

# Smack Dab in the Middle!

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

## Welcome to a New and Exciting School Year!

Welcome to a new and exciting school year! We are grateful that you have chosen St. Francis Xavier School as the environment for your child's middle school years! We are blessed to have the opportunity to work with such fine students and families.

Welcome also to the first issue of *Smack Dab in the Middle* for the 2009/2010 School Year. *Smack Dab in the Middle* is a special newsletter to let you know what is happening at the St. Francis Xavier Middle School. Inside *Smack Dab* you will find out what students have recently studied, are currently studying or will be studying in the near future.

Wondering how to help your child suc-

ceed during the middle school years? Being involved in his or her education is as important now as it was when he or she was in kindergarten. Here are several ways you can support your child's learning and make a big difference in his or her school success.

**Ask questions** If you want to know what's going on at school, take the time to ask your child. If he or she says, "Nothing," follow up with a specific question. *Example:* "What chapter are you discussing in science class?" Talking about school helps your child see how important it is.

**Expect success** Tell your child what you expect from him or her at school—

such as hard work, perfect attendance and consistent study. Challenge your child to set goals in all classes. Or suggest that he or she tackle a difficult topic on a term paper. The important thing is for your child to learn, so don't overemphasize grades. Students achieve more when their efforts are encouraged.

**Work together** If something goes wrong at school, take a deep breath before you contact the teacher. Keep in mind that the teacher wants your child to learn as much as you do. Together, find solutions to the problem. Working calmly through problems will put your child back on the path to learning.

## Learning About the World Around Us

The school year started out with a bang this year! The 6<sup>th</sup> Graders are learning about the Ancient World, and who better to teach them about it than an ancient teacher? We will be studying the Middle East for the next month or so.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Grade is hopping right into the causes of the American Revolutionary War. Did you know that King George 3<sup>rd</sup> of England was a German? (Probably a relative of mine).

The 8<sup>th</sup> Graders will be studying Geography. They will be watching the superb



Disney movie "Earth." Also, we'll be looking at the forces that shape our earth and the people who live on it.

The Middle School ventured north for a field trip to Camp Ripley (near Little Falls) on Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup>. They have the finest Military Museum in the upper Midwest, and it was a great trip. Industrial Technology Teacher Don Soupir served as an outstanding guide for us. He was stationed there for many years in the Army Reserves.

I am planning to have two fantastic

speakers on Tuesday, October 27. These wonderful men, one from England, were both prisoners of the Japanese in WW2 and did slave labor on the River Kwai. Their stories are unforgettable! This will be open to the public.

We are planning a speaker for Veterans Day. He is receiving chemotherapy right now, but God willing, he'll be here to tell us what it was like to be on the Battleship USS Arizona at Pearl Harbor, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941. Again, we'd love the public to join us.

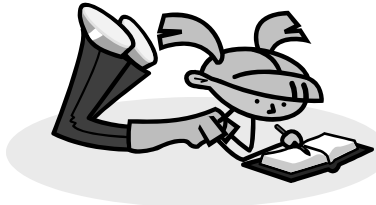
**Mr. Muller**

# A Novel Approach to Language Arts

## Language Arts 6

I am happy to see so many sixth graders who enjoy reading!

We are beginning to read a wonderful book, *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle, as a class. Along with the reading, we are working on vocabulary and comprehension and discussion questions. Students recently finished writing reports on a famous person and they are sharing them with the class. Students have weekly spelling work and a test on Fridays. As part of our writing class, students turn in one journal page each Friday. The topic can be free choice or they may write on a journal prompt given to them in class. I am enjoying reading what they have to say.



Their creativity and animation are refreshing. We are also working on writing descriptions. Students will also work on editing skills during Daily Oral Language.

## Language Arts 7

The 7<sup>th</sup> grade class is reading *The Giver*, a futuristic novel by Lois Lowry, set in a utopian society. Students began the year by creating a utopian society of their own and presenting these to the class. Hmm...do you suppose a student in seventh grade views a utopian society as we adults? We are working on studying vocabulary along with our discussions of the novel. Seventh graders are studying Greek and Latin roots. There is a spelling and vocabulary test each Friday. Students are writing one journal page per week, due Friday. It is fun to hear what

they have to say. Lastly students are working on their editing skills with Daily Oral Language.

