



SUN TIMES

NEWS FROM SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI SCHOOL
WEST DES MOINES, IOWA
VOLUME 10, ISSUE 7

PRINCIPAL, ROBERTA HARVEY

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, MISTY HADE

Dear St. Francis Families,

Wow! I am truly amazed that March is just around the corner. We have had a busy month with the All-City band festival, "Biz"town, sixth graders preparing for their musical, and parent-teacher conferences. Teachers are also preparing for the end of the second trimester and the sending home of progress reports. Even though we only have one trimester left and spring is around the corner, there still is a ton of learning to do and many fun activities at SFAS. We hope you will continue to encourage your children to do their very best at school during the months ahead.



and looked at policies currently in place at Saint Francis. For example the act states that students in grades K-5 will have physical education a minimum of two times per week and in grades 6-8 a minimum of 120 minutes week. Currently our K-5 students have physical education twice a week and our 6-8 students attend class two times per week for 45 minutes with 3 minutes of counted travel time.

Another area that is mentioned in the policy and is being addressed is parent communication. At the beginning of the year parents received information about providing healthy snacks and birthday treats for the classroom. As part of our wellness policy, the information is also included and is listed below as a reminder for all.

- *The school will encourage parents to pack healthy sack lunches and snacks and to refrain from including beverages and foods that do not meet nutrition standards.*
- *The school will provide parents with a list of foods that meet the school's snack standards, and suggestions for non-food related items for celebrations, birthday treats, rewards, and fundraising activities.*
- *The committee feels strongly about this initiative and will continue to develop the action plan for the investment of promoting a healthy life-style at any age.*



On February 25th we celebrated Ash Wednesday as a school and are now in the beginning of the Lenten season. Our theme this year is "Renew your life...come walk with Jesus." Each week the students and teachers will focus on a theme and add a new symbol to their classroom bulletin board. During Lent we will have weekly all-school Lenten Prayer Services, and will conclude Holy Week with Stations of the Cross at 2:00 PM. The first week of Lent, we are fortunate enough to have Fr. Bob Gielow with us for our parish mission. He will be preaching at all the weekend Masses on February 28th and March 1st, as well as Monday, March 2nd through Thursday, March 5th at 7:00 PM. What a wonderful way to begin our Lenten journey and grow closer to God!

On July 1, 2009, the state of Iowa will implement the Healthy Kids Act for all schools. We have been proactive in our efforts to implement the act by establishing a wellness committee. The committee developed the Saint Francis Wellness Policy which coincides with the Healthy Kids Act. The policy was presented and approved by the Board of Education in January, and the committee is now meeting to develop an action plan for implementation of the policy.

As a committee, we studied the state requirements

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to the education of your child. May we continue to grow in God's love and we proceed along this journey together.

Peace to you and your families,

Misty Hade

Misty Hade, Assistant Principal



ENRICHMENT

by Mrs. Chris Joslin

At the end of the second trimester, seventh grade's unit on Japan and poetry will also come to an end. This unit has covered literary devices, rhythm, and voice. We spent several days discovering the joys of choral reading and after a few tries most 7th graders might be able to do a stanza or two of the "*Charge of the Light Brigade*" from memory. It was really interesting to hear the "...cannons to the right of them, cannons to the left of them..." all booming in middle school style. We will tie up poetry and our initial unit on Japan by reading and writing haikus. In early March, a guest speaker will put an authentic touch to the poems with some Japanese kanji writing.

In fifth grade, we started with a short unit on Google Earth. I have encouraged students to download it for free onto their home computers so they can use what they learn in school at home. We will also study Japan and Japanese customs. This will include a guest speaker who will explain the Japanese writing system and styles.

Second grade will finish with a short look at matter as it is manifested in volcanic activity. We will pay particular attention to Mt. Redoubt as it is warming up and is predicted to erupt soon!

Kindergarten will finish their enrichment unit by looking at extraordinary animals, especially the platypus. During our time together we explored some interesting stories of real animals who have formed lasting relationships with other animals. Ask your kindergartener about these relationships, such as Jessica the hippo and her owners.

