



ST. SEBASTIAN PARISH SCHOOL'S

BRICK LOT *Bulletin*

February 2021

From the Principal's Office



Happy New Year! I am pleased to report that our school and students are thriving despite all the challenges we faced in 2020. On behalf of the entire school community, I extend sincere thanks to our teachers and staff, parents and students, and everyone who has pitched

in to help out. This collective effort is why we have been so successful this year.

Special thanks to our teachers, staff and volunteers who oversee activities and events at the school, including Scott Mason (Book Fair); Megan Ritchie and Debra Landis (Science Fair coordinators); Christina Friedl (Science Fair judge); Megan Ritchie, Debra Landis, Robert Dedinsky (MathCounts); Maggi Blischak and Sally Weakland (Power of the Pen); Jennifer Smee, Carrie Rea (HASA Readathon); HASA (Santa Shop); Socials (Family Scavenger Hunt, Five Days of Christmas for the teachers); Booster Club leaders and coaches (CYO sports); and Keith Johnson (Confirmation/sacrament preparation). These groups and individuals have put in countless extra hours to hold these events and activities since everything requires new procedures and policies as well as extra organization and communication, and we are very grateful for their efforts.

2021-2022 School Tuition

I'm pleased to report that tuition will not increase for the 2021-2022 school year. We know that the pandemic has resulted in financial challenges for some of our families. And while the school has experienced an increase in expenses due to COVID regulations, we have been careful with our finances, and we face the next year with confidence. If COVID financial concerns weigh heavy on your mind, there is COVID relief available from the diocese. Please contact the school office for more information. HASA has also decreased its fee for next year to \$25 as a goodwill gesture and due to the lack of field trip expenses for this year.

2021-2022 Registration

Registration for 2021-2022 opened on Jan. 31, with a deadline of Feb. 15 for current families. We are pleased to be using a new online process through FinalForms, a company that specializes in online resources for schools. Proceeds from the Readathon

Friendzy Survey

ACCEPTANCE: Students likely feel they are treated fairly, forgiven easily, and closely networked with their peers.

CLOSENESS: Students likely feel comfortable, understood, and connected to their fellow classmates.

CULTURE: Students likely feel encouraged to speak their mind, are understood by their teachers, and possess an attitude of belonging. Students also reported feeling like every student, not just their friends, were available to help and look out for them.

HELP: Students tend to reach out to their peers for help when needed, results show an emphasis on collaboration and community within your school. It is evident the students at our school are capable of assisting each other in understanding academic concepts as opposed to just giving the right answer.

SAFETY: Students view their peer relationships at school as trustworthy, safe, and respectful. Students reported that they trust their friends with personal information, their own belongings, and often take advice from one another.

were used to help pay fees for FinalForms setup and services. Once your family is entered into the FinalForms database, you will not be required to fill out the same forms every year. FinalForms also has many additional capabilities we are looking forward to implementing, such as online field trip permission forms. On the administrative side, FinalForms integrates with our school information system, which will eliminate another area of duplicate efforts. A final note, the school is switching to FACTS as its tuition assistance management company. We have received positive feedback from other parish schools, FACTS can be lower in cost depending on what payment plan you choose, there are no late fees through FACTS, and the administration has the ability to manage unique situations. Additionally, FACTS sends out reminders, will print statements if requested and has excellent customer service.

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work

The most recent Friendzy theme was "Teamwork Makes the Dream Work." As we began the new calendar year, our students are focused on loving their classmates and using their God-given talents to serve them and work together as a team. I'm proud of how our students have reacted positively to this idea — our Terrier Team is strong!

One component of the Friendzy program is a survey of students and teachers conducted twice, once before the program is introduced and once near the end of the school year. We recently received our school's first set of data. Our students' perceptions in all categories were higher (but close to) the benchmark that is the combined average of Friendzy students surveyed. In each category listed in the chart, our results indicate a high rate among students and teachers compared with all Friendzy schools.

