



The PK3 students are in a part of the year rich with opportunities for faith formation. After learning about giving and sharing for the Feast of St. Nicholas Dec. 6 and the birth of the Baby Jesus in the first Christmas story, they returned to school and learned about the Three Wise Men visiting the Baby Jesus on Epiphany. The children will become familiar with our school patron St. Thomas Aquinas on his feast day Jan. 28 during Catholic Schools Week and with good St. Valentine on his feast day Feb. 14. The children will receive ashes on their forehead from Deacon Ken on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 22, as we begin the Lenten observance.

After the holidays, PK3 students study winter, weather and environmental conditions, polar animals and how to dress for the cold weather. In addition to learning about winter, in January, Mrs. Stubbs emphasized character building skills in her class, reading examples of specific behavior, such as sharing with a friend, and her class voted thumbs up or down whether the action was good. For the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, Mrs. Stubbs will present a hefty visual of the saint by showing her students his statue outside the front of St. Thomas Aquinas Church. The children will make stick puppets of St. Thomas.

Teacher Donna's class read several books about the Epiphany, including "The Last Straw," and used their senses to see and/or smell samples of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Each of her students has an amaryllis bulb growing in the window. The children observe daily changes in their plant such as plant size, flower bud formation and the number of leaves. They learned about measurement using a thermometer to check the temperature in their classroom and preschool courtyard and measuring cups and spoons when some of the classroom parents came to help them cook pancakes. The pancake study includes sequencing events (gathering ingredients and following a recipe), learning where food comes from and how to use a knife to cut food. The class flips play dough pancakes on spatulas to strength hand muscles for improved handwriting.

Miss Carol's and Miss Michele's class observed/graphed temperature and compared weather situations. Their search and discovery of winter ani-

mals focuses on polar bears and penguins. Their classes will create a brace map during the snowmen unit.

Recalling December activities, the PK3 students performed seasonal songs and finger plays in the annual Christmas concert, which concluded with the audience joining the children singing "Silent Night." The children learned about giving as they decorated the Sharing and Giving Tree with socks, mittens, gloves and hats, which were donated to STA's sister school, St. Augustine. A visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus was a highlight for the students. Each child had an opportunity to talk with the jolly couple and received a peppermint candy cane.

As part of their Christmas activities, Mrs. Stubbs' students made a photo Christmas ornament for their family and participated in a book exchange with classmates during their Christmas party. Several Christmas activities in Teacher Donna's class are gingerbread themed, including decorating gigantic gingerbread man cookies, a fresh gingerbread house display, stories and songs and making a family Christmas ornament.



*Max Meliza clarifies his letter to Santa when Santa and Mrs. Claus visited the PK3 students on Dec. 14, 2011*

Mrs. Stubb's and Teacher Donna's class prepared for Christmas by lighting Advent wreath candles, reciting daily blessings and singing songs. Mrs. Stubbs' class maintained a countdown calendar.

February, which is National Dental Health Month, approaches with the anticipation of the annual visit by the Tooth Fairy. The Tooth Fairy teaches good dental practices to the children and gives them a toothbrush. Mrs. Stubbs' class has a valentine card exchange. Teacher Donna's class reads about St. Valentine, receives a holy card, makes old-fashioned valentine boxes and has a Sweetheart Dance Feb. 14.

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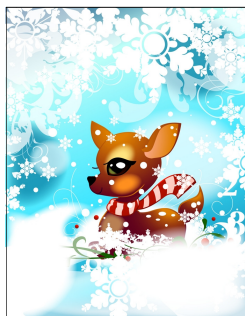
Also in February, Miss Carol and Miss Michele's classes in February will view and participate in various means of communication.

And in March, the preschoolers will be preparing for the arrival of spring, St. Patrick's Day and spring break.

### PK-4 Preschool — Mrs. Cole, Mrs. Fisketjon, Ms. Hayes, Mrs. Stock, Mrs. Wearden

Themes for January, February and March in the 4 year old Pre-Kindergarten are SEASONS AND WEATHER, COMMUNICATION AND SPRING. In January, the children will be sequencing, calendaring, rhyming and patterning themes associated with the weather. In February, we will build on all of the January concepts and begin to break down words into syllables as well as explore math concepts like spatial relationships, sorting, graphing, counting and one-to-one correspondence. We will also enjoy a visit from the Tooth Fairy. In March, we will begin to isolate first sounds in words and continue to break down words into syllables. The children will begin to predict story endings and predict consequences of behaviors in rhymes and stories and begin to explore past tense verbs. In Math and Science, we will explore the wonderful world of BUGS through graphing, measuring, and diagramming.

**“Lifeskills” presented, modeled and practiced: Effort, Personal Best, Courage, Organization, Caring, Resourcefulness, Pride, Sense of Humor and Initiative.**

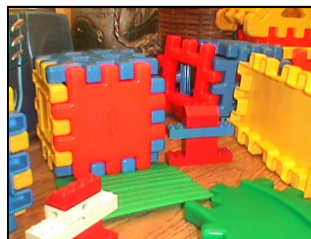


### Transitional Kindergarten—Mrs. McDaniel

The TK Super Stars are very busy learning many new things each week. Our Saxon Early Learning theme this month is Our Neighborhood. Earlier this year we walked to the grocery store and noticed all the shops and stores. This was another of our “spring boards” for learning! We created a “Lego” neighborhood, creating our buildings, shops and people shopping! This was on exhibit in our hallway. The boys are so proud of their work! Our next adventure will be discovering the people who work in our neighborhood.

Writing is fun, too! We are expressing ourselves through writing and drawing in our journals and in books that we are authoring! Blending sounds into words is a big step on our adventurous learning path.

Explore, adventure, listen, learn!



