

St. Francis School Monthly News

November 2007

Practicing respect for individuals is one of the highest goals of our school community. In the classroom this respect translates – whenever appropriate - into differentiated learning for the individual students.

DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING IN THE DAILY CLASSROOM

- by Mr. Delautre

After all, if some students have already mastered a concept, why “teach” it to them again? If some are ready for a more challenging math concept, why withhold that opportunity? Conversely, if a student needs more time to complete a task than many of his peers – a situation we adults encounter often in all walks of life – should this carry a penalty? Doesn’t the slower worker often produce a better product? Given recent findings on the differences between the female and male brains, should we really expect girls and boys to warm to the same reading or research topics ... always?

In school as in life, “one-size fits all” is rarely realistic or successful, and as our school’s Core Values express, “children thrive best in an atmosphere attuned to their individual interests, strengths, and needs.”

The St. Francis faculty is committed to discovering the needs of your child in order to help him or her find greater success. Though finding the right instructional level takes time and probably some trial and error, we want to provide students with work that is neither too hard nor too easy. Here are some of the often simple ways we accomplish that from day to day:

- Our Writing Workshop program avoids teacher-generated topics, encouraging children to explore a personal experience instead. Some are writing sentences, others whole pages depending on their developmental readiness. The result is more progress, faster.
- Of all instructional areas, students receive more differentiation in reading from the very beginning of the process. Within the same class, while some students are still sounding out letters, others will be reading and answering comprehension questions. By second grade, students are using books of widely different reading levels to explore and discuss a common topic; this practice is used right through middle school.
- Lower School students are encouraged to choose the number and difficulty of their spelling words. (Why have spelling words you already know?!)
- Pair work in foreign language often allows stronger students (especially native speakers) to mentor weaker ones, and both parties prefer this arrangement to teacher-centered instruction.

DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING continued on Page 3 —>

REMINDER —

We dismiss at 2:15 PM this **WEDNESDAY (11/7)** for faculty professional development. Thank you.

THURSDAY: "OPEN HOUSE" FOR PROSPECTIVE NEW JK-8 FAMILIES

Send your friends and neighbors to next (and final) JK-8 Open House, 6:30-8 PM this Thursday, Nov. 8.

We work hard to spread the word about SFS and invite prospective families to visit; but we depend heavily on you to tell others about our mission and your St. Francis experiences. Your endorsement of our work is our best way to spread the word about a St. Francis education.

SEE OUR PRESCHOOL, TOO

Our preschool — housed at St. Francis in the Fields Episcopal Church, on US 42 at Wolf Pen Branch Road — will have an Open House from 7-8 PM Monday, Nov. 12. This event is for new families considering St. Francis Preschool OR for current preschool families wanting to know more about what happens at the next age level.

AND SPEAKING OF PRESCHOOL ...

When told that only grown-ups can use knives to carve pumpkins, 3-year-old SFS preschool student Summer Clark responded: "...But I don't know how to grow up!"



GRANDPARENTS' DAY

See the accompanying flier about Grandparents' Day (Nov. 21) and the special Parents Preview the day before (Nov. 20). We schedule the Parent Preview because the actual Grandparents' Day presentation is so popular and crowded.

PLEASE NOTE: All students have been creating and rehearsing for this special day, and everyone is required to be at school for the performances. We ask families who travel to make this school day a top priority. Our performers' success is greatly altered if students are suddenly absent for the Parents Preview or Grandparents' Day. This is a school day.

SFS PARENT ASSOCIATION REPORT FROM THE SFPA FORUM ON "UNCONDITIONAL PARENTING"

Attendees at our first 2007-08 Parent Association Forum were impressed with the message of the Alfie Kohn DVD, "Unconditional Parenting." Kohn's approach is not a cure-all for every discipline issue, but it sparked good discussion about raising healthy, happy, self-motivated, intelligent, compassionate children.

Here are 10 tips for working with children of all ages. We thank parent Audrey Kline for taking notes during the DVD viewing and sharing them with us. If just one of these tips improves your relationship with your child, we have succeeded. The ideas have been abbreviated greatly; for more in-depth explanations, please check out a copy of the DVD from our school office.

