



SUN TIMES

NEWS FROM SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI SCHOOL
WEST DES MOINES, IOWA

Prepare the child for the path, not the path for the child.

Vol. 9, Issue 3

Roberta Harvey, Principal

Misty Hade, Assistant Principal

October 2007

Dear Parents,

I can't believe how quickly the days go by! It is amazing to me that the end of September is here and we are looking forward to an October filled with many great things. I wish to thank the staff, students, and parents for welcoming me to St. Francis. It has been a wonderful start to a new beginning for me, and I can't be happier to be here. Everyday I receive encouragement and smiles that let me know how important my job is here.

On September 21st, during our professional development day at Dowling, our teachers worked on the new reporting system. We spent time developing assessments and rubrics to help us truly understand where each student is related to the standards being taught. This day was filled with learning that was valuable to our staff who will be working on progress reports at the end of October.

During the first Board of Education meeting, September 6th, Mrs. Harvey and I presented the anti-harassment/bullying information. After discussing the information and answering questions, we finally came to an agreement on consequences for students at St. Francis. The following is the result of that meeting:

- Administrator(s) has the right to determine the consequences of the action which may include, but are not limited to: (a parent meeting will take place immediately)

- Warning
- Pull-a-card (K-5)
- Demerit (6-8)
- Detention
- Saturday School
- In-school suspension
- Out-of-school suspension
- Possible recommendation for expulsion to the Board

"Finally, my friends, keep your minds on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly, and proper. Don't ever stop thinking about what is truly worthwhile and worthy of praise."

Philippians 4:8-9

As we continue on this journey through the school year, we must remember our Catholic Christian community and how important it is to praise each other. May we look at our staff, children, and families daily with all of the wonderful ways the Gospel has lifted Him up to the kingdom of God.

With many blessings,

Misty Hade,
Assistant Principal



Picture Day at St. Francis School

Tuesday, October 9

Students are to bring their picture order envelope to school on Picture Day.

DRESS UP OR DRESS CODE!

If in doubt...don't!



MIDDLE SCHOOL DANCE for Grades 7 & 8

Friday, Oct. 19
St. Francis School
\$6.00
7pm-9:30pm

School ID's required



SFA wins VWM Class Cash!



We are delighted to announce that St. Francis School has **WON** this year's VWM Class Cash competition! Kristin Gose, President of our Home and School Association, was present at the announcement at the mall on Wednesday, September 19. Kristin accepted a check for \$3,000 which will go to benefit the programs here at school. Thank you for your support!

Congratulations, St. Francis Families! You're Number 1!



Noticias en Español! By Mrs. Shelly Power

Middle School students spent last month reviewing conversation and greetings phrases. Students can introduce themselves and others, and ask and respond to greetings, calendar, and personal questions. Students are able to distinguish between informal and formal conversation and use both appropriately.

Middle School students take vocabulary quizzes each class (twice a week). Each list contains ten words essential to communication. September words included greetings, colors, numbers to 20, days of the week, and months. October words include weather, feelings, people and items in the school, numbers to 100, and telling time phrases.

Students will complete oral and written activities in October that allow them to discuss their school day and classes. For example, students will be able to state that they have math class at 11:00 AM and need a book, folder, and pencil. Emphasis will be on communication, though correct grammar and spelling are expected as students progress.

Fifth grade students will learn about the butterfly migration to Mexico that occurs each fall. Students will make paper butterflies that will be sent to Mexican students and will hopefully return in the spring with a pen pal letter in Spanish. Also, students will learn about *Día de los Muertos*, a traditional holiday that combines Catholic and native cultural themes about death and remembrance. Students will learn vocabulary and discuss how Latin Americans celebrate family.

Second, third, and fourth grade students continue to practice calendar and conversation vocabulary. Students are learning to recognize more written language and will be able to write the day and date, their age, their birthday, and where they live **ALL IN SPANISH!**

First grade students are so excited to learn Spanish! Our new friend, *Ramona la rana* (frog) helps students respond to greetings questions in Spanish: *¿Cómo estás?* and *¿Como te llamas?* Students can recall numbers to ten and can say 11 colors in Spanish. We will use these words to describe animals and items in the classroom.