### Kindergarten— Mrs. Abbott, Mrs. Freis, Ms. Roe, Mrs. Scruggs

It is hard to believe it is already January. The kindergarteners are hard at work learning sight words and decoding. This month we are busy learning about the arctic regions and the animals that make those areas their home. In math we have been busy assessing for our first report card that will go home for the second quarter. We are also looking forward to the many fun activities planned for Catholic Schools Week.



Next month along with Valentine's Day we have lots of activities planned for learning about Abraham Lincoln and George Washington. In math we will continue counting, patterns and simple addition. We will add to these telling time by the hour, activities with measurement and learning about the nickel. Also in February we will have many activities focused on the beginning of Lent and a week-long author study on Dr. Seuss.

## First Grade — Mrs. Avery, Mrs. Hanifen, Mrs. Morris, Mrs. Wendorf

What fun we are having in 1st Grade! The children came back from Christmas break relaxed and ready to tackle all the new challenges of Second Semester. We are working very hard in Reading. Our nightly stories are very interesting! We are reading all sorts of genres, like folktales, autobiographies, and nonfiction stories. Please remember to ask comprehension questions as the stories are longer and are more complicated. We also love going to the Computer Lab to work on IStation. We are learning and playing at the same time! In Math, we are finishing up place value. Next we will begin money and time. This can be a difficult unit. Any extra reinforcement at home is greatly appreciated. It is time to begin subtraction on our weekly time tests. In Language Arts, we have finished verbs, and will be learning adjectives. We write each week either creatively or in our journals. Our sentences are getting more detailed and longer. Adding adjectives will help our writing too. In Social Studies we are studying winter. We are also working in our Map Skills books to help introduce geography. In February, we will begin our unit on American symbols, famous Americans, and the Presidents. In February we will complete an America Project in class. More information will come home as the due date approaches. Then we will focus on the great state of Texas! We are studying all about Animals and the different Animal Kingdoms in Science. Mrs. Galvin always plans exciting Science Labs for us. We are looking forward to our field trip to the Dallas World Aquarium as a culminating activity to our Animal unit. In Religion, we were so excited to have a chance to present Mass for the Lower School. We continue to study God's greatness in our lives. We will learn about Lent, Holy Week, and then Jesus's Resurrection on Easter. It should be a very busy next few months. As always our job is made easier by your support at home.

## Second Grade — Ms. Alvarez, Mrs. Barr, Mrs. Petit, Ms. Ratcliffe

With the new year just under way, Second grade has lots of fun things to look forward to! With the understanding that God forgives us when we are sorry for our sins, we are ready to take the first steps to begin preparing our hearts as we begin our journey toward First Communion! We will soon be wrapping up our unit in Math on two-digit subtraction with re-

grouping and beginning our new unit of Geometry followed by Money and Time. In science, we are starting to understand how our water is used and reused as we start to discuss the Water Cycle, which will lead us into our unit on Weather! In Social Studies, we are learning how our government is formed and how it works before we talk about being producers and consumers when we start our unit in Economics. But the fun doesn't stop here! We are continuing to perfect our writing skills as we continue to create stories about us in our personal narratives. With so many exciting things happening, it's hard to slow down!

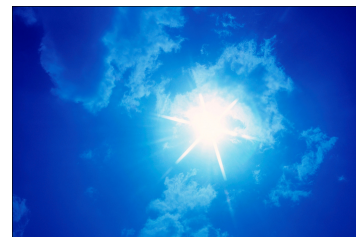
## Third Grade — Mrs. Dolen, Mrs. Reeves, Ms. Reynolds, Mrs. Williams

Like the Apostles, we are called to live our faith and spread the Good News to all people. This quarter third graders are memorizing the Apostles' Creed and studying ways our Church continues their mission.

Our Language Arts theme in the third quarter is Determination. Students will read stories about persevering to meet goals. Our comprehension strategies will include making inferences and analyzing, and monitoring comprehension. We will work on these reading skills: compare and contrast, draw conclusions, author's purpose and make and confirm predictions. In English students will be exploring expository writing, linking, helping and irregular verbs and quotations in dialogue.

In Social Studies we will begin looking at communities over time, how they change and how they stay the same. We'll also look at some inventions that have changed our lives.

In Science we will explore Energy: the forms of energy and converting energy. We will experiment with Light energy and study the layers of the sun. Look for our solar heaters to be displayed during the Science Fair!



## Fourth Grade—Mrs. Bigney, Mrs. Campagna, Mrs. Casner, Mrs. Kappes

So, the Spanish have arrived in Texas. (LaSalle brought some Frenchmen also, but they didn't stay long...) They've set up a mission system. (Many of these beautiful missions can still be seen today. If your family is looking for a spring break idea, check out the San Antonio Missions!) They call this part of the New World "New Spain", but are having a hard time convincing settlers to come to the northern area known as Tejas. So, when Moses Austin comes along, offering to bring settlers, they agree. (I guess they figured anything was better than taking a chance on France returning!) But Moses dies before he can come, (Hmmm, sounds a little like another Moses who dies before entering the Promised Land... but I digress...) so his son, Stephen, agrees to take his place. But, wait, there's another problem..."New Spain" has declared its independence, and is now Mexico! (Flag #3!) The Mexican government allows Stephen to bring his "Old Three Hundred" settlers, and they are soon followed by many more Anglos, many from the United States. Well, it won't be long before trouble brews...and independence is declared again, this time Texas from Mexico! The Republic of Texas (Flag #4!) will last almost 10 years...and, some say, lives on in the independent spirit of today's Texans.

