

August 2009

Dear Parents and Students,

I hope that you have had an enjoyable summer. I have seen a few of the kids around the school and they said they're ready to get back to school. They are bored. I know the start date seems early, but it is no earlier than last year, the third Monday. I just hope that this beautiful weather continues throughout August and into September.

We are cutting back on the use of paper, so the majority of our information will be sent by e-mail. We will send e-mail blasts to remind families to check the website for the newsletter, cafeteria duty schedule and much more. This communication program will save on paper cost, copying cost and postage. I cannot stress enough the importance of reading e-mails carefully because this will be our means of communication.

Supply Lists

If you are in need of a supply list for your child, you can find this on the school website under parent/student on the blue banner (www.stgabschool.org).

Kindergarten/New Family Orientation Meeting

This orientation meeting is **Wednesday, August 12 at 7:00 p.m.** in the school cafeteria. The first part of the meeting will deal with general information about the school and procedures that would be applicable to new families with children in grades 1-8 as well as all Kindergarten families. The second part of the meeting will focus on the curriculum of Kindergarten, the daily routines, etc. Miss Gentry and Mrs. Miller will discuss this information as well as first day procedures. There will be an opportunity for you to ask questions. A scavenger hunt is planned for the children while the parents attend the meeting.

Class Lists

The class lists will be posted on the glass doors at the parking lot entrance and the bike rack entrance (the area between the gym and school). Lists will be posted by 4:00 p.m. on Friday, August 14th. They will remain up all weekend. On the first day of school parents can walk their child(ren) to their homeroom. A floor plan is at the end of the letter indicating room locations.

First Day of School

The students will enter the building as in the past. The parking lot will have numbers for the grade levels near the steps by the alley. Kindergarten and first grade line up closest to the alley with the other grades progressing to the north. A floor plan is at the end of this letter to let you know room locations. I hope the floor plan will assist you and your child(ren) on the first day.

The first day will be August 17th for grades 1-8 and we will dismiss at 12:30 p.m. **We will have 12:30 p.m. dismissal all week.** No lunch will be served; however, the students may bring a healthy snack. The students must be in their homeroom by 7:50 a.m. Usually, on the first day we ask that you bring all your supplies, especially paper towels and Kleenex. These paper items can be brought any time during the first week of school. The students are carrying a lot on the first day, so we want to make it easier on them.

The first day will be a little chaotic. Parents can walk their child(ren) to the classrooms, but this is not a time to stay and visit. There will be an opportunity at the Back-to-School Night to meet the teachers.

The doors will open at 7:35 a.m. All students must be in their homeroom, not the building, by 7:50 a.m. Any student not in their classroom by 7:50 a.m. will be marked tardy. It is so important for students to be on time because teachers use the homeroom period to get the students ready for the day. A student being 2-3 minutes late has missed the overview for the day, needless to say the amount of time to get supplies and books for the morning classes. A person can accomplish a lot in that short of time.

Kindergarten Schedule

AM Kindergarten will begin on Thursday, August 20th. They will attend from 7:50 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. The first day for **PM Kindergarten** will be on Friday August 21st from 7:50 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. Parents can take the children to the classroom on the first day.

One thing that you need to know for the PM Kindergarten drop-off is that the students will be dropped off at the church driveway near the handicap parking behind the church. The only entrance that you can use is the church driveway by entering from Nottingham and proceeding north toward the parking lot. Once you get to the alley, your child can leave the car and proceed up the alley toward the back doors of school. If you would like to walk your child to the door, you can do one of two things: park in front of church and walk your child to the door or park in the handicap parking area for those few minutes and bring your child to the door. When parking in the handicap area, please be aware that the older students will be on the parking lot for recess. Use extreme caution when backing up. By having you drop your child off in this area will eliminate cars driving through the alley between the rectory and school.

The morning class will follow the morning drop-off procedures found in the handbook. The morning class will dismiss at the back doors at 10:45 a.m. Parents will need to park in front of church, on Murdoch, or on Tamm and walk to the entrance. No cars are to come down the alley for Kindergarten pick-up; there is not enough space to have the cars park in this area.

EDK Program

The EDK Program will begin on August 24th. These students will attend their morning Kdg. class and then move to the EDK room at 10:45 a.m. Please make sure that your child has ordered lunch or brings a lunch. The EDK students are dismissed at the back entrance on the parking lot at 3:00 p.m.

