



December Newsletter 2009

SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST SCHOOL - HYDES

Dear Parents,

In thinking about what we do in preparation for Christmas, I am always amazed that so much gets accomplished in such a short time. I am sure that honoring the birth of Jesus is the reason everything gets done. It is all about family and celebration in the name of Jesus. We decorate our homes, attend special gatherings, buy presents, send cards, and attend to our own special traditions. We do all this to honor the birth of Jesus.



This year, again, I ask that we join together to help our children and each other prepare our hearts for the coming of the Savior. Observe the weeks of Advent showing our children that Christ is the center of our lives. With permission, I borrow the following suggestion from a magazine article I read. "Every night at bedtime, or the first thing in the morning, make a small cross on your child's forehead with your thumb. That's all. This simple and silent - yet meaningful and powerful - motion says volumes about Christ being the center of not only this season but your entire life."

Hopefully, every family will celebrate the weeks of Advent. There are many online resources of prayers if you do not have your own special Advent prayers. Continue the tradition or begin it this year - Family time/Dinner time around the Advent Wreath.

"Theme Days":

It has been brought to our attention that if you were not present at the first H.A.S.A. meeting, you may not know about the Theme days each month. As it was described at that meeting, each month, usually on the Hot Lunch Day, students would be allowed to come to school "out of uniform" but must dress in line with the theme of the month. On September 16, the theme was "in the Good Ole Summertime." In October, we did not have the theme day on the 14th because the "Race for Education" was scheduled the same week and the students would be in Ravens' gear. The November Hot Lunch was on the 11th and once again the students wore their Ravens' gear. In December, the Hot Lunch is on the 9th and the students may wear red, white, and green. They will again wear Christmas colors on the 17th for the Christmas performances. Hot Lunch Days and Theme Days for the remainder of the year are as follows: January 20 (Favorite Sweatshirt Day), February 10 (Wear Red, White, and Blue Day), March 17 (Wearing of the Green), April 14 (Orioles), and May 19 (Almost Summer).

Progress Reports:

Student Progress Reports were distributed to Grades PK 4 through 8 on Tuesday, November 24. Conferences will be held on Monday, November 30, from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM and from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM. School will dismiss at noon on Monday. Teachers will be in their classrooms during conference hours to meet with parents. If you will need a team conference with several teachers or if you need an extended conference, you should make arrangements with the teachers for a special conference at another time.

The report is yours to keep. Please sign and return the report envelope.

Sibling Registration:

We sent home sibling registration forms in late November. If you have not received one and have a child who will be entering Saint John School for the first time in August or September of 2010, please call the school office for a registration form.

High School Applications:

The students in Grade 8 have received the Archdiocesan High School Information Forms. Students and parents must complete the Form and return it to Mrs. Meloni by December 1. The admissions testing will take place on Saturday, December 5, and Saturday, December 12. Students may take the test on either day at one of our High Schools. The cost for testing is \$30.00 which will be collected at the test sight the day of the test.

"I Read to the Principal Club":

The kick-off of "I Read to the Principal" took place during November. I relaxed and enjoyed several great books, read to me by our young readers. Our first list of new members for this year follows:

Sam Golumbek, Bridget Kruse, Conall Ferguson, Makaila Alcarese, Rebecca Rusinovich, Drew Wilson, Ainsley Plume, and Sophia Parr.

Thanks for reading to me!

Christmas Performances:

We again look forward to the students' Christmas performances on December 17. Students in Grades K through 8 will perform. The dress rehearsal for Grades K through 8 will be at 1:00 PM, and the main event for parents and relatives will be at 7:00 PM. Both of these performances will take place in the Church.

PK celebration will also take place on Thursday, December 17, at 9:00 AM in the Church Hall.

Thank You:

A tremendous thank you is given to Mrs. Alcarese, Mrs. Golumbek, and their committees who planned a wonderful "Open House." How fortunate we are to have so many willing volunteers.

Around the Corner:

This column started to give parents a glimpse of happenings "around the corner" from the office - that is, in the classrooms and halls of our school, things that many of you don't always get a chance to see or hear about.

The Pilgrims and Indians of PK 3 and PK 4 gathered in their classrooms to enjoy their feasts in celebration of the first Thanksgiving. Students wore necklaces they made, pilgrim hats and Indian feathers, and said prayers of thanksgiving for all their blessings. PK 3 and PK 4 family turkeys adorned our 1st floor hall bulletin board. It is one of the highlights of the season that we all look forward to.