These survey results provide insightful perceptions on the culture and climate of our school. It was fantastic to see that our students reported above-average satisfaction with their school experience in every category. We also are using the survey results to compare teacher and student opinions on key issues. While the sample for the teachers is much smaller than the student population, and teachers across the board tend to report more positive perspectives, we reviewed any key opinions with a variance between the teachers and students of more than 25%. The one topic where our students reported much lower results than teachers was in the area of how much teachers incorporate student interests in the classroom. We have looked at different classroom and professional development resources to close the gap on this topic, and we have already decided to have our students complete a strengths and preferences activity. I will keep you posted as we develop strategies to better incorporate student interests in the classrooms.

The next Friendzy theme is "Watch My Words," which reinforces the importance of our words and how we can use them to build each other up instead of tear others down. During Catholic Schools Week, our presenters kept these Friendzy themes in mind, as well as our theme for the school year, "Forward with Christ in Hope." It was a great week with a virtual retreat and a live-stream Mass with Bishop Malesic.

Yours in Christ,

Anthony Rohr
Principal

From the STEM Coordinators

Grades K-3, by Susan Vernon



Math Tiles

STEM activities in the second quarter centered on the holiday season. First-graders made unique ribbon ornaments. First, they measured out a piece of ribbon that was their exact height. Then they put it into a glass bulb and added a sweet message on top to make a priceless memory! First-graders also created reindeer ornaments with natural wood and their own finger and thumb prints. Second-grade students used floor polish to create beautiful glass glitterbulbs.

They also followed directions to make amazing 3D Advent wreaths and other Christmas crafts. Students in 3rd grade made aluminum foil and marker picture frames for their handsome selfies! All the classes practiced their math skills as they visited the Santa Shop and carefully kept track of their gift purchases to stay within the amount of money they had to spend.

Our 3rd-grade math students have been doing hands-on lessons on how to do division by using their own bag of tiles. They are learning about fact families and the relationship between multiplication and division.

Grades 4-6, by Jennifer Slegus

The 4th-grade students were busy with many STEM-based activities during the second quarter. The students learned about the California Gold Rush while creating a map based upon John Sutter's Mill in Sacramento, Calif., during 1848. While creating the map they explored different types of lines and line segments, shapes, area, and perimeter. They also completed an integrated Native American unit, learning about Ohio American Indians in social studies class and then reading the book "The Sign of the Beaver." They constructed different projects such as replica artifacts, weapons, and scale model homes. At the same time, they learned about archaeology and performed a fossil dig using cupcakes and different "hidden" items to help them understand how items get buried and then brought to the surface by erosion or human interactions. Fourth-graders also recently participated in an "escape room" while learning about the causes of the American Revolution. They solved ciphers, cryptograms, and other clues and puzzles. At the end, they used math problem-solving skills, reading comprehension, and primary sources to solve the final clue.

The 5th-grade class completed a hands-on friction investigation to determine what causes certain slides to be faster than others. Through the Great Slide Challenge, the students tested different materials to determine which have the most friction and which have the least. The 5th-grade students also investigated photosynthesis and why leaves change color through a hands-on color chromatography lab. They got to watch the color pigments from leaves separate and travel up filter paper based on their mass. In addition, they investigated the respiration process of yeast as a decomposer in the "Can You Blow Up a Balloon with CO₂?" lab. The yeast released CO₂ as it metabolized sugar and inflated a balloon.

The 6th-grade students performed a nutrition activity in which they looked up nutrition labels and compared healthy and unhealthy aspects of their favorite foods. They learned to read nutrition labels (one serving vs. servings per container), and they also completed a virtual lab about homeostasis and cell processes.

Grades 7-8, by Megan Ritchie

All of our students in grades 7-8 completed science projects again this year. Students were allowed to work alone or in pairs, and while they were still required to create a traditional trifold poster board presentation, instead of presenting their projects in person, they created video presentations, which were judged over Christmas break. According to Ms. Ritchie, the students did a very nice job with their projects despite the new procedures, and many of the videos were of great quality. The district science fair will also be held virtually this year, with registration beginning Feb. 15.