Alfie Kohn's Ten Principles

1. Reconsider your requests. Sometimes when kids don't do what you ask, evaluate what you asked of them and consider if it's for the child's best interest or just something to make your life easier: control vs. connection.
2. Put the relationship first. Being right is less important than respecting each other. Do you talk to your children the same respectful way you do to a friend when they do something that is not right?
3. The love must be unconditional. Children have to know they are loved when they mess up; that is when they need it most. They need to be loved for who they are not what they do. Love withdrawal (with punishment/reward) is conditional love. Ignoring kids when we don't like their behavior gives them a signal of conditional love. Rewarding them can make them feel they are loved only when they hear "good job" and have done well. Both signal to the child that they have to earn the parents' love.
4. Imagine how kids see things. Practice looking at the world from a child's point of view; you're more likely to be better parent the more you do this.
5. Be authentic. Don't pretend to be more competent as a parent than you are. Apologize to your child from time to time; this teaches it is OK to apologize with no consequences. Teaching kids to say they're sorry when they are not, however, might be teaching them insincerity.
6. Talk less, ask more. Listen, elicit, and imagine your child's perspective. Listening is better than dictating or explaining. The child's behavior is not the point; understanding the REASONS for the behavior is the goal. Listen to help find the underlying reason.
7. Attribute to children the best possible motive consistent with the facts. Why assume the worst? Sometimes misbehavior is just a developmental limitation (kids being kids); if you don't know the cause of the behavior, don't assume the child is trying to be difficult. Parents who assume the worst are more likely to be controlling, which creates vicious cycle -- others typically live down to low expectations.
- 8 Try to say "yes" when you can. Don't constantly say "no!" (We often do so out of habit or convenience.) Kids will still get plenty of frustration in life if you say "yes" more often. Pick your battles.
9. Don't be rigid. Waive the rules now and then and be flexible in certain situations. Make allowances for adults and kids having an off day. Kids need predictability, but don't use it to justify rigidity. Both parents do not always have to agree; it's helpful for kids to see parents talk things out
10. Let kids decide as much as possible; give them autonomy. When children feel some power in decision-making, they tend to stay out of trouble, enjoy school and be healthier than kids raised with rigid discipline. The way kids learn to make good decisions is by making decisions, not by following directions. Bring them into problem-solving. Kids need the chance to make age-appropriate decisions, which will teach them to make adult decisions later.

"Doing to" options are threats and bribes. A "doing with" approach uses the child to help solve the problem. You can't always solve the problem in the moment; many times both parties need time to individually come up with ideas to solve a problem and then come together to discuss. Try the child's solution sometimes and then come back and evaluate the progress. Communicating to children that their opinions matter is how they learn to make decisions. Allow the child to help solve problems. Solving problems together is more useful and respectful than punishing/rewarding.



Third-graders visit the Falls of the Ohio

PARENTS ASSOCIATION NEWS by Tracy Lattis, PA president

Our list of coming events includes our first-ever "Family Peace Education Night." Also, we need volunteers to help with Grandparents' Day. **Here's the list of events, plus more about each:**

- Nov. 9 - Coupon Book Sale
- Nov. 16 - Teacher Appreciation Luncheon sponsored by 4th Grade
- Nov. 16 - Monthly "Spirit Wear" orders due
- Nov. 19 - Coupon Book Sale money due back to school
- Nov. 21 - Grandparent's Day
- Dec. 4 - Family Peace Education Night

Coupon Book Sale: Coupon books will go home with students on Nov. 9. This is a one-week sale, with all money or books due back by the Monday, Nov. 19. These books make great holiday gifts for your mail carrier, babysitter, hairdresser, and so forth.

Spirit wear: Spirit wear makes a great holiday gift for your SFS student. Sweatshirts, long-sleeve T's, jackets and more are available. Last day to order in time for the holidays is Nov. 16; and this will be the final Spirit Wear order until January. If you are purchasing an item as a gift, please indicate that on the form and we will not send the item home with your child.

Family Peace Education Night: On Tuesday, Dec. 4, all St. Francis families are invited to school to learn more and participate in family activities facilitated by the instructors of the Peace Education Program our children have been experiencing at school. We will serve Pizza and drinks from 5:30-6:30 PM, and activities will start at 6:30.

Grandparents' Day: See times and attendance information in the accompanying flier.

We also need volunteers to help with the following Grandparents' Day tasks:

- * providing mini-muffins for pre-show snacks
- * setting up on Tuesday afternoon
- * active assistance on Wednesday during the big event

To volunteer, please contact parent Abby Yelton at awills@yahoo.com or 241-5670.

– Save the Date –

Parent Association Forum: Meet the SFS Board of Trustees, 6-7:30 PM Thursday, January 10. Learn about the board's role and vision for our school during the next 5 years. Childcare will be provided for this event.

– Skating Party Date Change –

Due to the Fall Play, the November 14 all-school skating party has been canceled. The next skating party will be Wednesday, Dec. 19.

EIGHTH GRADE GRADUATION PLANNING MEETING:

8:15 AM Monday, Nov 26, at Java Brewing Company in Prospect. All parents of 8th graders are invited.

DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING

continued from Page One ...

• In math, students routinely work at different levels within the same instructional group. Before we accelerate a student "vertically," however, we take care to ensure each child has received the horizontal enrichment that builds a sturdy foundation for advanced math.

* We often assign Language Arts reading in increments of time rather than number of pages: reading speed may vary enormously from one child to the next; one child may prefer to consume multiple volumes, another may want to read more thoughtfully; both approaches can produce excellent readers.

* Students are often given a choice of assessment for a given assignment or unit. Since classic testing tends to produce regurgitation rather than thoughtful competence, other means of measuring understanding are often more effective; children seem to know which means suits them best.

