



ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI SCHOOL

Principal's Letter May 14, 2010

Dear Parents,

Today is Field Day, and I want to thank the team that has worked so hard to organize this fun day-Jill Cann, Nancy Jayne, Nancy McHenry Dirks, Ralph Novito, Peggy Riedeman, Rita Hulsman, Esther Brodin and Mary DeMarre. Several hours of planning have been spent to ensure that this day runs smoothly, and we appreciate it.

When we were in Chicago for the reading symposium last month, we heard over and over from teachers, principals and presenters how hard it was to organize new programs or to introduce innovative measures because of the power of the unions in the public school. They were not necessarily criticizing the idea of having unions, but the union mentality that often results in people refusing to work one more minute than their contract states.

We have no such union in the Catholic school system. Our teachers just assume that they will have extra duties and responsibilities, and they do them willingly and professionally, oftentimes without pay. That's one of the reasons our schools are so successful.

For most teachers, this is not just a job-it is a calling, a vocation. Teachers want to make a difference, and they are constantly looking for new and better ways to teach to the whole child. They put their heart and soul into what they do, and I am sure that is why, when someone criticizes their professionalism, they take it so personally. Several times throughout the year (twice in the last week) a teacher comes into my office in tears because of an e-mail or phone call that attacks his/her professionalism. This is not to say that parents don't have a right to question or complain-they certainly do. Feedback is necessary in any job in order to continually improve. However, we just ask this-if your child comes home with a complaint, remember there are two sides to each story. Their perception is their reality, but not necessarily THE reality (I grew up with four siblings, and we each have different perceptions and memories of our childhood, filtered through our own personal lenses.)

So check on your child's perceptions by asking the teacher what he or she noticed. What did they see? What was their take on a situation? This information-gathering will help your child to see how others perceived his/her behavior. Although e-mails are quicker and easier, sometimes a phone call is better because the tone of an e-mail is easy to misread.

It is important to listen to your child, but it is also important to model to your children that, while you support them, you nevertheless need to check with the teacher to find out about the teacher's perspective. In doing this, we are modeling fairness.

Have a Great Weekend,

Sheila

WHAT TEACHERS MAKE

The dinner guests were sitting around the table discussing life. One man, a CEO, decided to explain the problem with education. He argued, "What's a kid going to learn from someone who decided his best option in life was to become a teacher?"

He reminded the other dinner guests what they say about teachers: "Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach."

To stress his point he said to another guest; "You're a teacher. Be honest. What do you make?"

Having a reputation for honesty and frankness replied, "You want to know what I make?"

"I make kids work harder than they ever thought they could.

I make a C+ feel like the winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor.

I make kids sit through 40 minutes of study hall in absolute silence.

"You want to know what I make?"

I make kids wonder.

I make them question.

I make them criticize.

I make them apologize and mean it.

I make them write.

I make them read, read, read.

I make them show all their work in math and perfect their final drafts in English.

I make them understand that if you have the brains, and follow your heart, and if someone ever tries to judge you by what you

make, you must pay no attention because they just didn't learn."

I paused and continued. "You want to know what I make?"

'I MAKE A DIFFERENCE.' What do you make?"

THIS IS WORTH SENDING TO EVERY TEACHER YOU KNOW. THERE IS MUCH TRUTH IN THAT STATEMENT.

"Teachers make every other profession possible!"