

St. Francis School Monthly News

October 2006

The debate over school improvement in this country has raged vigorously for more than twenty years. American schools and school districts have had a hard time adjusting

to a media and technology-saturated culture, and student performance has not improved as a result of government-driven programs like No Child Left Behind. In fact, there is a very good argument that NCLB is making things worse.

Increasingly, schools attempt to stem the tide of poor performance by emphasizing the outward trappings of learning – test scores, grades, and the number of hours a student spends working – rather than learning itself. As a result, children absorb a powerful message that no well-meaning educator (or parent) ever meant to send: that it's the grades and test scores and toil that matter most, not the quality of the ideas and skills acquired. No wonder the most common question a modern teacher ever hears is: Is this going to be on the test? And if the answer is “no,” most students stop listening, and learning, at that point.

One very puzzling aspect of the school improvement debate is that the educational research is clear about what enhances student learning ... and that that research is often ignored.

For instance, for 40 years, not a single homework study that I know of has established a link between homework and cognitive growth below high school. To the contrary, studies often found a negative connection between the two. In addition, the countries that consistently outperform us seem just as consistently to downplay the importance and amount of homework.

Why then does the dominant trend in today's schools, public and private, reflect a steady increase in the number of hours students are expected to work at home?! In other words, finding ourselves on the wrong path, we have decided to double our speed.

Fortunately, other voices are being heard. It would be hard to find a more informative summary of the homework question today, and what the research says about it, than “The Myth about Homework,” in Time magazine earlier this month. In case you missed this article, you can find it at the following link:

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1376208,00.html>

At St. Francis we do indeed give homework. However, we aim to do so without illusions of its overall worth. We recognize for example that for most children homework in reasonable quantities reinforces concepts, work habits, and good time management. Too much homework, on the other hand, will actually diminish learning.

As always, we count on your input to help us sustain the quality and quantity of work that will maximize your child's overall growth. We also ask that you help us spread the word: The research is on our side.

Important Parent Event: From 6:30 –8 PM Thursday, March 8, the Kentucky Association of Independent Schools will host Madelyn Swift, internationally acclaimed speaker and author on discipline and communication. Everyone who hears Madelyn wants to hear more and devours her books, so put this evening aside to enrich your understanding of good parenting. The event, which is free to the KAIS community, will be held at Kentucky Country Day school.

Nanny Help: We are hearing of lots of need for reliable nanny help in our community. If you know of someone who would be interested in working for a St. Francis family in this capacity, please pass the name to our office. Many thanks.

MORE HOMEWORK?

FALL BREAK:
NO SCHOOL
THIS MONDAY



BEGINNING TUESDAY: SIGN UP FOR PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES (OCT. 12-13)

Conferences will be held in 15-minute blocks (with 5 minutes between each) from:

* 4:30-8 PM Thursday, Oct. 12
(a regular school day)

* 8 AM-12:30 PM Friday, Oct. 13
(no classes this day)

Please note that our conference hours have changed from past practice.

Sign up by calling Kelly Hovey in our main office, 228-1197, between this Tuesday (10/3) and next Tuesday, Oct 10. Please speak to Kelly directly; don't attempt to set your appointments by voicemail.

John Delautre

FROM THE MIDDLE SCHOOL by Reed Gabhart, head of middle school

ON TUESDAY, SEPT. 19, our eighth graders took a remarkable field trip downtown. They visited St. Francis High School and heard a talk from environmental activist Julia Butterfly Hill. Her interactive discussion was provocative, and our students not only listened but also asked questions. Hill's focus on making a personal difference in the world was a great example of incorporating environmental awareness into our curriculum this year.

Our morning also included a visit to the Louisville Free Public Library to see a traveling photography exhibit on the 9/11 tragedy. Our eighth graders were briefed beforehand on the emotional impact of the exhibit and on displaying proper respect. Their response and behavior once again demonstrated their maturity and character – so much so that the police officer on duty complimented our school as we left.

