



SUN TIMES

NEWS FROM SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI SCHOOL
WEST DES MOINES, IOWA
VOLUME 10, ISSUE 8

PRINCIPAL, ROBERTA HARVEY

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, MISTY HADE

Dear Parents-

You have been hearing and reading articles in the *Des Moines Register* about the Iowa Core Curriculum that will be implemented in all public and accredited non-public schools in the state of Iowa. The high school plan needs to be written before July 1, 2010. The Des Moines Diocese will write a K-12 plan before that date and will begin implementation of the plan before the 2012 implementation date for high school and the 2014 implementation date for K-8.

The Iowa Core Curriculum is about teaching and learning. Its vision is to ensure the success of every student in the state and that all students will be prepared for a world of work and life-long learning. The Core Curriculum will provide the core concepts and skills all children in the state of Iowa should experience. It also provides teachers with ways to integrate the Core Curriculum into the classroom and beyond. The ICC has five areas for implementation: Literacy which incorporates reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing; Social Studies; Math; Science; and 21st Century Skills.

Parents might ask themselves, "How will ICC benefit our children?" It is the hope of the Department of Education and all educators that the Iowa Core Curriculum, will ensure students understand big ideas and that they will move beyond superficial knowledge into deeper understanding of concepts. It is believed student engagement in interesting and relevant learning experiences will be enhanced. It will provide more rigorous learning opportunities and promote formative assessment of children that will create clearer communication with parents on what students know and are able to do. And lastly, the ICC will promote learning through application of knowledge.

The benefits listed above are not foreign to us at St. Francis School. We have and are still striving to make learning experiences more relevant with applications for understanding the big picture, larger



concepts than just the world of the classroom. We are still developing formative assessments that are clear and accurate for informed decision-making in the classroom. Language Arts and Math Literacy skills have been emphasized and carefully addressed in this school since its very beginning in 2000.

We look forward to working with other Diocesan schools to align, assess, and develop curriculum that will better prepare our children. The Iowa Core Curriculum team consists of fifteen educators plus the Diocesan Schools Office who will write the Iowa Core Curriculum plan. Then each school will adjust the plan according to their individual development of assessments, professional training, and progress in differentiation, technology instruction, literacy, etc. This same team will also assist in creating professional development opportunities for the Diocesan teachers.

I'd like to thank the Diocesan Office for their help and support with this project. If you need further information, go to: <http://www.corecurriculum.iow.gov/Home.aspx>

We are already in the fifth week of Lent. Our school-wide Lenten services centered on the theme, "Renew your life...come walk with Jesus." has helped us all make this holy time more meaningful and prayerful. It is one of the greatest gifts that Catholic schools can give to their students, staff, and families. Please join us for the Good Friday Stations of the Cross presentation at 2:00 P.M. presented by the 6th grade students. It will be a truly moving experience as we share Jesus' last walk to Cavalry—the walk that saved us all.

May our Lenten journeys continue to stir within each of us a desire to love and serve Christ more deeply.

Peace-

Roberta Harvey



ENRICHMENT

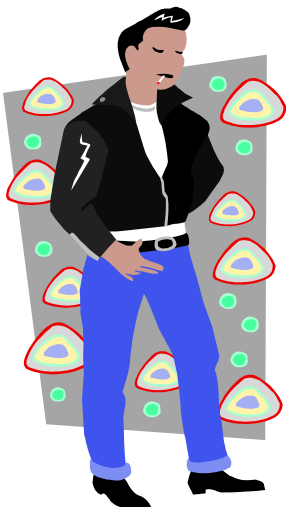
by Mrs. Chris Joslin

For this year's final trimester, I find myself "enriching" the minds of the **eighth** graders and find them a delight. Of course, as I write this I have had them for exactly one day—I hope at the end of May, I can say that the experience has been a positive one for all of us! My ultimate goal is to increase their cultural literacy, encourage them to be open-minded and aware of the many opportunities around them which can expand their knowledge base, as well as prepare them for high school. They should all be able to tell you that this will not be an "ordinary" class.

