junior High team, Mrs. Hycner is our 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Homeroom Teacher and teaches Grades 6, 7 and 8 Science and Health, and Grades 6 and 7 Religion. She has been a part of the Fourteen Holy Helpers family since 2005, and taught for twenty nine years before coming here. Her depth of knowledge and ability to inspire her students helps to develop the strong foundation of knowledge which supports a successful high school experience.

**Educational Philosophy:** I believe that every child deserves a nurturing and caring environment that meets their needs and helps them to realize their potential. Developing this type of atmosphere, I believe, promotes Christian values and helps the students learn respect and consideration for

others. I strive to integrate gospel values within the curriculum as much as possible. I believe that I owe it to my students, to be open-minded and positive and to bring consistency, warmth and a touch of humor to the classroom in the hope that I can encourage such traits in the children.

### **Mrs. Becky Moe, 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Homeroom, Junior High Language Arts & Social Studies**

#### **Teacher**

*BA, English, Secondary Education (Minor in U.S. History), SUNY at Geneseo*

*MSED, K-12 Reading, St. Bonaventure University*

*NYS Permanent Certification, English 7-12, Reading K-12, Social Studies 7-12*

*Co-moderator, Student Council*

*Co-moderator, Drama Club*

*Co-Moderator, Student Newspaper*

*Moderator, Book Club*

Mrs. Moe began her teaching career at Fourteen Holy Helpers in 2004, and is our 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Homeroom Teacher and our Junior High Language Arts, Literature and Social Studies Teacher. Mrs. Moe brings high academic standards and expectations to her classroom as she prepares her students for the rigors of high school. She is co-moderator of the Student Council, co-moderator of the Student Newspaper, co-moderator of the Drama Club, moderator of the Book Club and an outstanding volleyball coach! Her special interests include reading, quilting and (of course) volleyball.

**Educational Philosophy:** I strive to create a safe learning environment in which students can develop not only intellectually but also socially, emotionally, and spiritually. I believe students will live up to the expectations their teachers have for them; to that end, I endeavor to enter the classroom each and every day with a positive attitude and the highest of expectations. I hope to inspire a lifelong love of learning in my students by my own example.

### **Mrs. Cynthia Frank, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Homeroom, Junior High Math Teacher**

*BS, Elementary Education (Minor in Mathematics), Daemen College*

*Ed.M., SUNY at Buffalo*

*NYS Permanent Certification N-6, Mathematics 7-12*

*Co-moderator, Student Council*

*Co-moderator, Student Store*

*Co-moderator, Drama Club*

*Moderator, Quiz Bowl*

*Moderator, Math Contest*

Mrs. Frank began her teaching career at Fourteen Holy Helpers School in 1977. She is our 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Homeroom Teacher and the Pre-Algebra and Algebra Teacher for Grades 6, 7 and 8, and Religion and Reading Teacher for Grade 8. Mrs. Frank is committed to raising the bar for excellence and challenging her students to grow and excel. As the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade homeroom teacher, Mrs. Frank takes on the tremendous task of coordinating the activities of our soon-to-be graduates, which include fundraising, special ceremonies, high school applications, a class trip, and all the trappings of graduation itself! In her spare time (which is limited!) she enjoys fishing and boating, sports, photography and reading.

**Educational Philosophy:** In my opinion, teaching is a dedication because I am dedicated to helping my students do the best they can do. I hope I can make a difference in their lives, not only in understanding mathematics, but also in becoming a better person, one who cares about others and their feelings. I teach because I enjoy working with my students. I like to see their eyes light up when, all of a sudden, they understand a new concept. I feel proud when someone who has been

struggling in class, comes to me for extra help, and I see the extra help make a difference when they do well on their next test.

**Mrs. Gloria Brzezinski, Music Teacher**

*BA, SUNY at Buffalo*

*MS, Education, Canisius College*

Mrs. Brzezinski began teaching in 1978, and joined Fourteen Holy Helpers School in 2010. She has experience in both public and parochial schools, and brings a vast wealth of musical talent, knowledge and teaching experience to our school. She is the Music Director of assemblies, holiday programs, liturgies, the Arts Festival and our Spring musical production. She directs the children in song and instrumental work and brings great spirit to Fourteen Holy Helpers School! Mrs. Brzezinski's hobbies and interests include holistic health, culinary arts, gardening, writing, reading and research in the value of music.

