

“So, what *is* progressive education? I know my child loves school and the teachers, and that the students are learning a lot, but what is really so different about a St. Francis School education?”

This is a question I hear at least weekly. As a result, I’ve come to see how important it is that our parents understand the mission of the school, so that you can reinforce our educational values at home and, quite frankly, so that our parents can help us market what we do. Many of you have asked explicitly for help in defining our uniqueness.

One of the best resources for understanding what we do at St. Francis (and why we do it) is a wonderful book called *Schools that Learn*, produced by Peter Senge (“Sing-ghee”) who leads the “Fifth Discipline” think tank at M.I.T. My favorite article in that tome outlines very succinctly the erroneous assumptions that provided the foundation for mainstream American schools in the nineteenth century and which, sadly, continue to define most education in the western world today. See if these principles define your own childhood educational experience.

1. Children are deficient and schools “fix” them.
2. Learning takes place in the head, not in the body as a whole.
3. Everyone learns, or should learn, in the same way.
4. Learning takes place in the classroom, not in the world.
5. There are dumb kids and smart kids.

I hope you will recognize immediately that our starting points at St. Francis are radically different. We believe that **children are natural learners**, eager to encounter, absorb, and understand the world around them. Far from empty vessels who need us to “download” our learning into their heads, they are already full of ideas and require only skillful guidance to explore and experience our school’s curriculum and the world beyond it.

We believe, as the research demonstrates *abundantly*, that **the whole human body facilitates learning**, not just the brain, and that freedom of physical movement enhances a child’s educational experience. Inexplicably, most schools still restrict and restrain their students in desks.

We also believe – in fact, by now, every enlightened teacher *knows* – **that individual children learn differently, and at a different pace**, so that there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all curriculum. That’s why we place such a premium on differentiating our instruction according to the readiness of the student. Most of the time, “one size” fits none.

We believe that **learning needs to take place *outside* the traditional classroom** space whenever possible because it is in the “world” that learning must eventually be applied! The “world” should also be brought into the school room as often as possible by making instruction directly relevant to real world situations.

Last, and perhaps most important, we believe that **every child in our school has genuine intellectual and personal gifts** that can be cultivated to produce a successful, productive, happy individual. And *that* is the only important definition of “academic excellence.” We see our school’s curriculum as the means to and the raw material of this growth, and not merely the measuring stick for separating the “challenged” from the “high achievers.”

If you would like to explore this topic further, please e-mail me and I’ll put some interesting reading in your hands. You may also want to explore the websites of other progressive schools around the country to improve your sense of our educational tradition. “Francis W. Parker School” in Chicago (www.fwparker.org), “Green Acres School” in Rockville, MD (greenacres.org), or “The School in Rose Valley” outside Philadelphia (theschoolinrosevalley.org) are good places to start.

Annual Fund Campaign News and Notes

The Annual Fund Campaign is off to a strong start. So far, we have received approximately \$87,000 in gifts and pledges, which is over 50% of our goal of \$150,000. Of these gifts, ## were for \$1,000 or more. Those who have donated \$1,000 should go ahead and mark their calendars for our major donor recognition party at the Paradis Farm on Sunday, April 23 from 3:00 – 7:00pm. This is always a wonderful event celebrating our community and school!

Consistent with national independent school norms, St. Francis tuition dollars cover less than 80% of the real costs of our program. The remaining 20% must come from the St. Francis community, including current parents, past parents, the Board of Trustees, alumni, faculty and grandparents. Local and regional companies also support St. Francis School through their matching gift programs.

If you haven't yet made your gift, there is still time to get them in and take advantage of a current year tax deduction!

Alumni Reception

On December 21, at 7:00 we will host an alumni reception on our Goshen Campus. This is an opportunity to reconnect with old friends and see how the school has changed (and how it hasn't!) Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres will be available. Please help spread the word to our alums. If they are able to attend, please ask that they call Cindy Wood at 228-1197 to RSVP.

Lunch Volunteer Schedule

Monday, Dec. 5—Jan Cogburn and Debbie Morgan
Tuesday, Dec. 6—Nancye Faulkner, Angie Koss and Holly Winebrenner
Wednesday, Dec. 7—Katy Bade, Brigitte Muennich and Sherry Stevens
Thursday, Dec. 8—Lori Buse, Janet Roxworthy and Karen Siladi
Friday, Dec. 9—Tom Cowley, Kelly Farmer and Anita Meyer

Monday, Dec. 12—Christine Ullum, Carolyn Wetterer and Lisa Wiley
Tuesday, Dec. 13—Steven Paradis, Jeanne Sullivan and Holly Winebrenner
Wednesday, Dec. 14—Kay Chandler, Amy Dishman and Georgette Kidwell
Thursday, Dec. 15—Michelle Heit, Cynthia McAfee and Dianne Siciliano
Friday, Dec. 16—NA, 11:30 Dismissal

New Year's Eve Children's Celebration!!!

