



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 6

Roberta Harvey, Principal

Misty Hade, Assistant Principal

January, 2008

Dear Parents,

I want to share with you that during Catholic Schools Week, Jan. 27-Feb. 2, 2008, a regular presenter for the National Catholic Education Association, has been asked to return to St. Francis of Assisi School for a command performance. This time we want to give our parents the opportunity to listen to the common sense, no nonsense approach to education and life in general. Mr. Bob Lento, from Cherry Hill, New Jersey, will make you chuckle and affirm you with his message, "A Positive Parenting Approach." You won't want to miss him on Monday evening, January 28 at 7:00 P.M. Many thanks to our Home and School Association for sponsoring his visit.

*"Much is required from those to whom much is given,
for their responsibility is greater,"*

Luke 12:48.

This verse is one of many in the Gospels that challenge us to put our faith in action as followers of Christ. Middle School Students at St. Francis of Assisi will have the opportunity, beginning next semester to learn their religion standards and benchmarks through hands-on work in required service hours. Mark your calendars for Thursday, January 17 to attend a service fair from 8:45 – 11:00 A.M. with your middle school student to discover the many service opportunities available in our community. Not only will our students gain new insights concerning the needs of others, but they will grow in a faith community, working hand-in-hand for Christ. Stay tuned for more information.



Advent will soon draw to a close and the Christmas season will be upon us. What a wonderful season it has been! We have been

preparing busily for the coming of Christ in so many wonderful ways. We have enjoyed vocal and music concerts, our students and families have shown warm generosity by supporting our Advent Giving Tree, our school mission projects for the flood victims of Tobasco, Mexico, for our own St. Joseph's Emergency Shelter, our Parish Angel Projects, and other individual service projects too numerous to mention here! We also enjoyed visits from the Iowa Youth Chorus and the Hampstead Theatre Company who gave us a presentation of *A Christmas Carol*. And there is nothing better than the time we have together in prayer at our school-wide Advent services and liturgies!

We hope that in the planning and preparations you have been able to enjoy the gifts of the season. And if you haven't, please give a gift to yourself. Slow down, breathe, and put on some beautiful Christmas music. Enjoy the anticipation of Christmas celebrations with family and friends. Rejoice in the hope of salvation that only Christ brings!

From all the students and staff at St. Francis School we wish you a blessed Christmas and the happiest, healthiest New Year of all!

Peace,

Roberta Harvey,
Principal



NOTICIAS EN ESPAÑOL

by Mrs. Shelly Power

¡Feliz Año Nuevo!

Middle School students continue to take vocabulary quizzes each class (twice a week). Each list contains ten high frequency words. January words include student activities, family members, body parts, and physical and personality descriptions. Students will use these words to discuss their families and friends. Students do not have a text book for Spanish but should have a Spanish folder complete with all resources they need to complete any assigned activities. Your student should bring home his/her Spanish folder to study vocabulary.

Students have learned describe their classrooms and their daily schedule. In January students will discuss their favorite activities during the week, including using action verbs and sports vocabulary. Parents may remember learning verb conjugations in foreign language class as students. Your children will learn these concepts contextually, hopefully more than just: *I go to school, You go school, He goes to school, We go to school, They go to school!*

Students are expected to memorize one prayer per semester this year. In October students began class by repeating the Rosary in Spanish. November and December focused on the Our Father prayer. In January all middle school students will recite one memorized prayer individually.

Fifth grade students are learning words for school subjects and reviewing classroom words. Students will discuss their daily schedule and what they need for each class. Also, students will compare their day to that of a typical student's schedule from a Spanish-speaking country.

Third and fourth grade students continue to learn words for items in the classroom. They will play memory, match English and Spanish words, and describe items in the classroom by color or location. Students will create simple poems in Spanish describing their school and their classroom.

Second grade students continue to practice calendar and conversation vocabulary. Your child should be able to tell you the day, date, and weather for a given day. They should be able to ask you your name and how you are doing. Students will begin a unit on Mexico this winter. We will review physical features of the country and then focus on the Maya Indians of Mexico to complement the Native Americans unit studied in the second grade curriculum.

First grade students are able to respond to the greetings questions in Spanish, *¿Cómo estás?* and *¿Cómo te llamas?* Students are beginning to ask their teacher and classmates these questions as well. Students can recall numbers to ten and can say 11 colors in Spanish. Students can respond to simple math problems by showing the answer on their fingers. In January we will learn numbers to 31 as we discuss calendar concepts in Spanish. Students will learn to say the date, day of the week, and discuss the weather for a given day.