Our Thanksgiving Prayer Service was beautiful. Our Kindergarten students did a wonderful job by leading us in song. Thanks to Mrs. Brannon, Mrs. Thomas, Mrs. Kruse, and Mr. Pomplon who prepared the students.

Grade 4 students treated parents, teachers, and fellow students to a trip into history with their presentation of a wax museum. It brought back many memories of when I was in school learning about the great French, Italian, and Spanish explorers. Each student dressed as his explorer and was able to give some important facts written in a diary or daily log format. Thanks to Mrs. Jones, who coordinated this fun-learning activity.

Lots of good things are happening around the school every day! Maybe your class will be in the Newsletter next month.

Book Fair:

The Scholastic Book Fair was a huge success again. Thanks to Mrs. Gardner and the many parents who volunteered throughout the week. Thanks also to the parents and students who purchased books, and to those who helped set-up and break-down. Happy Reading!

Computer Monitors:

We have a few 17-inch CRT monitors that work perfectly, but have been replaced with newer equipment. Anyone interested in taking one for home use, please contact Mrs. Gardner in the library. Thanks!

Original Works:

The Original Works fundraiser was a success again this year. Parents supporting Original Works have a "jump start" on Christmas shopping. The proceeds from this project will help to defray the cost of our art program. Thank you, once again, for supporting this program. Special thanks to Mrs. Spangler for coordinating this terrific fundraiser.

Applause, Applause:

Way to Go, Middle Schoolers! The following students have attained Honors for the First Trimester

Principal's List

Grade 7

Megan Chaney
Anna Littleton
Elizabeth Loundas

Grade 6

Andrew Brannon
Sarah Kujala

First Honors

Grade 8

Scott Bohon
Marisa Jara

Grade 7

Mark Bauer
Nell Scheide

Grade 6

Mary Cochran

Second Honors

Grade 8

Calvin Curtin
April Moscati

Grade 7

Jack Brown
Matthew Curtin
Ben Evans
John Goska
Ben Lynch
Gianna Savarese

Grade 6

Lauren Abrecht

Social Action Club News from Mrs. Macek and Mrs. Donohue:

December 2, 2009, is our next meeting day. We will be decorating boxes and making posters for our next collection. We are working with Pat Loeffler at Saint John Church to fill at least 50 bags for the homeless. We will be collecting toiletries: shampoo, conditioner, soap, lotion, toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, hand sanitizer, and chapstick.

On December 16, we will meet again, and we will decorate and fill the bags. We will also have a special treat for the Club members.

Drama Club from Mrs. Gardner:

The rehearsals for *Much Ado About Coconuts* by Andrew Ross are going well. We would appreciate the support of the actors' families in memorizing their lines. They will not be able to use their books in rehearsals after Christmas. Thank you for all of your help. We will be asking for additional help with the set, props, and costumes after Christmas break.

Giant Bonus Bucks:

It's that time again when you have to reregister your Giant Bonus Card to give back to schools. For Saint John the Evangelist School, the school ID is **1080**. The website is <http://www.giantfood.com/aplus> or you may fill out a card at the Customer Service Department in the store.

H.A.S.A. News from Deb Golumbek:Breakfast With Santa:

Join us on Saturday, December 5, for a Christmas tradition! Breakfast with Santa will be held in the Church Hall from 8:00 AM to 12 noon. Pancakes, crafts, Santa photos, holiday greens, and much more make this the perfect way to start your Christmas season!

Contact Mary Beth Bressler at marybeasty@aol.com if you would like to volunteer to help or if you have any questions.

Christmas Candy:

Christmas Candy order forms are due December 2; but you can still order online until December 14. Your order will be shipped directly to your home. Thanks to all those who participated.

Market Day:

Thanks to everyone who purchased a pie for the Knights of Columbus Thanksgiving meal. The fourth grade won the ice cream party! Thanks to Diane and Bob Elliott for their hard work!

Christmas CD:

LIVE Christmas CD featuring the Saint John the Evangelist Children - What a unique gift this would be for your family! The LIVE CD, featuring the Saint John the Evangelist children, will bring a warm, personal touch to your favorite Christmas music. This professionally produced and packaged Live CD contains 10 Christmas songs and features original artwork from the Saint John the Evangelist choir and school children! Don't miss out on this treasured keepsake. This makes the perfect stocking stuffer for grandparents, aunts and uncles, or any special person in your life! Look for additional

information concerning pre-orders soon! Limited quantities of the CD will be available at the Christmas Concert. If you have any questions or would like to help, contact Julie Plume at dyceplume@yahoo.com.