For those who want to party all night!

Bring your children to St. Francis School for a New Year's Eve Sleepover. We are offering a night of games, fun and movies while mom and dad go in search of as much fun as we will be having!

Drop your children off at 6:00pm on Dec. 31 and pick them up between 10:00 and 10:30 on Jan. 1.

Cost:

\$125 for one child
\$200 for two siblings
\$250 for three siblings

In order to offer this program, we need a minimum of 10 registrants. Please RSVP by Dec. 15 by calling Cindy Wood at 228-1197.

If you have any questions about the program, please contact Jane Cox by calling 228-1197 or e-mail JCox@StFrancisSchool.org.

Holiday Wish Fund

Just one week left! Be a part of our school-wide Holiday "Thank You" to all St. Francis teachers and staff and send your contribution today!

Please refer to the red information sheet that accompanies this newsletter for more information.

December and January Dates of Note

Dec. 5—9, Scholastic Book Fair
Extended hours until 6:30 on
Tues., Dec. 6th

Dec. 9, Teacher Appreciation Luncheon
sponsored by the 8th grade

Dec. 13, 7:00pm community performance of our drama department's touring musical, "The Spinmeister"

Dec. 14, 2:00 Dismissal

Dec. 15 & 16, Preschool Holiday Parties

Dec. 16, Lower School Holiday Parties

Dec. 16th, 11:30 Dismissal

Dec. 21, 7:00 Alumni Reception
Mult-purpose Room

Jan. 2, Teacher in-service Day
(please note that this is rescheduled from Jan. 13, which is a normal school day)

Jan. 3, Tuesday, School resumes

Jan. 16, Martin Luther King Holiday

For a full listing of activities and events, please visit our website at www.StFrancisSchool.org

Dare to Care Food Drive

The Student Council is sponsoring a Dare to Care Food Drive through Dec. 9th. Collection boxes are located in our main lobby. Some of the items of particular need are:

Canned Meats
Beef Stew
Chili
Hearty Canned Soups
Ravioli with Meat
Canned Fruit and Fruit Juices
Spaghetti and Meatballs
Peanut Butter
Spaghetti and Rice
Saltine Crackers
Pork and Beans
Boxed Cereals (cold and hot)

Please send in a few items to support our students in this very worthwhile endeavor. If you have any questions, Kathy Emrich is the faculty sponsor.

Students Around Town

Center Stage Academy is presenting **School House Rock!** Four of our talented students will be performing in this musical. The performers are 4th grader Sophia Dearie and 8th graders Meaghan Heit, Ailsa Hoke, and Emilia Shiring.

The performance is in the Linker Auditorium at Jewish Community Center on Dec. 11th at 5:30pm. Tickets are \$5 for adults and \$2 for children. For more information, call 459-0660, ext. 0.

Several SFS students will once again be performing in the Louisville Skating Academy's **Nutcracker on Ice**. The St. Francis skaters are:

8th grader **Tim Taylor**
(Russian Skater)

4th grader **Lila Asher**
(Fairy and a Hungarian Skater)

5th grader **Emily Lacher**
(Fairy and a Hungarian Skater)

5th grader **Ellie Najewicz**
(Fairy and a Flower)

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Friday, Dec. 16, 7:30pm
Saturday, Dec. 17, 2:00pm and 7:30pm
Sunday, Dec. 18, 2:00pm
At Iceland Sports Complex
1701 UPS Drive

The SFS Drama Department is sponsoring a touring musical of **"The Spinmeister."** The students will do 11 performances around Kentuckiana the week of Dec. 12 including an evening performance for St. Francis School and community friends. Please plan to join us at 7:00 on Tuesday, Dec. 13 to view this special performance and then join with us in refreshments and a holiday sing-along.

"The Spinmeister" is based on the fairytale Rumpelstiltskin and is appropriate for people of all ages. Please feel free to bring a friend to this performance.

The following faculty sponsors have been working with the middle school students on this project: Ed Gupton, Angela Clark, Jane Cox and Bonnie Miller.

Chess Honors

Our chess team has been busy! The results of several competitions are summarized below.

LCC Fall Tournament, Oct. 1, 2005

The K-3 team won 1st place. Team members: Gilman Bagga, David Hendren, Braden Barnett, Justin Stevens and Mark Frenzel-Sulyok.

Alex Koby (1st grader) won 4th place in the K-5 section.

KYSOC Scholastic Chess Tournament, Oct. 29, 2005 (Carrollton, KY)

Justin Stevens finished 2nd in the K-3 division.