For the past few weeks I have worked with **first** and **third** graders on increasing presentation skills through the use of poetry. By mid-April, these students will switch to Technology, while **kindergarten** and **second** graders will begin Enrichment. Our focus will also be on poetry in preparation for the POETRY ALIVE program that is to be held on April 23rd. I will also be coordinating a poetry contest in April for all students in grades 2-8.

In **fifth** grade, we have begun our study of Japan. This unit was highlighted by our guest speaker, Yoko Tanaka, who explained Japanese writing (kanji). After she shared the basic facts with the students, they were able to use authentic ink, paper, and brushes to create their own copies of basic words. Ms. Tanaka also presented the same lesson to the **seventh** graders as a conclusion to their study of Japan. **Fifth** grade will take a short break from Japan to host a smaller version of the annual Can-struction project. This will allow more students to be involved in the design and creation of structures made from the can goods that are collected and donated to the DMARC Food Pantry.

In early April, eight students will represent SFA at the regional **National History Day Competition** with documentaries on Pete Seeger, James Jordan, and Cecil Stoughton. That same week, Lincoln Banwart will represent SFA at the state **Geography Bee** at Drake University. They have all worked very hard and I wish them well. Finally, **DCHS speech contest** practice began on March 25th. The competition will be held in early May.



SCRIP JEANS DAY

APRIL 28TH

**PURCHASE ONE HY-VEE COUPON BOOK
FOR EACH CHILD DURING THE WEEKS OF
APRIL 13TH AND APRIL 20TH
TO BE ELIGIBLE.**

Reading Recovery / Reading Support

By Mrs. Mary Anne Conway



Sound Boxes

During the writing component of our Reading Recovery lessons, sound boxes, also known as Elkonin boxes, are used as a supporting framework to teach the students how to hear sounds in words. Students are taught to hear sounds in sequence by connecting the slow verbal stretching of a word's sounds to the simultaneous pushing of counters into boxes, one for each sound as it is heard.

The goal is to teach the process of hearing sounds in words. This includes slow articulation, having the students listen to themselves, and pushing counters into boxes. Teaching the students how to hear sounds in words involves several steps.

Stretching the word out into its sounds/phonemes has to be introduced to the students through teacher demonstration and modeling. Students are asked to repeat the slow, phoneme-by-phoneme articulation. They are asked to "Say it slowly." At first, just picture cards are used.

The next step includes the use of boxes for hearing the sounds in words. Again, students receive a teacher demonstration that shows how the sound boxes are incorporated into the process. As each sound within the word is articulated, a counter is pushed into one of the drawn boxes.

Early on, the responsibility for stretching out the word and pushing the counters into the appropriate box is a shared task with the students. The students practice articulating the word slowly while the teacher pushes the counters into boxes. Then the teacher articulates the word slowly while the student moves the counters into the boxes.

When students become proficient with using sound boxes, they will then shift to using letter boxes. This helps students move from hearing sounds in words to matching those sounds with appropriate letters. Before students make the shift to letter boxes, they will need to know how to listen for sounds, how to find letters for recording those sounds, and how to find the beginning sound and move through a word's sounds in sequence.

(Sound Boxes information adapted from Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals, Part Two, by Marie M. Clay, Section 7 (72-77) & The Reading Teacher December 2008/January 2009, Using Sound Boxes Systematically to Develop Phonemic Awareness by Patricia A. McCarthy Pages 346-349)

Parents can also support writing at home. When your child has difficulty spelling a word, the following steps can be used:

- Have a blank piece of paper available.
- Have your child say the word slowly.
- Have your child write down the beginning letter sounds and any other letter sounds heard.
- Parents can then fill in any missing letters.

In writing, children need to learn to listen to themselves say the unknown or difficult word they are trying to write and ask themselves if they know another word that sounds like that.

Happy Reading & Happy Writing

Musical Notes by Mrs. Lee Randall

Here's an update on the latest activities in music:

Kindergarten: We are preparing for the Informances which will be held on May 6th.

