



SUN TIMES

NEWS FROM SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI SCHOOL
WEST DES MOINES, IOWA

PRINCIPAL, ROBERTA HARVEY
VOLUME 10, ISSUE 1

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, MISTY HADE
SEPTEMBER 2008

St. Francis Families,

It is hard to believe that September is upon us! The summer has flown by and now we are beginning to settle into everyday routines. Thank you for welcoming me back for another year with your children. I am excited to inform you of a new journey I will be making this year. At the end of last year Mrs. Harvey and I decided that we could serve the staff better if we split responsibilities even more than we did last year. To that end, it was decided that I would be spending part of my time upstairs in the Middle School. We were able to move Ms. Shull to the classroom between Mrs. LeWarne and Mrs. Wallace. This had two purposes; one, it gave Ms. Shull the space she needed to serve several students at one time and second, it allowed me to have an office space and be more accessible to staff and students.

As most of you know we lost a wonderful Spanish teacher during the summer. Mrs. Harvey and I searched high and low to find the right fit for our school and our students to no avail. This does not mean the search is over; however we needed to make the appropriate changes to the related arts schedule in order to serve the students the best way we can. We felt it would be in our best interest to use the staff we have to the best of their ability and have come up with a way to do this in our current day. Mrs. Nitzel, Technology, Mrs. Joslin, Enrichment, and Mrs. Heckle, Guidance, will be working with all grade levels this year. Mrs. Nitzel will provide the students with wonderful technology opportunities that will enhance our 21st Century Digital learners. Mrs. Joslin will provide enrichment to the



curriculum at each grade level based on the Standards and Benchmarks being assessed at that time. Mrs. Heckle will continue her Guidance program K-5 and will also be working with Middle School students on various topics including test taking skills and study habits. We are excited to provide these learning opportunities to the students.

Last year I informed families of the anti-harassment/ bullying law adopted by the Iowa Legislature in 2007. In the Family Handbook you will find the Diocese of Des Moines Policy (page 31) and the student discipline policy (page 33), which are congruent with our policies at St. Francis. This is an issue we continue to work on at school and ask that you talk to your children about it at home. If we don't know that it is happening, we can't help, so please encourage your child to talk to someone at school. Below I have listed a few websites that give parent resources to help begin the conversation about harassment, bullying, and being safe on the internet.

Again, I want to welcome you to a great start to the 2008-2009 school year. I look forward to continuing our journey of growing in faith and knowledge this year.

With many blessings,

Misty Hade
Assistant Principal

www.bullying.org
www.colorado.edu/cspv/safeschools/
www.atg.we.gov/safetynet/kids.shtml



Musical Notes by Mrs. Lee Randall

Below is the concert calendar for K-5 students this year. Please put these dates on your calendar now. Performance at a concert fulfills one of our Music Standards (Standard 6, Benchmark 1). If your **2nd or 3rd grade student participates in the annual Nutcracker performance** please make arrangements to be at the concert and attend a different rehearsal during that week. Any student who misses a concert will be given a make-up assignment as they would for missing a test in another class.

Please look for more location and time details on the website as the concerts approach. They will also be listed in the newsletter the month prior to the concert. Please look below for a guide to concert dress. If you have questions please email Mrs. Randall in advance of the concert.

Concert Dates 2008-2009 Grades K-5

Nov. 6 First Grade Informances - Location TBA
1:45 Curtin
2:15 Murphy
2:45 Gaul

First week of December– Catholic Charities
Concert – 3rd-5th Choir (voluntary) More information TBA

December 9 **7 p.m.** Christmas Concert 2nd – 3rd grade
May also include 3-5 choir (voluntary)

March 10 **7 p.m.** Spring Concert 4th-5th grade
May also include 3-5 choir (voluntary)

May 6 Kindergarten Informances - Location TBA
1:45 Crandell
2:15 Townsend
2:45 Howard

Concert Dress

Kindergarten, First grade – Please come in school uniform the day of your Informance. If your Informance date is a spirit wear day, that is also acceptable.

Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade – Please dress up for your concert. *Girls:* Dresses / 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. All shoes should be in good shape and clean (no holes, etc.). Thank you!



Middle School Music

by Sr. Vikki Slickers

"And we're off!" How exciting to be beginning again. We have so much talent here at SFA I know we will have a great year. AMERICAS MOST TALENTED has nothing on some of the talent we have right here at SFA.

Our classes have already begun their first units of study. Many Middle School students are starting even before school as they strive to learn the music necessary for auditioning for the OPUS HONOR CHOIRS. These students will be making an audition tape and sending it in by September 23rd. Last year two of our MS students were chosen to be part of the 2007 OPUS HONOR CHOIRS. Here's hoping more of our talents are recognized again this year. November 20th marks the date for the OPUS HONOR CHOIRS performance in Ames.

The middle of September will see the beginning of rehearsals for our own MS Chorus, yet to be named by the members of this year's group. Our rehearsals will once again be on Tuesday and Thursday mornings at 7:45 a.m. in the Music Room. I'm hoping for an even bigger turn out this year. Our repertoire and performances will depend on the make-up of the group.

Our students are once again involved in music ministry for our school liturgies. Special thanks to members of last year's chorus who were generous with both their time and talents as they helped with the music ministry for our special Diocesan Liturgy to mark the beginning of the school year. These same students joined with members of our staff as music ministers for our opening All-School liturgy.

September 5th will be a special day as Bishop Pates joins us to celebrate our All-School Mass and visit our school. Our sixth grade is wonderfully responsible and take their leadership role for this liturgy very seriously. I'm really proud of them.

We'll keep you posted on up-coming concerts! It's going to be a very "musical" year!



Guidance Corner

by Mrs. Julie Heckle

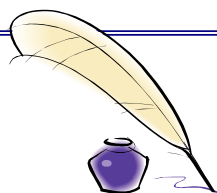
Welcome to the 2008-2009 school year. My name is Julie Heckle and I am the school counselor for St. Francis of Assisi School. I hope all of you had a relaxing summer and were able to spend time with family and friends. I am excited to be back and begin a new school year. Many of you may not have had a school counselor when you were in elementary or middle school, so I want to share with you what my responsibilities are as school counselor. The role of a school counselor is divided into three categories.

The first is providing classroom guidance instruction. This allows me to meet with each elementary class once a week to work on personal, social, and academic growth. This year I will also have middle school classes. I will be on a trimester rotation with technology and enrichment. This first trimester I will meet with 7th grade classes twice a week. The second trimester I will meet with 6th grade and during the third trimester I will work with 8th grade students.

The second part of my job is to provide individual and group counseling to the students in our building. A school counselor's role in individual counseling is to help students work through normal life struggles, such as friendship issues, divorce, death and other significant life events. This can be done in a group setting as well. Individuals and groups meet during the school day. If I plan to work weekly with a child or group of students, I will send home a letter or call parents to obtain consent.

The third category is consulting with parents and teachers. I have many books and resources to share and can help connect you with community resources, as well. I encourage you to call and set up an appointment with me if you feel your child is struggling academically, socially or emotionally. I am here to help, so please don't hesitate to utilize my services.

I look forward to working with you and your child this year!



Reading Recovery / Reading Support

By Mrs. Mary Anne Conway

Give your child lots of opportunities to read aloud this school year. Some fun ways parents can help their children become happy and confident readers are provided at www.ReadingRockets.org. Here are just some of the tips for parents of first graders:

- ⊙ Encourage your child to re-read favorite books and poems. Re-reading helps kids read more fluently and accurately.
- ⊙ When your child is trying to read an unfamiliar word, give him or her time to do so. Remind your child to look closely at the first letter or letters of the word.
- ⊙ Pick books that are at the right level. Help your child pick books that are not too difficult. The aim is to give your child lots of successful reading experiences.
- ⊙ Talk with your child every day about school and things going on around the house. Add some interesting words into the conversation, and build on words you've talked about in the past.
- ⊙ Ask your child to help you write out the grocery list, a thank you note to a grandparent, or to keep a journal of special things that happen at home. When writing, encourage your child to use the letter and sound patterns he or she is learning at school.