In 8th-grade science class, students have been studying plate tectonics and seismic activity, as well as the Earth's geologic time scale. Students made their own fossils and practiced carbon-dating techniques with M&M candy. In math class our students focused on linear equations and learning about their real-world applications. As part of religion class, our 8th-grade students used their technology skills to create a video for the feast of St. Nicholas on Dec. 6. And in English class, our 8th-graders created collaborative mystery stories requiring logical thinking/problem-solving in finding the solution.

In the 7th-grade science classes, our students worked to find variations in minimum and maximum temperatures of celestial objects in the solar system. They determined the celestial object with the greatest variation in temperature, with the goal of identifying the best object to study by sending a probe to it. The 7th-graders have also been practicing applying math to real-world activities, as they learned about personal finance and completed a lesson on calculating how many extra weeks they could stretch 10 paychecks if they followed a budget.



SPECTACULAR
A NON-EVENT EVENT
April 12th - 24, 2021

The dedicated volunteers coordinating this year's St. Sebastian Spectacular, the school's largest annual fundraiser, have decided to host a "Non-Event Event" for 2021. Co-chairs Lori Krohn and Carrie Pozsgay, along with our school's leadership, believe that we have all been through a great deal over the past year and that adding one more event to everyone's to-do list would be asking too much. Instead, they sincerely and excitedly invite you to "join" us from the comfort of your own home (or anywhere else!) for a two-week, all-online, "Non-Event Event" that will take place from April 12 through April 24.

All the money raised supports tuition reduction for every student and invests in both technology and the school endowment. And this year, 100% of the proceeds from the paddle raise will be used to purchase additional safety and security items for our school. If we are fortunate enough to raise more than what is required to complete the security and safety project, the excess dollars will go toward tuition reduction and technology.

Our school's continued success hinges upon the support of its community, both in funding and in spirit. Therefore, the 2021 event is launched in the hopes of not only raising funds, but also highlighting and celebrating our blessings as members of this incredible community and giving everyone an opportunity to take part in their own way. So, no need to save the date, get a sitter, or shop for a new outfit. Just stay tuned for more information on our SPECTACULAR plans!

Students in the News



Power of the Pen

Congratulations to our 7th-grade Power of the Pen team for winning first place at the district tournament, which was held virtually Jan. 9. Team members and individual award winners are: Bella Incorvia, Catie Bordenkircher, Susie Thomas (third place and a Best of Round award), Madelyn Kastelic, Alex Krohn (ninth place), Suzana Borges, Sophia Burgoyne (fifth place), and Grace Mahaney.

Student Ambassador Program

We are excited to welcome the following 7th-graders to our school's Student Ambassador Program: Suzana Borges, Sophia Burgoyne, Peter de Boer, Madelyn Kastelic, Lucy Langen, Jude Rothkopf, Owen Schlueter, Nathan Sparhawk, Susie Thomas and Quinn Yori. Our student ambassador program trains students in grades 7-8 to assist with tours for prospective families, support various school events and be representatives of our parish school.

High School Scholarship Winners

Congratulations to the following students who received scholarships to one of our local Catholic high schools by earning top scores on the scholarship exams: **St. Vincent-St. Mary:** Jacob Dennée, Payton Kidder, Matthew Large, and Josh Skovira; **Archbishop Hoban:** Jacob Dennée; and **Walsh Jesuit:** Jacob Dennée and Josh Skovira.



Annual Christmas Toy Drive

Student council held its annual toy drive before Christmas break. Our families responded generously, donating 287 toys, which were given to Summit County Children Services and The Ronald McDonald House. Many thanks to all who donated!

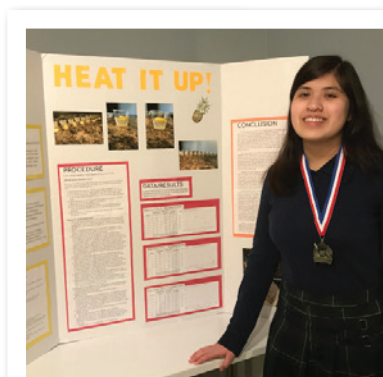


Canned Food Drive

Thank you for your support of our annual canned food drive held before Thanksgiving break. Our student council led this effort, which yielded a little over 1,000 canned goods and other food donations! All of the food was donated to the Good Samaritan Hunger Center to help those who are less fortunate. Thank you for your generosity in donating food to help us feed the needy. Michele Smith (St. Sebastian Class of 1980), director of Good Samaritan, thanked our families for their donations, which she said enabled the hunger center to feed over 500 families with turkeys and trimmings for Thanksgiving.

