

August 24, 2009

Dear Families,

WELCOME to an exciting year of learning in **faith**, in the **Spirit**, in **care and support** for one another, in **academics** inspired by new **curriculum** and in more **challenging ways of learning**. We are grateful that you have entrusted us with your child this year. Your child is a most sacred trust created by God whom we will nurture in as many ways as we are able. We recognize that the cost of a Catholic education is difficult in these times of economic crisis. If you are having difficulties, be sure to call me so that we can talk and find ways to keep your child here at St. Michael the Archangel School. Our teachers spent the last week learning themselves about some of the new technology that will be a powerful influence on the depth of their learning, about our new **Everyday Math** program developed by the University of Chicago that might confuse you just a bit at times because of some unique features in the program. We plan to sponsor opportunities for you to learn along with your child. Our learning ended last week with a retreat on the spirituality of teaching—why God has led each of us to be here at this time...with you and your child and with one another.

Today you are receiving a **VERY IMPORTANT FOLDER**. There are many important papers for you to read and sign and return to us this week. We ask that you read the new **Family Handbook** with your child. It will take time, but we expect you to read it completely, sign the paper saying you have done so, and return that form to us. We will consider you truly registered when you complete that. If you need someone to translate important parts of the book for you, please call me so that I can arrange for that to happen. At any time during the year, it is the role and responsibility to change what is contained in the handbook in ways that she sees best. You will receive the changes so that you can add them to your current 2009-2010 Family Handbook. I would like to invite you to read carefully some specific policies. They include:

- Mission and Philosophy Statements—pages 1 and 2
- Arrival and Dismissal (for the sake of safety)—page 4
- Attendance—page 5
- Homework, Progress Reports, Report Cards and Conferences, Terra Nova Testing—pages 6-7
- Bullying, Conduct/Discipline, Parent Responsibilities, Code of Conduct—pages 7-10
- Catholic Identity of St. Michael the Archangel School—pages 13-14
- School Planners (Grades 2-8—daily communication with you—page 14
- Cell Phones and Other Electronics—page 15
- Counseling Opportunities – page 15
- Updated Emergency Information in the Office (if phone numbers change, notify us immediately in the event of an emergency)—page 16
- Extended Day Program—page 16 (News not listed in the handbook—we just learned that free snacks will be provided for each child in extended day through our food service company)—page 16
- Field Trips—page 16 and Volunteer Requirements—page 36 (We will update you on whether your criminal background went through, whether we have your VIRTUS certificate, whether you have signed the Code of Conduct, CANTS report, and Application for Volunteers with three references we can call).

- Gang Activity—page 18
- Gym Uniforms —page 18 and Daily Uniforms—pages 35-36 (We will let you know when we will begin to wear our regular uniform based on weather for the next few weeks.)
- Harassment—page 19
- Health Requirements—pages 19-21 (Students will be excluded if all health requirements are not met. No child may enter school without a completed Immunization form and Health Exam report.)
- School Medication Procedures—page 21 and Appendix (contains needed forms.)
- School Board—page 22 and thoughts about developing a Parent Teacher Organization—page 22
- Safety Standards—pages 24-25 and Security in the School Building—page 26-28 (Effective this year, there must be a comprehensive School Safety Plan according to FEMA standards that we were just trained in this past week—we will let you know more as time progresses.)
- Supervision—pages 29-30
- Technology—pages 30-33
- Weapons—page 37

There are other forms in your folder that must be read, signed, and returned. They include the following:

