

W I N T E R E D I T I O N 2 0 0 8

DIVISION *dialogue*

YOUR RESOURCE FOR ST. JAMES' EPISCOPAL SCHOOL CURRICULUM NEWS

Dear St. James' Families,

This new publication, *Division Dialogue*, is a direct way for the Directors of Preschool, Lower Elementary, and Upper Elementary to communicate to you our vision for curriculum, to explain best teaching practices, to provide you with classroom and department updates, and to provide a place for us to answer your questions. We hope you find this publication informative.



Preschool News

Katarina Matolek

Director of Preschool

Responsible for the supervision of curriculum; instruction of students; hiring, supervision, and professional development of faculty in the Preschool Division; day-to-day operations, and licensing and accreditation. Mrs. Matolek oversees admissions for the preschool, manages re-enrollment, and maintains the division's budget.

Mrs. Matolek and students learn through play on the preschool play yard.

In school, the curriculum is not just the lessons in class or the academic tasks we assign our students. Curriculum encompasses every aspect of our day-to-day activities, especially for our children at the preschool. The learning experiences occur in a variety of ways, from transitions and spills to spats and naps. Our environment, interactions, food, and spiritual and physical energy are all included in what we offer as the St. James' Preschool curriculum. We engage children in projects that continue over time; however, projects are only one part of the complex story of what is being learned in our program.

Much of our schedule is child-initiated and designed to address both young children's learning needs and their interests. Our day consists of more movement-oriented activities such as daily chores or "real life" and playtime. Play, whether playing house or romping on the playground, is the most basic way children develop these skills. Play is what young children do best and how they learn. We also include teacher-directed activities such as circle and group time. Even waiting, changing, and transitioning are important learning opportunities!

If you'd like to learn more about our Preschool program, please give me a call, or stop by for a visit!

Katarina Matolek
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Lower Elementary News

Kristin Haines

Director of Lower Elementary, Grades K-2

Responsible for the supervision of curriculum; instruction of students; supervision and professional development of faculty and staff; day-to-day operations; student guidance, discipline, decorum, class assignments, grading, testing, and file maintenance. Mrs. Haines also oversees admissions for grades K-2, works on retention and re-enrollment, and maintains the division's budget.

Mrs. Haines and Ms. Payne's Second Grade class gather around for their weekly read aloud.

In Lower Elementary, many of you may have noticed that there has been more emphasis on center-based activities rather than workbooks. Does this mean that we have thrown out books? NO! Current brain research tell us that children learn best by doing. St. James' teachers are continually expanding their repertoire of teaching techniques: centers provide excellent opportunities to make learning more meaningful.

Why use centers?

- ✓ Teachers are able to assess student progress more easily.
- ✓ Children are more motivated while playing games.
- ✓ There is no anxiety about "getting it wrong."
- ✓ There is opportunity for differentiated activities.
- ✓ They are multi-sensory.

So, when you talk to your child about school, ask them what happened during centers. I am sure you will get a "thumbs up"!

Classroom Updates

- Stop by Mrs. Vodrey's class to stand on their **large number line** and play some math games.
- Mrs. Vermette's class is in the middle of their science unit **observing the properties of paper and water**. Students will be making their own paper soon!
- Mrs. Kammula's students have been trained to use the SRA kit and will be working on their **individual reading comprehension** during center time.
- Mrs. Leonard's class used **Circle Maps** to create ideas for **winter holiday stories**.
- Using **Circle** and **Flow Maps**, Mrs. Friedman's students planned, wrote, and edited a story. Come and see their finished products!
- Ms. Payne's class is busy **sorting everything from nouns to polygons**! Maybe all of this sorting will help them sort out their bedrooms!

I look forward to hearing from you, and I hope you and your family enjoy a wonderful and meaningful Holiday!

Krisin Haines
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Upper Elementary News

Angelina Arrington
Director of Upper Elementary, Grades 3-6

Responsible for the supervision of curriculum; instruction of students; supervision and professional development of faculty and staff; day-to-day operations; student guidance, discipline, decorum, class assignments, grading, testing, and file maintenance. Ms. Arrington also oversees admissions and retention for grades 3-6, manages re-enrollment, works on placement of matriculating students, and maintains the division's budget.



Our Sixth Grade students performed the Salsa Rueda at Grandparents and Special Friends Day!

