



# SUN TIMES

NEWS FROM SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI SCHOOL

WEST DES MOINES, IOWA

Vol. 9, Issue 8

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Misty Hade, Assistant

March 2008

Dear Parents:

Our blustery February is just about over and we can look forward to the promises of Spring. Ah, Spring! It can't come quickly enough for any of us, especially our children! Even though the weather has been particularly unpleasant this past month, it hasn't stopped us from working on our academic goals! We have been mastering math facts, learning about life during Shakespeare's time, and studying mythology. We've traveled to the *Des Moines Register* to learn about publishing a newspaper, and learned about the business world through Junior Achievement's "Biz City". Not only did we continue our love of Christ through liturgy and song, we've grown closer to him through sacrament preparation and prayer. We've even managed to squeeze in some good-natured fun with our Valentine's Day parties and ice-skating a la Mr. Hazel. One thing is for certain, every day at St. Francis Schools focuses on learning and enjoying the process along the way for both students and staff. One just can't help loving this place.

It was great seeing so many of you at parent-teacher conferences. Even though the weather outside has been confining, it was wonderful to see everyone so upbeat and positive. We always enjoy touching base with our families and sharing student growth and development.

While you were still enjoying time with your children on Monday, Feb. 25, St. Francis teachers gathered for a productive professional development day. The morning was dedicated to a review of our Social Skills curriculum and what skills will be targeted for the rest of third quarter and all of fourth quarter. We also discussed the importance of students learning these



social attributes as important life skills, community enhancement skills, and personal development skills. We spent time on our technology planning and curriculum development. Discussion centered around

our scaffolded plan for instructional skills and using software appropriate to each grade level. We also visited a great deal about the interactive whiteboards we have been investigating and formed a recommendation for the technology committee. The rest of the morning focused on school-wide academic language by the literacy teams (language arts, science, and math), as well as the development of key vocabulary in the related arts curriculum. The morning was topped off with teachers working on curriculum mapping updates. Our afternoon learning centered on differentiated instruction presented by Ms. Lori Pearson, AEA 11 Schools Consultant assigned to the Diocesan Schools. Our teachers became the students who were part of a classroom project on the Presidents of the United States. We learned new strategies for lesson design, classroom management techniques, and assessment development. It was a great day and feedback from the teachers was positive. Now that is a good thing!

I hope your Lenten journey finds you growing closer to our God, and in turn, with your loved ones. Remember, you are always welcome to attend our services. May the Lord show us the path of life and fill us with joy in His presence during this church season.

Kindest regards,

*Roberta Harvey*





# ¡Noticias en español para marzo!

**Middle School** students have been viewing short interviews of young people shot on-location in Spanish-speaking countries. The interactive videos help students practice concepts taught in class and assess their comprehension. Students should be able to describe themselves and others using personality and physical descriptive words. Students participate in partner activities during each class period to practice asking and responding to questions in Spanish.

Students should be able to ask and respond to:

¿Cómo eres? (What are you like?)

¿Qué te gusta hacer? (What do you like to do?)

**Your student should bring home his/her Spanish folder to study vocabulary. The vocabulary lists are also on the school's web site under Grade Level/RA News.**

**Fifth grade** students will review places in the community this month and later concentrate on market-places. Students will learn what items are sold in markets and learn to barter for goods. Students will use numbers to 100 and directional phrases.

**Third and fourth grade** students will learn about communities in Spanish-speaking countries. Students will learn names for places in a city and what community helpers there are in each place. Students will locate places on a map using directional terms.

**Second grade** students continue to study the Maya of Mexico to complement the Native Americans unit in the social studies curriculum. Students learned where the Maya lived, about their daily life, and compared Mayan culture to that of Iowa. In March students will practice basic math facts using the Mayan number system and learn what foods were central to the Mayan way of life.

**First grade** students continue to practice numbers to 31 as we discuss calendar concepts in Spanish. Students should be able to say the date, the day of the week, and discuss the weather for a given day. Students should be able to describe weather for any given month. In March we will discuss what clothing is needed for different months.

