



SUN TIMES

NEWS FROM SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI SCHOOL
WEST DES MOINES, IOWA
VOLUME 10, ISSUE 6

PRINCIPAL, ROBERTA HARVEY

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, MISTY HADE

Dear families-

The School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC) is off to a productive start. Thanks to the energetic and experienced leadership of chairman, Bill Havecost, we have plotted our course and have begun rolling up our sleeves to accomplish tasks.

Our mission statement:

"The St. Francis of Assisi School Improvement committee proactively identifies and reviews major areas of student and school development, achievement, and need. The Committee accomplishes its mission by:

- ✦ assessing accomplishment of long range goals;
- ✦ providing recommendations for future development and success; and
- ✦ ensuring mindful stewardship of limited resources."

Our committee decided as a team to focus our studies in the areas of parent satisfaction, middle school success, and communication. We have identified data sources that will be beneficial in helping us make informed decisions. As areas of need arise for the future growth and improvement of our school, the SIAC committee will submit a formal document with recommendations to the Board of Education this spring. The committee will meet monthly to share work assignments, study newly gathered data, and plan the next strategies needed for successful accomplishment of our mission.

We are grateful for the commitment of the following members: Jolene Lensing, Gail Koerner, Peggy Greenfield, Tom Mallisee, Tricia Hoffman, Brian Wagoneer, Sarah Harmeyer, Mary Head, Kerry LeWarne, Pat Berrie, Megan Weisenhorn, Mike Caliguiri, Lisa Donnelly, Julie Schraeger, Misty Hade, and Roberta Harvey. Students represented on this committee are seventh graders



Katherine W. and Tom B.; eighth graders
MacKenzie L. and Nick F.

The celebration of Catholic Schools Week has been most enjoyable, especially with this year's theme: *Catholic Schools Celebrate Service*. Thank you to all our families for supporting our two large service projects for CSW '09. The gifts to the day care center of the APIF Orphanage in Guatemala will be accepted gratefully, and our local hospitals will lovingly share the new and gently used books with patients and families! Thank you for your generous response to our call to serve others. May we continue our united efforts to serve and support those less fortunate in Christ's name.



We hope your children have enjoyed the other fun festivities this week. Jeans Day, Pajama Day, and "Fun in the Sun" Day seemed to be big hits with all our K-8 students. The concluding all-school mass on Friday reminded us of our Catholic school mission and goodness. If by chance you were unable to attend the CSW Pep Assembly on Friday afternoon, be sure to ask your students how they liked it!

Recently, a good friend shared her appreciation of this school, staff, facilities, and community with me. Are we perfect? *No way*. Do we have all the answers? *Definitely not*. Do we strive to do our best using our resources, time, and energy to the best of our ability? *ABOSOLUTELY!* We are dedicated to the Catholic education of children at SFA and will continue to work hard to improve services, communication, and student success and satisfaction. We know that we can because we see the cup as half full, not half empty. We will continue to be successful, all in the honor and glory of His name!

Blessings and peace to you all-

Roberta Harvey

REGISTRATION FOR THE 2009-2010 SCHOOL YEAR WILL TAKE PLACE DURING PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17 FROM 4:30—8:00 PM
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19 FROM 11:00 AM—7:00 PM

****Please bring your prepared registration form
(found on the SFA Website or in this packet)
and be ready to pay Registration Fees.**



Musical Notes by Mrs. Lee Randall

Another big THANK YOU goes out to those of you who gave gifts over Christmas. Each gift is appreciated, and they made my day!

ELEMENTARY CHOIR – Any third, fourth, or fifth grade student is welcome to join the elementary choir. We meet on Mondays and Wednesdays at 7:45 am. This group will be performing at the fourth and fifth grade concert.

Kindergartners greatly enjoyed performing at Mass last week. We will continue to practice using voices and beat-keeping skills in preparation for our Informance in May. I will have more details regarding the date and time of the Informance in the coming months.

