



St. Francis of Assisi

CATHOLIC SCHOOL

# MUSTANG CONNECTION

ALUMNI AND FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

**Winter 2015**

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## **Student Wishes for the New Year**

Students were asked, "If you had only one wish for the New Year, what would it be?" Here are some of their replies ...

*That I could fly!*

*That I would have magic!*

*To have infinity wishes!*

*To have a sister because I don't have one and I'm tired of brothers!*

*To live forever!*

*That homeless people could find a home!*

*To have a good time with my family!*

*To write a series of books!*

*That everyone would be kind to each other!*

## **Philosophy and Mission Statement**

*St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School is a family-oriented mission of the St. Francis of Assisi Parish community where each student is valued, respected and nurtured as a unique creation of God. We challenge our students spiritually, academically and physically to learn, care and lead as they work to discover the plan that God intends for them. As followers of Christ, we strive always to instill in our students the words of St. Francis of Assisi ... "Preach the Gospel always, and when necessary, use words."*

## Math Education



The fall and early winter have been eventful at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School. While curriculum changes occur every year, this year we are focusing on math education. We have amazing teachers, combining that with great resources creates a successful curriculum. Math teachers have spent the last several months, and will spend the months ahead, reviewing new materials to find the perfect match to our Diocesan Standards. The Annual Appeal will help purchase new instructional materials above and beyond our yearly budget for math education. We plan to keep the same instructional model with the new math curriculum resources. We have seen great gains with our individualization and differentiation within each grade level.

In K-3<sup>rd</sup> grades, teachers create groups based on the lesson/unit they are focusing on during a specified time of the year. They begin the lessons/units with an assessment to evaluate what the students already understand and also where there may be holes that need to be filled in. Based on the results of the assessment, students are grouped for various instruction on different material- this is called differentiation. Students still receive some whole-group instruction, but the majority of the material is tailored for individual student needs. The differentiation continues through the upper grades. In 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade, currently students utilize a program called Accelerated Math. AM, respectively, assesses the students at least weekly on the standards they need at their grade level. Some students are working above grade level while some are filling in gaps they did not master earlier on. AM assesses students, then gives specialized material that the teachers can work with each student on that is at that student's ability level.

We have seen great gains through this model as we now have 2-3 algebra classes in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade year and last year we graduated students in the top 7% in math in the nation. Previously only a minority of students were ready for algebra material.

Through the Annual Appeal, we will adopt instructional material that will help us meet the needs of the Diocesan curriculum, but most importantly the needs of students. While the structure of differentiation will stay, the resources through a new math curriculum will help us meet the students where they are with the most up-to-date material. Thank you to the donors who have already helped us make great strides towards our adoption goal. As a staff we love teaching and the resources provided through donations make the talents of the teachers beneficial to the students.

## The Pastor's Perspective



If I were asked the question, *"If you had only one wish for the New Year, what would it be?"* - my answer (as much as I would like to fly and have magic, as two students said!) would be that Christ's peace and grace fill the hearts and souls of all mankind. That said, in this new and blessed year, my ongoing prayer for each of you is that you will embrace Christ's abundant and gentle love as you journey through the months ahead. He is the way, the truth, and the light!

Here at our parish school, we are privileged to educate hundreds of children and we work continually to provide them with the best academic and faith-filled experience possible. To that end, we persevere in extending invitations to you to financially support our extraordinary mission through your charitable giving. You are so deserving of our deep appreciation for prayerfully considering our many requests.

This year our Annual Appeal is earmarked for Math Education. Our Hopes and Dreams Fund supports tuition assistance for first-time families. (As you may know, we kicked-off the second year of our Hopes and Dreams Fund challenge during all Masses on January 31/February 1 - our goal is to once again raise \$40,000 to meet our anonymous donor's challenge and help new families attend our school!) *"Goin' to Grace-land"* - our 14th annual Educational Trust Fund Benefit on February 28th will raise funds for our school's endowment. That event promises to include lots of grace, and spirit, so plan now to attend! And last, but certainly not least, our school year will conclude with our 19th annual Car Raffle, sponsored by Gene Butman Ford to help us raise funds for facility upgrades (renovating the Middle School restrooms), Outdoor Education, and the Booster Club.