KCD Scholastic Chess Tournament Nov 5th, 2005

Team awards:

K-1 team finished 3rd (scoring for the team were Roberto Bolli, Alex Koby, Aaron Lattis

K-3 team finished 4th (Team consisted of David Hendren, Braden Barnett, Gilman Bagga, Mark Frenzel-Sulyok, Lucas Asher, Justin Stevens, Jonathan Schmidt...scoring for the team were David Hendren, 3 points; Braden Barnett, 3 points; Gilman Bagga, 3 points; and Justin Stevens, 4 points)

Individual Awards:

K-1 Alex Koby tied for first place! He finished second in the tie breaker. Roberto Bolli won 5th place.



Just Horsin' Around!

Samantha Dabney competed in the National Academy Saddlebred Championship in Murfreesboro, TN on Nov. 5 & 6. She won third place in the qualifying round for the 7 & 8 year old pleasure class and was able to compete in the final round.

THANK YOU...

Our thanks go to Laurie Kinney for chairing our Grandparents' Day event and to the many bakers who stepped up to provide delicious treats for our honored guests. This event takes a great deal of volunteer effort and coordination.

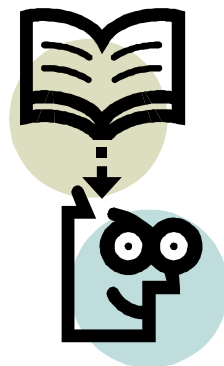
Mrs. Stevenson thanks Ann Hendren for providing bird feeders, complete with seed, for all the second graders at the beginning of our bird field study in science. These feeders gave all students the opportunity to experience feeding the birds at home, and they have enjoyed seeing the birds come to their yard. What a great extension of science class to their lives outside of school!

From the PE Department

Students in Grades 5 through 8 are beginning their volleyball unit this week. They will be learning how to play volleyball using the proper techniques and according to the rules of the game.

Scholastic Book Fair

Liz Bevarly is leading the effort for our Scholastic Book Fair which runs from Dec. 5 through Dec. 9. The book fair will be set up in the library and will be open from 8:00 until 3:00 daily with **extended hours until 6:30pm on Tuesday, Dec. 6**. If you are able to volunteer to help with the book fair, please contact Liz.



Money raised from the annual book fair is used to purchase BOOKS for the library ... we need to stock our shelves with replacements of the classics and also new titles the kids are asking for ... and they're asking every week!

Copies of the St. Francis Cookbook, A la Abacus, will also be available during the book fair. The cost is \$15 and proceeds go to the Parents' Association.

Communications Plan

We want to take this opportunity to clarify the timing and means of communications from the school. St. Francis School is following the trend of school's nationwide and reducing its reliance on paper forms of communication. The benefits include being:

1. More cost efficient use of materials and human resources
2. More timely delivery of news
3. More reliable delivery of communications
4. More environmentally responsible

The grid below summarizes our primary forms of communication.

Type of Communication	Frequency	Method
School-wide Printed Newsletter	Monthly on the last Friday of each month beginning in January	Sent home with the students
E-news	Weekly on Fridays by 5:00pm	E-mail
E-Alerts	As needed to announce information that is time sensitive	E-mail
Lower School Classroom Letters	Weekly	In the Friday folders
Specialist News	Periodically, typically twice a year	In the Friday folders for Lower School students and given to Middle School students to bring them home
Phone alerts	As needed to announce urgent news related to cancellations, safety issues, etc.	You will receive a call at your home phone number
Homework assignments	Updated weekly	Website
Calendars of events	On-going	Website
Reminder of weekly events	Weekly	Marquee sign as you exit the Goshen Campus
Parent Handbook	Annually; updated as needed	Paper version is coming home today. Updates will be made to the on-line version with a notice of revision.

Responsibilities of Parents in the Communication Process

Provide the school with a current e-mail address. You can provide as many addresses as you wish. For example, many parents provide addresses for both the father and mother or work and home addresses. E-mail address should be sent to Bob Deitel.

If you do not have access to e-mail and require a paper copy of all communications, please contact your child's lead teacher or advisor. At the present time, we are aware of only one person who has requested paper communication.

If you would like the number for telephone alerts to be something other than your home number, please contact Kristan Murphy and give her the emergency contact number you would like to be used.

Periodically review the calendars on the website for upcoming events and athletics schedules. If you have any questions regarding the calendars, please contact the following:

Goshen calendar – Cindy Wood; Athletic Calendar – Rosanne Conlan; Preschool Calendar – Shannon Delahanty

If you have any questions or comments about the communication plan, please contact Lori Dabney at 228-1197, Ext. 104.