



ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI SCHOOL

Principal's Letter September 3, 2009

Dear Families,

Welcome to the 2009-2010 school year. Our theme for this year is,

"We are the clay, You are the potter;
We are all the work of Your hands." Isaiah 64:8

Clay, because of its elasticity, has a mind of its own. However, with a bit of patience and some extra energy, any mound of clay can be shaped into a magnificent vessel. Along with our parents, who are the primary educators of their children, we work to form our students in God's image by upholding our mission that calls us to create a Christ-centered community that fosters an active faith, encourages service, and promotes academic growth. We look forward to working in partnership with you this year.

The staff has returned to school relaxed, refreshed, and excited about the promise of a new year. However, there is a myth that teachers get the whole summer off. On the contrary, many of the St. Francis teachers have been attending classes this summer, covering such diverse topics as Curriculum Mapping, using technology in the classroom, the Socratic Method, mathematics instruction, and professional learning communities. After attending classes, the teachers then begin working on ways to incorporate what they have learned into their teaching practices. They take seriously their commitment to stay at the forefront of best practices in education.

Our students also stayed busy this summer; besides the camping trips, the swim meets, and the other activities that make summer fly by, some of our students attended Camp Invention, a week-long Science camp that was held at St. Francis. It was a big success, and we already have plans in place to host the camp next summer. Other students received tutoring throughout the summer. It seems the school halls were very busy in July and August.

Now the school year begins, with many new families drawn to our school because of its high standards and the strong St. Francis community. Each of these new families has a mentor family that will help them become acclimated to the school. We know that with this support, they will feel part of our family before long.

We also have three new teachers who are joining us: Kali Paris in first grade, Chris Harris in third grade, and Michael Stein-Ross in sixth grade. I feel fortunate to have such talented, committed people on our staff. They will be mentored by teachers who, on average, have devoted a minimum of ten years to St. Francis. The wealth of knowledge that these mentors have to share will allow for a smooth transition.

I look forward to seeing you all at Open House, which will be held on September 10th at 7 PM. Unlike in previous years, the Open House will start in the church, as repairs are being made to the Family Center.

Enjoy the Labor Day Weekend,

Sheila

Continuation of Sheila's Bulletin

Creating a safe environment:

The Archdiocese of Seattle has developed the Safe Environment Program, putting in place policies and procedures for the prevention of and response to sexual abuse, sexual misconduct and sexual harassment of our children. All of our school staff and our extended daycare program and our CYO coaches have received training in how to identify and prevent sexual abuse, misconduct and harassment of our youth. In addition, Lonnie Miller, our school counselor, teaches a class, Talk About Touching, to the K-3 students. In addition, the seventh grade goes through a training entitled Call to Protect for Youth. Finally, all staff, classroom volunteers, and parents who drive on field trips are run through a criminal background check every three years. The staff training (with annual training updates), Talk About Touching and Call to Protect for Youth and the background checks are the major components of the Safe Environment Program.

We offer the Safe Environment training for all parents and parish members each year. Since many of our parents serve as volunteers in the classroom, drive on field trips, or assist in after-school activities, we feel that this training is a valuable tool for them. Parents who have taken the Safe Environment class have said that they really learned from it, and that all parents should attend a training class.

Although the Archdiocesan requirements state that "volunteers with ongoing unsupervised contact with minors and vulnerable adults" must attend the Safe Environment training, we would like *all* of our parents to take this class, especially if you plan to drive on a field trip this year. To this end, we are offering three classes this fall:

September 12 th	Parish Hall	9:00-12:00
October 15 th	Wiegand Resource Center (auditorium)	6:00-9:00
October 26 th	Wiegand Resource Center (auditorium)	6:00-9:00

To register for the September class, please go to www.seattle.setanet.org/classes.php
Information about registering for the October classes will appear in next week's bulletin.

Please try to make one of these classes, if possible. Safe of the children is our primary concern.

Family Center Floor Status:

As many of you know, the gym floor needed to be replace because of water damage. This was all supposed to happen before the second week of school; however, due to unforeseen circumstances, it looks like this project won't be complete until sometime in October. I will keep you posted as things progress...

Continuation of Sheila's Bulletin

Dear Parents,

H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu) Update:

I have received volumes of information about the H1N1 virus in the last three weeks from the Center for Disease Control and the Public Health Department of Seattle and King County. Here is a summary of the current information, best practices, and our school plan, based on recommendations from the Center for Disease Control:

As you know flu can be easily spread from person to person. Therefore, we are taking steps to reduce the spread of flu at St. Francis of Assisi School. We want to keep the school open to students and functioning in a normal manner during this flu season. But we need your help to do this. We are working closely with the CDC and the King County Health Department to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning schools. We will keep you updated with new information as it becomes available.

If the flu becomes more severe, we may take additional steps to prevent the spread such as:

Conducting active fever and flu symptom screening of students and staff as they arrive at school

Making changes to increase the space between people such as moving desks farther apart and postponing class trips

Dismissing students from school for at least 7 days if they become sick.

For now, we are doing everything we can to keep our schools functioning as usual. Janet Lund and Teri Lowe, our front office personnel, participated in a one-hour conference call in August regarding the H1N1 outbreak that is anticipated in the 2009-2010 year. This information was also reinforced in the CDC handouts. As a staff, we are taking the normal safety precautions-each class has hand sanitizer which has the appropriate percentage of alcohol content to be effective. We have ordered additional sterile wipes for the desk and computer surfaces, and we are also getting masks to use for students in the health room who are exhibiting flu-like symptoms.

Here are a few things you can do to help:

Teach your children to wash their hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub. They should rub for at least 20 seconds. Children don't have that concept of time, so you will need to model this.

Teach your children not to share personal items like drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues. They should cover up their coughs or sneezes using the elbow, arm or sleeve instead of the hand when a tissue is unavailable.

Know the signs and symptoms of the flu. Symptoms include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.

Keep sick children at home for at least 24 hours *after* they no longer have fever or do not have signs of fever, without using fever-reducing drugs. Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected.

Do not send children to school if they are sick. Any children who are determined to be sick while at school *will be sent home*.

For more information, visit www.flu.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

If your child is diagnosed with H1N1 flu, please call or e-mail us and let us know. We are responsible for reporting these statistics to the local health department, and this information will help us determine what further steps we need to take if the conditions become more severe.

Thank you,
Sheila