**Educational Philosophy:** It is my life's work to bring peace and harmony to the world through music.

**Mrs. Hilary Ungaro, Spanish Teacher**

*BS, Secondary Social Studies Education, SUNY College at Buffalo*

*MS, Secondary Social Studies Education, SUNY College at Buffalo*

*NYS Certification in Spanish Education (2011)*

*NYS Certification in Social Studies Education (5-12)*

Mrs. Ungaro began teaching in 2003 and joined Fourteen Holy Helper School in 2011. She has developed and presents a graduated Spanish program to our students in PreK4 through Grade 8. Her lively classroom is filled with Spanish song, culture and language, both written and spoken.

**Education Philosophy:** I believe that education is the foundation in the life of a child. I strive every day to meet the various needs of each of my students by implementing an assortment of activities. As a teacher, I believe it is important to create a positive and nurturing learning environment. I hope that students feel comfortable and involved in the classroom. My background in Social Studies and Spanish, as well as Catholic education, helps me to value other cultures – a life-long lesson I hope my students will learn.

**Mr. Roger Hutter, Computer and Technology Teacher and Coordinator**

*BS, Business Studies, SUC at Buffalo*

*MS, Education/Educational Computing, SUC at Buffalo*

*NYS Permanent Certification, Business Education K-12*

Mr. Hutter taught for 18 years in both the public and parochial sectors before joining Fourteen Holy Helpers School in 2010. As the Computer and Technology Teacher, he is responsible for introducing our students in PreK through Grade 8 to hardware and software tools, word processing and data base management systems, and a variety of academic resources and supplements to their classroom curricula. As our Technology Coordinator, Mr. Hutter manages and coordinates our use of the BOCES eSchoolData System and provides technical support to the faculty and staff. Mr. Hutter's avocation is music, and he is both the manager and a performer with the *Easy Street Big Band*.

**Educational Philosophy:** The education of children in our country is one of the greatest responsibilities that we, as adults, must accept and succeed at. It takes teamwork among parents, teachers and the community. As a leader of this team, a teacher must wear many hats while working

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with each student. A teacher must be a friend, a parent, a counselor, an advisor and an educator. When a child graduates, he/she must be a well-rounded individual in order to reach full potential in life. We want our students to have a positive self-image, be able to communicate well with all types of people, have an excellent academic background, and have a positive attitude. It is my goal as a teacher to provide an environment in which all of my students can achieve everything that they set their sights on.

**Mr. Frank Palisano, Physical Education Teacher**

*BS, Physical Education, SUNY at Cortland*  
*MS, Creative Studies, SUC at Buffalo*  
*NYS Permanent Certification, Physical Education*  
*NYS Permanent Certification, Health anticipated 2011*

Mr. Palisano taught Physical Education for four years prior to joining Fourteen Holy Helpers School in 2008. “Mr. P.” presents developmentally appropriate activities to our students in PreK4 through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade, stressing gross and fine motor skills, game activities, sportsmanship and healthy lifestyle.

**Educational Philosophy:** I believe all students have untapped potential and that it is my job to help students attain their goals and apply them to their everyday lives. My students understand that we are all unique, and that the focus of our class is to promote healthy lifestyles while adhering to good Christian values.

**Mrs. Pat Peterson, Remedial & Enrichment Teacher**

*AS, Hilbert College*  
*BS, Applied Science Daemen College*  
*MS, Education and Reading, Canisius College*  
*Bryant and Stratten, Information Technology*  
*NYS Permanent Certification, Reading and Elementary Education*

Mrs. Peterson joined Fourteen Holy Helpers School in 1982 and has taught in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grades, and as our Computer Teacher. In 2010 she accepted the position of Remedial Teacher, providing academic intervention services (AIS) in English/Language Arts and Math to students, in accord with New York State mandates. Her work takes her into every classroom and enables her to interact with teachers and students to assure access to supplementary and reinforcing work. Mrs. Peterson is an avid gardener, enjoys flower arranging, reading, drawing and crocheting. She is interested in computer technology and enjoys working with specialty programs.