All Saint Francis Spanish class students should be able to recite the Sign of the Cross in Spanish:

En el nombre del Padre, del Hijo, y del Espiritu Santo. Amén.



ENRICHMENT by Mrs. Chris Joslin

As the year is beginning, I have been using whole class enrichment as an avenue to get to know the students and their needs better. As ITBS results come in, more pullouts will be planned. Please look at the SFA website under enrichment in the next few weeks. Mr. Southward is helping me update and enlarge the site.

Mrs. Weisenhorn and I co-taught a short unit on increasing map, math and logic skills by using a computer program to all **5th graders**. The students explored the program, *Google Earth*, to locate land forms, cities, latitude and longitudinal coordinates as well as famous buildings, cities and works of nature. Many **5th graders** told us that they have been allowed to download the free program at home. Thank you, parents, for encouraging them to look at this incredible map that will enhance their knowledge of the world.

As I was preparing the unit for the **5th graders**, Mrs. Nitzel suggested showing the program to the **4th graders** also as it relates to their current unit on vulcanization. *Google Earth* has a special feature that locates current dormant and active volcanoes as well as seismic activity. We looked at fault lines, the growth of mountains through volcanic action as well convergent plates and the Pacific Ring of Fire. Again, several students related that they were allowed to download this program at home. It is a useful tool in many ways and I am sure the more they use it the more uses they will find for it.

I will be helping with the **4th grade** class play again this fall and will begin pull-out programs shortly thereafter. In **5th grade**, I will begin pull-outs soon and will help with whole class enrichment later in the year with Exchange City and Can-struction.

In **6th grade**, Ms. Sprung asked me to work with groups of 4 students with an increased interest in WWII and geography to enhance their understanding of the book they are reading as a class, *The Cay*. I met with these 3 groups for 3 times before they presented their information to the class. They gave digital presentations on the following subjects: Caribbean locations mentioned in the book, WWII overview, u-boats and photos of cays plus their flora and fauna. They have asked for the websites we used to research these and they are as follows:

WWII map: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II; German u-boat: <http://www.msichicago.org/> (This is a wonderful site that includes many aspects of life on a submarine as well as activities for students. It is an actual WWII u-boat that is on display at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry.); locations in the Caribbean: <http://earth.google.com/> (This is the site to download the program.)

Middle School Opportunities: Extra curricular

In September, I have been busy with **Mock Trial** team formation. It is so wonderful that we have so many Middle School students interested in this activity and so many parent volunteers! SFA truly appreciates their time, effort and the skills they bring to this program. SFA has 4 teams preparing for competition in November. We wish them well! If your child is on a Mock Trial team and has not paid their registration fees, you may send them to the office at any time.

National History Teams and single contestants have met with me to develop themes. We have two **8th grade** groups and one **7th grade** group. I will be meeting with **6th graders** later in October with possibly organizing a field trip to a workshop at the State Historical Center.

Mr. Southward and I are excited to be offering an after school **art club** for Middle School Students. The organizational meeting will be Monday, September 24th. We will alternate weeks between photography and general art work. Our main goal is to produce works of art to enhance our school while developing techniques of many media with the student.

In October, **Future City** will be started and students that have expressed interest in this will begin meeting in the middle of the month.



Book Nook by Mrs. Mary Head

The media center is off to a busy start. It is so nice to have students so anxious to get in the stacks and find the book they can lose themselves in. A reminder that books are checked out for two weeks, but students should return library materials as soon as they have finished reading them. So far we are doing a great job!

New books are the talk of the library this month. Library volunteers have been processing numerous nonfiction materials with various reading levels. We are excited to have these fabulous books available to our students and teachers. Fiction titles have been ordered and will arrive shortly.

The Saint Francis Home and School Committee has been so supportive in helping us build and maintain a quality library collection. The committee has also allotted money for the purchase of additional shelving which will help with some of our overcrowded shelves. Too many books...what a wonderful problem to have! We look for the shelving (made by Prison Industries of Iowa) to be delivered before Christmas.