In Reading we have started working on *Tic-Tac-Toe* activities and *Pick Three* activities to enhance the curriculum. The children work off the smart board and their interactive activities help them to have a

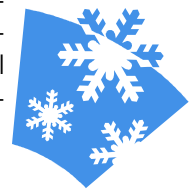
hands on experience with their weekly units. Class novels are fun to read and study! The author's point of view is a challenge to figure out. Group novels help us to concentrate on specific skills within the reading range of the children. Reading in a group and discussing ideas helps the students learn to appreciate different points of view.

In English, the cool thing about Grammar is making it all make sense. When you take a sentence apart and discuss the part of speech, the Smart Exchange Program helps us to have hands on experience to learn about the word.

Our writing program is getting stronger ever day! Monthly, we are still using our WPP on line program. The tutoring sessions are awesome on the computer! With the basic structure and using a FLEE map we are able to continue to write across the curriculum.

In Science, we will complete our study of the Protista, Bacteria, and Fungi Kingdoms and be ready to move into the exciting world of the Animal Kingdom. Thank you to all the wonderful volunteers who help us with Science labs and to Mrs. Galvin for organizing those wonderful labs.

Math is going strong. The students have been very busy dividing by two digit divisors. We will begin to study the basic number concepts that will lead us into fractions. We will also begin to incorporate the use of our hands on equations in our weekly routine. This will give the students some hands on experience in solving for variables.



## Fifth Grade—Mrs. Campagna, Ms. Joachim, Ms. Schnurr, Mrs. Strandberg

In Language Arts the fifth grade has just completed a unit on nouns including singular, plural, irregular, and possessive. We are now moving on to verbs which will include action, linking, irregular, as well as verb phrases. In Literature the students are beginning a poetry unit which will culminate by the students creating a poetry book. The students are also continuing to read a wide variety of genres to expand and build their love of reading. As always, we are continuing to write and the students progress is truly amazing. It has been a great second quarter and we are looking forward to an even better third quarter.

In social studies we'll continue to delve into the last of the 5 regions that comprise the fifty states of the USA. Students will learn about colonial life in North America ruled by England and the reasons colonists continued to pour into the continent and onto lands claimed by France which escalated tensions leading to the French and Indian War. We'll then explore reasons causing friction between colonists and Britain (taxes and tighter restrictions on trade) ultimately resulting in the American Revolution. Students will further their understanding of the key points of contention colonists had with Britain which led to the decision to declare independence from the United Kingdom by studying

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and memorizing the Preamble to the US Constitution.

In Religion we'll learn what the words of the Lord's Prayer are and exactly what they mean. We'll explore that at the Last Supper Jesus instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist. In this Sacrament we receive the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus. Through the Eucharist Jesus remains with us forever. The Eucharist is the third Sacrament of Christian Initiation. We'll study how Jesus came to forgive sins and throughout his ministry, he healed the sick in body and soul.

In math we will begin our work on fractions. At this time, it is very important for the students to continue practicing math facts every day. A strong math fact foundation will be imperative for success as they work with fractions. They will begin by learning Least Common Multiple and Least Common Denominator. Next the students will learn to compare and order fractions. They will also write fractions as decimals and decimals as fractions. They will learn to add and subtract fractions with like and unlike denominators. They will also add and subtract mixed numbers. Finally, they will learn to multiply and divide fractions and mixed numbers.

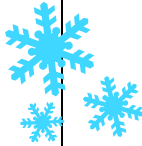
This is an exciting quarter in 5th grade science. The students have just started to work on their Science Fair Projects. The students have some great ideas for their projects. The Science Fair will be held on Tuesday, April 3. In class and lab we will continue our study of the Earth. Students will begin the quarter studying earthquakes and volcanoes. This is always a fun unit for the students because they will be building and exploding their own volcanoes in lab. The next unit will include the study of water and oceans. They will begin by reviewing what they have learned about the water cycle. Next they will study freshwater and saltwater bodies, as well as waves, tides, and currents. The next unit will cover weather, air, and the Earth's atmosphere.



## 6th Gr. Language Arts – Mrs. Bowdich

With the end of the second quarter, we are halfway through this school year. Before long these sixth graders will be our new seventh graders. In anticipation of seventh and eighth grade, as well as, high school, the third quarter will find the students focusing on their higher level thinking skills. We will apply these critical thinking skills to all facets of the curriculum.

In literature the students will be expected to use their analytical ability as we begin our poetry and historical fiction units. Vocabulary, writing, and grammar will continue to be a vital part of our daily class schedule. I have enjoyed watching these sixth graders grow, and I am looking forward to witnessing their continued growth and development in their academic endeavors.



## 6th Gr. Math – Ms. Guillen

The sixth graders have been moving quickly through many concepts in math class. They have begun to master comparing and ordering rational numbers and will soon be tackling the challenge of evaluating and writing algebraic expressions. These outstanding students will build on their knowledge of the order of operations and of the distributive property to write and solve both one-step and two-step equations. By using a hands-on approach to solving these equations, the students will gain a concrete knowledge of the concepts taught. They will record and justify the method they used to solve each equation and will solve real-world problems by writing and solving equations. The sixth graders will then draw upon their understanding of expressions and equations to graph, write and solve inequalities. This will be a very busy time for our sixth graders, but I am sure they will continue to face their challenges with determination and a positive attitude.



## 6th Grade Social Studies — Mr. Price



The beginning of the New Year in World History finds our students in the middle of exploring the realm of ancient Greece. The students are learning how Greece is quite different from the other ancient civilizations that we have covered so far this year. As a class we have examined what makes up the individual city-states in ancient Greece, how the Greeks made their living and have begun to look at the fictional and historical events that took place in and around Greece. Students had the chance to form their own city-states complete with its own name, type of government, and coat of arms. After we finish our unit over Greece we will shift forward in time to the great empire that was Rome. We will examine how the empire came into existence, how much land was under its control, and how such a great empire would come to fall. The students will also get the chance to learn about some of Rome's greatest leaders as well as other features of the ancient Roman Empire. Soon we will be shifting west to study Europe and its vast history! Information regarding the sixth grade field trip is coming soon!