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 Espíritu Santo. Amén.



Book Nook by Mrs. Mary Head

Christmas greetings from the Media Center!

"...listening to other readers stimulates growth and understanding of vocabulary and language patterns."

We have been busy processing new books for circulation and are happy to report we have new shelves to put them on. The Saint Francis Home and School Association financed the acquisition of additional shelving for the young adult section of the library as well as the general fiction and picture book areas. Overcrowding on the shelves has been eliminated. The beautiful new shelves were made by Iowa Prison Industries. Many thanks to the Home and School Association for all the support they have given the library since our doors opened.

As always, I encourage you to keep reading aloud to your children – even when they are independent readers. Jim Trelease, in his book *The Read Aloud Handbook* says, "Reading aloud to children helps them develop and improve literacy skills – reading, writing, speaking, and listening." Trelease adds, "Since children listen on a higher level than they read, listening to other readers stimulates growth and understanding of vocabulary and language patterns."

Have a blessed Christmas. We are looking forward to seeing everyone in the New Year.

MIDDLE SCHOOL DANCE for Grades 7 & 8

January 18
Holy Trinity School
2922 Beaver Ave., DM
7-9:30 pm
\$6.00
School ID's Required

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK January 27-Feb 2, 2008

Catholic Schools Light the Way" will be celebrated January 27-February 2, 2008. This theme scores that schools really the Way" by a faith-based that supports child aca- and spiritu- students will the Way" to a brighter future through their leadership in our communities, government, businesses and families.



HAPPY NEW YEAR



ENRICHMENT by Mrs. Chris Joslin

Our school year is zooming! Middle School Mock Trial competition was later this year than usual, being held on November 20th. SFA was proudly represented by 4 teams who all did very well. It is a great compliment to our students as well as to our volunteer parent coaches! The 8th Grade team did score high enough to move on to the State competition that was held on November 29-30th. They did an excellent job but did not move on to the finals. Congratulations to all the teams and their members. It is an experience that will be well worth the effort in the future.

Our fourth annual SFA Geography Bee held its semi-final round on Wednesday, December 5th. Those students who competed were: 8th Grade: Chris K.; 7th Grade: Keaton B., Lincoln B., Brandon B., Paul G., Fielding M., Ross P., Shaun P., and Mitch S.; 6th Grade: Grant B.; 5th Grade: James C., Adam G., Zach G., Tom K., Mike Mc., Tom M., Parker M., and Connor S.; 4th grade: John H. The top ten finalists will compete on December 12th in the Media Center at 3:30 for the opportunity to represent SFA at the State Geography Bee in April. The winner will take a written test and it is sent to National Geographic Society for scoring. If his score is in the top 100 in the state he will be invited to compete at the state bee. Our top ten finalists were: 8th Grade: Chris K.; 7th Grade: Keaton B., Lincoln B., Mitch S.; 5th Grade: James C., Adam G., Zach G., Tom K., Tom M., Parker M.

4th Grade: On December 7, a professional theater group presented a version of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. To help our students understand the plot of the play a little more, a group of 4th graders presented a reader's theater version of the play. They did the reading to kindergarten-fifth grades with a special performance to the 7th graders. Student readers were: Sydney G., Samuel M., Emily H., Jake H., Rosie Mc., Steven L., Maggie T. and Jack M.

7th Grade: Mr. Southward and I are co-teaching a group of 7th graders as they discover architecture and technical drawing skills on a computerized program.

5th Grade: Social studies group is discovering the qualities of leadership that were apparent in our struggle for independence in the 1700's. We want to look at both sides of the issue as well as important persons from each side.

4th Grade: We will begin with pullouts in January as we work on a computer based problem solving quest as we explore how the hours of sunlight change over the course of the seasons.

3rd Grade: Pull out will begin in second semester. Mr. Southward is visiting classes each week to present logic problems for whole class enrichment. I will also be helping with their rain forest unit.

Newbery Book: We have explored what makes good books 'good' and are working towards developing our own rating system.

Research group: One group has narrowed their focus to how the changing weather patterns may endanger sea life and another group is working on the Civil War. I have also been doing whole class enrichment with first grade in their unit on land forms and in 7th grade on Shakespeare. If time allows I would like to have a group that would read more Shakespeare. In January, I will also be working with the 6th grade to develop their research projects on ancient civilizations.