Mrs. Crandell's class: 1:45 pm

Ms. Townsend's class: 2:15 pm

Mrs. Howard's class: 2:45 pm

The location is yet to be determined, so stay tuned.



1st grade: Mrs. Curtin's and Ms. Murphy's classes will begin preparing for Mass on May 8 and May 15. First grade is also working on solo singing, reading music on the staff, percussion family sounds. They are also learning to play mallet instruments, such as xylophones.

2nd grade: Ms. Waters' class will be preparing Mass for April 24th. Additionally, the second graders are studying instrument families, composing melodies, and learning about folk dance.

3rd grade: The third grade is currently working on various recorder skills. When we finish up with this unit, our focus will turn to folk dancing.

4th grade: We just finished our concert—great job! We will now be working on recorder skills, viewing the musical *The Music Man*, singing in two parts, studying a few composers, and folk dance. As you can see, we have many things to cover over the next several weeks.

5th grade: This group also did an amazing job at our concert. I appreciate your hard work! During the next weeks we will view the musical *Oklahoma* and finish our recorder unit. We will also be learning basic guitar skills and studying composers as we finish out the year.

One additional note: Fourth and fifth grade students will be participating in an African drumming workshop and April 14th and 15th. The fourth grade has class on Tuesday April 14th and the fifth grade has class on Wednesday April 15th. The drums are placed between students' knees for playing, so please dress accordingly—**skirts or skorts are discouraged for this activity**. In preparation for this unique opportunity, the students will view a video and also receive extra instruction on drumming in the coming weeks.

Holy Week Activities

Stations of the Cross: Friday, April 10

Easter Sunday: Sunday, April 12

Easter Monday—No School: Monday, April 13



EIGHTH GRADE CONFIRMATION



SATURDAY, APRIL 25 AT 1:30 PM:

LAST NAMES L-Z

SUNDAY, APRIL 26 AT 1:30 PM:

LAST NAMES A-K

Lunch Bites

By Mrs. Jeannine Laughlin
and Mrs. Linda Larson



Happy spring and Happy Easter! We hope you all had a wonderful spring break and a great St. Patrick's Day. The menu for the month of April includes some old favorites, **(the students will be happy to know the school-made Mac and Cheese is back!)** as well as some new items like the Rib Patty on Bun. This is very similar to the McRib sandwich at McDonald's and comes with barbecue sauce. Encourage your kids to give it a try!

This month we would like to focus our newsletter on fats, cholesterol, and discretionary calories in our diets. Most Americans need to decrease their dietary intakes of saturated fat and much need to decrease their intake of cholesterol to reduce the risk of heart disease. When reading food labels, be sure to choose foods that have the least amount of "saturated fat", "trans fat", and "cholesterol" per serving listed on the Nutrition Facts label. Avoid using processed meats such as sausage, bologna and salami. **Try this:** Serve grilled, skinless chicken breasts instead. Limit certain bakery products like doughnuts, pies, cakes, cookies and crackers which may contain saturated fat and trans fat. **Try this:** Purchase fat-free or low-fat milk and yogurt and omit butter and cream in sauces. Try herbs and spices to add more flavors without the fat.

Did you know? The USDA has reduced or eliminated saturated fat and cholesterol in commodities (food schools order through the government food program). Shortening and butter are no longer available. Processors now use lean meat in place of skin and fat in processed poultry products. Schools are able to order lean meats and poultry items, part-skim mozzarella cheese and other reduced-fat cheese through the commodity program. This makes our job easy as we are able to offer more nutritious products to the students at reduced costs.

Oils are fats that are liquid at room temperature like vegetable oils used in cooking. Oils come from many different plants and from fish. Most oils are high in monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats and low in saturated fats. Use oils in small amounts. Did you know most Americans consume enough oil daily in the regular food they eat? Once again, make sure to check the nutrition labels to find foods, like margarine, that have zero grams of trans fats.

In planning and preparing meals for yourself and your family remember to stick with foods from the food groups, cut the fat in your diet, use oils sparingly, and remember to read food labels. For more information, check out the website (where the information above is from) at www.mypyramid.gov.