Back-to-School Night

Open House (Back-to-School Night) will be on one evening this year, Wednesday, August 19th. We will begin in the gym with a general presentation. There will be two 15-minute sessions in the classrooms. The junior high teachers (Grs. 6-8) will be in the cafeteria. The teachers in Grades K-5 will be in their classrooms. The special teachers will be in the faculty room and Mrs. Favazza's room. The teachers strongly feel the need to have an individual presentation in the classroom rather than a stop by to meet and greet.

During the Open House, we will have sign-ups for library, room parent, auction, etc. We do want to emphasize that we need parents to serve as room parents, however, we are only asking for **two** parents per homeroom to serve as room coordinators. For 8th grade, we will need room coordinators for the homerooms. This coordinator role is different than the core coordinators who work with me to organize the activities for the 8th grade year.

We ask that you bring an item to donate for the auction this year. For those families that bring an item to the Back-to-School Night, your child(ren) receives a dress down day. Items can be gift certificates to Starbucks, St. Louis Bread Co., or other items that you are willing to donate to the auction.

We will also have a volunteer sign-up sheet that will be sent home the first week with other opportunities to help at school.

Lunch Program

We will again have Two Mike's Catering provide our lunch service. The cost of lunch is \$3.25. Since we have the capability to send information by e-mail blast, the menus will be sent in this manner. The menus will be sent by e-mail the week of August 10th. It is still very important that you return the menu by the due date. On the top of the page, there is a section to put your child's name, homeroom and the days they will be ordering. These menus are also available on line at www.twomikescatering.com

Lunches will begin on August 24th. It is very important that you return your order form on Tuesday, August 18th. Since this is the very first week, we will take order forms up until Wednesday, August 19th. Any orders returned after that date cannot guarantee that your child will be on the lunch list for the week of the 24th. They will be added for the week of August 31st.

For students who do not bring a lunch will be given a packet of six cheese crackers and a glass of water. Due to the number of students with peanut allergies, precautions are being taken to not have peanut butter in the food preparation area. This was approved by the Board of Education. This will also eliminate the office staff from having to spend a lot of time to collect the \$1.50 for the charged PBJ lunches.

Cafeteria Volunteers

The cafeteria duty calendar will only be available on the school website. To access the cafeteria duty calendar you will need to go to the school website, www.stgabschool.org and click the link for Cafeteria Duty Schedule. You can browse through each month to check your duty times or you can do a search by clicking the word 'search' at the lower right hand corner of the calendar.

The volunteers will simply collect the drink money for those bringing their lunches, assist the students, and wipe the tables between lunches.

We have had a great response from parents to be volunteers. Most volunteers are scheduled for three times throughout the year; just a few scheduled for two times. We ask that you watch the volunteer calendar carefully for your day. It does work out that everyone is scheduled about every two to three months.

After-School Care

We will have the YMCA on site after school from 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. If you have not yet registered for the program, please contact Susan Asmus at the YMCA (314-644-3100).

If you are in need of after-school care for a short time after school, please call Ruth Farel at 353-2901. She has been coordinating our program for the past year. We have a few mothers who watch children in their homes after school. If you would like to be added to the availability list, please let Ruth know.

Protecting God's Children

All parents who help at the school as room parents, library volunteers, cafeteria volunteers, coaches, scout leaders, etc. are required to complete the "Protecting God's Children" program provided by the St. Louis Archdiocese. For more information refer to the Archdiocesan website www.archstl.org or contact Eileen Garvaglia at the rectory 314-353-6303 x 110.

Uniforms

Uniforms ordered through Famously Yours are available for pick up in the school office beginning August 10th. The office hours are from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Monday – Friday. If you are unable to come during that time, please call and leave a message so we can make other arrangements. In most cases, we can leave the package at the rectory and you can pick it up in the evening. Please note that the school office will be closed on Tuesday, August 11th. Mrs. Koettker, Mrs. Italiano and I will be attending a workshop on school health.

If you still need to order uniforms, please call Famously Yours at 842-4424. Pants, shorts, and shirts can be purchased at any uniform supplier, i.e., Catholic Supply, JC Penney, Target, etc.

Famously Yours provides a variety of sweatshirt styles. The St. Gabriel Athletic Association also sells sweatshirts. An order form will be sent in mid-September for Famously Yours sweatshirts. The SGAA sweatshirt order form is on the school website under the link, 'Parent/Student'.

