

Enlightening Minds, Enriching Lives

# St. Germaine Family Newsletter

January 15, 2012

## Budget Planning for 2012-2013 and a "Plug" for the Manna Program

The School Board will begin the process of setting the school budget for the 2012-2013 school year this month. We will soon receive salary schedules from the Office of Catholic Schools and will have a handle on the payroll and other expenses.

We know that each year sees an increase in the tuition we need to charge in order to continue to provide the "blue ribbon" quality education that St. Germaine student and families have come to expect. We are certainly aware of the precarious state of the economy and will do everything in our power to keep the tuition increase to a minimum.

One way that we can do this is to support the on-going fund-raising efforts of our school, parish and Family School Association. In particular, our school Manna Program has benefits for both the school and for individual families. The school benefits from its share of the rebates from the vendors—but so do the families who participate! Last year alone, the parent rebate portion of the Manna Program was over \$12,000. Those funds helped to reduce the tuition balance of some families by almost \$100. If you already participate in the Manna Program—thank you. If you do not yet take advantage of the program, seriously consider it. You'd be surprised how quickly the rebates accumulate just by purchasing Jewel, Dominick, Freshline or Pete's certificates. Add Speedway, Shell, BP Amoco, or Marathon and the rebates really grow! For more information about the program, please give Mrs. Ward a call.

Another budget consideration for next year would be to re-instate the Grade 3/4 "multi-age" classroom. In recent years we have included this option in the budget plans. Parents whose children were involved found it a positive experience and the option fits well with our school's commitment to differentiated instruction. It would be especially helpful this year because it would allow us to decrease the class size of the current second grade. We also face the difficult possibility that the current third grade will need to be combined into one classroom. (At this point we have a total of only 33 students in two classrooms, and tuition receipts do not cover the salaries involved.) By including the multi-age classroom we can offer one third grade classroom, one fourth grade classroom and one multi-age 3/4 classroom each with about 21 students. This would also make it possible to accept new students in these two grades.

## Pre-School Planning

We'd like to thank all of the parents who responded to our recent Pre-school survey. The results indicated that families had one of two distinct preferences. Some parents expressed a real need for a full-day program; others preferred the two and three half day program that currently exists. In an effort to meet the needs of as many potential students as possible, the School Board is planning a program that offers both options.

A limited number of full day enrollments will be taken for both three-year olds and four-year olds. These students will attend Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. (Students enrolled in the full day session will be eligible for the Extended Day Program which begins with dismissal at 2:30 and closes at 5:30 p.m.) In addition, we will take a limited number of enrollments for three-year olds who will meet from 8:00 a.m. until 11:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. A limited number of enrollments will be taken for four-year olds for the morning sessions on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. We will also accept enrollments for afternoon only sessions (T/Th or M/W/F) on a limited basis. Class size recommendations from NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) suggest that a ratio of 10 students to one adult is ideal. (In our current configuration, Mrs. McCann and Mrs. Gleeson are with the children for the morning sessions). This means that our total enrollment on any given day will be 20 students.

Some parents expressed a concern about the combination of three and four year olds in the same classroom. Julie Ramski, the Office of Catholic Schools consultant for early childhood education, told us that the NAEYC standards, Illinois licensing standards, and the National Health and Safety Performance Standards, are all based on mixed age groupings. She also said that most programs in the diocese have mixed three and four year old groups.

At this point, we are unsure of the number of potential students for the program. We will begin taking registration from families who already have students attending St. Germaine School now. Enrollment will be open to other interested families beginning on January 29<sup>th</sup> at the Catholic Schools Week Open House. We strongly suggest that you register early if you are interested, because we've been assured that the program will fill quickly. (In the event that we have more enrollments than we expect, we are planning to explore the option of separating the half-day program from the full day program—but this would require total enrollments of at least 35-40 students).

Tuition rates have not yet been established by the School Board, but we project that tuition for the full day option would be equal to the "regular" K-8 tuition rate. Tuition for the half-day program would be similar to this year's rate.

We're excited about these options and are sure that they will help us in our marketing and recruitment efforts. Our goal this year is to increase over-all student enrollment in all grades.

If you are interested in enrolling a pre-school student or if you have questions, please feel free to give us a call. If you know of families that would be interested in our program, please invite them to tour the school during the Catholic Schools Week Open House on January 29th!

