

August 6, 2010

Dear St James Parents and Guardians,

Greetings to all of you from all of us at St. James School, as we prepare for the exciting days ahead.

### **Welcome to our new families!**

Mrs. Julie Leske and I have been very busy over the last many months welcoming newcomers to the St. James Family. To all of you, we want to say thank you for entrusting your children to us! We hope to live up to your highest expectations. We want you to feel welcome, and hope that you will all find your days at St. James to be a great blessing to you and your children. You are certainly a blessing to us! We encourage you to get involved in the life of the school as soon as you can, and in whatever ways you can. There are lots of things to do which require volunteer time. These are things which can be done at school or at home at your convenience. Some take only a few minutes, others are tasks of longer duration. They are great at warding off boredom, now that the kids will be back in school and you have nothing to do!!! ☺ Of course, we would love to see you here at school, involved in the many fun things we have to offer! You will certainly make many new friends when you just “hop in”! Be sure that you check the PAFA information about volunteer possibilities. We do require volunteer service, but mostly because we know that it is a good way to get to know one another and it promotes our family atmosphere.

So again, a warm welcome to each and every new family. Keep spreading the word about St. James so that we can meet our enrollment goals!

### **PAFA Block Party**

Don't forget to join us on Sunday, August 22, 2010 from 1:00-4:00 p.m. for our annual Ice Cream Social which last year was expanded and improved by PAFA, making it an afternoon of fun for all, young and old! This has become a traditional celebration to kick off the school year, to welcome new families, to reestablish old friendships, meet our wonderful senior parishioners who are so strongly supportive of our school, and to celebrate the accomplishments of PAFA, our parents' organization. Please come to renew friendships and to meet our new families.

### **Early Childhood Center of Excellence SUPERKIDS SCHOOL**

We are delighted to be continuing our participation in the Super School Initiative, as designated by Pleasant Rowland of the Rowland Reading Foundation and the Office of Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Last year was a tremendous year as we introduced the use of the SuperKids reading program and continued our relationship with Ms. Pleasant Rowland and her foundation. During Ms. Rowland's visit to St. James, she applauded our efforts to be an outstanding Catholic school and was much impressed by everything she saw. The renovations which were made to our classrooms will continue, until we have state of the art classrooms, in every way. The Rowland Reading Foundation is matching any funds which we can raise towards this effort at \$.50 to every \$1.00. What a magnificent gift!

We are using the Superkids reading program in our PK-4 classes and in grades K-2. The teachers are highly excited about this program and the children loved it last year..

We are also looking for more volunteers who will be willing to be trained as Super Tutors, to assist the teachers in working with the children. Please let me know if you are interested!

## **Computer/Technology Report**

More great news in the technology department! Last year we participated in a program sponsored by the Office of Catholic Schools in which we took advantage of an offer to accept the loan of 4 interactive white boards for four months. We were given full training in how to use them actively in the classrooms. At the end of the four months, we chose to purchase them at a huge discount. This summer we were able to purchase a 5<sup>th</sup> board through the use of Title money. The teachers are again looking forward to this exciting addition to their instructional toolkit! And the kids positively love it!

For those of you who are new to St. James, let me give you a brief review of our technology plans and goals. Three years ago, we were able to purchase 50 new computers, with flat screen monitors, and full internet connectivity. We worked very hard to raise the \$40,000.00 required to set up our lab and the classroom computers. Using federal Title Funds we have been able to purchase 6 LCD projectors. One is permanently installed in the computer room and others are mounted on the classroom ceilings for use in the classrooms and with the Smart Boards. We are putting all of this to regular use in the education of our students.

Just a word of encouragement, however, to keep assisting us in any way you can with contributions to our Technology Fund. As I'm sure you know, there are many continuing expenses associated with computer technology. There are annual fees to renew subscriptions to security software and educational software. Ink and toner, which are used continually, are very expensive, as is the paper which we use constantly. Purchasing additional hardware is always an important option, to keep us from becoming outdated. There are many other items which we would like to purchase in the not too distant future. So, we cannot just rest on our laurels. We will need to keep raising funds to see that we can continue what we have begun. When you see it all in operation you will be thrilled to help us keep it up!

