

# SUMMER NEWSLETTER

## PRINCIPAL'S NEWS

\*\* Summer Edition – 2016 \*\*

**NEW PARISH ADMINISTRATOR:** Last July, Fr. Piedrahita was appointed the Saint Mary Parish Administrator for a term of one year, which ended on July 1. This past weekend, it was announced at all Masses that Fr. Shawn Daly is our **new** Parish Administrator. The school community wishes to extend our appreciation to Fr. Piedrahita for his year of dedicated service to SMS, and we wish him well in his next assignment. At the same time, we joyfully welcome Fr. Shawn to our school family and the parish community. Fr. Shawn is actually wearing two very big hats now, as he will retain his position as Vicar for Priests for the Archdiocese of Hartford. I have no doubts, though, that this strong proponent of Catholic schools (and former NCEA Pastor of the Year!) will be an enthusiastic and visible leader of Saint Mary Parish and School. Welcome, Fr. Shawn!

**“BACK TO SCHOOL”!** It hardly seems possible but another school year is already fast approaching! Our opening dates and start times for the 2016 – 2017 school year are as follows:

- **GRADES K – 8** – School will begin on Wednesday, August 31 with a half day of school. Dismissal will be at 12:20, and there will be **no lunch period**. Thursday and Friday ( 9/1 & 9/2) will be full school days ( 8:00 a.m. – 2:50 p.m.). All students will need to **bring a lunch**, as our Hot Lunch Program will not begin until Tuesday, September 6.
- **PRE-KINDERGARTEN** – School will begin on Tuesday, September 6<sup>th</sup> for all Pre-K 4 children and for those in the Pre-K 3, 5 day program. The Pre-K 3 children who will be attending 3 days each week will begin on Wednesday, September 7<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Kelly will provide more detailed information to the families of the Pre-K children.

**FACULTY & STAFF:** As of this writing, we have a number of changes for this year. We welcome **Mrs. Carmen Rodriguez** who is our new Director of Development and Admissions and **Ms. Jumirka Luna** who joins our office staff. I am sorry to report that Mrs. Kelly resigned her position as our Pre-K 4 teacher, but I am pleased to announce that **Ms. Marilyn Viera** has accepted that position. **Mrs. Skoglund**, a former kindergarten teacher, has accepted agreed to return to **Kindergarten**, and **Mrs. Jessica Martineau** will move to our **Primary** class. I am still in the process of conducting interviews to fill the remaining positions and I will keep you informed when I have found the perfect teachers who meet our needs. I am confident our newest faculty and staff members as well as the changes in staffing assignments, will serve to enhance our already terrific program.

**SUMMER SCHOOL OFFICE HOURS:** Through August 26, the Summer Office Hours are Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m. If you have any business to conduct that requires a visit to school, please work around these hours.

**SAVE THE DATE:** On Monday, **August 29** we will have a little something for everyone! At 6:30 we will host a **New Student** orientation and an **8<sup>th</sup> grade parent & student** meeting. Following these meetings, the HSA will host an ice cream social for **all new and returning students**. I hope to see all of you here as we unofficially kick-off the new school year.

**HOT LUNCH:** As mentioned above, our Hot Lunch Program will begin on **Tuesday, September 6**. A new restaurant opened down the street in the 7-11 plaza and they have happily agreed to provide our hot lunch. **Vivaldi's Pizza** has 4 other locations in the Central Connecticut area and they cater lunch at several schools in the towns in which their other restaurants are located. Once again, we are happy to say the food will be fresh and prepared each day and delivered hot and ready to serve. As with everything these days, though, there is a price increase. The cost will be \$3.75 per lunch. Enclosed in this packet is the menu for September. Please complete and return your child's lunch selections with the payment by **Monday, August 25**.

**HANDBOOK:** There are several changes to the Parent/Student Handbook which you can and must access on our website. Please take the time to thoroughly read the handbook with your child(ren) and then print the Acknowledgement Form, sign it and return it by the designated due date. If you are unable to access the handbook, please call the office, and we will send you a hard copy. If you are unable to print the Acknowledgement Form, just let us know and we will send one home.

**BUSING ARRANGEMENTS:** The Newington Transportation Department provides busing for students in grades K – 8 who are **NEWINGTON RESIDENTS**. If your child is eligible for busing, a notice regarding bus assignment and the designated pick-up/drop-off locations will be mailed to you in August. Please contact the Newington Transportation Department (860 - 666 - 2441) with any questions or concerns you may have. For the first week of school, it is recommended that you have your child at the bus stop 10 – 15 minutes earlier than the schedule indicates. After the first week, the bus run gets “ironed out” and you will then be able to determine a more precise pick-up time.

**ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL:** Buses will drop off students in the back of the school between 7:45 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. Students who are driven to school should be dropped off at the gym entrance also between 7:45 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. **Drivers are asked to enter the property via the driveway farthest from Cedar Street and drive behind the school.** Once your child has safely exited your vehicle please proceed slowly using the driveway in front of you. **From 7:00 A.M. until 9:00 A.M. this is an “EXIT ONLY” DRIVEWAY.** If the driver also wishes to come into school, he/she is to park in a designated parking spot in the front of the school and

then escort the student(s) into the building using the **gym entrance**. Please do not use the main entrance prior to 8:00 a.m. Once the gym door has been closed, late arrivals will be admitted through the main entrance. Students who are dropped off prior to 7:45 a.m. will be watched by the TLCare monitor for a fee as outlined in the Parent/Student Handbook. This fee is due upon arrival unless it has been paid in advance.

At dismissal, bus riders will be picked up in the back of the school. Parents who are picking their children up are to park in a designated parking spot in the front of the school and enter the building through the gym door. Students who are being picked up are to sit on the bleachers until their driver has come into the gym for them. Since we believe this is the safest method of dismissal, your cooperation and adherence to this routine is expected and appreciated. When driving through the parking lot, please use extreme caution and do not exceed a speed of 15 m.p.h.

**FIRE LANES:** - As per order of the Newington Fire Marshal fire lanes are clearly marked and posted. Drivers are not to park in the designated fire lanes at any time. Failure to comply may result in being ticked by the NPD.

**T.L.CARE:** - We will again offer before and after school care. Students can be dropped off as early as 7:00 a.m. for a small fee and remain as late as 6 p.m. (See rates in the Parent/Student Handbook). The fee for morning care must be paid in advance or at the time of drop-off. Failure to adhere to this payment plan will result in the need for an invoice which will increase the fee per child. If you know you will be using morning care service every day, you will be given the discounted rate of \$90/ month per child when paid in advance. After school care rates vary according to month and length of usage. If you know you will be using after care on a regular basis, the pre-pay rate will be your most cost-effective option

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES:** The term *professional learning community* (PLC's) describes a collegial group of administrators and school staff who are united in their commitment to student learning. They share a vision, work and learn collaboratively, visit and review other classrooms, and participate in decision making (Hord, 1997b). The benefits to the staff and students include a reduced isolation of teachers, better informed and committed teachers, and academic gains for students. Hord (1997b) notes, "As an organizational arrangement, the professional learning community is seen as a powerful staff-development approach and a potent strategy for school change and improvement

“The Archdiocese of Hartford supports the practice of professional learning communities as an avenue to study student work, collaborate with colleagues, and collectively support achievement and success for all students. As the schools in the Archdiocese of Hartford build a culture of professional learning”, the Office of Catholic Schools has approved of scheduling regular one hour early dismissals. Saint Mary School will continue exercising this option. **From**

**September through May, we will dismiss at 1:35 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month** so that our faculty may engage in this staff-development approach.

Included in this packet is a plethora of notices: calendars, lunch menu, etc. Please take the time to look at everything and respond accordingly. **Also enclosed in this envelope you will find several forms that you are asked to complete and return on the first day of school. Please adhere to this due date.**

**HEALTH ASSESSMENT FORMS:** All new students to SMS are required to submit a completed Health Assessment Form prior to starting school. Students (K-8) WILL NOT be permitted to attend school on August 31 if this form is not in the Nurse's office. Likewise, Pre-K children will not be permitted to start if this form is not in the Nurse's office.

Thank you for taking the time to read this lengthy letter. I hope you enjoy the rest of the summer break and I look forward to seeing you on Monday evening, August 29 and then again on the official first day of school.

Wishing you God's blessings,

*Mrs. Marge McDonald*

✓ **PARENT CHECKLIST**

**Due by August 25 - before school begins**

- Welcome Back Ice Cream Social RSVP
- Lunch Menu selections with payment\*

**Due by August 31 – first day of school for K – 8 (Sept. 6/7 for Pre-K)**

- Emergency Card
- School Release Authorization Form
- School Messenger Form
- Student Information Sheet
- Milk Order with payment\*
- TLCare Information Sheet
- Family Directory Form
- Photo Permission Form
- Student & Parent Handbook Acknowledgement Form
- Use Agreement for Electronic Information (Grades 1 – 8 only)
- Authorization for Administration of Medication

\*Make all checks for lunch and/or milk payable to Saint Mary School