These are all necessary initiatives because they facilitate so many of our school's wonderful programs and they are only possible because of you.

In addition to your charitable giving, I am reaching out to you to help us build enrollment here at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School. You are our greatest ambassadors! To that end, when you refer a family to our school and they tour, we will provide you with a \$50 SCRIP gift certificate (to be used at your choice of retailers.) If the family enrolls in our school, we will provide you with an additional \$250 SCRIP gift certificate. We will need to know from the prospective family that you referred them - after that, we will follow-up with you! Our anonymous Hopes and Dreams Fund challenge donor has allocated resources to support new marketing initiatives at our school, and who better to start with than you, our dearest friends?!

Thank you, thank you, for everything you do to help our Catholic school thrive!

Father James Conlon

## From the Principal's Pen



The school year is almost half-way done and we have been very busy at St. Francis. Advent was a huge success as each grade level participated in individual service projects rather than a school-wide event.

Preschool, kindergarten, and fifth-grade collected items for Arbor Vitae; first-grade students collected cans from the school community, returned them, and purchased items off of the giving tree; second grade did a coin drive (2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>) to benefit Northstar Reach Camp; third grade wrote letters to the home bound in our parish community; fourth grade collected clothing for an orphanage in Guatemala; sixth grade served at Saline Evangelical Home; and seventh and eighth grade collected food for local food pantries. All in all, the Holy Spirit was present as we awaited the birth of our King.

Our kindergarten through second grade reading groups are going very well. The new reading curriculum we adopted last year, Tattum/FAST Reading, has shown immense success. Our students have already grown at least a whole grade level in just 2 quarters of instruction! The multi-faceted instructional model allows us to teach students using various instructional methods that engage learning. We are very grateful to the donors from last year's Annual Appeal to help make this reading curriculum a success!

Administratively, I have been busy with a new Marketing committee this school year. We have beautiful new material emphasizing the faithful learning that occurs each and every day here (see the Open House postcard below, created by Pryor Design Company.) Within the marketing committee we are reviewing new ways of connecting with our local parish and Catholic community in Washtenaw County. We expanded our Open House invitations by 1,200 invites. The Open House was a huge success! Enrollment continues to climb! Your time, talents, and treasures continue to help me build the future of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School. For that I am eternally grateful.



Our school community is so blessed with caring/dedicated teachers, loving parents, and committed donors. The love of Christ is present through the care of each member of our community. I wish you all a very peaceful and joyous new year!

Deepest Love and Gratitude,  
Julie Fantone Pritzel



Dr. Susan Dorr Goold

## Greetings from Dr. Susan Dorr Goold

Warm greetings from Susan Dorr Goold, St. Francis '75 (a couple of years older than the University of Michigan's football coach), St. Thomas/Fr. Gabriel Richard '79. I have many fond memories and long-standing friendships from St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School, where I benefitted from the mentorship of Mrs. Green, Mr. Maierle and, someone who doubtless would find many grammatical flaws in this essay, Mary Lou Daby. When I returned to Ann Arbor from Pittsburgh with husband Michael and baby Ryan, joining St. Francis of Assisi parish and sending my children to the school (Ryan '04, Kate '10) felt like a foregone conclusion!

I grew up surrounded by adults of strong and active faith, including my parents Dick and Jane Dorr, my grandparents, teachers and parents of friends. In Catholic schools you develop relationships with whole – sometimes large – families. I enjoy seeing former classmates and their families leading businesses, serving communion, caring for patients, teaching my children, and serving on the board for Catholic Social Services.

The Catholic community here has deep roots, but also welcomes new people with open arms. My daughter still connects (using social media, of course) with a friend in South Korea who attended St. Francis during her visit to the United States. I am especially proud of and humbled by our St. Francis' vibrant community of parishioners devoted to service, who follow the advice of St. Francis on the front page of the bulletin: *"Preach the Gospel always, and when necessary, use words."* St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School embraces that wholeheartedly, and students learn how to live a faith-filled life that includes embracing and contributing to the "real world" rather than judging and rejecting it. My own work, as a doctor and teacher of ethics in medicine and health care, benefitted tremendously from the solid foundation of values taught at St. Francis. The people of Washtenaw County benefit every day from the vision of a just community promoted by St. Francis, other parishes, and Catholic Social Services. Thank you.