One very important additional note for our parents of upper grade children. Again this year, we will ask our students purchase their data sticks directly from St. James. Mrs. Vitulli is purchasing in bulk, which should save money and it will ensure that all students are using the same kind. Students who have their data sticks from last year do not need to purchase a new one.

Also, parents, please be certain to communicate with your children that these data sticks are for school use only. Nothing else should be saved to them. Also, they should never lend their data stick to anyone else, nor should they request to borrow another student's data stick. These two simple rules will save us from lots of other problems down the road.

### **Honeywell Instant Alert**

We are happy to let you know that we will continue to use the Honeywell Instant Alert program to notify you in the event of any emergency or when we need to close school for any reason. You will receive a telephone call or a text message or an e-mail within minutes of our placing a message in the system. However, it is necessary for you to enter your contact information into the system. We will be giving you more information on this at the Orientation Days, hopefully with computer stations set up so that you can do it all right from here. For those of you who are already in the system from last year, be sure to log on and make any necessary changes.

### **Option C Administrative Software**

Two years ago, St. James School received a grant and two wonderful donations which enabled us to purchase a software package which allowed us to make some timely changes for our office staff, our teachers and our parents. Use of technology is the present and future, whether we like it or not! Parents, the changes you saw were the new report cards, and the opportunity to have access to information on your children's progress, online. For the teachers, there was much to do and learn, but ultimately it made their jobs easier. As for the principal, I am very happy to have quick access to information without having to go to the files, the classrooms, or to bother Julie for little tidbits. The last two years were a learning experience for us, but we are expecting to be able to use the system to its full potential this year. We will be giving you more information soon!

**VIRTUS TRAINING**  
**September 16, 2010**  
**6:30-10:00 P.M.**

A reminder to all of our parents...Anyone who wishes to be involved in the life of the school in any way, is required to attend a **Virtus Training Session** offered by the Archdiocese of Chicago. **This does not apply to parents who were trained over the last four/five years! One training session is all that is required.** This is part of the nationwide program established by the Catholic Bishops of the United States, in response to the sexual abuse scandal. The program is entitled, "Protecting God's Children." This is indeed what we want to do, to protect our children from any kind of abuse! We all need to be trained to recognize dangerous situations and to know what signs to look for in adults which may help us protect the children from abuse. Abusers can be anyone, in any walk of life. They are often the person you would be least likely to suspect! Remember that you entrust your children to many people outside of school. Children spend time on recreation center teams, ice skating, tae kwon do, at libraries, shopping centers, sleep-overs, and surfing the internet! All these activities can put children at risk. This training is critical for all parents, guardians, teachers, priests, and child care providers. In our archdiocese and our parish, all pastors and priests, deacons, teachers, teachers' aides and I have all completed this training over the last five years, but we continue to read articles posted for us on the VIRTUS website. It is required that we train all school employees, volunteers, catechists, coaches, field trip drivers. Everyone should be trained.

While you may register for any one of a number of sessions around the archdiocese, probably the easiest thing for you to do would be to attend the session we have scheduled for St. James. If you cannot attend that evening, you may search the Archdiocesan website for a date, time and location convenient for you.

**You must register on-line in order to attend any session of "Protecting Children."**

To register on-line: Go to the website for the Archdiocese of Chicago. [www.archchicago.org](http://www.archchicago.org) Scroll down the left hand side of that screen, watching for the box that says, "Protecting Children". Under that box, look for the link which says "**Virtus Training**". Click on that link and you will find the list of training sessions around the archdiocese. Just follow the directions once you have found the session you wish to attend. **You will need to choose your own User ID and password. Don't lose it! When you have completed the class you will be given a certificate. Please make a copy and give it to Julie Leske in our office.**

Another requirement of the Archdiocese is that anyone who will be a regular volunteer must also submit the Criminal Background Check. This can also be done on-line and we will let you know if it is required of you. You must also turn in to Julie Leske, in our office, the CANTS form found on the website and the signature sheet which tells us that you have read the official statement of Acceptable Conduct for employees and volunteers. All of these materials are found on the same Website.

**Faculty Assignments:**

I am happy to introduce the faculty for this year. Please note that I am still in the process of assigning staff members to grade and subject assignments. Enrollment drives these decisions and we are still accepting new students every day.