**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.*

**Are you looking for a way to get involved at St. Francis?**

**Consider sharing your time as an officer for St. Francis Home & School Association!**



*Positions for 2008-2009 are:*  
 President-Elect  
 Treasurer (2 year commitment)  
 Recording Secretary  
 Corresponding Secretary

*Any parent with a student at St. Francis School is eligible. No previous Home & School experience is necessary*

Contact Kara Pollpeter at [pollpeterj@msn.com](mailto:pollpeterj@msn.com) or 327-1254



## Book Nook by Mrs. Mary Head

The media center is pleased to announce that \$1,792.57 was donated on our "100<sup>th</sup> Day of School" celebration! Wow! – what a wonderful windfall for our library. Thank you to all students and parents who participated in this fun day.

Third grade students have been researching the rain forest and rain forest animals. This authentic use of the media center gives students the opportunity to use the table of contents and index of nonfiction books, discover information in encyclopedias, take notes, read and organize information and then write what they've learned in their own words, while citing sources.

Second grade has started an animal research project that will incorporate many of those same skills at an age appropriate level.

The sixth graders researched the ancient civilizations of the Aztecs, Mayans, Incas, Romans, Greeks and Chinese.

Fifth grade students are discovering the differences between fables, myths, and legends and are reading examples of each to round out their genre logs. Fourth grade students covered historical fiction and have moved on to science fiction and biographies.

Think spring!



# HAPPY EASTER!

# Reading Recovery/Reading Support

by Mrs. Mary Anne Conway

## Taking Words Apart

Proficient readers are able to take words apart, on the run, while reading. Using what they know about how words work, readers can make analogies, connecting the unknown to what they already know (stop + play = stay). If sounding out is used, it is better to sound out with chunks that work together. It is much more efficient to work with word patterns or rhyme levels than at the individual letter level.

In a study of second graders' reading behaviors, Betsy Kaye discovered the following about proficient readers:

Proficient readers **do** demonstrate the following actions:

- Attempt to read the words
- Work through the word from left to right
- Use many different kinds of word parts on the run
  - \*Multi-syllable units
  - \*Syllables
  - \*Root words
  - \*Compound word halves
  - \*Onset-rhyme

Proficient readers **do not** demonstrate the following actions:

- Sound out words letter by letter
- Appeal for help before trying to make an attempt
- Stop at the new word and fail to make an attempt
- Skip the difficult word and continue to read on to the end of the sentence

We can ask readers the following questions to help them use what they know to get to something new:

- What do you know about that word?
- What other words do you know that could help you?
- Did you look all the way through the word?
- Do you know another word that starts like that one?
- What chunks do you see in that word?
- Do you know a word that has that word pattern and might rhyme with this one?

You might want to write down one of the child's known words to help with the reading of the new word. Once the known word is written, ask:

What part of this word can help you with the word in the story?

You might have the reader underline the helpful part and make the sound of the underlined letters. Then, have them return to the sentence and try it again, making the same sound. (*Behaviors of proficient readers appeared in the session, Taking Words "A-part, Ap-art, Apar-t" While Reading by Betsy Kaye at the 2008 National Reading Recovery Conference*)

Happy Reading & Happy Writing



## MUSICAL NOTES!

*Middle School Music News by Sr. Vikki*

*Our Middle School students are definitely in performance mode and it won't be long before we share with you the fruits of our labor.*

*Sixth grade students are putting the finishing touches on their mini-musical, MUSIC AND ME! This program is filled with musical numbers that involve the students in learning about the various elements of music with songs that are fun to sing! How can you beat that? Please mark your calendars and plan to join in the fun Tuesday, March 11<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 P.M. You'll be glad you came...and so will we!*

*In addition to this performance, students in the Middle School Chorus will perform with Middle School choruses of our Catholic Schools on **March 26<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 P.M. at Dowling Catholic High School**. Members of the Dimensions Show Choir, under the direction of Jodi White, will rehearse and perform with these choirs as well as perform selections from their own repertoire. Students will participate in afternoon rehearsals, share dinner together and then perform! It's sure to be a fun experience for all.*

