

St. Peter's School

November 12, 2009

Ms. Janet Spallo, Principal

Mrs. Angie Meyer, Vice Principal

School Website: www.stpeterskc.org



Principal's November 12 Newsletter

Dear Parents,

I asked Janet if I could take over the letter writing this week, and, surprise, she agreed! She and I gave kindergarten and third grade teachers a well-deserved recess break this week, which was a lot of fun for us—my mantra today was, “No injuries allowed when Mrs. Meyer is on playground duty.” I managed to miss a great catch on the “football field” but got some good giggles for my attempt. I noticed Fr. Steve playing basketball with some students after school yesterday—how lucky we are that he is making so many positive connections with our students.

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School Families

(Kindergarten-

Grade 8)

**will be raking leaves in
the parish/school
neighborhood, Friday,
Nov. 20.**

**Details are included on
permission slips in
today's packets; 8th
graders will also be
providing reminder
notes to family
members.**

Tuesday evening second grade students celebrated the Sacrament of First Reconciliation—it's a very special time in their lives, as they continue to prepare for the Sacrament of First Holy Communion, which will be in April. They ended the evening by singing a special song about forgiveness, which they shared with the entire student body today.

One of our priorities at St. Peter's is utilizing differentiated instruction strategies. Differentiated instruction is a concept that makes it possible to maximize learning for all students. It is a collection of instructionally intelligent strategies based on student-centered best practices that make it possible for teachers to create different pathways that respond to the needs of diverse learners (think one-room schoolhouse—teachers face a challenge of finding different pathways to help a wide range of learners be successful). So, last Friday on a beautiful fall afternoon, when children were hopefully outside playing after an early dismissal, faculty and staff from St. Peter's, Christ the King, and Visitation Schools gathered together at Visitation for a staff development session led by our Principal Janet Spallo and Visitation Vice Principal Jamie Koelsch (Janet and Jamie attended a DI Trainer conference last summer, as part of our ongoing professional development; Janet and eight of our teachers also attended a DI conference in July). While many of us have been differentiating in our classrooms for many years, we know we can continue to learn strategies that will move us from a “one-size-fits-all” environment to one that is highly differentiated. Research shows that it can take three years to transition to a highly differentiated learning community. Some best practices that teachers explored last Friday included assessment strategies (for instance, pre-assessing what students already know), using learning profiles (discovering how each student best learns), tiering activities (a “menu” of learning activities for students to choose from), independent student learning, and flexible grouping, just to name a few. Our teachers enjoyed the opportunity to share learning strategies with colleagues from Visitation and Christ the King. Realistically, we know teachers can not differentiate instruction all day every day, but we look forward to progressing together as a faculty and staff on the differentiated instruction continuum. As Janet and Jamie reminded us Friday, we are taking “baby steps.” We will continue our professional development with fellow Southwest Pod schools in June.

We are blessed with many wonderful opportunities for curriculum enhancement, including having visiting artists in our building. Art teacher Mrs. Mary Beth Schmidt shares this information with us today:

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Important Dates

- ✓ Thursday, Nov. 19; All School Mass @ 8:15 am
- ✓ Friday, Nov. 20; School Family Leaf Raking Day/Jeans Day (Permission Slips in Thursday, Nov. 12's messenger envelopes—you must sign one for each child!)
- ✓ Monday, Nov. 23; Christmas Basket Collection begins
- ✓ Tuesday, Nov. 24; All School Mass @ 8:15 am
- ✓ Wednesday, Nov. 25; No School—Thanksgiving Vacation
- ✓ Thursday, Nov. 26; Happy Thanksgiving!
- ✓ Friday, Nov. 27; No School—Thanksgiving Vacation
- ✓ Sunday, Nov. 29; First Sunday of Advent
- ✓ Monday, Nov. 30; Classes resume

“As part of our ongoing relationship with the International Relations Council of the Kansas City Art Institute, the seventh graders are enjoying a hands-on presentation by Dimitri Kozlov from Moscow and David Oicata from Venezuela. Dimitri is a graphic design major, and he discussed his personal and professional journey from Russia to Kansas City, sharing examples of his work and talking about his classes and career options. David, a ceramics major, included a demonstration of clay techniques, which the seventh graders employed in modeling their own imaginative creatures. We are grateful to the Art Institute for facilitating these personal interactions between upper level art majors and our own student artists, and to school parent Mrs. Christie Makar for coordinating the visiting artists' schedules.”

Sunday, November 29, marks the First Sunday of Advent, a time of preparation for Jesus' birth on Christmas. Advent Wreaths in the classrooms and school lobby will be visible reminders of the four weeks of Advent; families interested in purchasing an Advent Wreath might consider one from the Altar Society—weekend bulletins will provide details, and sign-ups are also in the entryways to the Church. The website <http://www.usccb.org/advent/index.shtml> has a calendar on its homepage with special activities to help you enjoy the season and prepare for Christmas.

As a parish member who was fortunate to travel to El Salvador two years ago this month to meet and connect with members of our Sister Parish, San Francisco de Asis in San Salvador, I was dismayed at the news of the recent flooding and mudslides in Central America, effects from Tropical Storm Ida, which has claimed over 160 lives and forced over 12,000 from their homes. Sixth graders in Mrs. Laura Hall's class have quickly convened and are making plans for an “SES (Save El Salvador) Week” here at St. Peter's School. Please be looking for information early next week regarding their generous plans to help those in need in El Salvador, plans partly inspired by information these students have learned during Explore time earlier this fall.

As always, it's a great day to be a Patriot,

Angie Meyer, Assistant Principal



Thank you for supporting our used book drive, benefitting Reach Out and Read, Kansas City—what a generous community! We have several bags and boxes of hundreds of books that will surely be treasured by children and families in need!
Angie & Anthony Meyer and Family