

St. Michael School
The Principal's Notes
February 14, 2008

Happy Valentine's Day! I hope everyone has the opportunity to reflect on the blessings that come with being loved. Parents love their children more than life itself. It is a feeling that rises in our hearts at unexpected moments. We love our spouses even when we are not seeing the world from the same pair of glasses. We love our parents and brothers and sisters. We love our friends...old friends and new ones. Do we not feel elation when we know that we are gathering together with loved ones on a cold winter's night just to talk or whatever? Those who love us accept us for who we are. We are at our best when we are able to be ourselves without worrying about what others think. Aren't we lucky that we have been baptized into a faith that constantly reminds us about how much God loves us...unconditionally? May you all feel the love that surrounds you today!

People are talking....

I knew that headline would get people's attention. Truly, people are still talking about Trivia Night. If you did not attend this year, mark your calendar for next year because it is a guaranteed great time. The crowd was fun, energetic and we shared many laughs. **Mr. Kemp** did an exemplary job as the Master of ceremony. **Mrs. Jamie Harlin** and **Ms. Susan O'Connell** are responsible for making this a perfect night out for all who were there. I am so grateful to these ladies for the time, and energy they invested in this project. Ladies, I will predict with certainty that the crowds will be even larger next year. As I said, people are talking about what a wonderful evening it was! Thank you to all who supported this event! As soon as I hear from our two event planners, I will let you know what we raised.

People are meeting....

I met with the vocabulary teachers from every grade level last week. I love meeting with the teachers because I learn so much from them. The first through fourth grade teachers are working diligently to implement the new reading program which we adopted this year. We are continuing our ongoing and never-ending mission to insure that we are all on the same page academically. As I had informed you previously, St. Michael is a pilot program for curriculum mapping. Every teacher in our school has chosen one subject that she teaches and maps it according to what she has taught...month by month. At the end of the year, the teachers in the next grade will be able to analyze and discuss what has been taught the previous year. This teacher is then able to plan accordingly. The curriculum maps coincide with the archdiocesan state standards which for all intents and purposes are aligned with Illinois state standards.

Educators previously were left on their own for the most part. We wrote curriculums, but they were promptly relegated to various bookshelves. The Office of Catholic Education now writes curriculums for our schools and we adopt them accordingly. This is a vast

improvement in planning and part of a larger program which was instituted by the archdiocese. This visionary plan is called Genesis and it was implemented to strengthen the Catholic school system. I will continue to write about Genesis regularly.

The vocabulary teachers brought up a topic during our meeting that quite frankly, floored me. They made the statement that **children do not read**. When you are older and your children are adults you will contemplate all the things you didn't do, (especially those of us who are Catholic and female and possess an abnormal amount of guilt.) I know I did not read to my children as much as I should have. I know I turned on the TV more than I should have when I was exhausted and harried and tired of listening to them crying or whining or both. Understand that you can make a huge difference if you read with your children. You can also make reading a priority in your home by turning off the computer...taking your kids to the library...buying them books as gifts. I remember a single dad who was so frustrated because his son hated to read. This father was a fireman so he wasn't always home with his kids. We suggested that he buy his son a subscription to Junior Sports Illustrated. He loved it! One thing led to another...his confidence also increased because he became more knowledgeable about the world around him. Did his IQ rise fifty points? No, it did not. However, we know that people who read do increase brain function.

As the weather improves make it a priority. Sports and running around increase, but if you make time to read with your child you will never ever regret it.

People are calling....

Let me start by saying that once the children are here at school, I will NEVER dismiss them early because of weather (unless mandated by civil authorities). On Ash Wednesday, it appears there was some confusing information out there (most probably because of the large number of parents and cell phones at the school for Lenten services). Ash Wednesday WAS NOT an early dismissal. We received a phone call at approximately 12:30, just as our children were going to church, from District 135 asking that we have our bus riders ready 15 minutes early. The purpose of this was so that the bus drivers could proceed slowly in the inclement weather in order to deliver your children safely to your door relatively close to the normal time. WE do not make decisions regarding the busses. They are provided to us as a courtesy by District 135, and therefore it is their decision to make. Please, please, please, when the weather is bad, be prepared for the possibility that busses may be early (or late), both picking up from your home in the morning and dropping off after school. The safety of the precious charges you have entrusted to us is at the top of our list of priorities!

Bernadette Cuttone