Junior High Science Fair

Our junior high students completed a virtual school science fair this year, complete with video presentations of their projects. Congratulations to the following students who earned top awards for their school projects. These students have qualified to compete in the Western Reserve District 5 Science Day in February at the University of Akron. Thank you to Miss Ritchie, Mrs. Landis and Mrs. Friedl for organizing another successful science fair, especially in all new circumstances! Good luck to our Terrier scientists as they move forward in competition!



7th Grade: First place: "Peanuts as a Fuel Source" by Jackson Chapin and Jack Jendrisak; **second place (tie):** "Do You See What I See?" by Sophia Burgoyne and Suzana Borges; **second place (tie):** "Shrinking Cotton Candy" by Sebastian Blaser; **third place:** "Do Different Types of Water Affect Bean Growth?" by Peter de Boer.

8th Grade: First place: "Heat It Up: How Heat Affects Enzyme Activity" by Claire Kinkelaar; **second place:** "Flying Higher" by Sophia Magee and Gianna Pillitiere; **third place (tie):** "To Bubble or Not to Bubble" by Isabelle Mastromatteo; **third place (tie):** "Faraday Cage Effect" by Josh Skovira.

News and Notes

Fall Social: Family Scavenger Hunt

Over 40 families participated in the first Fall Family Photo Scavenger Hunt, raising \$1,000 for the Teacher Appreciation and Wellness Fund. Everyone enjoyed fall family fun while competing for some amazing prizes donated by St. Sebastian community businesses. Families traveled around town, taking pictures of themselves playing in the leaves, carving pumpkins, going down the slide at school, and running along the Akron Marathon blue line, to name just a few. Thank you to all the host families for supporting and planning this event: the Chapin, Lawson, Milan, Najeway, Pezzaniti, Taray, Trenor, Vaccaro and Whitney families. Congratulations to the winning teams from the following families: Incorvia, Hanna, Long, Marino, Leffler, Chuba, and Dagnall. Save the date: The Spring Family Photo Scavenger Hunt is coming on March 26!



#weGiveCatholic/Giving Tuesday

Thank you to everyone who supported St. Sebastian Parish School's #weGiveCatholic fundraising effort on Giving Tuesday, Dec. 1. The proceeds for this year's "Chalk the Walk" effort were designated for the repair and restoration of the beautiful, original sandstone walkways around our school and rectory. Our community raised \$7,980 toward the \$15,000 goal, with 64 donors weighing in to help get this project off to a great start! Thanks also to the students who decorated the sandstone walkways with messages written in chalk and starred in special video messages for the project. If you would like to view the videos, they are posted on the parish's YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/StSebastianParish). While fundraising continues, the project work is planned for this spring.



Readathon

Many, many thanks to everyone for their participation in the school Readathon in November. Our students read a total of 58,055 minutes and raised an amazing \$18,042.40! This fantastic show of support from our families is especially appreciated since COVID has limited the fundraising opportunities for everyone. Mrs. Friedl's 5th-grade class was tops in terms of minutes read, with 8,233 minutes logged! Mrs. Bradley's 5th-grade class was the top fundraising class, bringing in \$4,116! Our top minute readers were Sophia Brdarski, Grant Coleman, and Claire Jopperi (pictured here). Our top earners were Ben Hagenbush, Frances Knauer and Nathan Paxton. Proceeds from the Readathon went toward the school establishing a partnership with FinalForms, an online forms and data management service that specializes in schools. FinalForms saves data from year to year, meaning that you will never need to enter the same information twice! This program also will pre-populate information wherever possible, so this will also save you time, especially if you have more than one child enrolled.



