



SUN TIMES

NEWS FROM SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI SCHOOL
WEST DES MOINES, IOWA
VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2

PRINCIPAL, ROBERTA HARVEY

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, MISTY HADE

Dear Families-

Fall is upon us! The change in weather is a sign that summer has come and gone and we have returned to being busy with family, school, and activities. November is a time to reflect and be thankful for the good in our lives. How fitting it is to have already had parent-teacher conferences to use as a reflection of the wonderful success our students are having this year. Conferences were well attended and provided the teachers the opportunity to communicate with families about each student. We thank you for taking this time to be an active participant in your child's education.

Last school year I introduced you to the Iowa law regarding bullying and harassment. Since this law went into effect all schools are asked to keep data on reports of bullying/harassment in the following areas: physical attributes, real or perceived sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, and other. These reports are tallied in the following ways: unfounded, founded but no consequences, founded with less than or equal to 10 days out-of-school suspension, founded with greater than 10 days out-of-school suspension, or expulsion—founded with one or more full days of in-school suspension, and other. In our first year of data collection we submitted the following results to the Department of Education: 4 total unfounded reports- 2 in the physical attributes and 2 in the other; 10 total founded reports with one or more full days of in-school suspension- 4 in the physical attributes category and 6 in the other category; 41 other reports- 20 in the physical attributes category and 21 in the other category. The other reports resulted in a quiet lunch, card pulling, demerit, and/or detention. This year we will continue to collect data on any report we receive. If you hear of something at home please contact the of-



office in order for us to investigate the situation. Please remember that if we don't know it is going on we cannot stop it from happening.

Along with our new technology, Infinite Campus, and web-based progress reports, we have two teams working on initiatives to strengthen our school. The first initiative is Positive Behavior Supports. This is a year-long process where the team is trained on implementing PBS in the school to promote positive student behavior. We are attending monthly trainings with other teams from Holy Trinity, St. Augustin, and St.

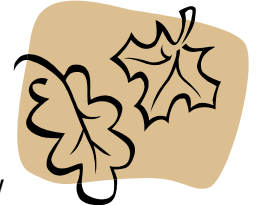
Theresa. PBS has allowed us to explore our plan that is currently in place and make it better for all involved. The second initiative is the Iowa Core Curriculum Leadership Team. This team will be attending six half-day trainings from October to April. By the end of the training we will have a plan in place on how we will implement the Iowa Core Curriculum developed by the state. For a kindergarten through eighth grade building the plan must be developed by 2012 with full implementation by 2014. Working on the initiative now will allow us to start the implementation process earlier in order to align our current standards and benchmarks with the Iowa Core Curriculum.

With so many things going on it is always a good idea to stop and take a moment to remember why we are doing all of this—to make St. Francis a dynamic school that holds education to the highest standard. I am thankful for the opportunity to be a part of this amazing place. I have been truly blessed to be somewhere where students come first and are supported by their parents and teachers. I thank you for allowing me to be here to share in the lives of your children.

With many blessings~

Misty Hade

Misty Hade



Home and School Association Meeting

Monday, November 17

7:00 pm



DON'T FORGET...



FALL BACK ON NOVEMBER 2ND!



Middle School Music by Sr. Vikki Slickers

What a busy, musical fall we are having! Our eighth grade students have been busy experimenting with **MUSICAL STYLE** and the elements they can manipulate to change one style to another. Besides listening and comparing different musical examples the students have taken a classical melody and changed the musical style by using the different voices, rhythmic styles, and chords on the keyboards. We've had some really different arrangements of 'ODE TO JOY'. I think Beethoven may be rolling over in his grave with some of them.

Our seventh grade students have just completed their unit on Native American music and have written their own chants using the same characteristics found in those of Native American culture. Students also made instruments appropriate for the culture and performed their chants as a tribe.

Sixth grade students have been reviewing their basic musical skills of reading and writing rhythms, pitch, and meter. We took a little time out from this task to use pitch notation to write Halloween stories. These stories were shared with some younger students to be read and also used to review their own pitch reading.

Last but certainly not least, I'm excited to share with you that our MS Chorus has more than doubled in size! Last January we began with eleven students. Two weeks ago, we started with 33. I'm thrilled with the response and hope it continues to grow in numbers and "spirit." Hopefully we will join forces with our MS Band and do some Christmas caroling in December. Watch for more information in our December newsletter!



Reading Recovery / Reading Support

By Mrs. Mary Anne Conway

Fluency and Phrased and Fluent Reading

Fluency is the ability to read "like you speak" in terms of rate, accuracy, expression and prosody. Prosodic features of oral language include juncture, pitch, and stress.