* Math concepts in particular are differentiated according to the readiness of the individual. This is true even among students seated around the same table, all of whom on a given day might be focused on different kinds of problems.

Some students work faster than others. Some are ready for an advanced concept sooner. Many have a unique learning style. These are the realities of the classroom that we strive to address. And if our ultimate goal is to enable each child to find success, respect for these real differences is essential. St. Francis students believe that their individuality is honored, and we believe that is one of the keys to our success





NOVEMBER LUNCHROOM VOLUNTEERS

Please find a substitute if you are unable to work on your scheduled day. If you are unable to find someone to work for you, please call Chef Matt Gasper (228-1197 x112) AND parent Dianne Siciliano (292-3295) before your scheduled date.

Monday, November 5 - Margaret Bond, Liz Bevarly, Rene Prys
Tuesday, November 6 - Karen Riley, Courtney Foster, Holly Winebrenner
Wednesday, November 7 - Vlasta Ross, Jill Shiflet, Dena Wilson
Thursday, November 8 - Ann Hendren, Holly Cooper Eliana Brunner
Friday, November 9 - Liz Cole, Weasy Middleton, Laurie Kinney

Monday, November 12 - Katey Stone, Betsi Faulkner, Michelle Jurige
Tuesday, November 13 - Courtney Foster, Lisa Fleming, Kathy Baucom
Wednesday, November 14 - Diane Fowler, Katy Bade, Dace Maki
Thursday, November 15 - Nancy Scott, Ann Hendren, Joseph Malone
Friday, November 16 - Kay Chandler, Julie Eckert, Karen Smith

Monday, November 19 - Margaret Bond, Liz Bevarly/David Beard, Dena Wilson
Tuesday, November 20 - Eliana Brunner, Suzy Bagga, Robin LeMastus
Wednesday, November 21 - NO LUNCH; NOON DISMISSAL
Thursday, November 22 - NO SCHOOL; THANKSGIVING BREAK
Friday, November 23 - NO SCHOOL; THANKSGIVING BREAK

Monday, November 26 - Michele Monda, Charity Ghali, Joseph Malone
Tuesday, November 27 - Carolyn Thebert, Shannon Jones, C. Zimmerman
Wednesday, November 28 - Sherry Stevens, Denise Waggener, Ellen Thalacker
Thursday, November 29 - Ann Hendren, Pam Smith, Karen Smith
Friday, November 30 - Kay Chandler, Risa Koby, Kristin Donovan

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR OUR ANNUAL AUCTION GALA: 6:30 PM FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1

Our annual "Our Good Earth" auction will be Feb. 1, 2008, at the Henry Clay -- the beautiful retail-residential-event complex that has been created out of the historic, old YWCA building downtown at Third and Chestnut streets. Please contact parent Amy Frederick, our Auction Acquisitions chair, for information about donating items.

ATTACHED TO THIS NEWSLETTER is the November calendar. For the very latest, check our <http://StFrancisSchool.org> calendar.

LET US RECYCLE YOUR USED PRINTER INKJET & LASER CARTRIDGES. We earn money that we can re-invest in our own technology equipment. Bring your empties to the front office, and we'll take them from there.

PHOTO OP: SFS grades 1-2 soccer team



DISPLAY SFS PROUDLY ON YOUR (CAR'S) BUMPER

If you would like a new "SFS" bumper sticker from our Goshen or Preschool campus, just let our office know. This is great advertising for our school during the admissions season. Wear your school colors with pride!

LAST FRIDAY'S HALLOWEEN DANCE WAS WAY "GHOUL"; MORE DANCES LOOM

Thanks to our three teacher-chaperones — Ms. Greaver, Ms. Muennich and Mr. Gabhart — and to our hard-working Student Council for helping turn our Multi-purpose Room into a Hooper's Hall of Horrors (and fun) at last week's dance.

Kudos also to our new and very suave disc jockeys: Tyler Longhofer, Quinn Hillerich and Graham Cote.

Best-costume winners were Chris Deam (a Hershey's Kiss) and Mariah Bauer (a pirate wench).

LISC dances scheduled; parent chaperones needed

Next up is the first 2007-08 LISC (Louisville Independent Schools Council) dance for grades 6-8: 7-10 PM Friday, Nov. 16, at KCD.

After that, the remaining LISC dances are:

- Nov. 16 at KCD
- Dec. 7 at Collegiate
- Feb. 8 at St. Francis
- March 14 at Walden

Our SFS faculty chaperones St. Francis dances, but we ask our parents to volunteer for "away" dances at other LISC schools. We must send one parent chaperone for every 10 of our students who sign up to attend each away dance. If you can chaperone, please contact Mr. Gabhart at RGabhart@stfrancischool.org or 228-1197 x125. Thank you!

FIELD-TRIP PROCEDURE, JK-8

To keep you well-informed, all teachers will ask you to sign and return a permission slip for any field trip your student takes. Please sign and return by the stated date so that your child will not miss an educational opportunity.