**Preschool**

Mrs. Parise Payton: 4 year old children at St. James (Ms. Angela Leske, aide)

Ms. Joanna Cortez 3 year old children at St. James (Aide: TBA)

**Let's Play Some More**

Mrs. Parise Payton, assisted by Mrs. Mary Cameron and Ms. Angela Leske

## Kindergarten – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

Mrs. Mary Pohl:	Kindergarten (Aide: Mrs. Lili Palma)
Ms. Jenna Norman:	Grade 1
Mrs. Anne Doane:	Grade 2
TBA	Grade 3
Mrs. Mary Vitulli:	Upper level Social Studies, Math, Algebra
Ms. Cathie Scotkovsky:	Upper level Science, Intermediate Math
Mr. Christopher Garrett:	Upper level Literature, English
Mrs. Dena Canmann:	Learning Resource Teacher
Mrs. Carol Kiwala:	Music
Mrs. Carol Sassorossi:	Physical Education
Mr. Mark Abbatte:	Art
Mrs. Judith Cullen:	Religion Grades 4-8
Ms Johanna Cortez	Spanish

Each of our teachers did a wonderful job last year and we are deeply grateful to them for their dedication to Catholic education and to the children of St. James. I know that you appreciate their efforts as much as I do.

### Orientation Days

Please remember that it is mandatory that you attend one of the two days set aside for Orientation and payment of fees and tuition. These days are Tuesday, August 17 from 3-7 p.m. and Wednesday, August 18 from 3-7 p.m. On these days you are required to sign your tuition contract and pay the first installment of tuition. Your classroom fees were due on June 15. You will also be asked to fill in lots and lots of important forms, order milk, hot lunches, gym uniforms, pick up supply boxes, register with PAFA, etc. **Attendance is mandatory for all families, PK-8.** If you must be out of town, please call Mrs. Julie Leske in the office, to make arrangements to meet with her at a scheduled time. Please, do not expect to come into the office on the morning of the first day of school to do this. We are far too busy in the office to accommodate you at that time. Most of the forms which you will need to fill out can be found on our website and you are encouraged to fill them out in advance. This will speed things up for all of us.

Also please remember to bring at least 5 checks with you if you plan to make payment by check. You may be purchasing milk, special hot lunches, PK blue bags, and insurance, in addition to payment of tuition and fees. Please fill in the Emergency Forms before you come or bring the names and phone numbers of your child's doctor and emergency contact people. These may be neighbors, grandparents, friends or relatives that will be willing to help if your child is sick or injured and you cannot be reached. It will save you a lot of time if you do this in advance.

Remember also that you can pay tuition and fees by credit card. While we are happy to offer this option there is a 3% charge for the use of the credit card. Also, remember that if you pay tuition in full you receive a \$100.00 discount!

We try to make this process as easy for you as we can, but plan to spend **at least 1 hour**. Please be patient if you encounter some lines. We have no control over when people come. It may go quickly, or it may slow down a bit. We try hard to make improvements each year.

Save time!! Don't forget to access the forms on our website in advance, if you can. [www.stjameschoolhwd.org](http://www.stjameschoolhwd.org)

### Website

We strongly encourage you to check our website regularly. Last year we were able to save substantially on the cost of paper and printing and postage by placing all of our communications on the website, so please check it frequently! [www.stjameschoolhwd.org](http://www.stjameschoolhwd.org)

Please let us know if you are unable to use the computer for this purpose.

## School Supplies

You can access a school supply list for grades K-8 on the website or ask Julie for copy when you come to the office. If you ordered a supply box in the spring you can pick it up at Orientation.

### Backpacks

All children are welcome to use backpacks to carry their possessions to and from school. However, as a result of our concerns for the children's health and safety we are not allowing them to use these backpacks in school, during the day. Children have a tendency to carry all their earthly belongings so as not to have to organize and reorganize during the day. These fully loaded backpacks can weigh many, many pounds. It is very bad for a child's back, especially when it is carried just on one shoulder. It also causes problems in the classroom when these items are on the floor, blocking aisles, causing students and teachers alike to have to step over them.

We have purchased small blue nylon St. James bags for the students to use during the day to carry their small personal items. They will be available for purchase for a nominal fee. The younger students may purchase them as well.