Classroom Locations and Dismissal Locations

Please refer to the map at the end of this letter for classroom locations. All students will still use the parking lot entrance in the morning with grades 6-8 entering at the bike rack entrance. For the afternoon, students in Kindergarten, grades 1, 5, and 6 will dismiss at the parking lot doors. Students in grades 2, 3, and 4 will dismiss at the alley doors facing the rectory. Students in grades 7 and 8 will dismiss at the front doors on Tamm. Students in 7M will dismiss at the bike rack entrance on the parking lot. Remember that when coming to pick up your child for an appointment, illness, etc. you will need to use the front door on Tamm. The back door does not have a doorbell system. After 7:50 a.m., that door is locked. At the

end of the day, after the parking lot has cleared, the back door is not accessible; you need to come to the front door on Tamm.

Scrip Program

We will have information the first week of school regarding the procedure for the Scrip program. Families will purchase a total of \$170.00 of grocery certificates or other certificates per month from September thru May. Other family members or neighbors can purchase certificates and apply it to your individual account. We have expanded the program to offer certificates other than the grocery stores. Certificates will still be available for Shop and Save, Dierbergs, and LeGrands. If you choose not to purchase certificates, you must buy-out of the program for \$100.00. You will be invoiced by September 15th if you have chosen to buy-out. For those who have not indicated their intent, it will be assumed that you are buying out and will be invoiced accordingly.

Parent Handbook

The Parent Handbook will be available the first week of school on the school website at www.stgabschool.org; in the blue banner click 'Parent/Student' to open the handbook. The reason for making it available on-line is that the printing cost is getting very expensive. If you need a hard copy, we will have some available in the office. Please contact Mrs. Koettker and she will send one home with your child.

We have made revisions that you and your child need to be aware of for the 2009-2010 school year. We strongly encourage you to read through the handbook. We also encourage you to review the discipline section with your child and let them know what your expectations are of them during the school year.

Also note that all information will be sent home on Wednesdays with the youngest/only child. We are continuing to use the family envelope this year. Every student has an envelope because teachers use this as a means to send home corrected papers, notes, etc. The folder is bright yellow, so it will be difficult to misplace it. The monthly newsletter will be on the website only.

Website and Grades On-Line

The school website (www.stgabschool.org) will have a link to the School Administrator Program. 'Login' on the quick links menu of the website. This program will also allow parents to check their child's grades on a regular basis. Kindergarten will be the only grade level to use the traditional report card and their grades will not be available on-line. A letter will be sent home with your youngest child on Wednesday, August 19th with directions on accessing the grades and your User ID and password. Since grades will be updated weekly, we are not sending mid-quarter reports. Teachers will keep parents informed at the mid-quarter if there is a concern with low grades. For the students in Grades 6-8, we will still enforce the after school study program.

Currently, all passwords are disabled. If you are a current family, your password will be enabled the first day of school. If we have a current e-mail on file, you can request your password if forgotten by clicking the link below the login boxes. There is no need to contact the school office for your ID or password.

Health News – Immunizations and Physicals

Missouri Law requires that all students must be immunized against poliomyelitis, rubella, rubeola, diphtheria, pertusis and tetanus **prior to the first day of school.** The law no longer provides for the grace period of fifteen (15) days. Please make sure that all immunizations are up-to-date. Also, all students entering school for the first time need a physical. Students entering 3rd grade and 6th grade are also required to have a physical. Physicals do not have to be completed prior to the start of school, but it would be good to have the physicals completed shortly after school begins. If you need forms for your physician to complete, please contact the school office. A generic form from the doctor is also acceptable.

Health News – Students with Significant Medical Conditions

For families with children having significant medical conditions, i.e., peanut allergies, other allergies, diabetes, seizures, asthma, we are asking that you contact us prior to the beginning of school so we can send you a form that needs to be completed by your child's physician. We want to make sure that we are maintaining the student's health and safety on a daily basis in the school environment. It is imperative that you contact the school office requesting these forms.

If your child takes medication during the school hours that needs to be administered at school, please contact the office so the appropriate forms can be mailed to you prior to the beginning of school. Please refer to the parent handbook for more information regarding the dispensing of medication at school.

More Health Information

In previous years, we had a number of cases of head lice at the beginning of school. We are asking that you please check your child's head prior to the start of school, especially if they have been camping or spending the night at a friend's. If you do find head lice, we ask that you share that information with the school. The school board implemented a policy in 2007 that the school will check all children for head lice the first weeks of school.