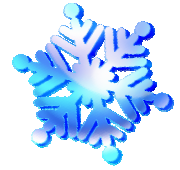
## 6th Grade Science — Ms. Watts

The 6th grade students are working hard on their Science Fair Projects. After in depth research, they have completed their purpose, research summary, and hypothesis as well as their MLA formatted work cited page. Now is the time to start the testing and investigation phase. Remember: Science Fair is April 3rd, 2012. In addition to science fair, the students are studying endothermic and exothermic reactions in a quest to better understand states and phases of matter. In the second semester we will calculate density, examine viscosity, have fun with physical and chemical changes and then dive in to motion, momentum, and energy. Hands-on is best, especially when it comes to work and simple machines. With hard work and inquisitive minds the 6th grade class will become "mini-scientists" in the field of physical science.



## 6th Grade Religion — Ms. Guillen & Mrs. Todora

In 6th grade religion, we have been journeying with the Israelites as they were led to Egypt by the great famine. There we learned of Joseph's role as governor and now we are learning about the life of Moses. We are soon to discover and learn about God's greatest act of saving love in the Old Testament: the Exodus. Understanding God's saving act in the Exodus story will help us better understand Jesus' saving actions. We will also learn about the Ten Commandments, which are a gift that God has given us so that we might deepen our relationship with Him. Through reading and discussing scripture passages in the Book of Exodus, creating skits and thinking maps, and much reflection, the students' journey to the Promised Land will be a spiritual journey for them as well. This journey will continue with learning about the roles and contributions of the judges and the first three Israelite kings. This will be an exciting and challenging period of biblical history for the children.



## 7th Grade Language Arts — Mr. Burns, Mr. Sullivan and Mrs. Todora

This year, we have been to the streets of Manhattan, the fictional West Texas town of Antler, the Dust Bowl in the "Dirty Thirties," an island lighthouse in the Atlantic Ocean, and India with a fearless mongoose, as well as many other places that literature can take you. In the new semester, we visit the world of poetry. We have selected many poems which we know the students will enjoy and will help them become better readers of poetry, as well as broaden their knowledge of poetic devices. Along with this, we will read an assortment of short stories, again helping our students to become proficient readers of literature while we visit other places and times.

As always, we will continue studying grammar using the Daily Grammar Practice program and vocabulary using Vocabulary Workshop. These programs are giving our students a solid background in these two vital areas and helping them to prepare for eighth grade and beyond.

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In writing, our students will write at least three formal essays during the third quarter. We will begin with a comparison-contrast essay based on two short stories. Our second formal writing assignment of the quarter will be a persuasive essay. Finally, the students will write a personal essay. As always, the students will continue writing frequent informal essays and using the Writing Practice Program to provide ample opportunities for them to practice and improve their writing skills.

## 7th Grade Social Studies—Mr. Price

The beginning of the New Year in seventh grade social studies finds our students wrapping up their study of Texas history. The students have studied about how Texas was colonized by Anglos as allowed by the Mexican government when it controlled Texas. We then moved on to the tensions that existed between the new colonists and the government which allowed them to bring their families and lives to vast lands of Texas. As a class we then examined specific events that sparked anger on both sides and how that anger would lead to altercations between Texan colonists and Mexican soldiers. Before we studied the Texas Revolution students were able to learn about the different military tactics that were applied during the war. Classes then examined the major engagements of the Texas Revolution, large and small, and their effect on the overall revolution. After we finished examining how Texas gained its independence, students studied the government that existed during the Republic of Texas as well as the first constitution of Texas. To wrap up our study of Texas History, students will learn about the American Civil War and what role Texas played in this great conflict in our nation's history. Students will now venture into the great realm that is American History. We will begin our study by examining the geography of the land before colonization as well as the inhabitants that lived on the land before explorers arrived.



## 7th Grade Math — Mr. Burns

The seventh grade math classes have been working hard on many different math concepts during the first two quarters of the year. Throughout the third quarter we will be studying many concepts ranging from probability to linear equations. We will also tackle math problems that deal with money such as calculating simple and compound interest and percent of markup and discount. As always, we will have several tests and quizzes each chapter to show understanding. We encourage our students to seek help from us when they are confused, and we look forward to another great quarter and all of the new concepts that our students will encounter.



## 7th Grade Religion — Mrs. Lucas & Mrs. Todora

In 7th grade Religion, we are studying the parables and miracles of Jesus to see how they apply to us today. Next we will continue to explore Jesus' public ministry and the men He chose to help Him. The students will research the apostles (both individually and as a group) to look into how their faith increased despite many obstacles. The long term assignment for this quarter will be a lap book presentation on the Apostles. Next we will study the end of Jesus' life. We will examine the events that happened in the Paschal Mystery. The students will participate in a trial for Jesus to show how unfair the trial was and the possible outcome if Jesus had been given a fair trial. The students will discuss that it was part of God's plan for Jesus to die this way. They will also explore and meditate on the Stations of the Cross. We will also review several of the Traditions prayers to encourage and help them in their prayer life. The life skills we will work on this quarter are faith, resourcefulness, cooperation, and courage.



## 7th Grade Science — Mrs. Sowder & Ms. Watts

The seventh graders have been busy studying transport in the cell and have moved on to cell reproduction (mitosis and meiosis). This can be a very difficult topic to teach. We have been very impressed with how focused the students have been. Keep up the great work. Science research project information has been handed out to the kids. We are looking forward to some great projects this year. We will be studying genetics very soon so stay tuned for more good things coming your way in the science classes.