**Educational Philosophy:** In my years of teaching, I found that if children feel comfortable and confident in their learning environment it will enhance their scholastic growth and progress. I have always strived to help children reach up, thereby challenging themselves. As the children go about their daily routine in the classroom, they are always encouraged to maintain a positive attitude about their studies and abilities. A positive attitude and environment also comes from the influence of God in our lives, and how willing we are to forgive others as well as ourselves. The principles that are stressed as a way of life encourage children to become aware of how they treat others, remembering that two wrongs will never make a right.

**Ms. Shannon Szymanski, Remedial & Enrichment Teacher**

*BS, Elementary Education with Math Extension (7-9)*

*NYS Initial Certification, Childhood Education (1-6), Math (7-9)*

Miss Szymanski joined Fourteen Holy Helpers School in 2010 as a first year teacher. She is an innovative and enthusiastic teacher who has established a very trusting and active classroom environment. Her special interests include camping, hiking, mountain biking, teaching, learning, running, singing and math!

**Educational Philosophy:** I believe that education is the most important component of anyone's life. It is my ongoing life goal to educate in terms of faith, social interaction, self-growth and intellectualism. Being a certified Elementary and Math teacher, I work to create a positive learning environment and engage my students to the best of my abilities. I recognize that all children learn and grow at different rates and by different styles. Consequently, differentiated instruction is a technique that I embrace. I value students' individuality, which is why I have a special interest in exceptional education. Changing lives through education is my prime objective. I strive for success in all classroom settings, grade levels and subject areas. It is my intent to facilitate each student's success at his/her highest level.

**Mrs. Terry Walkowski, Art Teacher**

*BS, Art Education, SUC at Buffalo*

*MS, Art Therapy, SUC at Buffalo*

Mrs. Walkowski joined Fourteen Holy Helpers School in 2003 after teaching art therapy at the college level, and adults with special needs for 25 years. She is a true gift to our students, providing both the history of art and expressive opportunities to all students weekly. Her room is an oasis of activity and our halls are vibrant with the children's work!

**Educational Philosophy:** I do not expect students to all become great artists, although I do stress that those who have the God given talent utilize it. "I can't" is never accepted, "trying your best" is. I do expect students to come away with a working knowledge and degree of skill in various media that they can incorporate into their everyday life. It is also important that they have a working knowledge of various genre of art /artists so they can converse intelligently as they become contributing members of society. The rich heritage of Catholic art is explored from Gothic Altarpieces to The Sistine Chapel ceiling to modern stained glass church windows. Christian values are an integral part of every lesson, as we help one another while working on group projects. Many discussions take place on treating one another as we wish to be treated through the biographies of artists such as Van Gogh, who was misunderstood for his mental illness.

**Mrs. Bev Blaszak, Director of Food Services**

Mrs. Blaszak had worked in food services for 7 years prior to joining Fourteen Holy Helpers School in 2008. She is responsible and the systematic organization of the federal lunch and breakfast programs that currently operate at Fourteen Holy Helpers School. "Mrs. Bev" also coordinates hospitality at school events and assures that our families and students are well-feted!

Her team includes **Mrs. Maria Ciura, Mrs. Jackie Diodate, and Mrs. Yvonne Mazurkiewicz.**

**Mr. Wayne Ludescher, Facilities Manager**

Mr. Ludescher is responsible for all aspects of facilities maintenance, safety and support. His able team includes **Mr. Tom McGurty and Mr. Joe Sukilowski.**

### **Mrs. Patti Jaehn, School Nurse**

Mrs. Jaehn is with us two days a week to provide medical and record-keeping support. She readily shares her skills and talents. We are grateful to the West Seneca Central Schools for making it possible for her to be here.

### **Mrs. Sally Becker, EDP**

Mrs. Becker joined Fourteen Holy Helpers in 1988, working part time as an aide in the Preschool Room, and later became the Coordinator of the Extended Day Program (EDP). In 2000 she accepted the position of Secretary in the main office, and soon thereafter became known as the heart of the school! Mrs. Becker has “retired “ from office work, but continues to lead the EDP. Mrs. Becker’s EDP team includes **Mrs. Kathy Makowski, Mrs. Jackie Diodate, Miss Stephanie Kraengel, Mrs. Sue Walsh, Miss Liz Rozek, Miss Julia Morgan, Mrs. Donna Palaszynski, Mrs. Tina Maziol, Mrs. Pat Peterson and Mrs. Liz Pollak.**

### **Mrs. Justine Krzeminski, Office Secretary**

Mrs. Krzeminski joined the Fourteen Holy Helpers team in the summer of 2011, with over 10 years’ experience in providing office and administrative support in Catholic school settings. She coordinates and supports a multitude of office activities that facilitate the day-to-day and long-range operations of the school. She multi-tasks constantly and never, ever, loses her smile!

