



ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI SCHOOL

Principal's Letter June 16, 2010

Dear Families,

This has been a very successful year. The staff, the parents and the students worked hard to accomplish the goals that were set at the beginning of the year, based on the Five Year Plan. Here is a list of some of the major accomplishments of the 2009-2010 school year.

Family and Spiritual Life:

- We worked with the parish office staff to develop goals for a youth ministry program. The school proposed hiring Michael Stein-Ross as the youth minister, and the parish hired Michael. Several of our staff members are also involved in the running of the program. "Edge", the new youth ministry, has been a resounding success.
- We continued to meet in Family Groups, focusing on the Twelve Gardens of Stewardship, and directed activities that focused the students on the need for stewardship.
- We adopted a sister parish in Mombasa, Kenya. Monica Stein went to Kenya to cement this relationship.
- The School Commission became involved in a new parish program, "Discover Your Strengths", and we are working with the parish to use the information from this survey to strengthen our parish life.

Faculty and Staff:

- We hired three new, wonderful teachers: Kali Paris, Chris Harris, and Michael Stein-Ross. The hiring reflected our commitment to staff diversity-two men!
- Teachers' salaries were frozen this year because of a mandate from the Archdiocese. In an effort to soften that blow, all the teachers were given laptops, as well as a bonus at Christmas.
- Teachers worked in Professional Learning Communities, planning with their partner teachers on curriculum, the creation and analysis of effective assessments, and teaching strategies. The results of these meetings were posted on a blog for optimum communication of ideas.
- We continued to develop the skills necessary to apply technology in the classroom. Promethean Boards (interactive white boards) were purchased for 9 classrooms, and the staff received training on their use.

Curriculum and Instruction:

Reading:

- Driven by our accreditation goal to focus on effective reading comprehension strategies, we brought in a reading coach from the center for Educational Leadership at the University of Washington. Grace Chiu spent 6 days at our school coaching teachers and focusing on best practices in reading.
- Six of the staff went to Chicago for the International Reading Association Convention, and the information that we brought back was then shared with the staff. Planning is already underway for altering reading instruction next year.
- Other staff members took workshops that dealt with specific areas of reading improvement.
- We offered a workshop for parents of struggling readers that focused on the summer reading loss and how to prevent it.
- We developed more effective tools for measuring reading progress, and graphs to display that progress.
- Our students scored very well on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Overall, we are in the 80th percentile nationwide!

Other Staff Development:

- In keeping with the goal of providing more intense, goal specific staff development, we used math and technology specialists to present to the whole staff.
- Technology training was more consistent.

Principal's Letter continued

Development:

Development reflects the long-range plan for the school. We accomplished the following steps in our long-range development goals:

- The Endowment reached \$700,000!
- The school maintained a savings account that provides a safety net for troubled times.
- The School Campaign is in its 16th year, and brought in \$56,000 this year.
- We continued to communicate with our alumni through the Alumni Newspaper.

Financial Planning:

- We received \$15,000 for Reading books through grant-writing efforts.
- Three of our teachers received grants to enhance instruction.
- We continued to work on ways to conserve energy and resources. The school replaced its ineffective thermostats, we did an energy study that showed the effectiveness of our conservation efforts, and we raised money at the auction so that we can begin to replace the windows in the school with more energy-efficient ones.
- The interest from our savings account was used to provide additional financial aid this year. In total, over \$56,000 was given out in financial aid.
- The School Commission continued with its 5 year plan to create a more equitable tuition structure.
- The debt from the third building campaign was retired, and the school played a significant role in seeing this happen.
- The School Commission worked with the parish to develop a plan to finance the replacement of the gym floor.
- The auction and other fundraising efforts were a tremendous success.

Facilities:

- We continued to work to provide a safe, secure and healthy environment, taking part in ongoing training regarding the swine flu epidemic, conducting regular safety drills, and continuing with the Second Step Program.
- New swings were added.
- The parish staff and the School Commission worked together to offer solutions for the gym floor issues.
- We replaced the refrigerator and the microwave in the Faculty Room with more energy-efficient ones. A new rechargeable battery device was purchased.

These are just the items that come to mind as we brainstormed about the year. I did not include the joy that comes from working with your children, the tremendous support we feel from the parents, and the commitment of a well-educated staff.

Thank you for another great year!

Finally, we say goodbye to Robin Besagno and Nancy Wright. You have been a blessing to us, and we thank you for your years of dedication to Catholic education. Please stay in touch. You will always be part of the St. Francis Family!

With Love,

Sheila