## 8th Grade Language Arts—Mr. Sullivan & Ms. Aikin

With the ISEE test behind us, the eighth graders will now set their sights on preparing for the rigors of high school English. As I have often told my students, freshman year is the year of grammar, grammar, and more grammar. Whether a student attends Bishop Lynch, Ursuline, Jesuit, Bishop Dunne, Woodrow Wilson, or another local high school, grammar will constitute a major part of the freshman curriculum. To prepare for this, my students will continue using the Daily Grammar Practice program to build their grammatical knowledge. I will also be teaching several in-depth grammar lessons on verb usage, verbals, and other grammar topics.

Regarding reading and writing, the emphasis this spring in my classes will be on analyzing and writing about literature, specifically the importance of theme, setting, conflict, and characterization. To accomplish this, my students will be comparing combinations of literature, nonfiction writing, and fine or graphic art to establish the thematic connection which they share. Practice of this sort will prepare the students for the higher level analytical writing required in high school.



This spring, we will also be reading two literary classics, Across Five Aprils, a novel of the Civil War, and the dramatic version of The Diary of Anne Frank, which will tie in with the students' study of World War II and

the Holocaust in American History. The students will then research and write a short research paper based on a topic related to one of these works.

## 8th Grade Math — Mr. Laffiteau

During the next few months, 8th graders will begin graphing linear equations using a variety of methods, including slope intercept and x & y intercepts. Additionally, Algebra students will begin solving systems of equations by graphing, substitution, and elimination. Algebra students will also begin the study of basic operations with polynomial expressions, including factoring polynomials (you may remember this as "FOIL"), difference of squares, and special case polynomials.

Stock Market Game for the 2011 Fall Session: The results for the Fall session were pretty good, finishing in 3rd place out of 11 schools. Out of 174 individual teams, 4 out of 7 teams were in the top 30%. Some teams suffered more than others during the stock market plunge back in November. Some had made it to the Top 5 just before the plunge, and STA was ranked 2nd among the schools.



The students have continued to take part in many computer website activities, games and puzzles. Continue to ask your children about some of the computer activities they're still competing at to achieve the best scores at Battleship, Jeopardy, "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" and various matching games to graph linear equations, calculate slope, and solve systems of equations as well. They're having fun and success too.

Remember, Tutoring is available on a sign up basis from 7:10 to 7:40 am for:

8th Grade on Wednesdays at:

7:10-7:25am (8-Silver, Blue, & White)

and at 7:25-7:40 (8-Honors)



## 8th Grade Religion — Mrs. Lucas & Mrs. Todora

In 8th grade Religion this quarter we will be completing preparation for Confirmation. We will also complete their Confirmation textbook. This text is a review of the teachings of the Church and the Confirmation Rite. We will explore the meaning of the Beatitudes and other teachings of Christ. The students will be participating in prayer services to help them grasp and understand the many aspects of Confirmation and their commitment to the Church. We will begin studying more in depth the Statements of our Beliefs in the Creed. We will explore how God reveals Himself, the Trinity and how we are an unfinished image with the promise of salvation. We are also studying the Nicene Creed in depth. During Lent we will explore the Stations of the Cross. The life skills we will be using this quarter are cooperation, faith, resourcefulness, and organization. Please pray for the 8th graders as they prepare to and receive the Sacrament of Confirmation this quarter.

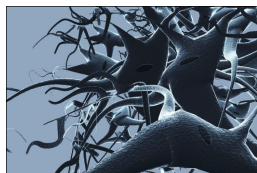


## 8th Grade Science — Mrs. Sowder

The 8th grade Science classes are completing the unit over fish, amphibians and reptiles. From this point we will move on and study birds and mammals thus completing our extensive study of the entire animal kingdom including all invertebrate as well as vertebrate animals. Students received information regarding science research projects and should be starting on these soon. Research papers are due early February and the project boards are due in March just after spring break. We will also be studying about the human body, primarily covering the circulatory, respiratory and nervous systems. The kids are doing an excellent job. They will definitely be ready for high school biology.



Red Blood Cell



## 8th Grade Social Studies—Mrs. Prewitt

As second semester begins, our class is in the middle of discovering A New Nation: Lewis and Clark's expedition, War of 1812 and learning the nuts and bolts of the Industrial Revolution. (No pun intended). In addition, as the third quarter gets underway, my students and I are looking forward to uncovering fun, historical facts about the Civil War as they read Across Five Aprils in their literature classes. We will continue to work in our interactive notebooks and also have some practice experience with reciting historical documents. History is alive and well in eighth grade!



## SPECIAL SUBJECTS

Lower & Upper Schools

## Drama — Mrs. Gray

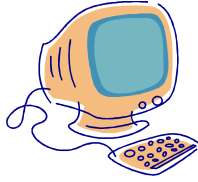
Kindergarten is currently exploring puppetry, and we'll soon begin preparing for their end of the year play, "Wackadoo Zoo." First Grade is rehearsing "Alice in Wonderland," which will be performed in March and April. Second Grade will star in "Two by Two Zoo Cruise," currently scheduled for February and March. 3C and 3D will begin rehearsing "Trial of the Big, Bad Wolf" which will be performed in the Spring (Performance dates to follow).

4C and 4D are beginning to prepare for their plays, "Stacks of Wax" and "Cinderella, A Spoof." 5B and 5D will present their plays, "Frumpled Fairy Tales" and "Fantastical Friends." These plays will be performed in early Spring, and performance dates will be sent home as soon as they are finalized. As you can see, we have a very busy semester ahead of us. Thank you for lending me your "stars and starlets!" It is my pleasure and privilege to teach them. Hope to see you at their performances!