We want you to read some of the students' own words, from Patrick Donovan's language arts classes and Nita Duechle's humanities classes. Students wrote reflections on the photos. We've included two poems and fragments of longer works. I think, as you read the excerpts, you'll agree with my final words to the students as we returned: "We're proud of you."

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"No national landmark could ever capture that feeling that we, as a class, felt after viewing the 9/11 photo exhibit. It was a touching testimonial to the lives lost on that day."

-- Lexie Lancaster

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"The photos in the 'We Remember 9/11' exhibit were displayed in an unfinished room. It was dusty, and under construction, and it reminded me so much of what it looked like when I went to visit Ground Zero, the remains of the Twin Tower attacks."

-- Olivia Tennant

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"A Simple Picture"
-- by Daniel Siladi

A simple picture
The suburbs
Two great towers
In the distance
When you look around
You see the scene
You hear the familiar cars
You smell the familiar smog
That you can almost
Taste upon your breath
You feel the picture flutter
Against the gentle breeze
As you hold it tightly
Between your fingers
Then you look past
And it brings tears
To your eyes
For the gleaming structures
The beacons of hope
The shining towers
They are gone

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"All the pictures were set up on chain link fences with barbed wire over the top. It had the feeling of Ground Zero and no one said a word. It was so cold and sad, I don't think anyone could say a word."

-- Charlie Pollard

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"The 9/11 exhibit room was filled with emotions and tragic memories.... I felt like I was being pulled into a black hole. [But, I was saved by the] hugs from my friends who made me feel loved, hopeful and thankful."

-- Claire Johnson

"9/11 Exhibit"

-- by Brianna Barnett

All is quiet in the empty room
there are nothing
but pictures.
Time slowly passes
minute by minute.
Shuffling feet
and then a sob.
And another
until finally
the tears stream
and we hold each other.
In this moment
of reflecting back
to the terrible memories
of September 11, 2001
we are there
for each other.
Everyone has a different
memory
from that day.
Everyone
had different
experiences,
Different emotions.
We are all
so different
from each other
but now
we unite
and help
one another
through the sadness
and the pain.
The pictures
reflect the horror.
They show
the terror
in those faces
and the
sadness
sweeping
every corner
of New York
on that day.
Everything we
forgot
we now remember
and together
we cry
for those lost
and those
who never found
their loved ones.
And in this
moment
we all feel
pain.
But we feel
love.
Love, because
our pain is
shared at last.

PARENT ASSOCIATION NEWS

by **Deirdre Barnett**, SFPA president

Here are the dates of our Teacher Appreciation Luncheons for this school year:

October 20 - 8th grade	February 9 - 3rd and 4th grades
November 10 - 7th grade	March 23 - 1st and 2nd grades
December 8 - 6th grade	April 20 - JK and K

Parent reps will contact the families in each month's grade to send in food and drinks and to help with set-up and clean-up. Please mark these dates on your calendars so you can join us in honoring the wonderful faculty and staff at SFS.

Bring in Box Tops and Labels

Two painless fundraising efforts – the General Mills Box Tops for Education program and the Campbell's Labels for Education program – are now underway for the Parents Association.

It's easy to help out! Just clip the box top or label from the hundreds of participating, everyday products; place the tops and labels in a plastic Ziploc bag; and drop the bag our collection box in the Main Amp. Every box top is worth cash to the school, and the labels can be exchanged for school merchandise. Both can accumulate quickly.

Two lists of participating products are attached to this newsletter. More information can be found at:

<http://www.boxtops4education.com> <http://www.labelsforeducation.com>

Please call parent Reed Van Inwegen, at 896-8453, if you have questions.

Classroom Rep Update

Monica Lipman has volunteered to be another room rep, along with Beverly Lancaster, for the Junior Kindergarten. Thanks!

THANK YOU TO ...

