



**St. Francis-St. James United School  
Status Report  
June, 2009**

## **SFSJUS, Our History**

In September of 1884 the Parish of St. Francis De-Sales along with its Catholic School opened with a class of 134 pupils. Three School Sisters of Notre Dame and two novices were sent from Milwaukee to handle all teaching duties. At first, all classes were held in German, and until WW1 in both German and English.

As was very typical then and still today, immigrant groups naturally gravitated to common neighborhoods. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century with transportation limited to walking and horse and buggy and the closest German speaking masses being held at the Church of the Assumption downtown, local families needed a nearby parish. John Ireland consecrated St. Francis de Sales on August 31, 1884, his first church consecration as the new archbishop of St. Paul-Minneapolis.

In a similar manner, Irish immigrants founded St. James parish in 1888, but did not build the school building until 25 years later with St. James Parish School opening in the fall of 1913.

As the nature of our neighborhoods evolved, 18 years ago the two schools combined as St. Francis-St. James United School (SFSJUS) and for seven years primary classes were held at the St. James building with middle grades and Junior High classes at St. Francis. In 1998 all classes were moved to the St. Francis facility and the St. James building was leased to a St. Paul charter school. Then, during the summer of 2006 the charter school-Twin Cities Academy (TCA) and SFSJUS “Traded Spaces” with SFSJUS now holding all classes at the St. James site.

Today, with public school education struggling to meet the educational needs of a diverse population, SFSJUS delivers a rich curriculum with small class sizes and individual attention in the context of faith-based instruction. The result is an exceptional educational environment that continues to deliver the Catholic leaders of tomorrow.

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### **OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

**SFSJUS is a living faith community. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we endeavor to provide an environment in which each child can grow spiritually, morally, intellectually, socially, aesthetically and physically.**

## **PHILOSOPHY**

Our philosophy for education at SFSJUS includes the principles:

- That Jesus is Lord of our lives
- That integration of our basic Christian principles is fundamental to our unity in the Catholic faith
- That the development and growth of self-esteem, respect, and the talents of each individual are vital for Christian living
- That by relating in varied ways, we come to know, care for and serve one another
- That quality education in a Christian environment requires diverse modes of teaching which prepare the students to face the future as contributing members of society
- That living out the principles of peace and justice is essential to true Christian living
- That teachers and staff compliment parents' efforts in their role as primary educators of their children

## **SFSJUS Financial Status**

A school financial statement will be ready within the next month. Tuition income/number of parents fulfilling tuition obligations has been improved this year. Some families chose the 12-month tuition plan, so we are in hopes that during the summer months these obligations will be met.

Grant monies, Archdiocesan Subsidies, Catholic Community Foundation tuition assistance and our own SFSJUS financial aid campaign have contributed greatly to helping parents who requested and qualified for tuition assistance. Our fundraisers such as The Heart Warming Dinner Dance/Auction saw profits of over \$20,000.

Our school is one of six FOCUS Schools participating in the Math Grant. We have received \$15,000 to assist us in this 2-year project to improve Math Best Practices. Our staff is actively involved in workshops, assessments of data, curriculum improvement and setting goals. We will continue this work during the 2009-2010 school year.

## CURRICULUM

The eternal question any educator asks is “How are we doing?” Are we teaching the essential skills students will need in tomorrow’s world? To answer that question, the entire curricula for the 2008-09 school year was revised to meet the latest State and local academic standards. Each subject in each grade level was given a set of learning expectations the teacher is to follow and measurement tools that are in place. Throughout the 2008-09 school year, teachers have utilized assessment data to adjust learning to better meet the needs of their students.

The “Learnia” program delivers on-line testing to compare our success with students elsewhere. But here at SFSJUS, we took on-line learning and assessment to a still higher level with a further learning and assessment program focusing on accelerated math and reading. This year we launched the AR Reading program, and assessed all students reading abilities. K and 1 also took the “Star Early Literacy Test” while students in grades 2-8 took the “Star Reading and Star Math Test.” These additional short computer generated programs helped teachers in their planning of both Reading and Math instruction.

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## STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

We continue to be proud that each year all SFSJUS students who apply are accepted for admission at Catholic High Schools even in the face of waiting lists and stiff competition. Out of 10 graduating 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 8 will be attending Cretin-Derham Hall, St. Thomas Academy and Cristo- Rey High School.