## Computer Technology — Mrs. Adams

K-2 classes are continuing to use keyboarding, word processing, and digital art programs and internet sources with greater proficiency and confidence. They have learned how to use tools and menus for specific tasks, and 1st and 2nd grade students are using basic file management as they learn to save, open, and edit their work. We continue to build on these skills as students complete journal writing and illustrate with graphic software. Keyboarding, word processing and use of relativity and homerow keys are ongoing skills we focus on throughout the year for all grade levels. Students are also learning to access and demonstrate proper use of various software and internet sites independently to practice keyboarding, reading, writing, and math skills. Some of the websites we will be using second semester are [Starfall](#), [Dance Mat Typing](#), [FreeTypingGame](#), [NetsmartzKids](#), [Arcademic Skill-builders](#), [FunSchoolKaboose](#), and [Aplumath](#). K-2 students are also using our Imagination Station program to improve reading and vocabulary skills.



In 3rd through 5th grades, students are creating hyperlinks as an introduction to basic programming. Students are also continuing to add to their PowerPoint "Portfolio" which includes hyperlinks, thinking maps, course information, and writing samples. Our current projects also focus on keyboarding, word processing, and file management techniques. As an extension of word processing and the writing process, students are using an online Writing Practice Program (WPP) to compose essays using thinking maps and prompts. This is used as extension and integration with their Language Arts classes. This program is capable of aiding the student in developing the writing process and editing and organizing information.

Third through fifth grades will also be demonstrating their knowledge by creating pictures in graphics programs to insert into word processing and multimedia programs such as PowerPoint. They are learning more about functions, tools and menus in various applications, including Word, Excel, KidPix, Paint, and Publisher. Our next adventure will be creation of spreadsheets in Excel!

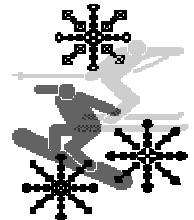
Accessing internet sites for research and finding information for reports and projects will also be a focus.

Students will read about current events and learn to navigate through the internet safely. We will continue to review and emphasize internet safety, netiquette, and acceptable use online sources for guided research.

Discussion of skills such as resourcefulness, responsibility, initiative, and integrity as they apply to technology and acceptable use policies will accompany upcoming web search activities and projects.

Focusing on Initiative, Integrity, Resourcefulness, and Responsibility!

Theme: Interdependence



## Computer Technology—Mr. Fountain

In fourth grade we have been working on our typing skills and being able to format and work with images in Word documents. We have been working on improving accuracy and speed. The students have learned some cool drills and exercises as well as a few keyboarding games. Ask them about "the hill!" Fourth grade is getting ready to start a big project with PowerPoint and multimedia. They will be learning about research techniques and creating an awesome presentation!

In fifth grade we have been working with Excel and spreadsheets. The students have been working with formulas and charts. They had a great time running a lemonade stand and recording the data in excel! The students learned quite a bit about profit and expenses and creating bar and column charts, as well as pie charts and line graphs. The students have started working on a current event PowerPoint and are researching their articles as they put together their presentations.

Sixth grade students have been working on a really awesome assignment combining scientific breakthroughs and history! This Word document project has been a great deal of fun and work for the students. The students have done some really exciting projects crossover science, religion and history.

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Seventh grade has been working on fundraising brochures. The students created brochure publications that represent a non-profit or charity and some fundraising event. The students did a great job researching and learning about the different charities and then also how to layout and create an eye catching brochure to represent their information! The students have worked on some really interesting projects this year including religion, history and science.



## Upper School Art—Mrs. Lewin

Our wonderful Catholic Schools Week Art Show features all the work of the fall semester art students including ceramics, oil pastel, weaving, watercolor, acrylic, pencil drawing, Mylar sculpture, and of course all the 8th grade senior portraits! We hope you enjoy seeing the creative talents of our young artists.

Daily happenings in the art room for spring semester are:

3rd graders are just finishing up their Masai portraits on colorful Madras paper! Students have worked very hard crating this unique and colorful representation of the Masai people. Third graders will soon begin an exciting unit on Ancient Egypt. Students will begin by immersing themselves in the art of Egyptian Gods and hieroglyphs. Each student will draw and paint an Egyptian God of their choice on authentic Papyrus paper from Egypt. Students will then paint their own name in Egyptian hieroglyphs by referencing alphabet symbols.

4th graders will be introduced to the concept of contour and continuous line contour drawing over several classes. Each student will take turns posing for the class as they choose “action poses” as the class draws them. Students will then learn two different watercolor techniques – “wet on wet” and “wet on dry” to create a large background for their contour drawings. The project will be finished up as we talk about how we “design” a composition as well as the use of positive and negative shapes to use a unifying border.

Spring Semester 5th graders will begin studying the genre of folk art that is deeply rooted in Spanish history and represents the “heart and soul of traditional religious beliefs in 17th, 18th, and 19th century Mexican culture. Retablos are small devotional paintings on tin, copper, or wood that venerates Catholic Saints. Students will adapt this practice to give thanks to someone that has truly impacted their lives in a positive way. Tooling techniques will be taught as students begin to design their personal Retablos in tin. Finally “Milagros” cut from tin will be sewn onto the Retablos.

We will then look at the amazing life of Alexander Calder and his invention of the “Mobile”. Students will create an individual fish mobile based on one of Calder’s larger works.

6th grade will begin the semester by being introduced to the theory of 1 point perspective drawing. This practice was perfected during the Renaissance to show three dimensions in a two dimensional space.

6th graders will conclude the month with an overview history of tapestry looking closely at the Middle Ages Bayeux tapestry, Renaissance castle tapestries, and the progression into modern day adaptations and techniques. Students will then sketch a design to be created into their own personal tapestry over the next several weeks by weaving with beautiful thick wool wefts and concluding with felting 3D figures that will be sewn on to the final work.

