



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

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## KEEPING IN TOUCH

July 22, 2009

Dear Parents,

I extend “warm” greetings at this mid-summer date between two school years. The clock and calendar continue to perform well in keeping us in line with the completion of more than 200 projects and items in time for the opening of the 2009-2010 school year on Tuesday, September 1.

Our enrollment has increased to 282 (10 more than last year) with several additional candidates in the admissions process. New operating systems and academic programs are being debugged through intensive training and implementation practice. New carpeting in the four 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classrooms is installed in preparation for the magical touches of teachers to create optimal learning environments. The planned changes in the PreK I and PreK II programs and classrooms are well underway with teachers and administrators finalizing spacing and other important issues needed to support and ensure the quality experience for the children. Since my last KIT letter, I received a letter of resignation from Ms. Amber Scalise, 3rd grade teacher. Ms. Scalise has chosen to enter a new field of endeavor. She will miss being with her students at St. Edmund’s Academy, and we will certainly miss her being a cherished member of our professional team. All best wishes go with Amber in her new venture.

The main focus of my remarks now turns to our expanded science investigation system and new mathematics series. Initially, I planned to send two “Keeping In Touch” letters, one on each program, but chose to send both in the same communication to emphasize our intent to continue integrating the basics of the four core programs (English, mathematics, science, and social studies) in our curriculum. This approach is of increasing importance at the next levels of formal schooling especially in the sciences and mathematics. My purpose is to give a general program introduction with several highlights of each that influenced the selection decisions.

### ***FULL OPTION SCIENCE SYSTEM (FOSS) – A major supplemental investigation system for grades 1-8***

The FOSS program is correlated to human cognitive development. The activities are matched to the way students think at different times in their lives. The research that guides FOSS indicates that children proceed systematically through predictable, describable years, and that students learn science best from direct experiences in which they describe, sort, and organize observations about objects and organisms. Upper School students construct more advanced concepts by classifying, testing, experimenting, and determining cause and effect relationships among objects, organisms, and systems.

FOSS investigations are carefully crafted to guarantee that the learning demands placed on students are appropriate for the level of developmental abilities. Although many programs we reviewed use thinking processes, FOSS is the only one that has organized these scientific processes into a developmental sequence specifically related to learning stages. These thinking processes guide the selection of content for FOSS. Although students possess the capacity to use all thinking processes throughout their lives, we know that some

processes are more powerful at certain ages, which again influenced our decision to supplement our science curriculum with FOSS.

The thinking processes emphasized throughout the grade levels are:

- OBSERVING – using the senses to get information
- COMMUNICATING – talking, drawing, acting
- COMPARING – paring, one-to-one correspondence
- ORGANIZING – grouping, serializing, sequencing
- RELATING – cause and effect, classifying
- INFERRING – superordinate/subordinate classification, if/then reasoning, developing scientific laws
- APPLYING – developing strategic plans, inventing

Summarizing this introduction – What is FOSS? A system of hands-on inquiry based science methods using carefully designed kits containing materials and activities to meet the school's science curriculum and FOSS goals. Our decision was also influenced by the FOSS goals, which are compatible with SEA's science goals.

1. SCIENCE LITERACY – Provide students with science experiences that are appropriate to their age and ability level, and served as a foundation for more advanced ideas that prepare them for life in an increasingly complex scientific and technological world.
2. INSTRUCTIONAL EFFICIENCY – Provide teachers with a complete, flexible, easy-to-use science program that reflects current research on learning, and uses effective instructional methodologies.
3. SYSTEMATIC REFORM – Meets the community science-achievement standards and societal expectations for the next generation of citizens, prepared with the knowledge and thinking capacities to manage the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### ***HSP MATH (Harcourt School Publishers) – grades 1-6***

The best way to introduce HSP Math for grades 1-6 is to summarize the process used with numerous math series resulting in this selection. A team of nine SEA educators met on a regular basis during the 2008-2009 school year assessing publisher math series. Each educator responded to the following questions as part of the rating process.

1. How will the program benefit our students in a way different from our current program?
2. What components do you view as its strengths and how will you utilize them effectively in your classroom?
3. What are its area(s) of weakness and what ways can you supplement to strengthen this/these area(s)?
4. Do you see adoption of this program as something that will benefit our students' long term and strengthen our math program? How?
5. Will there be gaps at the grade levels based on the fact that we would move from our current text to your text of choice?

After individuals reviewed the math programs, completed assessment ratings in several categories, and participated in team discussions, the HSP Math program was selected. The SEA team provided these highlights of the program.

- Math-on-location movies for grades 3-6 – “make math relevant in the real world” – helps children understand why they are learning particular concepts.
- Children can read, listen to, or print-out stories that relate to concepts being taught. Readers are leveled so that the appropriate book is assigned to each student’s learning readiness.
- Think-Central feature provides on-line interactive activities that enrich and remediate students at all levels.
- On-line instructional models actively engage the learners in a way to promote better understanding of concepts.
- A one-stop planner CD for teachers contains the entire text on-line providing steps for easy planning and implementation of the series and all ancillary materials available for print-outs to copy for students.
- Mega Math – interactive math adventures designed for students to practice skills and apply learned concepts. These are great for whole group or small group instruction and can be adjusted to meet the needs of individual students.

The SEA team rated HSP Math higher than other programs in these areas.

#### Appearance/Organization

- Is visually appealing to students
- Page layout is uncluttered and balanced
- Chapter introductions and summaries are clear and comprehensive

#### Content

- Investigates new concepts in depth
- Concepts are developed using multiple representation
- Learning goals are challenging, clear and appropriate

#### Approach

- Facilitates inquiry-based exploration through a variety of approaches
- Supports varied methods of instruction and learning styles
- Allows for whole group instruction, small group interaction and individualized instruction
- Lessons encourage higher-level thinking

#### Enrichment/Remediation

- Enrichment material expands horizontally rather than vertically
- Enrichment material is able to be completed with minimal teacher guidance
- Remedial material has a sufficient number of problems to assure understanding

#### Assessment

- Includes pre-assessment for chapters/topics
- Includes standardized test practice

#### Technology

- Technological support is pertinent and not information overload
- Assessment CD is available for the teachers
- Technological support is user friendly

#### Teacher Support

- Daily objectives and methodology are clearly stated

#### Other

- Language/reading level is appropriate for intended age group
- Lessons are linked to other subject areas
- Integrates ways to communicate with parents regarding goals and objectives

Parents in the grades where these new programs will influence the learning of their children will become very familiar with them. These highlights can serve as a reference guide to how well our student’s are succeeding

compared with the program's design and our expectations. Please do not hesitate to ask questions about or share comments on these new programs or any other area of our School.

We look forward to welcoming our students to the 2009-2010 school year on Tuesday, September 1. Enjoy the remaining weeks of the summer break.

Sincerely,

William Kindler