

Smack Dab in the Middle!

A Monthly Newsletter serving the Middle School Families of St. Francis Xavier School

We Learn, Live and Serve In Christ

All classes are in the third unit of their texts entitled “Jesus Christ.” Each of the three chapters explores Jesus’ Relationships, Life in Christ, and the Church. Each Monday the middle school students and staff gather together in the courtyard area to begin our week with an Advent prayer service.

This Friday, December 18, all Middle School students are going to work a morning shift at



Feed My Starving Children in Coon Rapids. Feed My Starving Children is a non-profit Christian organization committed to feeding God’s starving children, hungry in body and spirit. The approach is simple: children and adults hand-pack meals formulated specially for starving children, which are then shipped to more than 60 countries around the world.

This will count for two of the service hours each student needs to have by the end of 2nd quarter.

Mrs. Lenczewski

Great Books Bring Life to the Classroom

Language Arts 6

It all began with Bilbo Baggins....the hobbit who unwillingly leaves his comfortable home in the shire with a band of dwarves to face unknown dangers. The 6th graders have begun this great adventure, *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien. What do 6th graders have in common with hobbits? They both have sharp eyes and ears. They both like parties, they like to laugh and they like to give and receive presents. Over the next several weeks, the 6th graders will explore this classic novel. Students are studying vocabulary and literary devices as we read and discuss the novel. We continue to work on a spelling unit each week and students write a journal entry each Friday. We are finishing studying nouns and will move on to adjectives.

Language Arts 7

We are reading the timeless classic from Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*. Although the students are familiar with this story, we are looking at its setting of Victorian



England and Dickens’ commentary on that society’s treatment of the poor and oppressed. Seeing the live performance at the Guthrie this year added another dimension to our discussions. Along with the novel vocabulary, we are learning about the literary elements that make Dickens fun to read. Students continue to study Greek and Latin roots weekly. We are also working on identifying sentence parts in compound sentences.

Language Arts 8

We are reading Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*. This great American novel has so many insights with its revelation of society’s evils and ironies contrasted with Huck’s supposed ignorance. The novel makes for interesting discussions. Students are working on weekly vocabulary assignments and are finishing studying direct objects.

Mrs. Lenczewski

Super Scientists

The 8th grade scientists have just finished a unit on weathering and erosion. We saw a great DVD on the causes and results of the Dust Bowl of the Dirty Thirties.

They have also tested different soils as to porosity and permeability. Our wonderful home state of Minnesota has four big watersheds (Superior, Mississippi, Hudson Bay and Missouri). These along with the resulting divides provided a good excuse to draw a map of Minnesota and fill in the major rivers, lakes, watersheds and divides. We have some budding surveyors! They also studied glaciers and different types of weathering and soil formation. They had a good look at caves and some of the formations found in them. They studied flash floods, aquifers and river formations. The next big unit is weather,



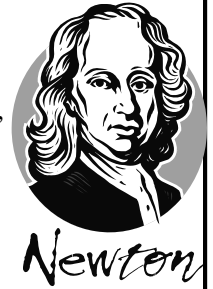
starting with the atmosphere and its layers, including the ozone layer and its disappearing act. They are also looking at pressure. And just why does a hot pop can implode upon immersion into cold water???

The 7th graders are now practicing botanists. After looking at algae under a microscope and studying different types of fungi, they are dissecting real plants. So far they have taken apart moss and horsetails. Next will be a flower. They did a great job designing their own plant: Lego trees, money trees, puff potatoes and a candy/shoe plant to name a few. They also designed a bird feeder using only recycled materials vying for prizes for creativity, practicality and the use of most materials.

Now I want them to go home to be used! I have filled them with sunflower seeds and in the cold weather the birds will appreciate it. After Christmas we will start the study of the animal kingdom.

The 6th graders have finally finished the huge unit on forces. This unit included the study of motion, speed, gravity, acceleration, velocity, friction, inertia, action

and reaction, Newton's three Laws of Motion, lift, drag, thrust and weight in flying, and buoyancy. They had a lot of fun



with toy cars. John Schoder and Brett Otten won the big glider flying contest in the gym. John's flew over 90 feet and Brett's stayed in the air circling for almost 9 seconds. The next big unit is called the Nature of Matter which is basically a study of chemistry. Do you realize how many marbles, grains of sand and milliliters of water can all fit into the same cup???

Mrs. Fiedler

Becoming International Videographers

Each student's main focus this quarter is the Spanish/Technology short iMovie about themselves. Pictures were due on November 30th and since then students have been actively adding pictures, transitions, titles and more. Soon they will be recording their voice to add as a track on the short movie, all of which will be in Spanish.



Due to the Christmas program rehearsals and Christmas Break, we may have to adjust our schedule in order for students to have more time to work on the project. It is due January 14th, which is not very far away.

Along with the iMovie, we continue to work on our keyboarding skills, internet

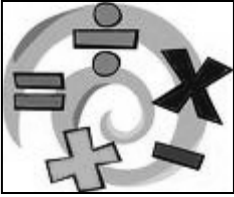
safety and recently watched a great video Fair Use and Copyright.

The internet is a great tool for all. Unfortunately people have used it for purposes that are not always good or appropriate. We continue to discuss internet safety throughout the year.