The National Reading Panel describes fluent readers using the following characteristics:

- Recognize words automatically
- Read aloud effortlessly and with expression
- Do not have to concentrate on decoding
- Can focus on comprehension

Descriptions of a non-fluent reader include:

- Reads haltingly
- Slow, laborious reader
- Uncertain about sight words
- Reads word-by-word
- Ignores punctuation
- Makes many errors

Readers become fluent by reading. Just setting aside time for independent silent reading is not enough. Findings in a study by Dr. Donald Langenberg found that in ten minutes of independent reading a fluent reader might read 2000 words while a struggling reader might read only 500 words. Even though equal practice time was allowed, results indicated unequal practice occurred.

According to the National Reading Panel, guided repeated oral reading has a significant and positive impact on word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension for students of all ages.

There are things we teachers and parents can say to help readers to problem solve while they read and to help them attend to fluency and/or phrased reading. Try using some of these statements and questions from Marie Clay, Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell:

Let's put this together. Read this much all together (cover part of the print to expose the phrase unit). Read it like this (model phrase units).

Are you listening to yourself? How do you think your reading sounds? Did it sound good?

How would you say that? Put your words together so it sounds like the way you talk. Make your voice show what you think the author meant. Make it sound like a story you would love to listen to. Make it sound like the characters are talking.

Read the punctuation. Make your voice go down at the end of the sentence. Change your voice when you see these marks on the page. Make your voice go up when you see the question mark. Take a short breath when you see the comma (or the dash). Use emphasis when you see the exclamation mark.

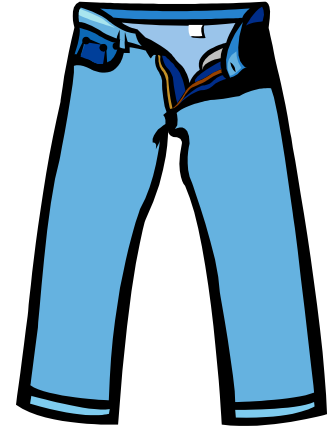
(Above information was taken from sessions at the 2008 National Reading Recovery Conference: Increasing Fluency in the Classroom Through Five Research Proven Strategies presented by Joe Cline and Fluency and Fluent Responding presented by Yvonne Rogriguez, Ph.D. & the National Reading Panel website. Prompts for attending to fluency are from Guiding Readers and Writers: Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy by I. C. Fountas & G. S. Pinnell (2001) page 352 and Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals by Marie Clay in the section "A collection of prompts for reference", page 205).

Happy Reading & Happy Writing

Scrip Jeans Day

Monday, November 24th

**Purchase Scrip anytime between
November 1st and 17th for your
jeans day pass**



ENRICHMENT

by Mrs. Chris Joslin

November will bring the end of our first trimester. For grades K-5, this means that Mrs. Nitzel and I will swap grades for Technology and Enrichment. Mrs. Nitzel will begin the week of November 17th with first, third, and fourth grades. I will begin at that time with Kindergarten, second, and fifth grades.

First trimester for first grade concludes with a short study of Korea. This was previously the focus for this age group in the Columban Fathers' Mission program. I decided to continue this tradition in Enrichment as I recently participated in a study tour of South Korea. The students learned about traditional food and dress (the *han bok*) and the Korean flag.

Third graders have been looking at the world using Google Earth. We will complete our letter writing to a school in Uganda to tie together units on Friendly Letter Writing and Citizenship. We will then prepare a CD of information about our school to send to them.

In fourth grade, we have also been looking at the world using Google Earth with a focus on latitude and longitude. We will finish with a unit on Japan, as this was previously the focus of the Columban Fathers' Mission for fourth grade. This unit will also tie in with their unit on volcanoes.

The sixth grade students and I will conclude our study of Asia. We have studied India, China, South Korea, and Japan. The students have learned about these countries and their unique contributions to the world. We have focused on the use of primary resources as well as making connections to the rest of the world. One of our activities that incorporated some Language Arts skills was a project in which the students wrote a friendly letter to other students in China.

There are several extra-curricular opportunities for students at St. Francis. Currently, we have 45 middle school students who will participate in the regional Mock Trial competition in early November. Another ten students are preparing for National History Day, and twenty students who meet bi-monthly for Art Club to perfect their photography skills. This will culminate with a photography show for Catholic Schools' Week in January. Additionally, I have begun working with small groups of fourth and fifth graders. Our project will be to plant tulip bulbs that will be used as a science experiment in the spring.