- **Photo/Academic Work Permission Form** (If you do not return the form by September 8th, it will be assumed that you give permission for your child's photo or academic work to be included in any form of communication (website, school marketing brochure, in communications between school and home).)
- **Acceptable use of School Technology by Student—Parent Consent Form** (Please note the circumstances under which your child may or may not be permitted use of school technology opportunities. Please note that parents will be held liable for any damages done to computers or any other type of technology hardware and software. At the end of the school year, we found that three (3) keys had been broken off on three (3) computers. It cost us \$112 to replace the three keys. A computer will be assigned to your student and we will know who may choose to damage any technology device in the school. Please note that we are beginning the installation of a very powerful Fire Wall designed to keep out any websites that are not designed for children and youth.)
- **Parent-Student Handbook Agreement** (This form must be turned into the office no later than September 8th in order to consider the student completely registered.)
- **Medical Authorization Form** (For your completion in the event that we are to administer medication to your child during the school day.) Please note that if your child is running a fever, is vomiting or has diarrhea, you are to keep your child home and have your child seen by a doctor to reassure us all that we have no cases of swine flu. If any child comes to the office with these symptoms, we will call you to pick your child up. We will be emphasizing appropriate washing of hands before meals and when a child uses the bathroom. The Archdiocese is seriously monitoring and advising schools about what to do in the event of an outbreak.)
- **St. Michael 2nd Annual Fest for both Parish and School Members**—Last year the first event was held during the summer and was not publicized or scheduled so that many, many families would consider it their responsibility to support. It is another form of fundraising that will offer enjoyable opportunities for fun and delicious food. Please set aside September 18-19 so that you can be a part of this. This fundraising event will contribute to your fundraising

requirements. It will also be a great time to meet the children your child spends each day in school with—a great community builder.

- **Hot Lunch Form/Free and Reduced Lunch Form**—We are asking **every family to complete this form** whether you want free or reduced breakfast/lunch or not. It is important because your status on this form brings a fairly large amount of money to the school through the various Title Programs. Those include your child's use of the Title I Resource Room for math and reading, Professional Development monies for our teachers, Technology dollars and Drug Free School resources. At a time when money is difficult to find for some of the above reasons, we ask you to help in that way. **These forms are highly confidential and are used only by the Director of the Lunch Program and myself. They are just as confidential as the application forms families will be filling in for Big Shoulders scholarships at the end of September.**

Parent Orientation Evening is in the process of being planned. Our faculty will be making a decision on that day within the week. It will undoubtedly be in September because we want to have the opportunity to use the new curriculum programs and technology that we have acquired so that we can let you know how you can support your child in his or her learning this year. It will be an evening with several sessions so that you can see your children's teachers if you have more than one child in school.

Volunteers will be needed this year for a variety of tasks, especially since we had to downsize our budget this year. We lost our Kindergarten aide, our clerical aide, our library aide. In order to be able to volunteer, you must have met the Archdiocese of Chicago requirements found in your Family Handbook. We would benefit from help to assemble our Tuesday folders to be given to you each Tuesday, some volunteers to be in the library on days or times requested by teachers to check our and put books back on shelves as well as to make new library cards for each book and date due slips. Help in supervising the cafeteria during breakfast from 7:15-7:40 or lunch from 11:10-12:00 and, of course, for serving as volunteers for field trips since no class may leave the grounds without enough supervisors for small groups of children. If interested in beginning to start a Parent Teacher Organization by beginning to have some conversation about what this group would do, that would be wonderful. We will also need help with fundraising this year. We want to try some new and different things. Simply call me or send me a note if you are interested in any of these volunteer positions. We need a team of people to plan a Halloween party or a Valentine event—or other events we haven't thought of to date.

Please note that there is a list of dates when the School Communication Folder (with all the fishies) comes home and you read the principal's letter and other information that will be helpful for you to know. Please sign your name next to that date and return the folder on Wednesday before it has time to get lost. It makes the job of assembling this communication harder if you do not return a folder. You may even want to make it a practice to check your child's backpack if you don't get the folder or other information you expected to receive from your child's teacher. Also, if you give your child tuition money, please check the backpack that day to see if it was turned into the office. Even though we ask for it, some children don't connect our announcement with the fact that you told your child to take this right to the office to Mrs. Sandoval.

More to say, but your reading assignment is long already.

Blessings on us all!