Santa Shop

A huge thanks to parents Ashley Woodford-Lawson and Natalie Griffin-Kinney for organizing a great Santa Shop, which had to be almost entirely reorganized due to the pandemic. Thank you especially to all the faculty and staff who helped out. Since parent volunteers could not help due to COVID restrictions, Santa Shop was only made possible by our school faculty and staff, especially our classroom aides, including Holly Raita, Donna Deagan, Ana Borges, Colleen de Boer, Carrie Rea, Michelle Huber, Jen Sullivan, Elizabeth Coombs, Gloria Chalfant, Teresa Schleier and Principal Rohr. A huge thank you to the maintenance staff for helping to clean/disinfect between classes. Lastly, a thank you to the parents who came in the weekend before Santa Shop and the weekend after Santa Shop for setup and cleanup: Ashley Woodford-Lawson, Natalie Griffin-Kinney, Laura Chapin, Theresa Wilgus, Gina Walker, Rachel Hagenbush, Christie Trenor, Bernadette Gibson, Laura Buehner, Sarah Chuba, Carolynn Coleman, and Becky Whitney. What a fantastic team effort!



Veterans Day and Christmas Cards

In honor of Veterans Day, students in grades 7-8 created patriotic cards for the veterans at the Louis Stokes VA Medical Center in Cleveland, thanking them for their military service. Our 3rd grade students (some of whom are pictured here) also wrote letters for Veterans Day. They decorated their letters with colorful patriotic pictures and sent them to the veterans at the VA Medical Center in Pittsburgh. The Pittsburgh VA hospital wrote our 3rd graders a thank-you note for their wonderful letters and pictures! In December, our kindergarten students colored festive pictures and sent these messages of good cheer to the residents of The Village of St. Edward.



Our Beloved Deacon Terry

Our school community will deeply miss our beloved Deacon Terry Peacock, who passed away Nov. 4 at the age of 81. Deacon Terry, who was a cherished father, grandfather, brother, uncle, friend, teacher and deacon, was born in Akron and remained here all his life. He was ordained as a permanent deacon in 1981, and he served in various assignments, including many years at St. Sebastian Parish.

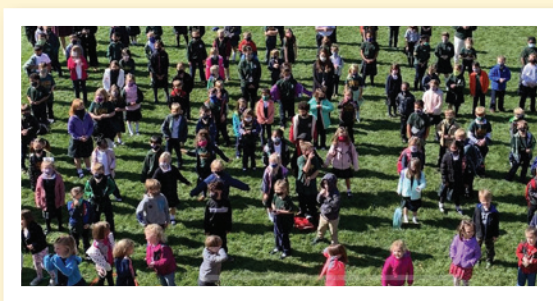
Deacon Terry loved working with our students. Even though Deacon Terry helped with daily Masses as well as weekend Masses, funerals and weddings, and visited our sick parishioners at area hospitals and local nursing homes, he always made time to visit the classrooms and offer his insights on our faith and to share his love of Jesus.

After Deacon Terry passed away, each of our students wrote a message or drew a picture about him on special paper decorated with angels. Janet Hanna, our school counselor, helped compile more than 300 pages of beautiful memories filling two notebooks, which were delivered to his family. Our students loved and adored Deacon Terry, and it showed in their messages, which ranged from fond memories of high-fives to statements that, when Deacon Terry smiled at you, he made you feel special. Many of the older students remembered Bible stories he told in class, and many students remembered what he would say to them before he left every class, "God loves you, and so do I."

Our students prayed many prayers for Deacon Terry as he dealt with health issues in recent years, and they crafted many cards to offer him cheer and encouragement. In late October, the entire school gathered outside to pray a "living rosary" for all of the sick, especially Deacon Terry. Our students also created a video for Deacon Terry in early November in which each class shared the many reasons they missed Deacon Terry. Below is a transcript: All of it holds true now: We miss you, Deacon Terry!



DEAR DEACON TERRY



We miss you! We miss your smile! We miss your laugh!

We miss your stories! We miss your kindness!

We miss you praying with us! We miss seeing you at Mass!

We miss you teaching us about God!

We are praying for you! We pray Jesus brings you healing!

We pray Jesus gives you comfort!

We pray you have peace! We pray you know how much you mean to us!

You inspire us! You help nurture our love for God!

