

# Smack Dab in the Middle

## St. Croix Catholic Middle School Newsletter

Volume 4, Issue 1

October 1, 2009

### *Curriculum Highlights*

**Religion:** Mrs. Lynch

**GRADE 6 – THE OLD TESTAMENT:** During these first weeks of school sixth graders are focusing their attention on the Bible. These first chapters lay the foundation for study of the Old Testament. We have discussed the source of Sacred Scripture, Divine Revelation, and its relationship to the Church. We are also familiarizing ourselves with the general history and organization of the Canon Sacred Scripture. In the next few chapters we will cover the Creation Story and Original Sin.

**GRADE 7 – THE NEW TESTAMENT:** “GOD” is the title of the first unit of study. Students have enjoyed learning the Attributes of God. Some of the concepts discussed include:

- God is a Supremely Transcendent and Perfect Being
- God is Existence, Love, All-Knowing, All-Powerful and All-Present
- God reveals Himself through Sacred Scripture and Church Tradition
- God created humans with a body, soul, mind and a will

Creation will be our next focus of study. Through discussion of the order of God’s Creation, students will realize God’s plan for all people.

**GRADE 8 – SOCIAL JUSTICE:** Students are studying the Catholic Social Teachings and ways these principles bring about social justice. Also covered in this unit are the following concepts:

- A World Full of Light and Shadows
- Why is There Suffering?
- The Reign of God’s Goodness
- The Compassionate Way of Jesus

October is Respect for Life Month. We will discuss our belief that all humans are created in God’s image, have dignity and should be respected. **Each grade level** will have a project on this important topic.



### **Student Council Report:**

Sr. Maria Frassati, with the help of the Middle School teachers, will head up Student Council for the 2009-2010 school year.

Details will be coming home shortly with students expressing interest in joining.

A MS assembly will be held in the next few weeks to explain the process.

### **Testing News:**

All students in grades 2-8 have been taking the NWEA/MAP test during their computer times.

Results were immediately available to the students and are in the process of being compiled for class and school averages.

We will spend the first week of October completing make-up testing for those students absent or who needed more time.

Teachers will be meeting with students to discuss results and goals for the school year.

Results will be distributed in October.



**Upcoming Attractions:**

Tuesday, October 6<sup>th</sup>  
**6<sup>th</sup> grade** to FMSC 11:00-3:00

Wednesday, October 7<sup>th</sup>  
**All School** Mass at 9:15

Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup>  
**7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade** to FMSC 11:00-3:00

Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>  
1:40-3:20 Catholic High Schools will be presenting to our **8<sup>th</sup> grade** students. Parents are welcome to come!

Wednesday, October 14<sup>th</sup>  
**All School** Mass at 9:15

Thursday, October 15<sup>th</sup> and Friday, October 16<sup>th</sup> **No School** (Remember Scrapping for Senteo on Friday 10/16 and Saturday 10/17)

Monday, October 19<sup>th</sup>  
**No AM Buses**

Wednesday, October 21<sup>st</sup>  
**All School** Mass at 9:15

Thursday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>  
Geography Family Fun Night 6:30-8:00 pm **all are welcome**

Wednesday, October 28<sup>th</sup>  
**All School** Mass at 9:15

Friday, October 30<sup>th</sup>  
Orange and Black Day

**Did You Know?**

Feed My Starving Children...

- was founded in 1987
- Each meal cost just 17 cents to produce
- To prepare each MannaPack™ all you need is boiling water
- FMSC provides for children in more than 60 countries
- In 2008 more than 310,000 volunteers joined FMSC to package 73,600,000 meals

**Science:** Mrs. Glaser

**6<sup>th</sup> grade:** We have been working hard on learning the Scientific Method. We will be continuing with that a few more weeks. We will be doing an in-depth study on the metric system and learning the importance of making concrete observations and analyzing the data to write a conclusion.

**7<sup>th</sup> grade:** We have just finished studying the interactions among living things. We looked at different limiting factors that affect the size of populations and studied the defense strategies that organisms use to protect themselves. The next chapter that we will be moving onto will be looking at biomes and will be creating a children's book on a particular biome.

**8<sup>th</sup> grade:** We are studying the interior of the earth. We spent time creating a model of the ocean floor and will be using those to do some sonar mapping. We looked at how the continents have moved over the years by creating a flip book of Pangea. We will be moving onto learning about earthquakes.

**Mathematics:** Mrs. Novack and Mrs. Bates

**Course 2** students have completed Chapter 1 Number Sense, Patterns and Algebraic Thinking and are now beginning Chapter 2 Decimal Operations.