7th graders will begin an in-depth study of 1 and 2 point perspective to create individually drawn perspective cities from their imagination. This project focuses on truly understanding the theory behind linear perspective, as well as the use of shading.

In March students will begin creating a ceramic mask based on the Mayan culture. We will also look at human proportion, hand building 3D techniques in clay, and texturing of clay surfaces.



## Lower School Art — Mrs. Luckey

It has been getting more exciting in the art room as we are beginning our second unit of clay. All classes have completed their first unit of pinch pots and 2nd grade classes are beginning their second unit with the pinch and pull technique. We are making butterflies, turtles and many other exciting 3 dimensional art. The squishing, pressing, and molding of the clay is so good for their fine motor skills and they have so much fun with this unit.

Classes are almost finished with their units on the Element of Color, with just a few more projects to go in this series. We have done a lot of painting in this unit and the students enjoyed mixing colors and learning the color combination groups. We will have most of the projects completed in a few weeks and then begin our series on the Element of Space.

We are also about to begin our "Learn to Draw" unit where we will focus on several class periods doing a 4 step as well as an 8 step drawing. If weather permits we may go outside to the garden and do some sketching outdoors.



We have also been busy working hard on our projects for Catholic Schools Week. Each student will have 3 works of art hung around the lower school in addition to our Primary Colors paintings, our Secondary Color paintings, and our Color Wheel designs. We also have Thinking Maps about the Art Room on display.

Thank you to all the parents who supported our photography project! The pictures are up and look fantastic! We will be discussing these in the upcoming week along with the parts of the camera and how photography and technology are a part of art.

All art classes continue to talk about Thinking Maps. We are working on our brace map, flow map and multi-flow map. Everyone loves to participate.

## Physical Education — Mrs. Perez

Marathon Kids!! Many students have finished or are approaching the end of their marathon! Congratulations to these students! There is still plenty of time to complete the marathon. The free final mile celebration will be held March 24th, 2012 at Loos Stadium. All family members are welcome. Reminders with more information will be sent out closer to the event date. Remember, students should be jogging and/or walking in  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile or  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile increments.



Super Star Jump Ropers! The jump-a-thon has begun. We are working towards becoming super stars with the jump rope. The students will be participating in a self-challenge with the long jump rope. Students will have many opportunities to earn stars that will be displayed on the gym walls as we "Jump For the Stars." Kinder students will need to jump 51+ times in a row to earn a super star award, 1st graders will need to jump 101+ times, and 2nd grade will need a high score 151+. We already have many super stars, so come by and see who they are. We are also recognizing our super star rope turning. These are students responsible for helping the jumper become a super star. We talk about the importance of helpers others. We stress that great turning leads to a great performance in jump roping.

Olympics: We will have our 3rd annual STA Olympic Games. Students will be working in teams, represented by various world countries, competing in Winter Olympic style events.

## Physical Education — Mr. Storey

Students will prepare for their spring fitness testing that includes such things as the mile run, sprints, pacer, push-ups, sit-ups, etc. They will also start preparing for their Olympics within each class. For the Olympics, the class is split into permanent teams and they will take part in various games over the next couple of months. In addition to lessons on the Olympics and core fitness testing, the students will also start their units on hockey and baseball/softball.

I am excited to welcome you to our second semester of Español! Like in the first semester, I am sure that we will enjoy working and learning together. We have lots of fun topics and activities to cover!

During this quarter the 6th grade will be learning ¿De dónde eres?, how to ask and tell where they are from. As part of this lesson the students will study about Hispanic heritage and culture, while they learn the 21 countries where Spanish is the official language. They will also research a country and make a presentation to their classmates about the country or the custom or tradition assigned. In the following quarter the vocabulary related to daily activities, snack foods and their likes and dislikes will be taught.

Seventh graders have been learning vocabulary to be used when greeting and meeting with friends. They had a wonderful time and did a great job on the skits presented to the class! Following is "Un rato con los amigos", a chapter where they learn how to ask and tell the activities they like and do not like to do with friends. ¿Qué te gusta hacer? Me gusta practicar deportes.>>; ¿Qué no te gusta hacer? No me gusta estudiar! >>The verb gustar(grammar), its correct use with nouns and the use of adjectives is next.

Our eighth grade students will continue to practice the use of adjectives when describing people. They will be able to tell if someone is cómico(funny), guapo (good looking), alto(tall) inteligente (intelligent). We will also learn the antonyms for some of these adjectives . They will also be taught about adjective agreement in Spanish (feminine/masculine; singular/plural). The use of the verb gustar used with everyday activities and how often they do things will follow. We will review the conjugation of verbs ending in AR(necesitar-to need) and introduce them to the irregular verbs querer (to want) and tener and its idioms. I know they will have fun creating a video for their Spanish class!

The use of technology is important because we can motivate the students to write, read and speak Spanish more confidently. The students have the following resources that they use at STA and that can be accessed from home: [www.classzone.com](http://www.classzone.com); [www.quia.com](http://www.quia.com), and [www.quizlet.com](http://www.quizlet.com).

¡Feliz Año Nuevo!

We have begun 2012 in Español with mucho entusiasmo, as we wrap up the second quarter of the school year and prepare for the third one, in which we will be covering units to further cement key concepts. PreK and TK will focus on continuous practice of their numbers and colors as we use these to describe the world around us and ourselves (seasons and body units), while kindergarten will master the noun-gender agreement through similar units. First graders will continue to use the vocabulary in each unit to also practice noun-gender agreement as they develop their knowledge of the article-noun agreement (el/la/los/las/ and un/una/unos/unas),and the use of the asking words, ¿Cuántos?, ¿Cuántas?, ¿Quién?, ¿Quiénes? and ¿Dónde? (family and house units). Finally, second graders will be practicing their numbers, colors, and shapes in the upcoming La ropa (clothing unit), and learning a new prayer, Angel de mi guarda (Guardian Angel prayer).