- * Chair Lori Dabney, all the room reps, and the many volunteers who worked tirelessly to make this year's Eagle Festival a rousing success
- * all parents and students who participated in the Fall Fundraiser
- * Ann Hendren for all of her hard work with the Used Book Sale and especially her ongoing efforts with the Fall Fundraiser
- * Katy Bade for all her help with the Fall Fundraiser
- * Kim Mackin, Michelle Monda, and Vlasta Ross for helping to verify fundraiser orders
- * Reed Van Inwegen (mom of Cole Steiner) for volunteering to chair the Box Tops and Labels for Education programs

EAGLE SKI & SNOWBOARD CLUB for students in 6th, 7th & 8th grades

-- by club organizer, parent **Mike Schafer**

Many of the 8th graders have asked when Ski Club is going to start. It's time to start thinking about it. Come to the initial planning meeting: 3:15 PM Tuesday, October 10, in the Multipurpose Room.

As with last year, we will ski at Perfect North Slopes -- a 90-minute drive from school -- on most Fridays in January and February. We will leave from the SFS athletic complex parking lot at 2:15 and return somewhere around midnight. Parent involvement is essential. We do not rent a bus, so parents are asked to help transport if they are able.

A club pass for our Friday date will cost \$110 plus \$66 for rentals. This includes 6 lift tickets and 4 lessons. The price -- available to students, parents and teachers -- is a great deal. A regular lift ticket costs \$43. Additional pass options are available if you plan on skiing more than the club dates.

To purchase passes (or explore additional options), visit <http://www.perfectnorth.com>. Select the Club Log-In at the far upper right; then search for Eagle Ski Club using the ABC chart. Type in our club password: farside. Select Purchase Your Club Pass Now. Type in our Group Name and Password again. Continue to follow online instructions

TO GET THE CLUB PRICE, you must PURCHASE online by NOVEMBER 12. Also, check out the photo gallery from the one trip last year I remembered to bring a camera. (I will do better this year.)

All of last year's participants -- young and old -- had a great time. I hope to see you on the slopes. If you have any questions, e-mail me at mike@mikeschaferlaw.com or come to the meeting.



OUR PA's LANDSCAPE COMMITTEE NEEDS YOU!

The Landscape Committee needs additional volunteers to help weed the many gardens around the school. Meet and weed with the group, or work on your own. For more information, please contact parent Laurie Kinney at 228-5772 or kinney1@bellsouth.net.



OCTOBER 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 at 228-1197 x112 before your scheduled date.

Monday, October 2 - Fall Break, no school
Tuesday, October 3 - Nancye Faulkner, Holly Winebrenner, Rene Prys
Wednesday, October 4 - Amy Dishman, Abby Yelton, Beverly Lancaster
Thursday, October 5 - Michelle Heit, Cynthia McAfee, Ann Hendren
Friday, October 6 - Laurie Kinney, Debbie Morgan, Levetta Perry

Monday, October 9 - Ginger Campbell, Mary Ann Pollard, Amanda Fields
Tuesday, October 10 - Lana Tyulmenkova, Suzy Bagga, Michele Monda
Wednesday, October 11 - Carolyn Wetterer, Vlasta Ross, Gretta Manni
Thursday, October 12 - Nancy Scott, Patti Adkins, Ann Hendren
Friday, October 13 - Parent Conferences, no school

Monday, October 16 - Lisa Wiley, Christina Ullum, Rene Prys
Tuesday, October 17 - Robin LeMastus, Suzy Bagga, Dianne Siciliano
Wednesday, October 18 - Sherry Stevens, Kim Mackin, Risa Koby
Thursday, October 19 - Michelle Heit, Cynthia McAfee, Ann Hendren
Friday, October 20 - Laurie Kinney, Catherine Chandler, Tracy Lattis