Be sure to support our students in their many endeavors: Technology Fair, SAT vocabulary videos, and sixth grade's production of "We Haz Jazz"! Mrs. Nitzel, Sr. Vikki, and myself are thrilled to see the students pursuing enrichment opportunities. Also coming up in March is the conclusion to National History Day.

In early March I will begin teaching eighth grade. I look forward to this experience as I have been working with several great groups of eighth graders for history research and discussion. In addition to spending their extra time in research, they have also volunteered to help the first grade penguin technology projects. I know the first grade teachers and Mrs. Nitzel will be grateful their assistance. I look forward to this opportunity for our older students to be good role models for the younger ones.

Middle School Music

by Sr. Vikki Slickers



Good News! Spring is around the corner! The past two months have been so busy, I can hardly believe we are already into March, and our final Trimester.

February had great musical moments beginning with the sixth grade performance of WE HAZ JAZZ. What a fun lesson on Jazz styles and the musicians who made them great. Congratulations sixth grade! You were AWESOME!

Seventh grade students were busy researching the different decades of Rock Music. They have uncovered styles, performers, and songs we all have long forgotten....or not! As we head into March student groups will present their findings in class. One of my favorites has been to watch the groups who have focused on the evolution of dances throughout the decades. I can't wait to see these reports presented—costumes and all!

Eighth grade began their unit on Broadway. Their first assignment was to take a familiar story and turn it into a musical to demonstrate their understanding of the key elements found in each musical. You would have enjoyed the various performances, complete with live instrumental music for some. What a treat! Add to that creative backgrounds, puppets of all kinds, and creative scripts, and you have really fun classes.

Both seventh and eighth grade students were privileged to participate in a workshop given by R.J. Hernandez. Mr. Hernandez took the students on a tour of Mexico with a focus on the rhythms used in the various areas of Mexico. He brought his guitar and other instruments for the students to join him and actually play some of his musical examples.

March will be busy for both seventh and eighth grade as they begin work on the music for their Spring performance, ROCK ON! This 30-minute revue takes us back to some favorite songs and dances of earlier days in the history of Rock & Roll as well as some more recent favorites. Please plan on joining us for our May performance. Rest assured it will bring back some fun memories.

Our Show Choir is also busy preparing music for the Show Choir Workshop to be held at DCHS on April 1st. This group is so full of energy and talent. I am grateful to them for sharing their talent in many of our special Liturgies as well. They're a fantastic group and I look forward to every Tuesday and Thursday morning!



Reading Recovery / Reading Support

By Mrs. Mary Anne Conway

Reading Recovery students are learning what it means to be a good reader; they have important jobs as readers during their lessons.

Reading has to make sense! If what the reader is reading doesn't make sense, then it is the reader's job to attempt to figure out what was wrong.

Good readers catch most of their mistakes by listening and thinking about the story while reading. Often children know that something they said didn't make sense. Sometimes they just keep on reading, expecting a teacher or parent to stop them if they're "wrong". Students are learning that it's their job to self-monitor and try something to fix their mistakes. Other times, a child might stop and wait at difficulty. If they wait, they are asked to think about what is going on in the story and then start the word again.

Another job students have is to be active readers. Reading Recovery students learn how to fix their mistakes and what to do when they are stuck on a word. Their job as an active reader involves trying the following at an unknown word:

- o Look at the picture.
- o Think about the story.
- o Reread from the beginning of the sentence.
- o Look for what is known about the problem word.

As students do their job of looking for what is known about the problem word, they are encouraged to look for word parts or "chunks" they know. Their job is to say those known word parts. It is beneficial to use the largest known part(s) rather than isolating letter by letter.

Following the rules of directionality to read from left to right is another job for students. Reading from left to right is important when students come across words with identical letters, but different ordering of those letters (examples: stop/spot; from/form). When students read the wrong word, they are asked to reread the sentence and look at the letters from left to right in the problem word, while saying the word.

Respecting the author's words is yet another job students have in Reading Recovery. They know that we only read the words the author has written. If students do begin adding words, deleting words or changing words (examples: Mama/Mother, shop/store or kitten/cat) they are reminded to respect the author and read only what they see on the page.

Reading is hard work and students have many jobs during the course of their lessons. They need our love and support as they work through the tricky parts in their reading. The comments that we make at home and school let our children know that we recognize their effort. It is important that they know that we are aware that they are becoming good readers and we are proud of them!

