

Lord, I can't preach like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. or Jesse Jackson or turn a poetic phrase like Maya Angelou, but I care, and I'm willing to serve, and to use what talents I have to build a world of peace. Use me as you will, Lord, to save your Children today and tomorrow, and to build a nation and a world where no child is left behind, and every child is loved and every child is safe.

--Marian Wright Edelman

February 12, 2008

Dear Families,

I hope that this day finds you a bit warmer than the past few days. I also hope that you utterly love the snow since we are blessed with a few inches more each day! These are busy days for us all. We are preparing our students to take the **Terra Nova Tests** during that first week in March. You will want to prepare for that, too, by seeing to it that your child gets great sleep and breakfast on those days. We will be hoping for 100% attendance on those days. It is not too early to begin to encourage your child to take the testing seriously. The results of 7th grade testing are always requested by Catholic High Schools. If families are hoping for scholarships there, grades and test scores need to be high. We are required to send test scores and report cards to Big Shoulders Fund for any students receiving grants.

Social Studies Curriculum: We are currently reviewing some of the newest social studies books and materials that support the newly written Social Studies Curriculum from the Archdiocese of Chicago. By the end of February, we will be making a decision on the texts we plan to purchase in Kindergarten through 6th grade. You will find that our new curriculum broadens the expectations for our learners. The curriculum has been developed to help our students understand political systems like the U.S. government and to understand how the economic system works in the U.S. Yes, already at the 1st grade level, children study economics in ways that they can understand the concept. Students learn to understand events, trends, individuals and movements that shape the history of Illinois, the U.S. and other nations. The study of Chicago is also included in these new materials. Another goal focuses on cultures as reflected in language, the arts, traditions. Finally, students come to understand world geography at a time when they aren't even sure what states border Illinois. In the meantime, I have hired consultants to help teachers to update their instructional approaches to social studies.

Sacrament of Reconciliation: There is a very important meeting tomorrow, February 13th, at 6:15 for the parent of any student who will be receiving the Sacrament. Your presence is truly required for this meeting since you have an important role to play in preparing your child for the reception of the Sacrament.

Parents of students receiving Title I services—please note. On Tuesday, February 19th we will have an important parent meeting at 6:15 in the evening. Mrs. Lowers, our Title I teacher, will introduce you to new math games that you can then sign our and take home to use with your child. These games are for grades 1-7 and will help build skills in a new way. We will be serving food to you so that you don't need to worry about that. Simply come and find out ways you can ensure your child's growing success in math. If you don't feel that you were ever very strong in math when you were a student, you can still learn to teach your child the many games that will be yours to use by just asking. We are excited about these new materials. We hope you will be, too!

How can I thank you enough for taking the time to write back to us letting us know why you choose to send your child to St. Michael for a Catholic Education? Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and beliefs with us. I was so touched by your comments. It is my intention to put all of those testimonials into a booklet that will be shared with you and any new parent considering St. Michael School in the days and weeks and months to come. We are preparing a new **brochure** that highlights new curricular programs and after-school activities for the 2008-2009 school year. I don't think it will be printed before we begin our Registration Process at the end of February; however, we will use some of your quotes in our brochure. (We won't be using your name with your quote.) So, please accept my profound gratitude for the gift you sent us.

The budget for the 2008-2009 was submitted to the Archdiocese of Chicago. As you might expect, tuition fees will go up. We have tried to keep those increases small so that you can continue to afford to send your child to St. Michael. I will be sharing those with you very soon. We have NOT changed the registration fee, the book fees, or the fundraising fees. Those will all remain the same. We will continue to search for grants that might help families afford Catholic education. One of the things we can tell you if you have a child in pre-school is that we are a member of a partnership with the Chicago Public Schools. Through that partnership, each of our pre-school families this year will receive \$1,000 to apply to their tuition this year if they live in the City of Chicago. The **first 20** families who register for our pre-school for the 2008-2009 will also receive that grant next year. **As an incentive to help build our student population up for next year, we will credit your tuition account this year with \$100 for each family you convince to register for the 2008-2009 school year.**

Great news! Chukwuemeka Akwarandu, a student at St. Michael the Archangel School, has been accepted into the People to People World Leadership Forum. He will join students in Washington, D.C., September 15-21, 2008 to earn high school credit while studying leadership and exploring some of the United States' most prominent monuments and institutions. He will examine characteristics of American leadership during times of national challenge and prosperity. What a wonderful source of information he will bring to the study of leadership in the U.S.

Our Pre-Algebra program has been launched with 15 committed 7th graders and their teacher—Ms. Agnew. They are looking ahead to consider ways to give themselves a competitive edge once they go on to high school and college. In a recent conference with the Archdiocese of Chicago Catholic High School Principals, Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M. from De Paul University asked the question: **What does it take for a 14-year old to get a college degree?** As a very serious researcher he found:

- That grade point averages are not good predictors**
- That test scores are not good predictors**
- That race is not a good predictor**
- That socio-economic status is not even a good predictor.**

All of these predictors disappear if you look at something else that is a far better predictor of whether students will actually get their college degree.

And those predictors are **math class** in high school and **attendance** in college.

This is another very critical reason why we are introducing pre-algebra now and for the coming school year. Next year the 15 students who are part of our pilot project will continue on in pre-algebra which should allow them to go confidently into Algebra at the high school level and perform well. We will also start pre-algebra in grade 6 to those students we believe will be ready. For those sixth graders, pre-algebra should be mastered by the end of 7th grade. Algebra will then be taught to them in 8th grade with the hope that they will do well enough to test out of Algebra 1 at the freshman level and go on to Algebra 2. Our expectations are high.

Remember that our CANDY SALE ends on February 20th next week. Also be reminded that we will have NO SCHOOL on Presidents' Day on Monday, February 18th and on Friday, February 29th when we will be at an important in-service.

Peace to your family!
Ms. Lee