

FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

Welcome to this year's first issue of our school's Newsletter. In this first edition, I wish to give you an overall view of our current plans for our school and the things that we have accomplished thus far... sort of a State of the School Address. All our efforts are towards a comprehensive vision that seeks our school's growth at different levels including:

- Academic Excellence – We have invested in a new curriculum for Middle School Science and French. This, together with last year's new Math curriculum K-6 continues our efforts in keeping an up-to-date curriculum. We also continue our emphasis on integration of technology in the classroom, with the addition of five new Smart Boards with their laptop computers and projectors. Now each homeroom will have its own Smart Board! We have strengthened our academic support program at the RISEN Learning Resource Center, by hiring Ms. Stacy Mares, our new full time Special Education Coordinator, as well as our library with our new librarian, Mrs. Monica DiIorio.
- Improved facilities – In addition to the physical plant improvements from last year (parking lights, kitchen, offices, copy room, teacher's lounge and conference room) this summer's improvements include the renovation of the 7th grade room (science lab) and 6th grade room (including removal of asbestos, new floors, ceilings, light, closets, blinds and countertops). Also, ceiling lights for first, third, fourth grade, Art room, cafeteria and lobby. New exit lights have also been installed throughout the building. We have acquired new tables for 1st grade and new desks and chairs for grades 2-7 and they are in place. The new pre-K playground equipment has also been installed. Coming soon we will install a new roof over the 6th & 7th grades and the kitchen. Our next project will be to beautify the front of the Church and School building. It will consist of fencing around the grass, paving the grassy area by the curb with beautiful pavers and adding some benches. And we hope to accomplish more this year!
- Increased Safety – We have continued the physical reorganization we started last year with children's safety in mind. Some classrooms have been relocated so that they are mostly between the back wing and the cafeteria wing. We moved the administrative offices, between the two main entrances to the school. The nurse's office was also relocated closer to the students to the former administrative offices. This year, our Art teacher, Mrs. Ann Griffin, is also our Assistant Principal in charge of discipline and safety. She is constantly monitoring our facilities to ensure safety and, together with me, will be working on an updated crisis plan/safety program for our school. Together with our school nurse, Mrs. Cathi McMickle, we have formed a team to care for the health and wellness of our students, especially as we may face new challenges and emergencies.
- Nurturing Environment for Our Students – Last year we expanded extracurricular activities with the addition of new clubs, such as the Service Club under the new Campus Ministry, the Newspaper and the Student Ambassador Program, which allows 8th graders to play a more active role in representing our school and in recruitment. I am happy to announce the creation of a new tutoring program called DRIFT (direct reinforcement integrating fundamental teaching). Under the direction of our third grade teacher, Ms. Cathy Santangelo, this program will offer tutoring to students in a specific area of need at no cost. This program will be offered on Mondays, starting October 3, from 3:15-4:15 PM in the school library. We continue our comprehensive discipline approach in which every grade balances an age-appropriate recognition and motivational program with correctional measures for inappropriate behavior, as well daily interaction between the principal and the students, via morning greeting, daily prayer and announcements, and personal goodbyes at dismissal time. The pastor also visits the classrooms regularly, at least once a week.

- **Affirmative Work Environment for Our Faculty and Staff** – It is our interest to foster a work environment that is conducive to greater collaborations and positive interpersonal relations. Last year we gave our school a new academic structure, dividing it into sections and departments each with a coordinator. This improves continuity, sharing of resources, networking and communication. We also implemented the Heart Card program, in which faculty and staff members can nominate peers to acknowledge their special efforts or accomplishments. In addition, the second Mass of the month features our faculty and staff as lectors, gift bearers, and Eucharistic ministers. This year we have reorganized our faculty's schedule providing more planning time. In addition, we plan to increase and improve the opportunities for professional development for our faculty and staff by scheduling in-school training and development workshops, establish a peer-mentoring program to share knowledge and training, create opportunities for our Special Education Coordinator to serve as a resource to our teachers, acquiring new resources for development, and exploring how partnering with our Local Education Agency (LEA) and nearby institutions of higher learning can enhance our professional development opportunities.
- **Strengthening School/Parish Partnership** – There is unity of leadership between the school and the parish. There is excellent communication between pastor and principal and we share a vision for the parish and school with greater involvement of our parish members. In fact, Sacred Heart Church Director of Religious Education, Mrs. Marissa Mills, has been a leader in our Service Club as well as on our 8th grade retreat, SHC Faith Formation students contributed to our Marathon fundraiser last year and will contribute again this year, and last October, the Knights of Columbus sponsored Oktoberfest Dinner/Dance to benefit our Science lab project, and they are doing it again this year. This activity will take place on Saturday, October 10, 2009 after the 4:30 PM Mass, in the cafeteria. Suggested donation is \$20.00 for adults and \$12.00 for students 12-18 years.
- **Effective Use of External Resources** – All three grants that we submitted were approved: Catholic Foundation Grant for Non-tuition Needs (requesting updated Compass Software for our Academic Support Program - **\$2,405**), Catholic Foundation Grant for Tuition Assistance (**\$12,000**), and Sullivan for tuition assistance (**\$5,000**). With the money from the Groton Educational Grant that Mrs. Sparks obtained last year, we have acquired five digital cameras (two Crayola brand and three Fuji brand) for our students to use both as part of the Art curriculum and to support classroom projects in our school, as well as Adobe Photoshop software to enhance the use of these cameras. Donations to our school went up last year (cash for science lab and school renovations, new computers for our teachers, etc.) and this year we have already received a donation to the school library of \$210.00. We continue our efforts for media coverage, and, in fact, our school is featured in a two-page spread in this month's edition of the Four County Catholic. And this year we plan to increase our efforts to establish an alumni initiative.
- **Strengthening Our Catholic Christian Identity** – We seek to establish this through our emphasis on school/parish partnership, celebration of sacraments and liturgical feasts, expanded Campus Ministry, collaborations with our parish's DRE, Service Club, annual retreats for our faculty and staff as well as for our 8th graders, daily prayer with the principal and the monthly teacher's Mass. As always, we continue to support many charitable projects throughout the year.
- **Improving Overall School Perception** – Our new academic structure, emphasis on academic support and technology, improvements to our physical plant, greater community exposure and collaborations and a strong Catholic Christian identity should help elevate our school perception. In addition, we are always looking for ways to improve our school web site. Our teachers have already electronically submitted their course syllabi, which are now featured on our web site. Finally, our School Advisory Board has worked very hard in comprehensive Five-Year Strategic Plan that will be published very soon.

We hope that through these efforts we can continue to establish a reputation of a school on the path towards distinction. There is still much to be done and there is always room for improvement, but with God's help and through the hard work of our entire community, we can make it happen.

In Christ's love,

Dr. Calle