Happy Reading & Happy Writing!



**Picture Day for
all students is
Monday, September 29!**

ENRICHMENT

by Mrs. Chris Joslin



Konnichi-wa! I had a great summer and I hope you did too. The highlight was a three week study tour of Japan. I have much to share with our students from that beautiful island country! I will be including the culture, history, and geography of Japan in my teaching throughout the coming year.

Several changes have been made to the enrichment program over the summer. This year will be different as I will be meeting and getting to know all the students. Since this is a new adventure, I know you will be patient while I work out the inevitable kinks.

K-5: This year, all K-5 students will receive whole class enrichment. This will alternate with technology. Since this is a new program, Mrs. Nitzel and I will be working together to provide opportunities for students to explore various units in greater detail. The first trimester, I will be working with grades 3-5 while Mrs. Nitzel will focus on K-2. The second trimester they will switch. The third trimester they will divide the time equally between the two grade levels depending on the projects involved. As the trimester progresses, I will schedule some pull-out times for small groups in grades 3-5 in the areas of need.

Middle School: This year all 6-8 students will receive whole class enrichment on a trimester basis. This will alternate with technology and guidance. Sixth grade will have enrichment during the first trimester. In keeping with their social studies curriculum and my personal travel experiences, we will use the time to explore eastern Asia more in depth. We will focus on Japan, South Korea, India and China through geography, culture, history, and economics. The second trimester I will be with the 8th grade and will correspond to the Shakespeare unit. The third trimester I will be with the 7th grade and that unit will be designed around what the students will be studying in social studies or language arts at that time. As the trimester progresses, I will schedule some pull-out times for small groups in grades 6-8 for specific units per request of the MS teachers as well as where I see need for specific students.

Middle School students also received a sign up sheet for extracurricular activities offered here. Their responses will be used to form Mock Trial teams, prepare for National History Day, Tech Fair, Dowling Speech Contest, Geography Bee, and Art Club. Except for Mock Trial, students can ask to join the other activities as the year progresses if there is enough time for them to prepare and registrations have not been sent in. Several of the activities do have registration fees that the students need to pay. Costs vary per activity.

Other notes: Middle School students will also be allowed to come to my room during study hall to work on Mock Trial and National History Day projects. They may also come in at this time to develop and work on individual projects throughout the year. They will need to contact me prior to setting up this schedule. Eighth graders may come in before school for similar work. I am not here on Fridays so they must plan accordingly.

MOCK TRIAL: We would love to have interested 6th grade parents contact me for help with the 6th grade team. Law experience is greatly appreciated.

Gym Shorts

**by Mr. Mike Hazel
& Mrs. Mary Beth Scott**



Hello and welcome back! It is great to get started and see how much the kids have grown over the summer. We love to hear about all the things everyone did to stay physically active while school was out.

First, a quick update in scheduling. Mrs. Scott will teach grades K, 2, 4, 5, and share teaching responsibilities with Mr. Hazel for grade 3. In addition to sharing 3rd grade, Mr. Hazel will teach grades 1 and 6-8.

Shoes are always a big question. To help clarify, kindergarteners need to come to class with tennis shoes, but they do not need to be a separate pair from what they wear during the day. However, for grades 1-8, all students should have a separate pair of good, safe tennis shoes for indoor usage only. Most shoes do not leave black marks anymore, so no worries there. But we ask that PE shoes not be worn outdoors so that we don't have any scratches on the hardwood from little pebbles that get stuck in the tread.

The mile run is something we do twice a year for students in grades 3-8. Our fall run will be coming up sometime in the next few weeks. As for the 4th and 5th graders, Mrs. Scott is planning a very special competition, the "Run Across Iowa"! Each class in 4th and 5th will compete as a class against the other two in the grade to be the first class to accumulate enough miles ran to equal the distance across Iowa from Council Bluffs to Davenport on I-80.