For the primary children, please do not purchase large backpacks. They have no need of anything more than a small bag/sack to carry their lunch and their "Take Home" folder. Storage of 20-25 large backpacks is a real issue in our classrooms. Our 1950's school building was not designed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and all the "things" we carry around. Our "In A Wall Wardrobes" were certainly not designed to store 25 wheeled "climb Mt. Everest" backpacks which the children are so fond of using. You are encouraged to purchase one of our St. James bags. Thanks a lot!

### School Uniforms

All students (K-8) are expected to be in full uniform on the first day of school, August 23. Please be cooperative in following the uniform code every day. What may seem like no problem to your child or to you, is in fact, a big problem for us! Areas of concern have often been the shoes for both boys and girls, and sweatpants/leggings with the girls, jewelry, and the style of blouse for the girls. The School Board has tried to address these problems when reviewing the uniform policy. Please read the policy carefully before making your uniform purchases.

#### SHOES

- solid black leather shoes (WITH BACKS AROUND THE HEELS)
- low top
- low heel and sole (not higher than 1 inch soles or heels)
- no boots of any kind; no lights, emblems, colored shoestrings
- We are looking for simplicity and safety - **not the latest style.**

#### CLOTHING

- Shirts and blouses must be tucked in at all times.
- No shorts or slacks may have patch pockets or be of the cargo pants style.
- No colored undershirts or turtlenecks, or shirts with writing may be worn under the uniform shirt/blouse.
- No sweaters or sweatshirts may be worn in the classroom other than the uniform sweater or sweatshirt. The uniform sweatshirts have the St. James School name or logo and must be purchased through Dennis Uniform.

Please do not make me tell your child on the first day of school that the \$70.00 pair of shoes or the shirt/blouse/sweatshirt/ slacks you bought are not acceptable.

Other regulations which are important relate not to clothes, but to haircuts, jewelry and makeup.

- Hair styles for boys and girls must be neat, off the face, and of natural, God-given color. No bangs hanging in the eyes, please!
- Jewelry: Other than religious medals or crosses, jewelry should be avoided. If girls have pierced ears (one piercing per ear!) only small stud earrings can be worn. No other body piercing or tattooing is allowed. Earrings are not part of the boys' uniform.
- Makeup: No makeup is necessary or allowed. Natural beauty shines through. Lipstick, eyeliner, nail polish, etc. should be saved for non-school days.

Please read carefully the School Board Newsletter, which came to you under a separate mailing, and the Parent/Student Handbook for detail on the uniform policy. You will be given a copy of this handbook at Orientation. It will also be on our website. Generally speaking, if anything about a child's appearance draws attention, it is, most likely, not allowed.

### **Uniform Cleanliness**

Parents, please pay attention to the cleanliness of your child's clothes on a daily basis. The children are so sparkling clean in August, but as the year progresses, uniforms are often in need of washing, mending, or replacing as the children grow. Shoes begin to look worn and unpolished. Teach your children to value a neat and clean appearance. It is very important to their health and well-being.

### **Parent Student Handbooks**

Be sure to pick up your copy of the handbook at Orientation. There are some very important issues addressed. Included are the Cell Phone Policy, Technology/Internet Usage Policy, the Medication Policy, uniform code, policies and procedures for academics, spiritual life, safety issues, classroom and playground rules, and many other important pieces of information. Make certain that you read it carefully and discuss it with you child/ren. Being aware of all these procedures and rules is the best way of making our year progress smoothly. You will be asked to sign a statement acknowledging that you have read and understand it. We have also written a shorter, more concise Student Handbook. This should be helpful to the students and the teachers. It is expected that the children will know and understand everything that is in that handbook. Things may be spelled out more completely in the Parent Handbook, so be aware that you are responsible for being familiar with both!

All of these handbooks are or will be posted on our website.

### **Hot Lunch Program**

We are very happy to remind you that we will continue the daily Hot Lunch Program this year. The lunches are provided by FSP (Food Service Professionals) and will be available every day **after the 30 of August**, for those who desire it and purchase it in advance. **(Please note that there is no FSP lunch on those days in which PAFA sponsors the Special Hot Lunch)** Students may purchase lunch daily or whenever they choose. Mrs. Hazel Nagel has been hired by FSP to serve as our program coordinator and server.

Some of our children will be eligible for free or reduced price lunch, based upon family income and federal standards. We will have forms available at Orientation to apply for this program. Be sure to come prepared with your family gross income information if you think you may be qualified for subsidized lunches for your children. W-2 forms/Income tax statements are the most helpful sources of this information.