Happy Reading & Happy Writing

Mark your Calendars!



March 2:
3rd Trimes-
ter Begins

March 6:
Report
Cards Sent
Home



Middle School Dance
Friday, March 6
St. Theresa's School
And
Friday, March 27
Holy Family School

7:00-9:00 pm
\$6 Admission
School ID and Appropriate
Clothing Required!

Musical Notes by Mrs. Lee Randall

Fourth and fifth graders are very excited to share their news skills with you at our **March 10th** concert at **7 p.m.** Please remember that our concerts are an authentic assessment of Standard 6 which highlights a student's ability to show good concert etiquette as a performer and audience member. The **Elementary Choir** (3rd, 4th, and 5th) will also be performing at the concert. Our students really appreciate the ability to show the skills learned in class, so please take advantage of our presentation!

As a reminder good audience / performer guidelines include:

- Listening (not talking) during all parts of the performance.
- Participating as requested.
- Turning off cell phone and watch alarms.
- Sitting and listening to the other portions of the concert.



Students, please dress up for our concert!

Girls: Dresses or skirts at the knee or longer, or dress pants.

Boys: Dress slacks or school uniform-style pants, button up shirts or polo shirts.

Both: Absolutely no jeans or denim. Shirts should not have any large writing or logos larger than the SFA logo. Wear sturdy shoes that will not get caught on the risers (heels and flip-flops are somewhat dangerous). You do not have to wear dress shoes. Any shoes should be in good shape and clean (no holes, etc.)

Finally, please note that Ms. Neugent's second grade class will lead school Mass on Friday, March 6th.

Gym Shorts

by Mr. Mike Hazel
& Mrs. Mary Beth Scott



Physical Education is an integral part of the total education of every child in Kindergarten through twelfth grade. Quality physical education programs are needed to increase the physical competence, health related fitness, self responsibility, and enjoyment of physical activity for all students so that they can be active for a lifetime. Physical Education programs can only provide these benefits if they are well planned and well implemented.

Improved Physical Fitness: Improves children's muscular strength, flexibility, muscular endurance, body composition, and cardiovascular endurance.

Skill Development: Develops motor skills, which allow for safe, successful, and satisfying participation in physical activities.

Regular, healthful physical activity: Provides a wide-range of developmentally appropriate activities for all children.

Support of other subject areas: Reinforces knowledge learned across the curriculum. Serves as a lab for application of content in science, math, and social studies.

Self Discipline: Facilitates development of student responsibility for health and fitness.

Improved Judgment: Quality physical education can influence moral development. Students have the opportunity to assume leadership, cooperate with others, question actions and regulations, and accept responsibility for their own behavior.

Stress Reduction: Physical Activity becomes an outlet for releasing tension and anxiety and facilitates emotional stability and resilience.

Strengthened peer relationships: Physical education can be a major force in helping children socialize with others successfully and provides opportunities to learn positive people skills. Especially during late childhood and adolescence, being able to participate in dance, games, and sports is an important part of peer culture.

Improved self-confidence and self-esteem: Physical Education instills a stronger sense of self-worth in children based on their mastery of skills and concepts in physical activity. They can become more confident, assertive, independent, and self-controlled.

Experience Setting Goals: Gives children the opportunity to set and strive for personal, achievable goals.

(National Assoc. for Sport & Physical Education, 2002)



We here at St. Francis strive to have a quality physical education program. Currently the Kindergarten through third graders have been working with the parachute. The benefits of the parachute are working on upper body strength, coordination, and team work, besides a great amount of fun! Fourth graders have spent time playing pirate ball and basketball. Fifth graders experienced volleyball and basketball. The upper grades have played volleyball, hockey, and focused on fitness. We will be doing dance and bowling in the near future.

Gym Shorts, continued

Statistics

1. Since the 1970's, the prevalence of obesity has more than doubled for preschool children aged 2-5 years old and adolescents aged 12-19 years, and it has more than tripled for children aged 6-11 years. At present, approximately nine million children over six years of age are obese.
 2. In 2000 it was estimated that 30 % of boys and 40% of girls born in the US are at risk for being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes at some point in their lives.
 3. It has been estimated that about one-third of overweight preschool children and one-half of overweight school-age children will remain overweight as adults.
- Physical inactivity and poor nutrition practices are second only to smoking as the leading preventable cause of death among adults in the United States.