Mrs. Yakesh

Mastering Mathematics

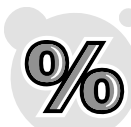


6th grade mathematicians have worked through decimals and have moved onto fractions. We have reviewed greatest common factor and least common multiple. We have also explored prime factorization by creating factor trees and writing the factorization using exponents. After Christmas we begin adding and subtracting fractions.

7th grade mathematicians have breezed through equations and inequalities as well as ratios in chapters 4 and 5. We have just started working with percents this week in Chapter 6.

8th grade mathematicians have worked through Chapters 4 and 5 focusing on proportions and percents. We recently began Chapter 6, which covers topics of equations and inequalities. We will be deep into solving multi step equations by Christmas.

Mrs. Marsyla



Tooting Our Horns



Middle School Band students have settled into a routine of a 20 minute lesson each week, along with a half hour of full band.

We have been making some wonderful progress with our playing!

As of late, we have been working on Christmas music for the program on December 17th.

Following winter break, students will be learning ensemble etiquette, theory, and some history. We will also begin working on our selections for the upcoming Mardi Gras dinner on February 16th.

Go Band!

Mrs. Fantauzza



St. Francis Xavier School Announces A Honor Roll Students



St. Francis Xavier Middle School is proud to announce 1st Quarter A Honor Roll. Students made the A honor roll by having a GPA in all classes of 3.75 or higher. Students were honored with a gift certificate to

Dominos Pizza.

Congratulations to the following:

**Drew Borgerding, Dominick Dahmen,
Luke Merz, Dylan O’Borsky, Lucas Smith,
Gabriel Brovege-Trossen, Anna Cassady,
Nicholas Swearingen, Jonathan Thielen,
Maria Braun, James Remer,
and Dominic Shovelain.**

In case you lost count, that is twelve students in all! (Almost half of the Middle School!) The Middle School team of teachers hopes to see this number grow in the coming quarters.

Congratulations once again!!!

Mrs. Marsyla, Mrs. Fiedler,

Mrs. Lenczewski & Mr. Muller

St. Francis Xavier Alumni Trivia

What percentage of last year’s eighth grade graduating class earned a spot on the **Ninth Grade Honor Roll** for First Quarter at the Buffalo High School?

- A. 55%
- B. 68%
- C. 92%

The correct answer is C. 92% Hats off to our Alumni! We are very proud of you!

STFX Middle School Team

Nancy Lenczewski:	MS Religion MS Language Arts
Erin Marsyla:	MS Math MS Health
Al Muller:	MS Social Studies
Carol Fiedler:	MS Science
Joy Swearingen:	K - 8 Music
Lyn Fantauzza:	4—8 Band
George Mead:	K - 8 Phy. Ed.
Rachel Yakesh:	K - 8 Computer
Iliana Gramstad:	K - 8 Spanish
Mary Mahon:	MS Art
Jan Hance:	MS FACS
Don Soupir:	MS Tech. Ed.

New Bulletin Board

Have you been down to the Middle School wing lately? If you have you may have noticed our new (HUGE) bulletin board. Students and parents can expect to see this filled with exciting things from pictures of recent Middle School events to completed class projects. Mrs. Fantauzza is even posting the weekly band schedules on the board. Coming in January there will also be a calendar displayed and, as projects and tests are assigned, they will be posted there. Middle School teachers hope that students will check the calendar often to make sure they aren't missing any assignments and can study accordingly. Parents are also encouraged to check out the bulletin board. Feel free to check back often as things may change frequently.



Healthy Lifestyles



6th grade has completed their menus and overall they were wonderful, I think they enjoyed the project. After Christmas we will begin a chapter on physical activity and why it is important in everyone's life.

7th grade has covered the topics of relationships, resolving conflicts, and tobacco. We are currently discussing alcohol and the effects it has on the body and in life. We will move on to other types of drugs after Christmas.

8th grade has been discussing conflict resolutions, preventing violence, and why it is important to have physical activity in your life. We will move on to nutrition and body image after Christmas.

With just over a month left of 2nd quarter and Health this year all three classes have been set up with heart rate monitors. These will be used for the next few weeks in gym classes to see where each student's heart rates are during the high activity time in gym. Stay tuned for the next Smack Dab issue to see our results.



Mrs. Marsyla

Middle School Phy. Ed.

The cold north winds chased our soccer unit inside. We are thankful for the nice November as we enjoyed some quality time finishing up our outdoor units. As we move inside, we jazz up our soccer game by playing both regular soccer and line soccer. We use several balls at one time to make it more exciting!



When we finish with soccer, it's on to speed ball. Speedball is a combination of soccer, football and basketball. It is a very fast moving and popular game!

Mr. Mead

Come, Emmanuel!

The Middle School students have had a very busy month. They have been responsible for all the music for each Advent liturgy at St. Francis Xavier School including all vocal music and instrumental accompaniment. We have also been preparing for our Christmas concert. They will be singing in 3 part harmony and also adding several instrumental parts throughout the concert. Several students will be singing with our Kindergarten and First graders as soloists. Everyone has been working really hard to help with set-up and take down for each large group rehearsal. Thank you everyone for all your help and great leadership!



Mrs. Swearingen