## Parent Ambassador Program: Increasing Our School Enrollment

With all of our talk about the budget, we know that one of the most effective ways to keep tuition increases to a minimum and guarantee our “vitality” as a school in the future is to increase our student enrollment.

A new program sponsored by the Archdiocese Office of Catholic Education and adopted by the St. Germaine School Board is called the **Parent Ambassador Program**. This program attempts to involve as many loyal, supportive school families in the “marketing” process as possible. In short, it asks that our families take an active role in promoting the school to friends and new neighbors. We all know that people respond to personal invitations and personal testimonials than they do to printed articles and brochures! As “parent ambassadors” we ask that parents share their stories of success and growth with others. Invite new neighbors to attend a school function with you—so that they feel welcomed and included.

As we learn more about the formal “Parent Ambassador Program” of the Archdiocese, we’ll give you other suggestions about how you can help us in our goal to increase enrollment. In the meantime. . . help us by sharing the good news about St. Germaine and inviting people to our Catholic Schools Week Open House.

### Discovery Education Student Access

Before the Christmas holidays, we sent directions for you and your child to access the Discovery Education educational video library at home. The sheet contained your child’s user name and password along with suggestions and “tutorials” to make the process simple. Since we have returned from the break several of the teachers have assigned video segments for the upper grade students. We’re happy to report that both the teachers and the students are happy with the results! The students were excited about this new possibility for learning and the teachers are able to monitor the student progress on the assignments so that they know which students have completed the materials.

We’re really excited about using these videos at all grade levels to introduce new topics, review concepts taught in class, and offer “enrichment” or “challenge” materials for students looking for extra effort.

We’d be very interested in your response to the site. If you’ve had a chance to explore it ([www.discoveryeducation.com](http://www.discoveryeducation.com)), let us know what you think.

## Winter Weather and School Closings

Each year as the severe winter weather arrives, we remind you of our Emergency Weather procedures. As you know, we attempt to remain open if possible to provide a safe place for students whose parents must go to work. We will continue to do that if conditions allow enough of the school staff to report for the day. Environmental concerns such as electric power outages or lack of heating will certainly require us to close school for the day.

However, we always need to make an important point: As the parent, you are in the best position to know whether or not it is safe for your child to come to school during severe weather. You are best aware of local neighborhood conditions and the possibility of providing appropriate supervision for your children. We leave the final decision about their attendance to you. If you feel that it is not safe for your child to venture out and are able to provide appropriate child-care, we certainly can support your decision to keep your child home.

Local weather stations carry school closing information in the event of severe weather. Our “Room Mom’s” will attempt to notify parents of any official closings—assuming that the electricity is “on” and the internet is “up.” Please use your best judgment in making attendance decisions during severe weather.

### Library “Holdings List”

Last year we began the daunting task of entering our library card catalog into an electronic database. A number of generous volunteers helped with the data entry. We are very grateful to them for all the hours of typing!! We still have books to enter, though. If you can help for an hour or two, we can train you in about 5 minutes and you can help us to update our library holding list! Mrs. Nancy Gill developed the database as a part of one of her graduate “programming” courses and it really is well done and user friendly.

### Catholic Schools Week Calendar

We’re attaching a copy of the Catholic Schools Week special events to this newsletter. An order form for the Friday “Barraco’s Pizza Lunch will be distributed this week. Please make plans to join us for the Mass and Open House on Sunday, January 29<sup>th</sup> and for Parents’ Night Out XIV on Friday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>.

### Manna Note

We received a double order of \$25 Visa gift cards at Christmas. We have ten of them to sell. If anyone is interested, please contact Mrs. Ward (425-6063).

### Looking Ahead. . .

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| 1/16      | Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday, no student attendance  |
| 1/20      | Second Trimester Progress reports distributed to students  |
| 1/22-1/23 | Parish Mission, 7:00 p.m. in the Church. All are encouraged to attend  |
| 1/24      | Annual Magazine Drive “Kick Off” in the Activity Center  |
| 1/29      | Catholic Schools Week Mass and Open House, 9:00 a.m. Mass; 10:00-12:00 noon Open House. Please invite a new neighbor to attend with you! |
| 2/3       | Parents Night Out XIV; 7:30 p.m. until 12:30 a.m. in the Activity Center   |
| 2/9       | Market Day Pick up   |
| 2/15      | Athletic Association Meeting, 8:00 p.m. in the Faculty Room  |
| 2/17      | Half-Day Faculty Meeting; 11:30 a.m. student dismissal   |