Monday, October 23 - Mary Ann Pollard, Amanda Fields, Dace Maki
Tuesday, October 24 - Kathy Baucom, Steve Paradis
Wednesday, October 25 - Katy Bade, Georgette Kidwell, Bob Barnett
Thursday, October 26 - Mary Herrmann, Patti Adkins, Ann Hendren
Friday, October 27 - Amy Lavin, Carolyn Thebert, Tanya Greenberg

Monday, October 30 - Jeannette Gettelfinger, Bob Barnett
Tuesday, October 31 - Nancye Faulkner, Holly Winebrenner, Rene Prys

ATTENTION FAMILIES OF STUDENTS IN GRADES 4-8: SAVE NOVEMBER 9 FOR "EARTH AND SKY NIGHT"

The SFS Science Department is planning a fun-filled evening of exploration of the land and sky on Thursday, Nov. 9. We will begin with student-led tours of the Nature Preserve so that families can view our wonderful property and hear about the learning opportunities that students have there. Later, we will be assisted by the Louisville Astronomical Society in an exploration of deep sky objects visible from our property.

This evening is for families with students in grades 4-8. Those students will get a more detailed flier; but here are some basics: We'll start at 5 PM with the "Earth" portion and continue with the "Sky" portion after dark. Bring a flashlight. Stay as long as you wish. Keep your fingers crossed for good weather!

OUR ENRICHMENT PROGRAM OFFERS FULL-DAY CARE ON OCT. 13 CONFERENCE DAY: We'll have no classes on our Friday, Oct. 13, parent-teacher conference day; but Lower School students may sign up for optional child care from 8 AM to 6 PM. The cost is \$65. To sign up, call the office, 228-1197.

"LOST & FOUND" ALERT: With colder temperatures coming and jacket/hat/glove weather not far behind, please remember to label your children's clothing with their names. Also, we've moved our Middle School clothing Lost & Found to the stage in the Multipurpose Room. (Lost books and folders are kept in a box outside of Ms. Alexander's science classroom.)

PUMPKIN SALE AT SFS: NEXT WEEK! We'll be selling pumpkins beginning next week during morning and afternoon carpools. Proceeds from the sale will go to the school. Look in front of school for parent Steve Paradis and his orange beauties.

PARENTS OF NEXT FALL'S KINDERGARTNERS:

If you currently have a 4-year-old who doesn't attend our preschool, please call our Admissions Office ASAP to request paperwork to apply for our 2007-08 kindergarten class.

We currently have 12 children in our full-day Junior Kindergarten program, so it looks as if we will have a bumper crop of kindergartners next fall. Siblings of our current K-8 students have first priority in admissions, and we've already distributed applications to 4-year-old siblings at our preschool.

If you have a prospective 2007-08 kindergartner at home or another preschool this year, let us know immediately.

STAGE PROPS NEEDED FOR OUR FALL DRAMA, "THE SUNSHINE BOYS"

The play takes place in the 1970s, and the principal character's apartment is rundown and shabby. We can use:

- * ugly old couch
- * beat-up old refrigerator and stove (but light enough to be moveable)
- * several old chairs, or an old recliner or love seat to match the era
- * end table or two; old coffee table
- * old TV (and rabbit ears)
- * small kitchenette-type table
- * rental-style hospital bed
- * small office desk with 2 chairs
- * hand-held or larger "TV camera"
- * apartment radiator-style heater
- * old Abbott & Costello or Laurel & Hardy memorabilia
- * vintage movie posters

BRING IN YOUR OLD CELL PHONES FOR US TO RECYCLE

We then can submit the old phones for cash, just as we do with the empty printer ink and toner cartridges we collect from you. Thanks to all who have been doing this.

RECURRING REMINDER

In addition to this monthly, paper newsletter, we send weekly e-mail news updates and periodic e-mail alerts.

Please read them; we rely on them to provide much information to you. If you aren't receiving our e-mailings, contact us at News@StFrancisSchool.org.