You show us Jesus' love through your actions! You are a part of us!

Our days aren't the same without you!

Remember, Jesus loves you! And so do we!

Student Check-In

In our last issue of the newsletter, we shared some feedback from parents on this most unusual of school years. In this issue, we share some reflections on the first half of the school year from our students. Thanks to our survey participants: Sophia Burgoyne (7th grade), Emilia Coleman (1st grade), Bailey Huckabee (5th grade), Frances Knauer (5th grade), Nicole Krohn (6th grade), Wes Kormushoff (1st grade), Ellen Rothkopf (4th grade), Jude Rothkopf (7th grade), and Michael Rothkopf (2nd grade).

Q1. What's the most different this year?

(Nearly everyone answered "mask wearing," but here are some other responses):

- Not being able to switch classes
- Lots more online work
- Pickup and drop-off from school
- No Mass in church
- Eating lunch at my desk
- Having the Zoomers on the screen

Q2. What's the same?

- Despite being 3-6 feet apart, we still manage to find a way to talk to one another and drive our teachers out of their minds
- Being able to learn in person
- Seeing my friends and sitting in the classroom
- Everything else is the same
- My friends are the same, even when we are wearing masks
- The kindness of the school and my friends

Q3. What's been your favorite thing this year?

- Gaga pit (so much fun)
- Eating lunch with just 2 friends at a table
- Being able to see my friends in person
- My teachers, Ms. Wilde and Ms. Deagan - and I really like seeing all my friends
- I enjoyed growing closer to my classmates during these hard times — and the new gaga pit on the playground
- Seeing my friends, having hot lunch every day
- Not getting behind if you're sick because you can Zoom when you're sick
- Recess is my favorite

Q4. What's your least favorite? (Again, nearly everyone responded "wearing masks," but here are some other responses):

- Not being able to pick out books in the library
- Eating lunch in the classroom is my least favorite thing because I like being in the cafeteria
- I don't like that I don't really get to see my friends from the other class
- Not being able to be with everyone
- Still having to do school when you stay home sick because you can Zoom

Q5. What things did your teachers do that helped you cope/succeed during COVID?

- The teachers still let us play with our friends at recess, and the teachers make class fun by playing games and singing songs
- The teachers have made it seem normal
- They have spent longer on lessons, and my teacher has done stuff like give us candy to keep us sane
- The teachers are very understanding
- The teachers always let us know we are loved and that this virus is not going to last forever
- Friendly. I have learned to keep going and to never give up

We know how hard our teachers and staff have been working every day to keep our students safe and inspired in the classroom, and we are so grateful for all the extra time they have had to put into creating a wonderful learning environment.

SCHOOL CALENDAR AND IMPORTANT DATES

SAVE THE DATE

Kindergarten Screening	April TBD
Easter Break	April 2-9
St. Sebastian Spectacular	April 12-24
No School, Teacher Day	April 30
First Communion	May 1
May Crowning Mass	May 13
Last Day of Preschool	May 28
No School, Memorial Day	May 31
Pass It On Mass	June 2
Last Day of School/Graduation	June 3
4th-Grade Food Truck Social	June 4
5th-Grade Food Truck Social	June 5
Vacation Bible School	July 26-30

FEBRUARY

Parent/Teacher Conferences	February 9, 11 (Tuesday, Thursday)
No School, Teacher Day	February 12 (Friday)
No School, Presidents Day	February 15 (Monday)
Confirmation Retreat	February 19-20 (Friday-Saturday)
Ash Wednesday Mass	February 17 (Wednesday), 9 a.m.
Early Dismissal	February 25 (Thursday), 1 p.m.

MARCH

No School, Teacher Professional Day	March 5 (Friday)
8th-Grade Confirmation	March 5 (Friday), 7 p.m.
Foundation Scholarship Mass	March 18 (Thursday), 8:15 a.m.
End of Third Quarter	March 25 (Thursday)
Spring Family Scavenger Hunt	March 26 (Friday)
No School, Teacher Professional Day	March 26 (Friday)

Questions or suggestions for the newsletter?

Please email Anne Dennée, newsletter editor, at Anne@DenneeFamily.com.