First grade is reviewing rhythms and learning about new pitches and how to read them on a three line staff. Second grade is beginning to prepare for their homeroom Masses. Additionally they have been learning about musical form.

Third grade is learning new recorder notes and about performing in canon. A canon is when two or more groups sing/play the same song starting at the same time. Fourth and fifth grade have been working on more complicated canons and are beginning to prepare for our March 10th concert. More details on this concert to come!



Reading Recovery / Reading Support

By Mrs. Mary Anne Conway

Learning About Words and How Words Work

Early on, first graders need many opportunities to read and write words they know. They can use their "known" words to help them learn new words. They need lots of practice, in a variety of ways, in order to learn new words effectively and efficiently. Students' lessons are designed to help them acquire a group of high-utility words that will be useful to them in both reading and writing.

Children participate in many activities involving "word work" during their lessons. Some of the activities focus on syllables in a word. Children learn how to point to a word with more than one syllable while reading a sentence. They also practice saying words slowly and "clapping" the syllables as they learn to hear how many syllables are in a word.

Practicing "known" words is important. Children learn how to locate "known" words in reading and writing as well as recognize and read common words quickly, without hesitation.

We participate in activities with rhyming words because children need to hear word endings and be able to tell if they sound the same, or rhyme.

Children use magnetic letters to learn how to construct new words and how to take them apart. Once a new word has been assembled with magnetic letters, they are asked to say it slowly. Then they're asked to look at the word in order to SEE the first part, middle part and last part. Letters are jumbled (but are still kept right side up) and the child is then asked to make the word and read it. This process of jumbling of letters, making the word again, and saying the word is repeated several times with the SAME word until the child is able to do it quickly in left to right sequence without hesitation. *(above information adapted from HomeLink – Home Activities for the Emergent Reader, Dominic Press, Inc. 1997, pages 47-81)*

While it is easiest for children to learn new words in the context of reading and writing, there are appropriate times for attending to words in isolation. In Literacy Lessons Part Two, Marie Clay makes the following statement: "The child should learn about constructing words and taking words apart in many places in his lessons. The aim of this work with words in isolation is to have him know about how words work and be able to use this awareness while reading texts and while writing *(page 138)*."

End of First Round Reading Recovery Lessons

Congratulations to the first grade Reading Recovery students who recently completed their series of lessons. Each of them made considerable progress in reading and writing!

Many thanks to those parents who had children participating in the Reading Recovery Program at Saint Francis. Your at-home support contributed greatly to your child's success! Thank you for listening to your children read their books and for watching them assemble their cut-up sentences.

Before deciding which first graders will participate in the Reading Recovery program during the remainder of the school year, the Observation Survey tasks need to be administered. The results of the Observation Survey assessment and teacher recommendation are carefully considered as we determine which students will be invited to participate in this early intervention.



STRIKE UP THE BAND BY MR. RICK PURVIANCE

St. Francis of Assisi band students are busy preparing for the Diocesan All-City Band Festival, which will be held on Monday, February 16th.

There will be three separate grade level bands. During the afternoon all of the 5th graders will rehearse at Sacred Heart, the 6th graders at St. Pius X, and the 7th and 8th graders at St. Theresa. Parents will pick up students at the separate schools following their afternoon rehearsals.

The concert will be presented that evening at Vet's Auditorium downtown at 7:00 p.m. Students will need to be at Vet's Auditorium by 6:20. Included in the concert will be the two Dowling Catholic High School concert bands. Over 500 students will be participating in this event.

BOOK NOOK BY MRS. MARY HEAD



We have enjoyed some busy days in the library as students engage in research and become independent in finding books in the card catalog and on the shelf.

Third grade students have started practicing looking up titles, authors and subjects in the card catalog, writing down call numbers, and locating the book on the shelf.

Third grade students have also 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 - citing sources - in their own words.

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

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

Fourth grade students focused on historical fiction in January and are looking forward to reading some fantasy or science fiction in the month of February.

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!



That's Amore!