*Seventh grade students have finished their guitar unit by composing and singing the Blues. You just can't study music in February without learning more about musical styles important to Black History. The seventh grade did a great job learning the 12-Bar Blues format. In fact, many went beyond what I asked by adding the bass guitar and even harmonica to make the whole experience even more authentic. What a great job they did!*

*Eighth grade students are surveying the history of the American Musical. It's hard to find people who don't enjoy some aspect of Musical Theater whether it be on Broadway or in a film version. The students have traced the development of Musical Theater from its early beginnings to the evolving styles of today. Individual groups are designing a Broadway Musical Theme Park to demonstrate some of what they have learned in a fun and creative way.*

*However, the best way to learn about any music is to perform it and the seventh and eighth grade will join their musical talents together to bring some of our favorite Broadway tunes to life on stage for you! They are reading through the music now and will soon be trying out for various solos from these wonderful shows. May 13<sup>th</sup> marks the date for this exciting evening.*

*A special thanks to many of our eighth grade students who volunteered their talents in making our CSW liturgy a meaningful prayer. What a wonderful way to "give back" to our loving God who has given us so much. Thank you!*

## MUSICAL NOTES!

*K-5 Music News by Mrs. Lee Randall*



The fourth and fifth grade just finished a great concert. We are now brushing up our recorder playing and music reading skills. We hope to complete our recorder unit just before spring break.

The third grade has been working hard on reading notes and playing their recorders. Most students have already passed their first two recorder belts.

Second grade students are in the process of preparing for their upcoming masses. They have been learning about form in music. Our form “sandwiches” and “cakes” will be displayed in the music room.

The first grade is trying to solve the mystery of who has “Lucy Locket’s Pocket”. They will be singing, playing instruments, and creating their own words to solve this mystery.

Finally the Kindergarten has been exploring fast and slow as well as rhyming words. We will be doing a dance to “A Hunting We Will Go.”

Mi ddl e School Dance  
Fri day, March 28  
St. Theresa' s School  
7: 00–9: 30 pm  
\$6 admi ssi on



## ENRICHMENT by Mrs. Chris Joslin

This past month has been a busy one. I have begun working with two third grade groups exploring the Amazon rainforest. One group is researching medicinal plants and the other is making a diorama of a Yanamano tribe's environment.

In fourth grade two groups are beginning a Mystery Tour of the world using hours of sunlight as clues. They will be learning about photo periods and latitude and longitude. Fifth grade is regrouping after an exciting visit to Biz City that unfortunately was cut short by inclement weather. Sixth graders are working on ancient cultures and I was able to work with two groups, one on Skara Brae, a mysterious pre-historic site on the Scottish island of Orkeny; the other on Australian aborigines whose culture had remained unchanged for millenniums until very recent times. That group also took up the challenge of a hands-on exploration of aboriginal art. We ground our own pigment, made it into paint, and created animal paintings using a variety of implements, including their own fingers. Two of the group entered a National Geographic contest based on their experience.

Seventh grade continues to build bridges that will be tested for weight strength. The world's record is over 500 lbs on a 40 ounce, 15 inch long balsa wood bridge. We are not looking to set records, but to test the students' design ingenuity and building acumen. They have already identified problem areas by building bridges on a computer program. They know that the Joslin-asymmetrical bridge style is not very efficient nor is the One-Use disposal bridge.

I was also able to meet with three groups of 7th graders to read Shakespeare's "Macbeth". The students learned by reading the script aloud. We discussed and learned new vocabulary as well as some of the history of the original Macbeth, an actual king of Scotland. We also learned how it related to King James I of the Scotland and England, who was king when it was written. We finished in time for the eighth grade Shakespeare Faire. The students are now creating Macbeth Newspapers in their language arts class and I remain a source of information for them.

The Shakespeare Faire was held February 15th in the Parish Hall. The eighth graders were divided into groups that would present information about Elizabethan times. There was a royal court and William Shakespeare presented two excerpts from his plays. (A little license was taken as the one play, Macbeth was not written until after her death.) I was able to prepare the sixth and seventh graders for their attendance at the fair, especially in the etiquette when meeting the queen as well as give background information to the eighth graders to get them started.