Keep encouraging the joy of reading in your home!



ON OUR PALETTES by Ms. Sara Anderson

It has been a great year so far in art. You may be asking, "Who are you?" Let me introduce myself: I am Ms. Sara Anderson and I teach Art to the 2nd-5th grade students. Some of you may remember me from last year. I was here as Mr. Southward's student teacher from Grand View College. I enjoyed my time here so much that I asked to stay. This is my first teaching position and I am totally pumped to be part of St. Francis of Assisi School. I graduated from Grand View College last year with teaching degree in art specializing in painting.

Currently, the students are working on a piece for the Twin River's Art Festival. It is called "I am an Artist!" The students are being very creative showing off their skills proving that they are, indeed, artists. It is open to all students from kindergarten through age nineteen and the winning pieces will be shown during the Art Festival. We will be sending in the pieces at the end of the month.

We also are starting up Art Club at St. Francis. Our organizational meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 24, after school. Our Art Club is open to 6th-8th grade from 3:30-4:30. We are also looking for donations of digital cameras so we can get more students involved in photography.

Happy Art-ing!



Tech Talk by Mrs. Diane Nitzel

The first part of the school year has been very busy. Sixth grade has been in the lab quite a bit since the beginning of the year. They have gone over the lab rules as well as learning about the consequences of copyright infringement in a school setting. I also handed out flash drives and showed the students how to use them and scan them for viruses. Then they dove right in creating a memo for Language Arts and a Power Point slide on a scientist for science. They are also well into their keyboarding.

Fifth grade students started out the year working on their keyboarding skills. They also were refreshed on the computer lab rules as well as writing a report on a scientist for science. Next they joined Mrs. Joslin in the lab to learn how to use Google Earth and reinforce their map reading skills while studying different geological features particularly those sites that are of historical significance to early American history. Then the 5th graders completed a web quest on the U.S. Census Bureau's web site. They practiced typing a web address in the address bar as well as looking for large numbers and writing them in different forms for Math.

This year we have decided to start keyboarding in 3rd grade due to the fact that they are expected to type several multi-paragraph reports and we did not want them to form any bad keyboarding habits. They all seem to be enjoying the keyboarding program, Type to Learn 3. They are also using *Speedskins* which covers up the keyboard to prevent them from looking at their fingers and reinforces the touch typing method of keyboarding.

The 4th grade students came into the lab to learn more about the Internet as a research tool after being refreshed on the computer lab rules. Next they completed a scavenger hunt about earthquakes on the U.S. Geological Survey Earthquake Hazards Program's web site. Later that week with Mrs. Head, they learned how to find books and resources in the library using the school's computerized card catalog.

Lastly, the 7th graders came in to go over computer lab rules as well as to learn about copyright infringement consequences in a school setting and in the real world. Next they came in to research their topic for a Social Studies project on the Medieval Period.

As always, I enjoy working with your children in the computer lab. They always seem to be very excited and engaged when they are here. I am looking forward to another exciting year filled with curiosity and the thrill of learning new things.

God Bless!



DRESS CODE REMINDER!

Beginning October 1
Shorts and sandals (including cros)
are no longer permitted.
Thank you!

Reading Recovery/Reading Support

by Mrs. Mary Anne Conway

Reading Recovery students are learning that print contains the message and pictures can be an important source of information when making predictions about text. We have been reviewing the basic concepts about how books work. Our focus has been on the following:

- read left page then the right page
- start at the top and read left to right
- return to the left of the next line
- read page from top to bottom
- point to each word as it is said

In our early lessons we want to insist on exact matching when pointing. As students use their fingers and eyes to read, we do not want them to become careless about pointing. At a later time, we will ask the students to stop finger pointing and read just with their eyes.

Learning the alphabet and understanding how letters function in words plays an important role in the beginning reader's ability to look at print. The three areas of letter learning that we focus on are:

- recognition and identification
- letter formation
- initial letter sounds

In order to become good readers and fluent writers, Reading Recovery students are encouraged to do the following:

- name each letter of the alphabet and know a word that begins with each letter
- recognize and name all of the letters even when the letters are out of order
- form letters quickly and consistently

Letter formation is so important. Students have to write so that others can read their writing. Students also have to be able to read their own writing.