Note: As part of the CD package, each child decorated a page of the CD booklet/insert to reflect the song that their class would sing. The winning artwork per grade will accompany the CD. The artwork winners will be announced each week leading up to the concert.

Mardi Gras!

Ticket reservations are now being accepted for the Mardi Gras event on March 6, 2010, at Towson Golf and Country Club. Contact Renee Banashak at (410) 692-0555 for more information.

Father/Daughter Sweetheart Ball:

Save the date of February 12, 2010, for the Father/Daughter Sweetheart Ball for girls (ages 4 to 11) and their dads. Spend an evening in the Church Hall from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM enjoying some refreshments and dancing the night away! Tickets will be available in January. Contact Donna Weitz, at dbweitz1@comcast.net, if you would like to help plan this event, or if you have any questions.

Reminders:

The Advent Christmas liturgy will be held 11:00 AM on Friday, December 18. Christmas holiday begins at noon, and school will reopen on Monday, January 4, 2010.

Have a Happy and Holy Christmas.

Sincerely,

Jean Delcher



Parents *make the difference!*

Early Childhood – December 2009

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Use time over the holidays to read with your preschooler

Some time this month, your child will be starting winter break and will likely not return to preschool until January. This is a time to focus on spending family time together. Reading and literacy fit that goal perfectly. And as a bonus, your child continues to learn.



Here are some ideas for strengthening your family bond, and your child's bond to literacy, during break:

- Blend reading into your everyday or holiday activities, such as cooking and baking. Read part of a recipe to your child. Then have him retrieve an ingredient from the pantry. Read directions, such as, "Stir for one minute." With your help, have your child carry out the directions.
- Get cozy with your child. For most people, winter break means cold temperatures. So grab a blanket and several books. If you're in a warm climate, have a "reading picnic" outdoors.
- Join your child as a listener. Sometimes your eyes and hands are busy, such as during a car trip to visit family. You can still use your ears to listen to an audio book with your child.
- Trade stories with your child. Tell him a story about how you spent winter breaks when you were his age. Then have him tell you a story about something he would like to do (or has already done) during break. Write down his story and ask him to draw pictures to go along with it.

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Developing Thinking Skills

Do you know what your child is learning during play time?

You've heard how much preschoolers learn through play. "For young children, play is the main vehicle for learning," says parenting expert Sylvia Rimm. But have you ever wondered just what your child is learning while having fun?

Consider that:

- Art inspires creativity and helps kids coordinate hand muscles. Supervise while your child cuts, colors, glues and tapes--and marvel at the masterpieces!
- Pretending allows children to imagine. Puppets, dolls, props and costumes prompt kids to wonder, "How would someone feel in this situation?" "What might they do or say?"
- Building encourages kids to plan, count and figure things out. Materials such as blocks and puzzle pieces provide good motivation.
- Music draws children in, improving their listening, movement, rhythm and pre-reading skills. Practice singing, playing instruments and moving to the beat.
- Playing games requires cooperation and sportsmanship. It also helps kids use letters, numbers and words.
- Reading builds attention, language skills and imagination. It's a perfect activity to do every day!

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Language Skills

Expand your child's language skills with adjectives, adverbs

When your child began speaking, her first words were probably nouns--things she could see, hear, touch or taste--such as, "Mama," "Dada" or "ball." Next up were probably verbs, such as "want," which led to her first sentences, such as, "Want cookie."

Using verbs showed that your child's thinking skills, as well as her language skills, were developing well.

And now, your preschooler is capable of more complex language. She can describe the nouns and verbs she uses. These parts of speech are called adjectives and adverbs.

To help your preschooler become comfortable using adjectives and adverbs:

- Ask questions. If your child points out a dog, ask her, "What kind of a dog is it?" If she has trouble with this, help her by asking further, "Is it a big dog or a small dog? What color is it?"
- Play a description game. For example, say, "I'm thinking about pancakes and I'm going to tell you two things about them. They're round pancakes and they're yummy pancakes. Can you tell me two things about that tree outside?"
- Play a movement game. Ask your child to clap loudly, then to clap softly. Or ask her to run quickly across the room. Carry this over into your day by asking questions like, "Did you just come down the stairs quickly or slowly?"