Saint Francis Gala and Auction
Saturday February 14

Visit www.stfrancisgala.org to order tickets and get involved!

Lunch Bites

By Mrs. Jeannine Laughlin
and Mrs. Linda Larson



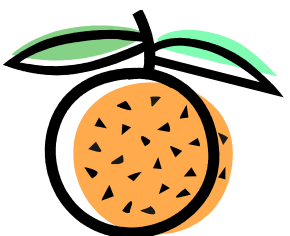
Welcome February.....spring is just around the corner. February is American Heart Month, Canned Food Month, National Cherry Month and, best of all, Chocolate Lover's Month! Take some time to enjoy all of life's pleasures this month. And, remember, dark chocolate is **Heart Smart**.

We are in the process of auditing the accounts of families who participate in auto deduct. If you are running a large balance, we will contact you and you will have the option to decrease your auto deduct amount for the remainder of the school year. We are also going to be sending letters home to those families who have had a balance below zero twice within this school year. You will be required to use auto debit as your form of payment for hot lunch. Thank you for your cooperation with this matter.

Check out the menu for the month of February. We are having International Week which was the fabulous idea of fifth graders Hannah F. and Lindsey C. Each day will consist of a favorite food or foods from another country. We have some old favorites and some new items. Give them all a try!

Our nutrition information for this month is "Heart Smart". We want to give you a list of foods that can do wonders for your heart. Include them in your regular diet and reduce the risk of clogged arteries, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure.

- 1) Almonds: toss a handful on your morning cereal or yogurt, or mix them with raisins to nibble on during the day.
- 2) Apples: Pectin in apples binds itself to cholesterol so it can't circulate to your arteries.
- 3) Garlic: All forms of garlic reduce cholesterol and prevent blood clots.
- 4) Grapefruit: It's a nutritional bargain. One half has just 40 calories and lots of heart-healthy nutrients like vitamin C and folic acid. Add to a seafood salad and enjoy!
- 5) Olive oil: Toss olive oil into fresh greens, drizzle it over warm pasta, or use it as a dip for bread. When olive oil takes the place of saturated fats (such as butter) cholesterol levels lower and blood pressure may improve.



Continuing with the list, oranges, oats, and brown and wild rice all help keep your heart strong and in top working condition. Spinach, salmon, and tomatoes can all be added to your diet to reduce cholesterol, lower blood pressure, and reduce the risk of heart disease.



Middle School Music

by Sr. Vikki Slickers

January has come and gone so fast hasn't it? Our music classes are very active these days.

Eighth grade students are focusing on American Musical Theater: its historical development and key elements. Our study began in an active way as students turned a children's story into a musical format. Nothing like "active participation" to learn what all is involved in this art form.

Seventh grade students are tracing the development of Rock from its beginnings in the early 50's to the many styles of today. Students are teaching each other about the important musicians, performance styles and music of each decade as they research and present their findings in class.

Sixth grade students are actively involved in their study of Jazz and Jazz musicians as they prepare their mini-musical performance of **WE HAZ JAZZ!** This is a great show filled with performers and songs highlighting various elements of JAZZ as we know it. Please join us Thursday, February 26th at 7:00 for **WE HAZ JAZZ!** Note: this is a change of date. Given our snow days, I thought it best to move our performance date.

A big thank you to our MS Chorus for leading our music for both CSW liturgies. I'm so proud of them and appreciate the sharing of their time and talent.

Ash Wednesday
February 25, 2009

All-School Liturgy
at 9:00 am



Please join us!



**End of 2nd Trimester is
Friday February 27.**

**Report Cards will be sent
home the following
Friday.**

ENRICHMENT

by Mrs. Chris Joslin



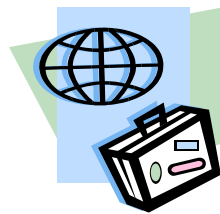
Kindergarten: We just finished with a lesson on Kwanzaa, an African-American celebration that is held from Christmas through New Year's. I will continue working with small groups during classroom centers.