## Language Arts 8

The eighth graders are beginning the year by reading George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. They did some research on historical figures, different forms of government, and some Russian history. These are being presented to the class.

The students are studying vocabulary and spelling and have a weekly test. They are also working on grammar and are writing a weekly journal page, due each Friday. Students are also developing a persuasive paper, due next week. Please persuade them to hand their paper in on time to receive full credit!

Mrs. Lenczewski

# Swinging, Soaking and Soaring into Science



The **eighth grade** scientists have been reviewing the metric measurement system. They went more into depth, using precision, accuracy, significant digits and learning all the units. This year, they will also be using the scientific method in their experiments more than before, the first one being the effect of string length on a swinging pendulum. Atoms (no, not you, Adam) is the current unit being studied. Learning the Periodic Table and what all the numbers mean can be a bit challenging. After nailing down mixtures versus compounds, ionic versus covalent bonds, and protons, electrons, neutrons, isotopes and all that, they will come up for



air and identify rocks and minerals. They should literally be picking rocks to identify for the next unit.

**Seventh graders** are making the science room look like a botanical garden currently. They are in the midst of identifying leaves (25 total) and putting them into a booklet. They also reviewed metric measurements and the scientific method, using Pampers® and Huggies® diapers. I'm not sure how accurate their measurements were since half of the teams claimed Pampers® to be the winner i.e. holding the most water and the other half claimed Huggies® the winner. Oh wee, they both held way more than anyone thought they could. Next they will be learning cell structure and making a cell city.

The first unit for the **sixth grade** is Forces. They also did some metric measuring and then using that knowledge had a little too much fun rolling marbles across the floor to determine speed. Next came pendulums, both single and twin, which were hung all over the room. After testing that, they are now measuring gravity using balances and spring scales. They will be dropping many objects in the next week or so to determine the effect of gravity on the different objects. They will also experiment with parachutes. Newton's laws of motion are next.



Mrs. Fiedler

# Sharing Our Musical Talents

Middle School Music class is here! We have had a great time getting to know each other a little better by preparing for the first two liturgies of the school year. For those students and parents that are new to the Middle School, we spend some time each Friday preparing for the next week's liturgy. Those who play instruments like guitar, flute, violin should come prepared to play every Friday in class. I will prepare their music folders so students can rehearse over the weekend.



Another exciting thing happening in the Middle School is our newly formed band program. Mrs. Lyn Fantauzza is our new director and has been busily setting up what is sure to be a great opportunity for our students! Our current goal is for the new band students to have something prepared in time for our Christmas program in December. Playing an instrument is a commitment of both time and effort but the results can be awesome! Remember to play your instruments each day!

The coming weeks will be filled with learning about the Baroque and Classical periods in music history and beginning our preparation for a truly exciting Grandparents Day on October 30<sup>th</sup>. This year's program promises to be awesome!



Here's a hint: **Elvis will be in the house!**

Mrs. Swearingen

## El verbo SER y ESTAR

Middle School students will be kicking off the year by learning the verb TO BE in Spanish. This is a very important lesson since it is one of the most used verbs in the Spanish language; and it is way different from the manner the verb is used in the English language. Emphasizing grammar will give the students the tools to feel more comfortable about forming sentences in a second language.

We will be working on oral skills as well; students will be required to talk about their day for 5 seconds (two sentences) in full Spanish. Also, little use of the English language will be stressed inside the classroom. All of this will be complemented with our very own and new PASAPORTE system, which enables students to earn extra credit on their assignments of choice by using their Spanish skills inside and outside of the classroom.

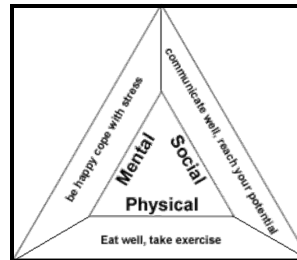
Hasta luego!

Mrs. Gramstad



## Maintaining Our Health

All three grades have started the school year by reading and discussing Health and Wellness, and what it means to have Total Health.