Art Club and Photography club are meeting on Mondays and are preparing works of art for the hallways.

Future City continues to progress on their model building and hope to be finished by spring break.

National History Day students are working on a variety of submissions for the regional competition in March.

**Order your school supplies for  
next year by March 15th.**



# The Lunch Line

by Mrs. Jeannine Laughlin and Mrs. Barb Wisnieski



Third, fifth, and seventh graders were able to hear about good nutrition as a part of the Health Fair on February 14<sup>th</sup>. Third graders were educated about the Food Guide Pyramid; fifth and seventh graders heard about portion size distortion, the importance of starting out their day with a healthy breakfast, and about making good fluid choices (milk, juices, sports drinks). In this month's packet, a Good Breakfast Shopping List is included as a communication tool between students and parents about healthy breakfast items they would like to have on hand at home. Please print one out and share it with your student(s).

We have started recycling our plastic milk containers and are using this project as a means to get students to drink their milk. So far, students have been very receptive to finishing their entire milk before they toss the container in the recycling bin (We have had very few tears over "unfinished" milks!!)

Along with encouraging your child to finish their milk, please remind your child of the importance of finishing his/her hot or cold lunch. According to Iowa State Bureau of Nutrition Programs, plate waste (food thrown away) is greater in affluent communities. In the School Lunch Program, we strive to provide nutritious meals with foods that we feel appeal to most students...students are responsible for what and how much they eat at lunch. Please ask your student(s) about how much they eat of their hot or cold lunch, and partner with us to educate them on the importance of good nutrition during their school day.

A couple of newsworthy items about school lunch....

Spring might not be officially here, but in March, we will begin our Spring Cycle menu items. Again, many items are the same (what month is complete without chicken nuggets?), but we are adding seasonal selections to shake things up a bit. Spring salads for middle school and visitors will also start this month...

**We appreciate our volunteers!!** Please make sure you check the volunteer schedule for the day(s) you are to be helping in the cafeteria. We know how busy life gets and how easy it is to miss your date...but when we don't have enough hands in the cafeteria, it effects the amount of time it takes us to move students in and out of the cafeteria.

As you know from grocery shopping for your family, the cost of food has increased dramatically in the past year due to a number of factors (cost of transportation, agricultural issues, etc.) Next school year, we will be increasing the cost of school lunch to reflect these higher food costs.

Due to increasing number of students to feed next year, we will be going to four lunch periods for the 2008-2009 school year to accommodate additional kindergarteners eating lunch.

That's all for now....hang in there!! Spring **has to be** right around the corner!!

## GOOD BREAKFAST SHOPPING LIST

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Could you please buy the following foods to have on hand for breakfast? Thanks!

Love,

\_\_\_\_\_

Choose 1 item from GROUP 1....Breads, Cereals (whole grains are best!!)



\_\_\_ bread (whole wheat is best)

\_\_\_ bagels, English muffin

\_\_\_ pancakes (microwave/homemade)

\_\_\_ waffles (toaster/homemade)

\_\_\_ whole grain cereal (Crispix, Mini Wheats, Cheerios...)

High fiber is best...sticks to your ribs!!

\_\_\_ oatmeal

\_\_\_ granola or breakfast-type bar

\_\_\_\_\_

Choose 1 item from Group 2....proteins (Lowfat is best!)



\_\_\_ lowfat milk (1% or skim are best!)

\_\_\_ lowfat yogurt (flavors I like best:\_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_ cheese (string, sliced American, other:\_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_ egg (cooked anyway)

\_\_\_ low fat sausage

\_\_\_ peanut butter

\_\_\_\_\_

Choose 1 item from Group 3.....fruits/vegetables



\_\_\_ 100% fruit or vegetable juice (type:\_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_ fresh fruit (about ½ cup) (I like these:\_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_ frozen fruit (unsweetened is best!)

\_\_\_ raisins, craisins, or other dried fruit (a few tablespoons will do!)

\_\_\_\_\_