The Photography Club is working on photo composition. I print off copies of one or two original works that demonstrate a variety of techniques. This month's photos represent a study in contrasts between minimal design with muted colors and with many details and bright colors. I post them on my window so please stop by to see what our Middle School students are doing in photography. Our goal is to have a sample of everyone's work to be displayed for Catholic Schools Week.

This season has Mr. Southward and I are working in many areas that are quite diverse. It is one of the joys of working at this school and with these students and staff. Not only are the students eager to learn but the staff allows us to share our work with other classes. It is a true gift!

Have a very peace-filled holiday! And thank you for all that you do for the school.

Reading Recovery/Reading Support

by Mrs. Mary Anne Conway

Supporting Writing at Home

Each day the Reading Recovery students spend some time writing. The writing component consists of the child composing and writing his/her own story. The child's sentence or story is then written on a sentence strip. Then the story is cut up and the students are required to reassemble the story. In order to reassemble this cut-up story, the students need to reread what they have written. Both the rereading and the reassembling strengthen the students' reading strategies.

Writing, like reading, should be a regular activity in our homes. Children need to know that writing is a valued activity. Therefore, writing needs to be a highly visible activity. Our children need to know that stories come from real people and are about real events. Some tips to help support writing at home are discussed here.

- Have your child keep a list of ideas to write about. To generate ideas, have your child think about home, their pets, favorite activities, friends, family and important dates.
- Talk through ideas with your child. Or talk to your child about something that happened that day or something special your child would like to talk about. Help your child discover what he/she wants to say by getting him/her to generate a story or sentence from the talk you just had.
- Once your child has decided what to write, let him/her repeat it several times to be sure of the wording.
- Have your child write the letters and/or words he/she can without help.
- Be a helper, not a critic when your child has difficulty spelling a word. Encourage him/her to say the word slowly in order to hear all the sounds.
- Then have your child write down the beginning letter sounds as well as any other letter sounds heard. Parents can fill in any missing or silent letters.
- For longer and more difficult words, simply write the word for the child in the sentence. Have your child reread the sentence after writing EACH word. This helps with remembering what word comes next.

When our children receive the right kind of support from us during writing, it makes the activity fun for both children and parents. Our children have so much to say! It's important for us to praise them for their efforts and emphasize their successes!

(Adapted from Family Involvement In Writing prepared by the Families and Reading Committee of the Keystone State Reading Association and from Supporting Writing at Home section from HomeLink-Home Activities for the Emergent Reader, Dominic Press Inc.)

Happy Reading and Writing!



MUSICAL NOTES!

K-5 Music News by Mrs. Lee Randall

The second and third grade had a beautiful concert on December 4th. I received many compliments, for which I am grateful. Please pass the good job on to your students as well, they worked hard.

Third grade students have begun preparing mass and will soon be starting recorders. Please fill out the form on the letter that has come home and return by January 7th so that we can have our recorders for class.

The fourth and fifth grade students have been working on Recorder Karate and are beginning to prepare our concert. The concert is February 12th at 7:00 p.m. It is right around the corner! Just as reminder that students need to dress up and should not wear jeans or shirts with large logos for the concert.

Middle School Music News by Sr. Vikki

Happy New Year! Can you believe we're beginning our second semester already? The year ended with beautiful reflections by our 8th grade students. I wish you all could have been in the room to share the musical reflections of Advent/Christmas done by the 8th grade. Their sensitivity and spirituality was evident in the pictures, music and text chosen for their reflection. I am really proud of them and continue to be a bit "awed" by them as well.

Seventh grade students had fun with Christmas carols and guitar chords. Of course, some were more challenged by the chords, but it was a bit less painful when we combined them with Christmas carols and songs of the season. Next they will be learning to play melodies as well as chords. That could prove to be a bit of a challenge for everyone but I know they'll dig in and meet their goal.

Sixth grade students shared delightful Power Point presentations they put together after researching Christmas carols, traditions etc. of other countries. They did a great job researching and organizing their material, inserting their music and presenting their final project. They did a superb job!

Our attention begins to turn to performance in this second semester. The sixth grade students have already been introduced to the music they will be performing in March. MUSIC AND ME is a mini-musical focusing on the various elements of music: melody, rhythm, harmony, tone color, dynamics. There are opportunities for solos & speaking parts as well as participating in the chorus. Look for a fantastic performance by our 6th grade in March as we celebrate Music In Our Schools month!