### **Mrs. Mary Jo Aiken, Principal**

*B.Sc., Life Science, University of Toronto, Canada*

*Ed.M., Secondary Sciences, State University of New York at Buffalo*

*M.S., Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, University of Buffalo School of Medicine, Dept. of Social and Preventive Medicine Educational Leadership Program, Cohort 17, District and Building Leader, SUNY at Buffalo*

*NYS Permanent Certification: Secondary Sciences (7-12)*

As a teacher and school administrator for over 15 years, and as an epidemiologist specializing in occupational medicine for 20 years, Mary Jo is privileged to work with the wonderful students, parents, faculty and staff of Fourteen Holy Helpers School, and to apply her knowledge and experience in health, education, management, school administration and Christian mission to the continued excellence, growth and vitality of Fourteen Holy Helpers School!

### **Educational Philosophy:**

My philosophy of education has formed over the years as a result of my foundational Catholic/Christian beliefs in the sanctity of life, the purposes and goals of life-long inquiry and education, the practical study and application of active learning and presentation styles, and the Christian settings in which they are optimally achieved.

#### **Foundational Beliefs**

- Every individual is gifted; these gifts are from God and to be cherished and used for His glory;
- Each individual holds within him/herself the full person he/she will become.
- Self-motivation is the only valid impulse to learning;
- Learning is optimized when it is developmentally appropriate, sequential, self-paced and mastery oriented.
- Students work, learn and grow most fully in peaceful, respectful and secure environments where they are able to acquire basic skills before participating in competitive learning situations. (“Never let the child risk failure until he has a reasonable chance of success,..” M. Montessori)
- Peace and respect flow from the Presence of the Holy Spirit, Who should be invited into each classroom and meeting every day, and from a practiced recognition that each individual is made in the image and likeness of God.

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- Order and self-discipline are essential to optimize physical, spiritual, intellectual and emotional development.
- The consistent application and modeling of conflict resolution techniques in conjunction with prayer, accountability, and reasonable and appropriate consequences for behavior establish, maintain and reinforce a Christ-centered environment of inclusion and respect.
- Educators and administrators must work in concert with students and their families to identify learning styles and needs, address impediments to learning in and out of the classroom, and implement appropriate remedies.
- Educators and administrators have a responsibility to function as advocates for the student, know their subject matter thoroughly and expertly, and be able to present it in an organized manner that facilitates learning.
- Educators and administrators have a responsibility to serve as role models of kindness, respect and integrity; in a Catholic/Christian setting, educators have a responsibility to model and reflect Christian behavior and principles, maintain Christ as the center of each classroom, and call students of all ages into a deeper relationship with Christ through reading/listening to the Bible, and through reflection and prayer.

These beliefs in turn drive and support the purposes and goals of an institute of learning and its classroom experiences.

#### **Purposes and Goals of the Catholic/Christian Educational Environment**

- To facilitate in each student a confidence in the knowledge of the ever-present Lord;
- To facilitate a personal relationship with the Lord and the development of an interior life;
- To motivate and prepare the students to become a lifelong learners.
- To assure that each student will learn to love learning;
- To facilitate the achievement of each student's full physical, spiritual, intellectual and emotional potential;
- To engender in each student a sense of kindness, humility, honor, respect for self, for others and for the environment, good habits and excellent manners;
- To imbue each student with a spirit of Christian/community service;
- To prepare each student to assume his/her place in society, functioning as a positive Christian role model;
- To enable each student to know and embrace his/her talents and challenges as gifts from God, uniquely given to bring him/her closer to the Lord;

The implementation of these goals and the fulfillment of these purposes can only be achieved in an environment where the pursuit of excellence is the norm. Faculty, staff and administration must work in concert and collegiality, with openness to innovation and a willingness to pray together and support each other on behalf of their students. They too, must be life-long active learners, embracing constant formation to maintain the focus, energy and joy required to glorify God through service to His children.