Time has moved swiftly by. Before we know it, we'll be celebrating the New Year! Our Upper Elementary students, faculty, and staff members are hard at work teaching, planning, researching, learning, and having fun! Here are a few highlights from the First Trimester.

Classroom Updates

- Senorita Chavela, our new Upper Division Spanish teacher, directed student presentations for our first-ever **Hispanic Heritage Month Assembly**.
- Mrs. Paap (substitute for Mrs. Cregan) and her Third Grade class presented their annual **Living Gallery**.
- Mrs. Castanares's Fourth Grade class performed its **Polygon Song** for our November Community Gathering. Visit Mr. Duggan's class website to view a **video of our students estimating global distances** using string, a ruler, and a calculator.
- Both Fifth Grade classes visited **Para los Ninos** to act as teacher helpers and to foster relationships.
- Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Lewis, and Ms. Pyle coached our Sixth Graders for the annual volleyball match with the Center for Early Education. Our students played hard, focused intently, and exhibited good sportsmanship. Way to go, Sixth Grade!
- Mrs. Hollis, Mrs. Brown, and Mr. Shamoon will take a group of Sixth Grade students to Washington, D.C. during the **Inauguration** to report to us on the event. Please visit www.sjsgoestodc.org for trip updates.
- Ms. Yu has been busy teaching the Fourth Grade how to set up and conduct **experiments with independent variables**. The Fifth Grade has been learning about **animal classification, survival of the fittest, and genetics**.

Middle School Admissions

- Please submit **requests for transcripts and recommendations** to Mrs. Rodriguez before Christmas break.
- We conducted our **second Middle School workshop** of the year December 3. Four St. James' alumni and their parents joined us for the evening to share their middle school admissions experience and life after the process. **Good news: they are thriving at their respective middle schools!** One parent commented, "*It means a lot to me as a parent that you care so much about the 'parent experience' with respect to middle school. I really get the impression that you are trying to make us more informed and comfortable, rather than simply trying to 'place' our kids in fancy schools.*"
- Mr. Bowers and I are always available to provide **additional support**. Please do not hesitate to contact us with your middle school admissions questions and concerns.

I can't wait to see what 2009 has in store! If you have questions or suggestions, need advice or a listening ear, please do not hesitate to call or email. Happy holidays to each of you!

Angelina Arrington
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FOCUS ON CURRICULUM: MATH AT ST. JAMES'

Each year, we conduct an in-depth review of an aspect of the St. James' curriculum. This approach to continuous program improvement enables us to continue to provide the appropriate, effective, challenging, and efficient academic program for which St. James' is known. During the Update for the Community this past October, we presented an outline of the topics we plan to address throughout the school year regarding math instruction at St. James'.

We have been working diligently to accomplish the goals set forth in the meeting, as well as to address questions and concerns from the larger community. We have conducted thought-provoking, productive meetings with our Math faculty, discussing topics such as algorithms across grade levels, preparing students for higher-level math, student exposure to math in everyday life, and math home study.

GOALS FOR 2008-2009

SUPPORT STUDENT LEARNING

- Implement learning centers across grade levels
- Provide Associate Teacher support in Fourth and Fifth Grades (small group, individual instruction, ongoing student assessment)
- Provide after-school support
- Expand teaching techniques to differentiate instruction

ANALYZE AND REFINER THE CURRICULUM

- Analyze *Everyday Math* scope and sequence for articulation across grade levels
- Survey use of manipulatives, and order as needed
- Conduct survey of SJS alumni and middle schools about middle school math placement

ENCOURAGE AND PROVIDE FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Bring in a Math Consultant to provide faculty support and training
- Encourage faculty-to-faculty support
- Division Directors teach sample lessons, order supplies, encourage new teaching techniques
- Attend math conferences and workshops

STRENGTHEN THE SCHOOL-PARENT PARTNERSHIP

- Publish *Division Dialogue* newsletter with curriculum updates and study tips
- Increase opportunities for parent communication and community dialogue
- Conduct parent workshops to increase the understanding of *Everyday Math* concepts
- Plan and implement Back-to-School Days for parents to receive hands-on experience with the *Everyday Math* program

We are available to communicate further should you have wish to explore this topic in greater depth. Much has been accomplished in these few months, and we look forward to continued success!