Students will be involved in many fun activities throughout the school year in PE. Be sure to ask them what they are currently working on in class. Perhaps it will be another way for you to enjoy some physical activity with your family in the evenings, especially during the wonderful Iowa autumn!

BOOK NOOK

BY MRS. MARY HEAD



The Media Center welcomes all students to the Saint Francis of Assisi Library. Saint Francis has a library to be proud of and I am anxious for all students to come in and browse the shelves.

Library books are checked out for a two-week period; however, students are encouraged to return their library books as soon as they have finished reading them. Books may be returned any day of the week. There are no overdue fines, but if a student has a number of overdue books, he/she will be asked to wait until those books are returned before checking out another. Overdue notices are sent to the students on a weekly basis.

Please refer to the Media Center link on the Saint Francis School web site for reading suggestions and to see what day your child has scheduled library visits.

Please continue reading to your children – even when they become independent readers themselves. The benefits of reading aloud are many. It increases vocabulary, widens background experiences, extends listening and comprehending abilities, and expands their capacity to relate to the environment. Reading together can be a very special time for both parents and children.

Home and School Meeting
Monday, September 15
7:00 PM





Tech Talk

By Mrs. Diane Nitzel

Welcome back everyone; I can't believe how fast the summer flew by! I hope all of your children have had a fun and exciting summer, and are ready for another year of learning.

We have made several changes over the summer where technology is concerned. We have implemented a new student information system called Infinite Campus, and thanks to the fundraising efforts of Home and School, we were able to purchase some new technology for the classrooms.

Infinite Campus is a web based student information system that is being used by most of the school systems in the Metro area including Ankeny, Des Moines, West Des Moines, Dallas Center Grimes, and Johnston, as well as several other schools throughout the state. There has been talk about adopting this program state-wide.

Some of the exciting features about Infinite Campus are that information is disseminated in real time. Information entered and saved is immediately visible to other users and the parent portal. This program also has more capabilities than our previous program. The integrated grade book allows for standards tracking, it has scheduling capabilities, and as I mentioned earlier, an integrated parent portal similar to Edline. The program was also designed to retain past student information, and using the Ad Hoc reporting feature we will be able to extract and analyze data in various ways, helping the administration see trends that will help us with long term planning. We will also be able to track behavior issues, monitor student support, import and track state mandated testing, and we will be able to complete our state reporting with just a few clicks of the mouse. Needless to say we are all very excited to use this new product!

Since this program is such a huge step up from where we were, it has taken more time than we anticipated in getting all the data from our old system converted or inputted into this system. I believe we are on the down hill slide now, but before we open up the parent portal we want to make sure all of our child/parent relationships are correct and everything is running smoothly. We would appreciate your patience with this, and we will open the portal as soon as we possibly can.

The teachers are also excited about the new technology that was purchased for the classrooms over the summer. The Technology committee has come up with a 4-year plan to equip all the classrooms in order to improve your child's access to technology. This year we have installed ceiling mounted projectors in the 4th – 8th grade classrooms, as well as Lab A and Art. The projectors will be attached to the classroom PC, the TV/DVD/VCR, and have an input for a document camera. The projectors are also attached to ceiling mounted speakers so video can be easily heard throughout the room.

We were also able to purchase four Mimio Interactive Whiteboards, which are powerful interactive teaching tool that allow teachers to provide students with more engaging and interactive content. We were also able to purchase four wireless interactive tablets that allow teachers and students to control the computer from anywhere in the room. We also purchased one Document Camera which will allow teachers to put any object under the lamp and have it magnified up to 12 times and then projected onto the whiteboard so all the students can see in great detail as well as capturing digital still pictures or video of the object or process. We think this will be an excellent addition for our science teachers.

The teachers are in the process of being trained on the new equipment, and training will continue throughout the year, with the help of our local AEA, to help ensure the equipment will be used to its fullest potential. We are all so excited to get this year underway and are looking forward to a wonderfully exciting year with an abundance of engaged learning!