We have discussed the three parts that make up our Health Triangles (Physical, Social and Mental/Emotional), and how it is important to have all three balance to maintain total health. We also discussed how making responsible decisions plays a role in our total health.

All Middle School students have taken their respective Chapter 1 tests and have moved on to Chapter 2. The second chapter for all three grades continues to be very similar in talking about building character and setting/reaching goals.

Mrs. Marsyla



The faculty and staff of St. Francis Xavier School is grateful to have so many Middle School students who are willing to help teachers, custodians, staff, etc. Our "Teacher Assistants" are currently working in a variety of classrooms, at the front desk, in the daycare room, assisting the custodians, etc. If your child has **not** chosen to participate in this program he or she needs to go home either with a parent or on the bus at 2:15pm. Also, all students who **are** serving as Teacher Assistants need to leave at 3:15pm. St. Francis Xavier School is unable to provide supervision for students after 3:15pm.

## **STFX Middle School Team**

|                   |                                 |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Nancy Lenczewski: | MS Religion<br>MS Language Arts |
| Erin Marsyla:     | MS Math<br>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.                    |

***“Anything is possible,***

***but you have***

***to believe.”***

**- Lance Armstrong**

## **Who is Having a Bad Hair Day?**

The elements of art: line, shape, form and space are concepts the middle school students are using to create their projects these first few weeks. The 7th graders have created line designs and the 6th graders have used line and color to design calico animals. Both are on display in the hallway outside of the art room. The French artist, Henri Matisse, who loved using shapes and colors, is the inspiration for collages by students in sixth and seventh grade.

“Bad Hair Day” has given the 8th graders an opportunity to be creative with curls and swirls of hair.

**Mrs. Mahon**



## **Growing Our Seeds of Faith St. Francis Xavier Middle School Showcase**

Please join us for a fun and informational event promoting St. Francis Xavier Middle School. The event will be held in the St. Francis Xavier School cafeteria next Thursday, October 8th, beginning at 7:00pm. The agenda includes a presentation by Kim Zumbusch, Middle School teacher introductions, a panel of current and alumni students, results of 2009 MCA-II scores, open discussion, and time for socializing.

Refreshments and dessert will be served.

Please RSVP by emailing Ann Greenhagen at [ann.greenhagen@stfxb.org](mailto:ann.greenhagen@stfxb.org) by Monday, October 5th.

Although this evening is geared to students and families in grades 4—8, all are welcome! Come and learn about all of the wonderful things St. Francis Xavier Middle School offers your child!

## **Learning About and Growing Closer to God**

### **Religion 6**

We are using the *Call to Faith* Religion series this year. The focus of 6<sup>th</sup> grade study begins with the Old Testament. Prayer is a very important part of our day. We participate in daily prayer, seasonal prayer services and go to the chapel to pray the Rosary at least once a month. On Fridays we spend time discussing missions and current issues facing Catholics. We use the *Maryknoll* magazine and a publication called *Venture*.

### **Religion 7**

Our Religion series focuses on Jesus and the Gospels in Unit 1. We have prayer services in class and go to the

chapel to pray the Rosary at least once each month. Our new Mary Garden has also given us an additional place to pray as well. Students have each been assigned a book on a saint and a report on this saint due November 2<sup>nd</sup>. We spend time each Friday discussing missions and current issues facing Catholics. In addition we use the *Maryknoll* magazine and a publication called *Vision*.

### **Religion 8**

Our 8<sup>th</sup> grade Religion series focuses on the Church and the Holy Spirit in the first Unit. We have prayer services and also pray the Rosary each month in the chapel. We examine the ways we are to live our lives and how that influences all

of our choices. Students have been assigned a book on a saint to read and write a report. These are due November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Friday class time is spent discussing missions and current issues facing Catholics. The *Maryknoll* magazine and a publication called *Vision* are also important additions to our curriculum.

All middle school classes will go to *Feed My Starving Children* again this year. Our trip is scheduled for Friday, December 18th from 8:30am—12:30pm. We are able to bring a few parents. Please let Mrs. Lenczewski if you would like to go.

**Mrs. Lenczewski**