**Pre Algebra** students have completed Chapter 1 Variable Expressions and Integers and are now beginning Chapter 2 Solving Equations.

**Algebra** students have completed Chapter 1 Connections to Algebra and are working with Chapter 2 Properties of Real Numbers.

**Geometry** students have completed Chapter 1 Basics of Geometry and are now beginning Chapter 2 Reasoning and Proofs.

**Computers:** Mrs. Donlon

In computer class the **6<sup>th</sup> grade** students are learning about font, style, format and the elements of design and we will be applying these elements to the documents we will create this trimester: personal letters, business letters, invitations, newsletters and brochures.

Additionally, we have been working on reviewing geographic regions and developing our mental map of some amazing countries.



**English:** Ms. Lass

**6<sup>th</sup> grade** – Along with identifying and using singular and plural nouns, the sixth grade will look at the challenge of irregular nouns and their plurals both in their English text book and their own writing.

We began reading the adventures of Brian Robeson in The Hatchet and will complete a variety of vocabulary exercises and creative writing pieces. One writing activity is to create a flyer put out by Brian's parents after he goes missing.

**7<sup>th</sup> grade** - We start the year off with grammar objectives that include: reviewing the rules for singular and plural nouns, distinguishing between nouns used as direct objects, indirect objects, object compliments, subject compliments, and objects of prepositions.

Fact finding terms from our historical fiction novel Johnny Tremain will enlighten the 7<sup>th</sup> grade as to the inner workings of family life and political unrest leading up to the revolutionary war.

**8<sup>th</sup> grade** - Spiraling off the curriculum from last year, the 8<sup>th</sup> graders continue with reviewing the rules for singular and plural nouns, distinguishing between nouns used as direct objects, indirect objects, object compliments, subject compliments, and objects of prepositions.

The spare and direct book Z for Zachariah is our introduction to 8<sup>th</sup> grade literature. It is an ALA Notable Book and won the Edgar Allan Poe Award for its haunting yet simple style. Several pieces of writing will incorporate with this book including a suspense opener, interior monologue and flashback.

**Spanish:** Sra. Bates

The month of September has been alive in the Spanish classroom. **Eighth graders** are writing, reading, listening and speaking various greetings, ways to say goodbye, and introductions of themselves. Speaking another language is so much fun! ¡Qué divertido!

During the last part of September, the students had the opportunity to perform skits with a dialogue written by the assigned group members. This gave each person the chance to speak the Spanish that they have been learning and show their creative side, too.

October brings the students into the first chapter of their textbook; they will begin using Spanish to describe themselves, to describe others in the class, and tell about their likes and dislikes. Talking about teen activities is interesting, and we will also discuss the concept of friendship in Spanish-speaking countries.



**Health/P.E.:** Mr. Slaikeu (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students)

During the month of September I really wanted to take advantage of the beautiful weather that we were so fortunate to have. We started the school year playing touch football, which I have to say started with some difficulties, but within the 4 weeks the students really grew and became to understand the sport a little bit better. Parents, I challenge you to have your student pass you the football. They should all know how to properly throw... like Brett Favre!!

October we will focus on soccer and how to properly play. This sport is always a challenge because they can't use their hands! Trying to break them of that is difficult, but they seem to enjoy it. After soccer we will start playing volleyball and more then likely won't be outside much because of weather.

This past week in Health students reviewed and learned about what makes a healthy person. It's more then what meets the eye! 8<sup>th</sup> graders also explored nutrition and got to see good examples of what our food actually has in it. Next month in health we will be the learning some of the body systems and how they affect our health.





**Communications:** Mrs. McCarron

At the beginning of the trimester, the 6th grade students in Communications class learned all about how, what, and why we communicate. From there they learned what it means to be an "active" listener.

After lessons on good communications, we began the Storytelling unit. The students learned all about the elements of a good story and how to be a good speaker. Then they selected a reproduction of a piece of artwork that they would use to create a story. First they wrote the stories and then presented their stories to the class. The students did a great job telling their original stories!

Storytelling was a good stepping stone to our next unit - Play Production. In the middle of November, each 6th grade class will perform a one-act play for the school and relatives who can join us at daytime performances. The students are learning what it takes to prepare a play, including auditions, stage presence, character development, rehearsals, and committee work (sets, props, costumes, publicity). They especially learn that teamwork is essential to a successful production!

Later in the trimester, the students will learn about newspaper writing and will produce, as a class, an issue of the Middle School newsletter, *The MidKnight Express*.

