

Saint Patrick School Newsletter

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Principal Susan Graham



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Upcoming Events

- ◆ Margaritas Night, April 13th
- ◆ Seacoast Catholic Schools JH Dance on April 17th at St Mary Academy in Dover
- ◆ NH Opera Company present the Magic of Mozart, April 23, 1:45 PM
- ◆ Mad Science Show Pop, Spin & Boom April 24, 10 AM
- ◆ April Vacation, April 27 - May 1
- ◆ Godspell Jr. May 22 & 23 at St Thomas Aquinas
- ◆ Pot O' Gold Raffle, June 11, Family Fun Day at Peirce Island

Principal's News Improvements to the Literacy Program

Reading will occur at the same time of day across grades 1-5 next year. This will allow every student access to the level of reading he or she needs without being constrained by grade. Developmental Reading Assessments (DRAs) or STAR 360 assessments will be administered routinely to determine if a reader is ready for the next level, allowing students to move ahead more quickly if they are ready. These assessments will also help us to identify when more intensive reading support is needed. Teachers will be working on structuring this new format through the end of the year and into summer.

Every grade, up through the Middle School, will also have a dedicated time for writing and we will be completing work on the writing curriculum in June.

A more comprehensive description of our literacy program will be sent to parents in June, once teachers have had time to work through the details and the schedule is in place.

The Importance of Phonics and Cursive Handwriting

Although our reading program is robust and our students are strong readers, phonics is an area that we feel we need to strengthen. Phonics has a direct impact on spelling and on decoding in reading. All of our K-3 teachers will be undergoing Orton Gillingham training; this is a multi-sensory approach to teaching language that includes all the senses and taps into the learning styles of each student. Cailey Jerome and Megan Gould have already attended an intensive workshop and have been using what they learned in class. They are very encouraged by the results!

Cursive handwriting is often thought of as a dying art these days, but there is solid research that indicates that handwriting improves learning.

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/03/science/whats-lost-as-handwriting-fades.html?_r=0

The bottom line is cursive handwriting will remain a mainstay in the St Patrick curriculum and will be required in the upper grades beyond grade 4.

STAR 360 Testing

This week will begin a series of adaptive computerized assessments in reading and math for all grades. These assessments are much less time-consuming and less invasive to classroom instruction than the Terra Novas and will give the teachers immediate real-time data about the progress of each student in these areas. The assessments provide detailed information concerning students who need additional support or more challenge. We will also use this information to inform curriculum and instruction decisions.

Curriculum Mapping

The teachers have been documenting the content that they teach, the activities assigned, and the assessments given in each subject each month. This is called curriculum mapping and it creates a broad and, at the same time, in-depth picture of the academic program at St Patrick School. Following the last day of school for your children, the teachers will spend two intensive days looking at these maps, and at the assessment data from STAR 360, the Developmental Reading Assessments, The Readistep exam taken by the 8th graders, and other sources of information. As a faculty, the teachers will identify the gaps and overlaps in the curriculum, and its strengths and weaknesses. Adjustments, overhauls, and, where necessary, new material will be added to create a challenging and rigorous academic program in which we can all take pride.

Math Curriculum Overhaul

An in-depth analysis of the reading program has been taking place this academic year, and the work on the reading curriculum is well underway. The focus in June will turn to the math program. By looking at the content, skills, and knowledge our graduating 8th graders must have to be successful at the honors level in high school math, the teachers will redesign the math curriculum, starting at 8th grade and working backward down through the grades.



*“Without
Challenge, there is
no Change.
Without Change,
there is no
Growth.”*

Saint Patrick School
125 Austin Street
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Phone:
(603) 436-0739

Fax:
(603) 436-1569

E-mail:
sgraham@stpatsportsmouth.org

www.stpatsweb.com

A Year of FAITH

The theme for next year will be a Year of Faith. Every month, the school population will examine, discuss and model a different virtue of faith and work to make that virtue part of their daily lives. I will be sending out this week, via email, a letter explaining the Virtues program which we are implementing school-wide. It is my hope that by intentionally focusing on the virtues; as part of morning meeting, in the classroom and in the daily rhythm of the school, we can strengthen the Catholic culture of the school and its community.

New Website

In a couple of weeks, the new St Patrick School website will premiere. I want to thank all the parents and faculty who responded to my request for suggestions for their input. Your ideas helped to craft a website that is useful and flexible. Right now, the timeline for the new website to go online is April vacation.

Pot O' Gold Raffle

As of press time, the Pot O' Gold was worth over \$1000. Gift cards continue to come in. We have raised \$1500 in ticket sales. The top student ticket seller will win a new Chromebook, generously donated by a parent. The classroom that sells the most tickets will win an ice cream party, also donated by another generous parent.

Summer Program

A schedule of summer offerings will go out later this week by email and will be posted on the school website.

Charity Dress-Down Days

The 1st graders are in charge of the next Dress-Down Day on Tuesday, April 21st. The 1st graders are raising money to support CHaD (Children's Hospital at Dartmouth). For the donation of a dollar, more if you feel charitable, a student may wear non-uniform clothing to school. Please follow the guidelines for non-uniform days and let modesty and good taste be your guiding principles in the selection of clothing for school.

Fond Farewell

Lynn Meehan, longtime physical education teacher at St. Patrick will be retiring from her position at the end of this year. Mrs. Meehan is looking forward to spending more time in her beautiful garden. Everyone at the school will miss her and we all wish her the very best in her future endeavors.

Enrollment

Enrollment is solid! The Open House went well on Sunday. As of mid-March when the budget was submitted, over 90% of our current families had re-registered. We continue to get many inquiries and have several tours and visitation days scheduled. With another Open Houses just around the corner, enrollment looks very promising.

In every school, there is always a small population that will look for greener pastures. Sometimes a new job precipitates a move. Other times, the fit between family and school is not ideal and it is best to part ways. Occasionally, the needs of a student will dictate a move to another school.

The potency of gossip at St Pats worries me. If you hear of something that concerns you, please contact me. The information you hear may not be correct. Do not allow rumors or comments from the disenchanted to undermine your confidence in the school. The school is stable. There are no plans to combine grades. Changes have been made and continue to be made to improve the academic program and the Catholic culture of our school. Our enrollment is going up! The financial situation is improving and we are moving forward. **Keep the Faith!**