



**ST. EDMUND'S ACADEMY**  
WILLIAM L. KINDLER, PH.D · HEAD OF SCHOOL

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## KEEPING IN TOUCH

July 1, 2009

Dear Parents,

HAPPY 4<sup>th</sup> OF JULY! May you and yours enjoy a glorious celebration of our Nation's 233<sup>rd</sup> birthday. This second summer communication highlights major operation changes and enhancements as we enter the 62<sup>nd</sup> year of St. Edmund's Academy's continuous service to children. Further information on the items in this letter and other division changes and enhancements will be provided in future writings by Mrs. Susan Miller, Associate Head of School and Head of the Lower School (PreKindergarten through grade 4), and Mrs. Elizabeth Harbist, Head of the Upper School (grades 5 through 8). An operation change is deleting a current structure/or system and replacing it with a new one. A program enhancement is adding to the basic structure/system new or expanded resources. Both have favorable influence on the St. Edmund's Academy curriculum that is defined as everything that happens to a student under the auspices of the School.

### CHANGES

- **A two semester structure** replaces the trimester structure. This structure enables a more efficient flow of our nine programs' curricula. A large number of basic teaching/learning units are organized in 8-10 week cycles. Research clearly indicates that comprehensive student performance assessments (grades and skills' profiles) result when they follow clearly defined learning cycles. The two semester structure also more evenly balances the large number of "breaks" throughout the school year. The first semester begins on September 1, 2009, and ends on January 15, 2010, with mid-semester student progress assessments completed on October 30, 2009. Second semester begins January 19, 2010, and ends June 2, 2010, with mid-semester student progress assessments completed on March 19, 2010.
- **PreKindergarten I and PreKindergarten II** replaces the single 3- and 4-year-old program. PreKindergarten I provides appropriate cognitive, physical, and social activities for 3-year-old children in a separate classroom with expanded restroom and storage facilities. The half day morning program will continue with an optional traditional child care program in the afternoon. Two early childhood teachers will be in the classroom with the students at all times.  
  
PreKindergarten II is a full day program for 4-year-olds and young 5-year-olds. These children will experience a classroom where teaching and learning activities encourage their readiness for more advanced developmental and cognitive opportunities in preparation for Kindergarten. Four early childhood teachers will be in the classroom in the morning and three early childhood teachers will be with the students at all times. Both programs have full enrollments with waiting lists.
- **The HSP Math Program** (Harcourt School Publishers) replaces the deleted math program for grades 1-6. The selection was made by a faculty/administration team following a comprehensive review of several publisher programs. Highlights of the program listed by the selection team are numerous and will be

provided to parents in my next KEEPING IN TOUCH letter and throughout the school year by classroom teachers. Teacher training sessions began at the close of the 2008-2009 school year. The HSP MATH Program offers extensive online features and resources available to teachers, parents, and students to support and strengthen concept understanding and skill mastery.

- **A 9 period day in the Upper School** replaces the 10 period day. The seven 40-minute and two 50-minute class period day allows for a scheduled 5-minute travel time between periods. This change gives credibility to the actual time devoted to teaching and learning for each period while recognizing that a period cannot begin and end at the same time. The school day will end with a 20-minute homeroom period. The use of this new homeroom time is multi-purposed and will be described further by Mrs. Harbist. The extended 50-minute periods are scheduled each afternoon for expanded activities in the core courses: English, mathematics, science, and social studies.

## ENHANCEMENTS

- **Two parent conferences** are scheduled for the 2009-2010 school year. This year, St. Edmund's Academy makes an earnest appeal to parents to participate in the more formal parent/teacher discussion on a student's progress at two pivotal points in the school year. The first conference is scheduled during the week of November 2. This conference's primary focus is on assessing how the school year is progressing for each student. The second major conference is scheduled during the week of January 25. This conference summarizes what has been accomplished during the first half of the school year and what adjustments, if any, must be made for the second half of the year. The formal conferences do not take the place of the ongoing communications essential to an effective home/school partnership whenever a student-related issue needs attention.
- **The Blackbaud Education Edge** software program supports a complex number of student information requirements that require clear, concise, and accurate coordination. All class and room scheduling, report cards, attendance, and similar tasks are being completed using this system with coordination and confidence levels not previously achieved. With The Education Edge, getting everyone working together on student information and related issues is a major step forward.
- **The Full Option Science System (FOSS)** enhances the science curriculum in grades 1-8. FOSS provides long-term (8-10 weeks) topical modules for each grade level, and the modules are implemented within the regular grade curriculum and continue throughout the grades. FOSS modules begin with hands-on investigations that emphasize learning with depth, understanding through observing, communicating, comparing, organizing, relating, inferring, and applying. The experiences move students toward abstract ideas related to those investigations using simulations, models and readings. Additional information on FOSS will be the topic of my next KEEPING IN TOUCH letter.
- **The Six Traits of Writing program** coordinates writing emphasis among the K-5 grades and prepares students for the rigorous writing requirements in the Upper School grades 6-8. All language arts teachers in these grades attended introductory workshops, follow-up workshops and 'maintaining' workshops in May and June of 2009. Mrs. Miller will describe in greater detail the purpose and integration of this program throughout the writing program and grade levels.

- **Music** classes continue for students in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. In the two semester structure, students will have music for one full semester and art classes one full semester. This change enables the students to continue with music classes in the new school year that ended at the 6<sup>th</sup> grade in 2008-2009 and also provides for greater concentration of both art and music units not possible in a trimester structure.
- **The new Health course for 6<sup>th</sup> grade continues for 7<sup>th</sup> grade.** The second year of a two-year pilot health program offered in the 2008-2009 school year will retain its primary focus on adolescent nutrition, physiology and anatomy, and social issues. Specialists in each of the three areas will be selected as adjunct teachers under the supervision of the St. Edmund's Academy administration. Further assessment this year will determine whether the program becomes a permanent part of the curriculum starting with the 2010-2011 school year.
- **Computer education** emphasis in the Upper School will focus on integrating and improving student computer skills within the core courses. 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students will concentrate on developing their computer skills performing research and technology activities and assignments. 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students will use their existing and new computer skills as a component/tool in the core courses regular and special assignments. Teacher coordination in the various programs is essential to students' success in this enhanced experience.

These changes and enhancements, along with others that have less overall impact, strengthen the organization's efficiency and effectiveness of administrating the curriculum, upgrading the teaching and learning opportunities, improving the assessment of children's accomplishments, and integrating better the academic and non-academic components that comprise the total St. Edmund's Academy experience.

Your responses to this and all other communications are welcomed. Continue to enjoy a wonderful summer.

Sincerely,

William Kindler