*Dear Lord, be with our alumni. May they represent St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School as life-long learners, effective communicators, globally aware citizens, and spiritually centered Christians. May they accept challenges with unwavering enthusiasm and great expectations, for nothing is impossible with You. May they come to know, love, and serve You more fully each day, and glorify you in their accomplishments. We ask these blessings on our alumni in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*  
~ Amen.

## Nica and Joe

On November 15, 2014 several hundred people attended a benefit concert for Father Gabriel Richard High School and St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School, given by Veronika Belyavskaya and St. Francis alumnus Joe Guyton ('93), who perform as "Nica and Joe."

*"It was a huge joy and a dream come true for me. Ever since I started singing I have always wanted to give back to my old schools. My mother and some very dedicated teachers helped me to be the person I am today,"* says Joe.

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School music teacher Phyllis Fellin *"planted the seed of singing in me,"* says Joe. *"Mrs. Fellin encouraged me to go to Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp. She believed in me even though I returned early from homesickness."*

Father Gabriel Richard High School music teacher Ms. KM convinced Joe to attend Interlochen during his senior year. Following that, Joe studied at the Julliard School of Music in New York City and entered the Washington National Opera/Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program. Nica and Joe met in 2011, shortly before competing in Germany's version of The X Factor. They earned third place, and also released their self-titled debut album.

*"I had help and many wonderful educators who challenged, encouraged and loved me. I felt loved at these schools. I felt like I mattered. I knew that what I did and thought had value."*

*"God placed me in a most fortunate position. I had the right teachers in my life at the right time,"* says Joe.

*"Giving back will always be a main priority in my career. No matter where I am, I will always be a Mustang. That means I am called to be kind, compassionate, loving, and well, a bit challenging!"*

The concert raised more than \$1,000 for teaching supplies for St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School. Please visit <http://www.nica-joe.com/> to learn more.



Nica and Joe

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**Ann Arbor, MI 48104**  
**(734) 821-2200**  
**<http://www.stfrancisa2.com/school>**

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## Wish List

Please consider supporting St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School with a Wish List donation. For more information, or to help, contact Principal Julie Fantone Pritzel at 734.821.2200.

- + Kindergarten Ball Chairs with Air Pump (5 are needed)  
<http://chairs-seating.dallasmidwest.com/Ball-Chair-16.5-Diameter-C80390.aspx#moreimages>
- + IXL: Assessment for Kindergarten Students  
<https://www.ixl.com/membership/school/subscribe>
- + Digital Camera (for Yearbook and Photography Class)
- + 25 Boxes of Crayons (Crayola pack of 24)
- + Amazon Gift Cards (to buy math apps for the tablets)
- + The Beginner's Bible-ZonderKidz (10 are needed)
- + Books (for the Library)
- + Classroom Printer
- + Weighted Lap Pads
- + Keyboards (for teacher ipads)
- + Color Printer (for the Computer Lab)
- + Magnet Lab Kits  
[https://www.schooloutfitters.com/catalog/product\\_info/pfam\\_id/PFAM35550/products\\_id/PRO47203](https://www.schooloutfitters.com/catalog/product_info/pfam_id/PFAM35550/products_id/PRO47203)
- + Science Magnets with North and South Labeled Poles
- + Inexpensive Hand Tire Pump (for the classroom)
- + Digital Gram Scales (for the science lab to teach density)
- + Electric Kettle (for the Science Lab)
- + Legos and Magna Tiles (for indoor recess)
- + School Office Painting and Carpet

## Important Dates



- February 18:** Ash Wednesday
- February 28:** Educational Trust Fund Benefit  
(*Sheraton Ann Arbor Hotel*)
- April 3:** Good Friday  
(*No School*)
- April 5:** Easter Sunday
- April 6-10:** Common Calendar Break Week  
(*No School*)
- April 21:** Vocation Presentations
- May 14:** Mary Lou Daby Spring Arts Festival
- May 16:** ETF Leadership Circle Class of 2011  
Thank You Reception
- May 28:** Eighth Grade Graduation
- June 5:** Last Day of School  
(*Mass in Church at 9:15 a.m.;  
11:15 a.m. Dismissal*)
- September 21:** Teeing It Up for Tuition Golf Outing  
(*Washtenaw Country Club*)