**History:**

**Grade 6 World History:** This month we have taken some time to familiarize ourselves with terminology and develop our background knowledge and skills in the areas of history and geography. We are now ready for the adventure to begin! We are currently in the Swiss Alps unearthing artifacts as clues to an ancient (and frozen!) Iceman. Next, we will move to South Africa and Southern Turkey to learn about some early cities and their cultures.

Over the next month we will jump to Ancient Egypt and explore one of the most significant early river civilizations on the banks of the Nile River.

**Grade 7 American History (Pre-history – 1850):** We began this year with an overview chapter intended to introduce and provide a framework for the study of American history. We examined basic geographical themes (including the physical regions and climates of the United States) and discussed the tools needed for the study of history, which included a basic introduction to the key fields that support the study of history, like economics and the various social sciences.

All hands are on deck as we set sail examining the Era of Exploration (1492-1675). Students are working in the lab developing Power Point presentations about their explorer and will soon be sharing this information with their classmates both orally and through a collaborative comparison. Then we will be jumping off the ship to begin the colonization of America.

**Grade 8 American History (1850 – Present):** This past month to start the year we have been learning and discussing the important issue of slavery during the early 1800's and how America was changing during this time and the struggles of those changes and the events leading up to the Civil War. The students have also studied the Gettysburg Address and are able to recite most if not all of it. During our Civil War chapter we will be breaking down the Gettysburg Address and actually asking ourselves "what did it mean"? The 8<sup>th</sup> graders have also been hard at work with learning the United States Presidents. Each Friday two students present information on a president. By the end of the school year it is my hope that the students will know in order the Presidents of the United States. Don't forget to ask your students about "stupid history" and "the today in history" facts. Very interesting information!

**The Middle School Constitution:**

Students will be reviewing the Middle School Constitution during Advisory and bearing witness to this document with their signature. The main tenant of the MS Constitution is respect; respect for others, our selves, and our surroundings.

Come see Mrs. Novack before 10/8/09 for a treat if you can tell me what year the MS Constitution was drafted...

**Art:** Mrs. Fioritto

**Seventh grade** will have art during first and third trimesters.

We are off to a great start in our new art room, the former resource room. This is an enthusiastic and creative group and I'm already enjoying them greatly!

We started by drawing a summer memory of a special place after looking at the work of American folk artist, Grandma Moses. The students then wrote a descriptive paragraph to go with their drawings, using their five senses in both. Look for the finished work outside the art room.

Our next project was a tessellation in the style of M.C. Escher. Students first used colored paper to create a repeated, positive/negative design. Next they created a new pattern and traced it onto tagboard, then chose contrasting colors in marker to create their portfolios. The design was completed by working their names into the design. It was fun to see the new patterns emerge and also to see how math can be used in art!

We are currently completing our "Van Gogh sunflowers" using oil pastels. We are learning about the life and art of Vincent Van Gogh as we use his technique in creating colorful and textural sunflowers on colored paper. As in all of our projects, we are looking at and using the elements of art, such as line, color, texture, value, space, and form.

It is my hope that the students will see the many ways in which art shows up in their daily lives - in different areas of the curriculum and in God's world around them. Their awareness should increase as they are exposed to the various artists we study and also by being an active participant in the artistic process. Students have a sketchbook assignment each week, which is meant to stimulate creativity and help them gain confidence in observational and drawing skills. We will also have the opportunity to take part in the Minneapolis of Art's Art Adventure program, "Sources of Strength" in October. Please check out the Middle School area and the hallway just outside the art room for displays of seventh grade work. They are doing an amazing job so far!

### **What is Senteo?!?**

Senteo is a student response system that allows students, with the push of a button on their wireless remotes, to instantly tell you how much they know.

The Senteo SMART Response system works with the SMARTBoard software many teachers are currently using in their classrooms. Questions can be posed any time during a lesson as a formative assessment or at the end of a lesson or unit as a summative assessment.

## **Scrapping for Senteo**

*October 16  
9:00 am – 8:00 pm  
and*

*October 17  
9:00 am – 5:00 pm*

*SCCS Gym*

*A \$20 donation will allow entry into our "warehouse" and you can fill a large gift bag with all kinds of scrapbooking and stamping supplies, invitations, gifts, etc.*

*We hope to raise \$3,100 to purchase two complete classroom Senteo sets. 100% of your donation goes towards the Senteo purchase!*

*All products manufactured and donated by Gartner Studios.*

*The public is invited, so please invite your friends and neighbors.*



Look for the next Middle School newsletter on October 29, 2009.