Gym Shorts

by Mr. Mike Hazel
& Mrs. Mary Beth Scott



April brings warmer weather, which we are all looking forward to. It also brings the one unit Mrs. Scott and I are asked about all year--rollerblading! Easily the biggest crowd-pleaser and most anticipated activity of the year in PE, rollerblading is back. We will be doing this activity in all grades except Kindergarten. We have a new feature with it this year too, wrist guards. Wrist guards will be supplied for all students.

As always, you are encouraged to protect your child from injury by supplying them with helmets (a bike helmet works perfectly) and pads. Mrs. Scott and I will happily lock and store the gear for your child for the duration of the unit, we just ask that all gear is well-marked or in a marked bag. Another great tip for safety is to encourage your child to wear an extra pair of socks on PE days to prevent sores or blisters around the legs. At the very least, be sure they wear something longer than ankle socks those days.

Lastly, for parents of students in grades 1 through 3, we would love for some volunteers to help us assist the kids in getting their skates on and off. This really saves time and increases the activity time for the kids. Please give Mrs. Scott or Mr. Hazel an email if you'd like to help.

On a final note--April is marks the beginning of baseball season! Enjoy opening day!!

BOOK NOOK

BY MRS. MARY HEAD



St. Francis students are looking forward to a school visit by Poetry Alive! on April 23rd. Poetry Alive!

brings poetic enrichment to schools across the country by presenting a program of poetic performance. The Poetry Alive! actors have memorized hundreds of poems—from the classics to the popular and the contemporary. The poems are presented in engaging and memorable ways, bringing poetry to life for students. In preparation for their visit, I have been sharing poetry with the students during story time. We thank the Curriculum Enhancement Committee for planning and making this program available to us as well as enriching our library with some beautiful new poetry books.

Fourth grade students visited the media center to research reports about U.S. Presidents. They practiced taking notes in their own words, gathering information from books and encyclopedias, as well as accurately referencing the sources of information used. Sixth grade completed their fable, legend, and myth unit and are moving on to reading and writing poetry.

Finally, I'd like to extend a quick reminder that there are no fees for overdue books, but if a student has three or more books that are past the due date, they will not be allowed to check out until books are returned. Thank you for cooperation and understanding!

Middle School Music

by Sr. Vikki Slickers



Our month begins with the MS Chorus attending the Show Choir workshop at DCHS. The Dowling Dimensions Show Choir, under the direction of Jody White, will participate in a Show Choir workshop with MS students participating in chorus in our Diocesan schools. Students will rehearse songs and choreography combining all into a wonderful performance with members of the Dowling Dimension Show Choir. The workshop/concert will be on April 1st with the concert at 7:00 P.M. The concert is FREE and open to the public.

April 14th and 15th our MS students, along with students in 4th and 5th grade, will have a wonderful cultural experience with Fonsiba Koster. The workshop is entitled: African Drumming and Culture

Fonsiba's creativity and teaching skills are never more apparent than during her residency programs. She spends each day meeting with individual classes, giving them first-hand experience playing the African hand-drums. Students are thrilled to play the drums and discover how much fun it is to make music the "tribal way". Every class learns a genuine African polyrhythm containing 2 – 6 rhythmic parts played simultaneously.

Fonsiba sends each school her documentary video, "Gifts from Mother Africa", for all the students to watch before she arrives. This video documents Fonsiba's trip to West Africa, where she lived with an African family of drummers and drummed with them at traditional weddings. Students love this video, and it provides a good cultural background for the drumming.

Fonsiba also brings her African Home Display, which contains many household items used by a typical West African family for all to view. Special thanks to Stacie Palmer and our Enrichment Committee for another cultural experience we're sure to remember!

Last, but not least, mark your calendars now for our 7th and 8th grade performance of '*ROCK ON!*' on May 7th at 7:00 P.M.

First Eucharist Rehearsal will be held on Wednesday, April 29
At 5:15 pm and 6:45 pm