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Use praise to encourage, motivate your kindergartner

Kindergarten children usually want nothing more than to please their parents. Your words and actions are key to whether your child will be encouraged and motivated to do well in school, or discouraged and apathetic.



Praise your child whenever you see behavior you want her to repeat. Follow these steps:

1. Make eye contact with your child.
2. Stand near your child.
3. Smile at your child. You can be saying the kindest words, but your child will look first at your facial expression to determine whether she can believe you.
4. Cuddle your child. Combine praise with a hug or a high-five. Take advantage of your ability to do this now--she may not be as accepting of it in her later school years!
5. Don't delay. Your child needs reinforcement immediately following behavior. Wait too long and the lesson is lost.

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**Click here to view the
December EC Activity Calendar**

Parents make the difference!

Elementary School - December 2009

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Ensure your child continues to learn over the school holiday

Your child looks at the calendar and imagines the joy of having no schedule for the whole winter school holiday. You look at the same blank squares on your calendar and have a mild moment of panic.



However, the winter break can give you a chance to spend a little extra time with your child. Here are some activities that will keep her learning--and that will keep you from hearing, "I'm bored" during the holiday:

- Assemble a list from your local newspaper of places to go and things to do. Every community has places that will interest kids. Check out a local museum (see if they have a day when admission is free). Look for free concerts you can attend. See if the local public library has any special story hours or performances.
- Get outside. Be sure you schedule time every day to be outdoors. Walk, bike, skate, ski--but get outside!
- Look for a video based on a children's book. Read the book first, then watch the video. Discuss how the two were alike, and what differences you saw.
- Prepare food together. Nearly every culture has some special foods associated with the holiday season. With your child, prepare foods you remember from your childhood. Share your memories. Or do some research and prepare a dish you've never tried.
- Volunteer. Set aside time for a family volunteer activity. Feed animals at the animal shelter. Make sandwiches for people living on the street. Your child will learn the best gift is the gift of service.

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Discipline

Follow five research-based tips for more successful discipline

Helping children learn appropriate behavior is a parenting task that sometimes seems overwhelming. But research shows there are five ways parents can be most successful in shaping children's positive behavior:

1. Give your child positive attention. Set aside time every day when you can give your child some individual attention. Read a book, play a board game or work together on a household project. The important thing is that the two of you are together, talking and listening to each other.
2. Listen to your child. Give him words to express his feelings. Kids who can say, "I'm angry" are less likely to hit.
3. Give choices whenever you can. Kids learn how to make good choices by making lots of choices. Let your child make choices--and then live with the results.
4. Notice when your child does something right. This doesn't mean praising your child every time he takes a breath! But when he does something positive, let him know you noticed. He'll be more likely to do it again tomorrow.
5. Be a good role model. You can't expect your child to control his temper if you scream at every car on the road. Your example is the single most powerful way that you teach your child about appropriate behavior.

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Building Character

Help your child persevere by setting goals

Facing life's challenges--from learning to ride a bike to finishing a big project--requires perseverance, and kids need plenty of help developing this trait.

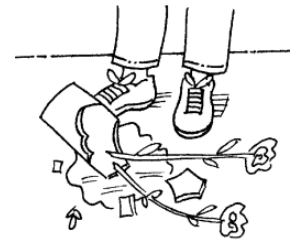
To boost your child's persistence:

- Build on the past. Remind your child of times she's succeeded through hard work. Discuss how great she felt and how she can do it again.
- Set a small goal. Choose something your child can accomplish and enjoy, such as walking a mile with you. This builds confidence.
- Ask for input. What else would your child like to achieve? Wanting to reach the goal will give her motivation.
- Be honest. Make sure your child picks a realistic goal, but explain that reaching it won't be easy. Good planning will help a lot.
- Make a plan. Write down specific steps and deadlines. Help your child divide her goal into small, manageable parts.
- Be a cheerleader. Compliment progress, both along the way and at the finish line. Do not use prizes or punishments.
- Learn from the experience. Even if your child doesn't meet her objective, stay positive! Take pride in her hard work. Talk about what she might do differently next time, and envision success.

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Encourage your child to be honest in difficult situations

Research shows that by the time kids reach elementary school, most know the difference between honesty and lying. But that doesn't make truth-telling easy!