The program works this way. Monthly lunch menus will be sent home with an order form. Children/parents decide which days they would like to order. A menu choice lunch order form is filled in and returned to school, with a check made payable to St. James School. All meals include milk. The children may order milk if they prefer to bring a lunch from home.

Every child who purchases lunch will be given a hot pack, a cold pack and milk. Anything that the children do not want will be put on a leftover table.

Be sure to look for the Hot Lunch table at Orientation. The FSP District Managers will be available to help you sign up for the program and place your September orders. We certainly hope that many of you will continue to take advantage of this terrific program. The food is healthy, inexpensive and the children like it very much. Just think how happy you will be when you don't have to pack a lunch or two or three, every day.

**Below are some key points regarding the program of which you must be aware:**

- Full priced meal is \$3.00 (comes with milk)
- Reduced price meals are \$0.40
- Individual milk purchases will be \$0.35 per day (white milk only)
- Leftover milk can be purchased for \$.35
- Occasionally, meals are available for purchase, depending upon the number of children absent. The cost of each meal is \$3.00.
- If your child forgets to bring a lunch to school, we will provide them with a meal if there is one leftover. You will be responsible to pay for that meal and you will be billed at the end of the month.
- All orders for September of 2010 are due at the Orientation Days on August 17-18. The first day for Hot Lunch service is **Monday, August 30**.
- **All following orders are due on the first Friday of the month** no later than 8:30 a.m. Please be sure to check your calendars before ordering so as to know if there are any days in which your child will be out of school due to appointments or other obligations. Do not order for those days!
- **No late orders can be accepted.** Your child will have to bring a sack lunch for the month if orders are not in on time.
- Credits cannot be given for calculation errors when you fill out the order form at home. We cannot be responsible to credit nickels, dimes, quarters, etc. (If for some reason an overpayment is large, we will apply it to your next order.)
- In the case of a lengthy illness or family emergency greater than a week, a child's lunch order can be cancelled. **Please contact the FSP Coordinator.**
- If paying by cash, please send exact amounts. Change cannot be made.
- Please keep a copy of the order form or mark your calendar so that you know which days your child can expect a hot lunch, and what meal he/she ordered. We cannot send home copies of your order. Older students should use their assignment notebooks to record their orders.
- We understand that family income levels may change during the year. If you feel that you may qualify for government subsidized meals anytime during the year, please contact the FSP Coordinator to request the necessary forms.

**If you have any questions, please call the office and leave a message for our Hot Lunch coordinator, Mrs. Hazel Nagel. She will personally call you back as soon as possible. Please do not call her at home, as she cannot answer questions without the paperwork in hand. It is always at school.**

There will be another table at Orientation, for **PAFA Special Lunch** which we will have one day each month. There will be no FSP hot lunches on these days. Please don't miss either table.

## **School Calendars**

On the SJ website, you will find a copy of the annual school calendar. Please note that this annual calendar is subject to change, but we will try to follow it as closely as we can. Please use it for long range planning. Also on the website you will find the August and September calendars which should be completely accurate. (We hope!) The monthly calendar and your newsletter will be posted prior to the first of each month. Please keep these calendars in a prominent place in your home where you can check them often.

## **Communication**

Nothing makes a school year proceed more smoothly than constant communication between home and school. Teachers will contact you often and we encourage you to do the same, especially if you have a concern of any kind. Little problems can escalate quickly if ignored. Please work with us to see that this does not happen.

E-mail is an excellent form of communication, so if you have an e-mail address, please make it available to your children's teachers.

## **Highwood/Highland Park School Bus**

We are happy to be able to continue bus service for families who reside within the boundaries of District 112. Those families who are eligible have been notified and are required to sign up for the service. We hope that this will continue to be very successful. We trust that this service makes life a little easier and that it will encourage more families to choose St. James. If you have questions about District 112 bus service, please call the school office.

## **Still Seeking Bus Service to Great Lakes**

While we continue to pursue all avenues to find bus service to the Naval Base housing, it has not happened yet. We are still hopeful and may ask for your help. Keep posted.

Well, that seems to be all the information that is necessary for you now. Please feel free to call the office if you have other questions.

I am looking forward to a wonderful year. May God bless us all!

Sincerely,  
Mary Kay Tschanz, Principal