Middle School Dance
November 21, 2008
St. Francis of Assisi School
7:00-9:30 pm
\$6 admission

Another Enrichment opportunity for students at SFA
Information provided by the Belin-Blank Institute at the University of Iowa.

New analyses have shown that students who participate in talent search have improved academic performance. This is true for those who only participate in the above-level testing; however, when that activity is combined with educational activities that promote talent development, the effect is even greater.

An important tool for discovery of academic talent is the Belin-Blank Exceptional Student Talent Search (BESTS). We are excited for the opportunity to serve gifted students throughout Iowa and around the U.S., both those who have been discovered and those who have yet to be.

We've provided some basic information about BESTS below. If you want to know more or have questions please go to www.education.uiowa.edu/belinblank/talent-search/ or call 800-336-6463. You may also contact Mrs. Joslin at cjoslin@dowling.pvt.k12.ia.us.

What is BESTS?

*An academic talent search.

What is an academic talent search?

*A testing procedure that discovers academic strengths for talented students.

How does a talent search work?

*Tests designed for older students are administered to younger students.

*This is called above-level or off-level testing.

Who qualifies?

*Any student in grades 4 through 9 who has at least one score in the 95th percentile or above on a core subject of a grade-level test, such as the ITBS.

What tests are given?

*Students in grades 4-6 take the 8th grade EXPLORE test from ACT, Inc.

*Students in grades 7-9 take either the SAT from the College Board or the ACT from ACT, Inc.

What happens after a student tests?

*The Belin-Blank Center provides a comprehensive interpretation of scores with a customized report for each student.

*Parents are not required to share the scores with their school, but they are strongly encouraged to do so.

*Students are eligible to attend weekend and summer courses at the Belin-Blank Center.

What does it cost?

*Test & registration fees are \$58 for EXPLORE, \$63 for the ACT, and \$78 for the SAT.

*The Belin-Blank Center is committed to providing services to all who qualify - fee reductions are available for families who demonstrate financial need.

*All our BESTS services are free to schools.

Lunch Bites

By Mrs. Jeannine Laughlin
and Mrs. Linda Larson



October flew by and we hope you all had a great Trick or Treat! In October we participated in the vote to choose our favorite school lunch....as of this going to print, it looks like "Pete's Pizza" is winning by a landslide! Thanks for voting and thank you for participating in school hot lunch.

Thanks to all of you who will be taking advantage of the auto debit payment program. This program will be such a convenience for you the payers, and us, too. We are still in the process of getting our on-line balance access and auto e-mails set up. Infinite Campus and report cards have a higher priority so we are waiting until the Technology man-power is done with that and then we can focus on the lunch part of our new systems!

In October we tried several new menu items, with varied results. Cheeseburgers proved to be extremely popular, even though just a handful of students had asked for them. We are also using several more whole-grain products in our program this year, which is one of the things the government is pushing. So far they have met with success here, so thank you for trying them!

The menus for National School Lunch Week were planned by the officers of the School Nutrition Association. They do this every year, and all menus are planned to meet the dietary guidelines, so really are beneficial for us to use. This is where the idea for "Vote for School Lunch" came from. We think the students really liked it, especially since this is an election year. Even though Pete's Pizza won, there were many more votes for Petunia's Pita Pocket than had been anticipated.

National Pie Day is just around the corner on November 21. In honor of that we are having Pumpkin Pudding (like a pumpkin pie without the crust). We hope everyone will enjoy this fall treat.

On a closing note, don't forget Veteran's Day. Be sure to thank a Veteran for their service and sacrifice to our country. We also want to wish everyone a great Thanksgiving holiday weekend!



BOOK NOOK

BY MRS. MARY HEAD



Thank you to everyone who shopped at the Scholastic Book Fair during conferences. Once again, you helped make this important fund raiser a great success.

This year we made a profit of \$2,300. The money will be used to purchase new books for our library.

Each homeroom took part in "Book Fair Bingo." This activity highlights books available at the fair. The winner of Book Fair Bingo this year was Mrs. Doyle's fourth grade. The prize was \$50 in books from the fair for the classroom library.

Along with those who purchased books, I want to thank the many, many volunteers who helped set up the book fair, organize the bingo activity and run the cash registers, and the very helpful school staff who helped dismantle it. Your help is greatly appreciated.

We are looking forward to making our new books available to our students!

Enjoy the Thanksgiving holiday!



Musical Notes by Mrs. Lee Randall

Please mark your calendars for the First grade music informances on Thursday, November 6. The location is yet to be determined.

1:45—Mrs. Curtin's class
2:15—Mrs. Murphy's class
2:45—Mrs. Gaul's class
Hope to see you there!