To encourage honesty in your child:

- Be a role model. Children are good "lie detectors." They notice when parents tell the truth--and when they don't.
- Reward trustworthiness. If your child is truthful in a difficult situation, compliment him!
- React calmly. When your child lies, don't label him a "liar." Express confidence that he will make better choices in the future.
- Discuss honesty. Why is it important to be honest? Note examples of honesty and dishonesty--and their effects.
- Create opportunities for telling the truth. Say, "You broke my vase," instead of, "Did you do this?" It's better to say what happened rather than to ask unnecessary questions.

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**Click here to view the
December EL Activity Calendar**

Parents still make the difference!

Middle School - December 2009

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Use conversation, questions to boost your child's thinking skills

True, your preteen may do well in school. But what kind of thinker is she? Can she tackle a tricky assignment in a clever way? Does she weigh all sides of an issue before picking a position? Will she give a reasoned opinion about something when asked?



If the answers are no, no and no, don't worry! Like other skills, your preteen's thinking skills can be nurtured and sharpened over time. To do just that:

- Engage your child in conversation. Don't gloss over the issues of the day when sitting down to dinner. Really discuss them. Encourage your child to ask questions about the things she sees online or hears at school. It may prompt her to consider those topics more deeply.
- Ask open-ended questions. When possible, avoid asking your preteen yes-no questions. Instead, ask things that are more likely to lead to a thoughtful response. "What did your history teacher have to say about the election?" may result in a more creative answer than, "Did you talk about anything in school today?"
- Avoid quizzes. Boosting your preteen's critical-thinking skills shouldn't seem like school. So don't make her feel as if you're testing her. Rather, keep your exchanges casual and friendly.

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Reinforcing Learning

Find out how your child learns best and make the most of it

Just as no two kids are exactly alike, no two kids learn in exactly the same way. Instead, they tend to move toward a particular "learning style."

While research shows there are at least eight such styles, the most common include:

- Visual learning. Kids who learn visually do best when they can see a lesson. Whether it's looking at charts or watching the teacher draw diagrams, they absorb information with their eyes.
- Auditory learning. Some kids can simply hear information and retain it. These "auditory learners" may be able to absorb new knowledge just by listening to a teacher explain a lesson or new concept.
- Kinesthetic learning. Kids who prefer hands-on learning do best when they're performing a task. Conducting a science experiment, for example, is a good way for kinesthetic learners to grasp an idea.

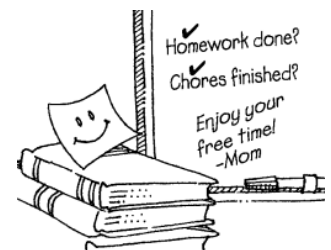
Though you might prefer one learning style over another, you can't force your preteen into a certain style. To help your child make the most of the one he leans toward:

- Define it. Learn more about learning styles yourself. Then talk to your preteen about what you've found. Ask him to think about his own study habits, and see if it helps him define his learning style.
- Embrace it. Once you've figured out your preteen's learning style, find ways for him to use it. For instance, is he an auditory learner? Then hearing you read his notes might be a perfect way for him to prepare for a test.

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To teach your middle schooler respect, lead by example

You can always talk to your preteen about respect, but he'll likely grasp the concept more quickly if you show him what it looks like. In other words, teach respect by modeling it! Here's how:



- Value your child's opinions. You're the parent and you're in charge. But that doesn't mean you can't let your preteen speak his mind (within reason). Show respect by listening to him.
- Take an interest in your child's life. Find out who your preteen's friends are. Ask about what everyone's learning in school. Show your preteen that his daily life matters to you.
- Acknowledge your child's maturity. As your child becomes more responsible, make sure your house rules reflect it. Give him chances to earn more freedom.

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Building Character

Encourage your middle schooler to develop good judgment

When you trust your child, you have faith that she will "do the right thing" most of the time. The first step toward this is knowing what the "right thing" is. This process is judgment, and it develops over time.

Here are two ways to guide your child toward good judgment:

1. Give your child increasing amounts of responsibility for school routines. Start with a basic habit, such as bedtime. She knows what time she needs to get up for school. Tell her you will let her judge for herself a reasonable hour to get to bed. If this goes well, allow her to exercise judgment over another area of her life. If it doesn't go well, ask her what she has learned from the experience (for example, she feels like falling asleep in her first class). Work out a new plan with her, and try again.
2. Discuss situations in advance. What would she do if friends who had been drinking wanted her to get into a car they were driving? Your child probably knows not to get into the car, but kids often get flustered when presented with tough situations for the first time. Practicing with you will help her call upon her judgment skills and make a good decision.

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