What can we do?

Here at St. Francis we have a wellness committee that is working to ensure that our kids are getting the information and the opportunity to take care of themselves. We have looked at our lunches, snacks, recess time, PE time, and how our health curriculum is being addressed.

What can you do?

1. How much exercise is your child getting? How much is your family getting? Sign your child up for a recreation activity, join a health club, take the family dog for a walk, etc.
2. What kinds of meals are being served and what is in the snack pantry? Try to prepare simple healthy meals, especially with the limited time that many of us have. Limit how much junk food is consumed by what you buy and put in the cupboard. They can't eat it if it's not there.

Are you talking about it?

(Stats were from the Center of Weight and Health, UC Berkley, 2001 & The Institute of Medicine of the National Academies – Focus on Childhood Obesity)

First Eucharist Retreat For Parents and Students



Sunday, March 29
1:30 pm and 3:30 pm

BOOK NOOK

BY MRS. MARY HEAD



The media center is pleased to announce that \$1,760.13 was donated on our "100th Day of School" celebration! Wow! What a wonderful windfall for our library. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all students and parents who participated in this fun day.

Students from Kindergarten through second grade have been working to distinguish fiction from nonfiction and define which areas of the media center house them. Learning that fiction books are shelved by the first letter of the author's last name has helped students become more independent in locating fiction books.

As you know, I am a big proponent of reading aloud to children even when they can read themselves. It increases vocabulary, widens background experiences, extends listening and comprehending abilities, and expands their capacity to relate to the environment. Occasionally, when a child asks a question involving the text, make a point of looking up the answer in a reference book. It greatly builds a child's knowledge base and also teaches library skills.

You may also enhance the value of a book by "bringing the author to life." "Google" the author's name, find their Web page, and read the information with your child. This helps children realize that books are written by people...not machines.

Happy Reading!

Guidance Corner

by Mrs. Julie Heckle



6th grade guidance will begin the first week in March and continue throughout the third trimester. The following is an overview of the topics we are currently studying in guidance and the units we will cover during the month of March.

Kindergarten:

The students have been practicing the following problem solving process. Make sure to ask them to tell you about the song they have learned: Stop (calm down), Think (what is the problem), and Brainstorm (think of ideas to handle the problem)

During the month of March, we will be talking about respecting differences in others and being proud of who we are.

out last week.

Guidance Corner, continued

1st Grade:

We recently finished our study skill unit with "PAL". See if your child can remember what each letter in "PAL" stands for.

The students are currently learning about the "I Care Rules" for working peacefully with others.

2nd Grade:

We just finished our unit on study skills. The students had fun reviewing these study skills with our "Barney Bear Bingo" game.

The students recently completed a "Career Interview" with a family member. Each student will share their interview with the class as we explore a variety of careers.

3rd Grade:

Students have learned a four-step conflict solving process through the video series "Les, Struggle, Conflict Sleuth". They are currently working on putting together a skit to show they know how to apply these steps to different conflict situations.

Making safe and healthy choices will be our next unit of study.

4th Grade:

Students recently designed and presented skits to demonstrate their knowledge of how to solve conflicts peacefully.

During the month of March, students will learn to identify signs of stress and recognize how they react to and deal with stress.

5th Grade:

Students recently learned the definition of prejudice and stereotyping. I did a short survey with them and many were surprised to find that they might be considered "prejudice" because they tend to form opinions about things without knowing all the facts. Make sure to ask your child about this survey.

In March, I will be talking with the students about communicable diseases, specifically AIDS. I will send out a letter detailing the specifics of this unit before I introduce it to the students.

8th Grade:

We have completed the "Adolescent Life Skills" program with presenters from EFR. During the month of February we have covered the following topics: alcohol use and abuse; abuse of prescription drugs; inhalants, marijuana and other illegal drugs; and the media's influence on substance use.

Eighth grade guidance will continue into the first week of March as we watch and discuss the DVD "Romance without Regret". For more information on this video please refer to the letter I sent out last week.

Think Spring!