At the Upper School, third grade continues to work on perfecting their phonetic awareness of the Spanish language, practicing some of the key pronunciation rules of Spanish, in the units la ropa and Los números hasta veinte.. Fourth graders will "flip" schedules this quarter, with 4A and 4B beginning their twice-weekly Español classes, while 4C and 4D will conversely meet once a week. Our biggest unit of the year, El tiempo (time unit) also begins now, allowing us to learn how to use the expressions ¿Qué tiempo hace? (What is the weather?) and ¿Qué hora es? (What time is it?). Fifth graders will continue to learn their personal pronouns and practice the "ar" verbs in the new units, En la casa and En el restaurante. Saving the best for last, 4th and 5th graders will also be learning to recite El Padre Nuestro (Our Father), just in time for Easter!



## Science Lab — Mrs. Galvin



Science Fair for Upper School students will be held in the St. Thomas Aquinas Gym this year on April 3, 2012. More information will follow in future publications.

Kindergarten will be studying animals that live in the extreme habitats of the Arctic and the Antarctic. They will learn about adaptations that help animals survive in these cold climates, using blubber mitts and polar bear gloves. As our winter days begin to lengthen, they will investigate the causes for "day and night", study the sun as a source of light and heat and learn that the absence of light creates shadows.

1st Grade: As first graders continue to explore the world of living things, they will study the five classes of vertebrate animals. They will observe fish and reptiles, pet tadpoles, learn about toads (amphibians) and observe representatives of the bird and mammal classes. Then we expand their study of the Animal Kingdom to include animals without backbones- invertebrates. They will witness first hand the stages in the life cycle of insects as they anxiously await the emergence of painted lady butterflies in the Science Lab. Earthworms will be studied up close as we observe what great decomposers they can be, creating rich earth for members of the next Kingdom of Living Things that we will study- Plants.

2nd Grade: After an extensive study of the solid Earth, students have begun to study water on our planet. They created layers of earth and observed how ground water moves differently through different materials. Comparisons between salt water and fresh water will become the focus of another 2nd grade lab. Then they will learn how water is the ultimate in recycling as they explore the steps in the water cycle. This leads naturally into their study of water as a major component of weather. Students learn the "whys" behind rain, hail, sleet and snow along with extreme weather events such as thunderstorms, tornadoes and hurricanes.

3rd Grade: Third grade students have learned about the seemingly "magical" abilities of magnets. They are applying these concepts to create and observe

compasses, electromagnets and electric generators. This will further their understanding of how magnetism and electricity are two aspects of the same force. Next they will review various forms of energy and experiment with the ways in which energy can be changed from one form to another. Light and the way it travels will introduce them to the study of our greatest source of natural light- the Sun. Students will consolidate their knowledge as they attempt to transform the sun's light energy into heat energy in models of solar water heaters. We hope for sunny days to come!

4th Grade: Students have classified members of the animal kingdom by distinguishing between vertebrates and invertebrates. They are conducting a long term study of darkling beetle larvae in order to determine whether moisture will affect their metamorphosis into adult beetles. They will then explore each of the 5 classes of vertebrate animals to discover how they are alike and what makes them so different. This will culminate in the study of a fictitious phylum in order to better understand the organized system that scientists use to classify living organisms.



5th Graders are in the process of exploring the forces that change the crust of planet Earth. The science lab will be shaking as they build seismographs to measure earthquakes and explode volcanoes. From the land students will "dive" into a study of the Oceans, exploring the chemical composition of water and the power of waves. They will prove that salt affects the buoyancy of water as well as the temperature at which it will freeze. They will create longitudinal water waves in the lab and layer water of different temperatures and salinity in order to understand why the ocean has currents. Their ocean studies will lead them to an appreciation of this huge mass of water and its influence on weather patterns around the world. Our local Texas weather will provide ample opportunities to observe the variety of weather conditions that occur on Earth!

## Lower School Library — Mrs. Packard

The National Education Association (NEA) annually celebrates Read Across America Day on March 2nd, which is Dr. Seuss's birthday. This is to generate enthusiasm for reading nationwide and to highlight how important it is to motivate children to read.

All classes at the lower school will hear a brief description of Theodor Seuss Geisel's life as we honor him by reading at least one of the forty-eight books he wrote and illustrated before his death in September of 1991 at the age of eighty-seven. Many of the children are able to identify and admire some of Dr. Seuss's stuffed book characters, such as the star-belly sneetch from The Sneetches and other stories, the big fish from One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish, the Grinch and Max from How the Grinch Stole Christmas, and Sam I Am from Green Eggs and Ham.



After spring break the first graders will be trained on Accelerated Reader (AR). A student may read an accelerated reader book, then take a quiz on that book in their classroom, the computer lab, or the library and earn AR points. Incentives of AR buttons, reading certificates and/or bookmarks are given for points earned.

If second grade students achieve their quarter goals, they will select a "free paperback book" in addition to their other incentives!

One motivation for children to read could be to participate in the Six Flags and Discovery Education READ to SUCCEED Program. As further information and details on this year's program become available, please read upcoming communications. Students in K through 6 are eligible to complete six hours, or 360 minutes of recreational reading.

We hope you will try to instill a "love of reading" in your children. It is one of the best gifts you can give them. Books transcend everyday life and encourage the reader to explore, expand, and envision the world in ways that are unique to each child. Share that gift with them, and make all of our little patrons great readers!

Happy reading!

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## St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School

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