As we work on letter learning, we often will take a minute or two in the lesson to work with magnetic letters or to practice writing a single letter. However, the majority of our letter learning takes place while we're reading books and writing stories. While a child does not have to identify all of the letters of the alphabet before he/she can begin to read and write, eventually it will be necessary to gain control of all of the letters.

(Some of the information in this newsletter was taken from the Early Literacy Learning and Learning the Alphabet sections of HOMELINK Home Activities For the Emergent Reader Dominic Press, Inc. 1997, pages 4,5,7, 13-15, 21 and 32).

Happy Reading & Happy Writing!





MUSIC! MUSIC! MUSIC!

K-5 Music News by Mrs. Lee Randall

Kindergarten and First grade parents don't forget that we will host Kindergarten Informances on October 23 and Grade 1 Informances on October 23 during your child's regular music time. All Informances will be held in the Parish Hall. You can find your child's class time on this portion of SFA's website: <http://saintfrancisschool.org/Academics/Music/music.htm>. Even though this is a mini-performance, please have your child wear dress code uniforms as appropriate for the regular school day.

Third through Fifth grade parents please check your calendars for December 2nd. This is the date for the annual Catholic Charities *No Room at the Inn* event. This will be an **optional** performance for interested students. Please be watching your email for information about rehearsals for the students and performance time to be announced! We would love to have as many students involved as possible for this great event that benefits others!

Fourth grade students start looking for your recorders! We will be needing them for class soon! Any Fifth grade students who haven't found their recorder yet, please find a replacement as soon as possible. We will be using recorders off and on throughout the year. We will also have our Recorder Karate Unit as we did last year for both grades. Contact Mrs. Randall if you need suggestions for local stores which carry recorders.



Middle School Music by Sr. Vikki

September was a very busy month in our MS music classes. The eighth grade students did a wonderful job comparing musical styles. They really demonstrated a good understanding of the elements of music and how they are used in each style. Their current challenge is to play a given Classical melody on the keyboard and to change the style by altering the rhythm, melody, harmony or timbre.

Seventh grade students are exploring Native American music. They have learned the role of music in Native American life as well as listened to authentic examples.

The students have used pictographs from various tribes to tell their stories and are now writing Chants and making instruments appropriate for this culture. They will perform their Chants in class.

Rhythmic and pitch notation has been the focus in sixth grade music. Students have found they have learned a lot over the years about written music. Their next step is to put it all together and do a little composing of their own.

Guidance Corner by Mrs. Julie Heckle

The year is off to a great start in the guidance department. This year all students in grades K-5 attend guidance class once a week. I hope all parents of our elementary school students received the "Introducing Your Counselor" booklets your children brought home during the first two weeks of school. These booklets review my role as a school counselor and the services I provide.

In grades K-2 we recently finished our first units on manners and listening skills. Kindergarteners are now focusing on self-esteem and learning that each person is special, unique individual. In first grade, students are learning the importance of being an organized and responsible 1st grader. We will do this by looking at their morning routines at home and school. Second grade students have just started a unit on friendship. They will discover characteristics that make a good friend and behaviors that interfere with friendship.

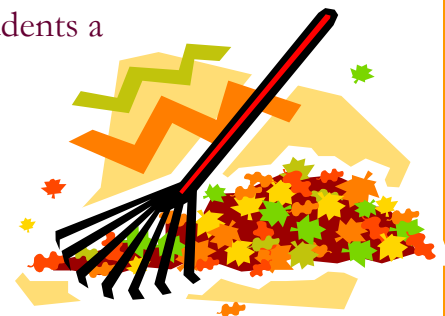
Students in grades 3-5 have each been focusing on different units of study. Third graders spent the first few weeks in Guidance class learning about standardized tests and how to prepare for them. We worked through practice tests for both the COGAT and ITBS tests. They are well prepared and ready to take these tests.