Cell Phones and Electronic Devices

Please refer to the handbook for this policy.

Art Bags and Chair Back Pouches

If you are still in need of art bags or chair back pouches there are two people who make the pouches. You can contact Sarah McCarthy at 481-3525. There is information on the website, click 'Parent/Student'

Girls on the Run

We will once again offer the Girls on the Run program for girls in grades 3-8. More information will be available the first week of school.

Classroom Upgrades

With donations from generous donors and the Class of 2009, we were able to purchase new white boards for all the classrooms. The marker boards we had were over ten years old and had a lot of marker residue. The classrooms under the gym have a new HVAC system. This was the second phase of the system that was put in the gym last year.

Fundraising Opportunities

We have been very fortunate at St. Gabriel School that we do not do a lot of fundraising that required parents to make purchases throughout the year for pizzas, wrapping paper, etc. We do have some wonderful opportunities that do not require you to spend extra money; these are all corporate donations based on your purchases.

- **Target** – Any purchases made with a Target credit card will result in 1% coming back to our school. You simply have to sign up for the program and indicate what school you want to help. Last year we received over \$1500.00 from Target.
- **Office Depot** – If you purchase any supplies during the year, 5% of the qualifying purchase comes back to the school of your choice. At the time of checkout, tell the cashier what school you want to help. St. Gabriel ID number is **70057490**. If you make on-line purchases at Office Depot, you can have 5% of that purchase go back to the school. This past year we had received over \$1300.00 of store credit.
- **Cartridge Recycle** – At the end of the year, we received about \$500.00. The recycle program will take any type of cartridge – ink jet, laser, etc. as well as cell phones. Ask your employer if you can take the empties for your child's school.
- **Box Tops for Education** – This program brought in over \$1300.00 this past year. Simply save the box tops and bring them to school. There are Campbell collection boxes at various locations in the school to drop the Box Tops.
- **Campbell Labels** – This program helps to provide for educational materials for the classrooms. Many times teachers need books, educational videos, etc. The points from the labels go to purchase such items. There are Campbell collection boxes at various locations in the school to drop the labels.

The dollar amount may not seem to be a lot, but every little bit helps. So please sponsor our neighboring businesses that give back to the community.

New Staff and Faculty Members

We welcome our new faculty/staff members and look forward to working with them during the 2009-2010 school year. **Mrs. Kathy Bleitner** is our new school counselor. She will be here Monday – Friday in the mornings. Mrs. Bleitner will also be the EDK assistant in the afternoons Monday – Friday. **Mr. John Ashby** is our computer teacher/technology coordinator. **Mrs. Mary Miller** is returning as morning Kindergarten and EDK teacher. **Mrs. Laura Gentry** is AM and PM Kindergarten teacher. We wish all our staff the best during the 2009-2010 school year.

Auction/PFA Information

At the Back-to-School Night, please go to the Auction tables and sign up to work on a committee. Our success is based on your participation. It's a great way to get involved and meet people. This is our one big fundraiser so it eliminates us having to sell pizzas, etc. like most other schools have to do.

Anyone bringing a gift for the auction at the Back-to-School Night will receive a dress down day for their child/ren and a chance to win 2 free tickets to the event. Thanks to all of you who participated.

Mark your calendar for the Auction: Saturday, February 27th. The theme is the “Black and White”

We will once again do the Staff Christmas Fund, which eliminates the need for you to send money individually to your homerooms. Last year the teachers were really pleased with this and so we will continue it again this year. You'll receive information on this in early November.

Mentoring Families

A special thank you to the families who have volunteered to adopt our new families. We have about 32 new families at St. Gabriel School this year. We welcome all of you and hope that you enjoy your new community.

A Special Thank You to...

- ...the maintenance staff in getting the building ready for the start of the year.
- ...Toni Zychinski for coordinating the Meet and Greets for new families and Kindergarteners.
- ...the many people who are helping with the Meet & Greet on August 8th.
- ...the Class of 2009 for their generous gift to the school for the purchase of white marker boards for the classrooms.
- ...all of you for the kind words to the teachers and me at the end of year with cards and/or small tokens of appreciation.

As always, we look forward to a new beginning. I pray and ask that God continue to protect His most precious gifts, our children. May God bless the rest of your summer and give safety to all those who are traveling.

Sincerely,

Miss Ann M. Davis

Miss Ann M. Davis
Principal