2nd Grade: I am working with the students to expand their knowledge of habitats. We are looking at the six that they are studying (pond, ocean, arctic, savannah, desert and rainforest) via Google Earth. We have had an interesting time looking at sand dunes along the Nile and dense forests along the Amazon. We have discussed the need for the snowy owl, arctic fox, and arctic hare to change colors in winter and summer as camouflage tactics...but what about those polar bears? Ask your second grader!

4th Grade: We finished our unit on Japan with a short quiz. I was very happy to see that most of the students now have a better understanding of Japan but most importantly, the respect that the Japanese give their teachers. Ask your student to show you the proper way to greet a teacher. I love it when they remember to greet me this way in the hall too and not just in the classroom.

5th Grade: I look forward to starting a new session with the 5th graders. I will be in their classroom each week for 30 minutes. I hope to challenge these students with a take-home question each week. They will be responsible for some internet research or logic problem-solving exercises.

7th Grade: Will end this trimester with a study on poetry. We have looked at the life and times of William Shakespeare in conjunction with the 7th grade Language Arts unit. We will be looking at writing in iambic pentameter, writing some haiku, and finishing with some geographically influenced poetry of American poets, Carl Sandburg and Robert Frost.



Wednesday—Tea with Agatha. On Wednesdays after school, a small group of 8th graders are meeting to discuss Agatha Christie's work and the genre of mystery writing.

Christmas Cards to India: Working with Ms. Nennig, the Middle School collected used Christmas cards to send to a Catholic school in India. The students helped to box up the cards and rosaries to send off. This is part of their service to those in need around the world.

Other international connections: Sixth graders received letters from students in China and sent letters to our partner school in Uganda. Recently some 3rd graders took it upon themselves to send more letters to Uganda! It is amazing what students can do with a little encouragement!



Guidance Corner

by Mrs. Julie Heckle

First, I want to thank all of you for generous gifts and kind wishes this Christmas season. It is truly a blessing to work in a setting where I can share my faith with such wonderful people. I hope all of you had a joyous Christmas and were able to relax over the break.

The following is an overview of the topics we are currently studying in guidance and the units we will cover during the month of February.

Kindergarten

- The students have been learning to identify a variety of feelings and practicing how to handle feelings appropriately. We will be learning and practicing the following problem solving process: Stop (calm down), Think (what is the problem), and Brainstorm (think of ideas to handle the problem).

1st Grade

- We are reviewing the skills it takes to be a good student, through the "PAL" study skills program: Pay Attention, Always Work Hard, and Listen Carefully. We will then move on to conflict resolution skills.

2nd Grade

- Through the adventures of Barney Bear the students are learning the importance of good work habits: Listening carefully, Asking if you don't understand, Working quietly & carefully, and Doing your best. Next, we will spend time exploring careers.

3rd Grade

- We read the book "Don't Pop Your Cork on Monday" and the students learned about stress and how it affects all of us. We discussed the difference between good stress and bad stress and practiced relaxation techniques to help ourselves calm down and deal with stressful situations.
- During the month of February, we will watch a video series on conflict management, in which the students get to take an active role by being detectives and helping to solve several conflict cases.

4th Grade

- The students are learning to consider the perspective of others as we learn and practice conflict management skills. This unit will continue throughout the month of February.

5th Grade

- 5th graders completed a self discovery activity in which they were asked to complete a fill in the blank letter to themselves, explaining what causes them stress, identifying symptoms and reactions to stress as well as listing positive ways to deal with stress.
- Accepting individual and cultural differences will be our next unit of study.

8th Grade

- We are continuing the "Adolescent Life Skills" program with presenters from EFR. During the month of January we have covered the following topics: Dealing with Anger and Anxiety, Bullying and Harassment, and Alcohol Use and Abuse.
- We will be addressing human growth and development topics during our last few lessons in February. Look for more information in upcoming 8th grade newsletters.