In 4th grade, we are using the program "Don't Laugh at Me" to explore the factors that contribute to a person's self esteem. Students have learned that the words they use and the actions they take can dramatically affect the self esteem of others. Currently we are reviewing test taking skills to prepare for ITBS tests. When finished, we will focus on how to make their classrooms a "Ridicule Free Zone."

Fifth grade students have spent time reflecting on the skills, talents and abilities they have learned throughout their years in school. They have explored how they can use these talents to accomplish certain tasks and achieve their goals. After spending time reviewing for the ITBS test, we will begin a unit on stress. During this unit, the students will learn to identify stressors in their life and explore various healthy ways to cope with and reduce stress.

I have not forgotten our middle school students. I will be teaming with the middle school staff to teach special units throughout the year. Our first unit will focus on living a healthy, safe, drug free life, as we celebrate Red Ribbon Week. I also plan to meet in small groups with the middle school students. This seems to be more personal and effective way to help our young adults deal with the challenges of adolescence.

Two school wide special events will be coming up this fall. Red Ribbon Week will be held the last full week of October. More information about our celebration will be sent home soon. We will join students across the nation in celebrating "Mix It Up At Lunch Day" on Tuesday, November 13. This day gives students a chance to break out of their normal lunch routine and get to know someone new.



The Lunch Line

by Mrs. Jeannine Laughlin and Mrs. Barb Wisnieski



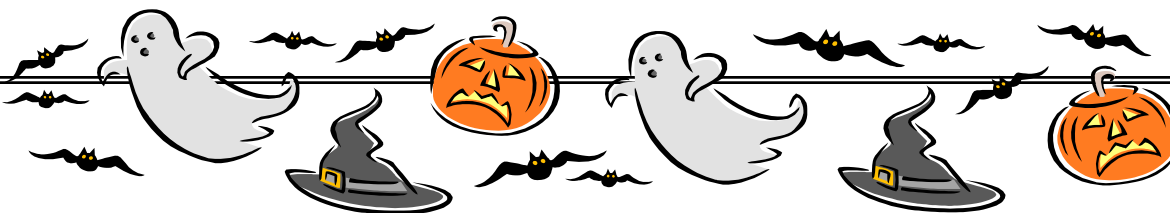
WOW!! It's October already!! Happy Fall! Things are moving right along in the School Lunch Program. It is so great to have all of our staff from _____ last year returning...and with our school only growing by 25 students this year, life is a "piece of cake" for us this school year!!

The beginning of a new school year is the perfect opportunity to sing the praises of the people you appreciate...and for Jeannine and myself, we cannot say enough great things about the staff we have working in the School Lunch Program. So much goes on behind the scenes of putting out our lunch everyday, and we are blessed with the hardest working, most conscientious women (and Robert) we could possibly have. AND, they definitely put the GROOVY in our "Groovy Food Gals/Robert" team!! Working in the SFA kitchen is like hanging out with your friends...that truly is a blessing, my friends! (OK...maybe not on popcorn chicken days, but that has nothing to do with us!!)

We also want to extend a big THANK-YOU to all of our volunteers who help serve food and work in the cafeteria this school year! We cannot tell you how vital you are to the flow of our program...we couldn't serve our 675 students and staff without the hours you donate to our program. And, we MISS YOU when you are not there...please try to find a sub if you know you are not going to be able to be here as scheduled. We will have a list of volunteers who can sub on the SFA website (names only...please check your directory for phone numbers). We know that last minute emergencies arise...please let us know if you are not able to find a sub.

This year, we will continue to offer student favorites, but mix in some new menu items as well. Our dinner rolls are all homemade this year by Mrs. Linda Larson (who is trying to bake ahead for us for when she is gone for her hip replacement in November), and we have been blessed by Mrs. Tracy's Knapp's yummy baked goods, all from baked from scratch. Look for more lower fat menu options (taste tested, of course, for quality), and more items made from whole wheat, which is consistent with our school Wellness Policy Goals. Salads are a big hit again this year with the middle school students...and are always an option for parents and guests to order in place of school lunch. We rotate seasonal menu items in to the menu for winter and spring...to keep things interesting for us and the students!!

Please feel free to call or e-mail us with questions, suggestions, or concerns. Thank-you for your continued support!



BOO!