Our AR reading program has been more successful than we imagined. Everyone is reading more! Students read a book and then take a comprehension and later in the year a vocabulary test. Students received credit for passing the testing (no credit for not passing) and how difficult that particular book was.

**RESULTS:** Students Read: 2,342 books over 40.5 million words!

Learnia testing scores show how SFSJUS students compare to all others in the Learnia database. “Basic Proficiency” is 55 to 70%. “Proficient” is 71 to 85%. “Advanced” is 86% plus. During May testing we found 7 of the 10 8<sup>th</sup> graders scored at advanced level in Math. In Reading all students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade scored in the proficient or advanced category.

Grade Level	Math	Math	Reading	Reading
	10/08 Performance	5/09 Performance	10/08 Performance	5/09 Performance
5	62%	80%	52%	84%
6	54%	74%	64%	84%
7	62%	76%	70%	82%
8	67%	86%	69%	88%

## AWARDS

An important learning aid is to recognize students when they excel, and in keeping with this philosophy, every school year each grade has one student chosen for the SFSJUS Citizenship Award for making good decisions throughout the year that help classmates to learn.

**For 2008-2009, the Citizenship awards go to:**

K	Leah Buehler
G1	Malaika Gayles
G2	Casey Larson
G3	Andrew Johnson
G4	Seney Melake
G5	Estefany Garcia
G6	Awet Melake
G7	Erin Kopp
G8	Michael Morrison

Graduating 8<sup>th</sup> graders are also recognized with both scholastic and athletic awards. The Gregory Kohout Athletic Award winners this year are: ***Molly Hansen, Luke Herman and Michael Kulhanek*** Julia Mayer Scholastic Achievement scholars are: ***Joe Gargaro and Therese Nichols.***

***Therese Nichols*** is the winner of the annual Rita Gillach-Otte Memorial Scholarship award, and the Skipper-Slawik scholarship fund administered by the Catholic Community Foundation has awarded High School scholarships to ***Carlos Melendez and Luke Herman.***



## 2009-10 Strategic Objectives

### **Objective #1.** Improve school enrollment 10% by the 2010 school year

- Strategies:
  - Implement some recommendations of the University of St. Thomas Marketing report
  - Develop a prospect list through the parish database
  - Plan and implement greater community recruitment activities
  - Create a marketing committee of involved parents and staff

### **Objective #2** Update curriculum and handbooks

- Strategy:
  - Enhance and evaluate electives curriculum in the middle school with student options and success measurement tools
  - Incorporate learning's from the St. Thomas Math Grant
  - Evaluate Renaissance Learning programs and adjust learning, instruction and goals in the areas of Math and Reading.

### **Objective #3** Develop a broader base of parent and community support

- Strategies:
  - Utilize Parent Volunteer program with School Advisory grade level representatives to create a broader school support system
  - Utilize SFSJUS Financial Aid committee to promote community support

### **Objective #4** Develop long range plans for buildings and grounds

- Strategy:
  - With consideration of future needs of the school, renters and Sandcastle Childcare, develop maintenance and operating strategies

### **Objective #5** Coordinate curriculum design with student performance assessment

- Strategy:
  - Utilize standardized assessment including Renaissance Learning measurement programs

### **Objective #6** Advance the financial stability and long-term viability of the school

- Strategy:
  - Create an all encompassing budget projection of school needs

#### **The Future**

The West 7<sup>th</sup> St. neighborhoods of St. Francis and St. James have changed and matured such that there are fewer children nearby from which to maintain past enrollment levels. Yet the positives of smaller classes and the individual attention each student receives also show clearly that small classes and quality instruction results in an exceptional learning environment. With the primary goal of attracting students from a wider area, we will build on our current curriculum improvements especially in the area of Mathematics through our support from St. Thomas University. We will showcase and spread the news about our Fine Arts/Electives Programs through a Marketing/PR plan. We look to the support of our parishes, alumni and school families because word of mouth continues to be the best marketing tool available.

We ask for your prayers and continued support.

Please visit your school. Help by supporting our fundraising events, and check out our school web page, [www.sf-sj.org](http://www.sf-sj.org). Good things are happening!