

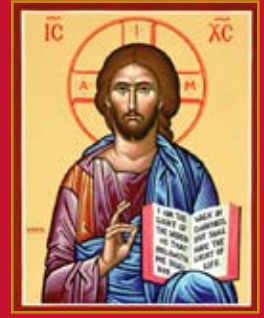


ELEMENTARY DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

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NATIONAL
CATHOLIC
EDUCATIONAL
ASSOCIATION



NEWS

HAPPY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK!



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

CATHOLIC SCHOOL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE - 2009

The Catholic School Leadership Institute, which is open to both high school and elementary school personnel, provides ongoing formation and support for new principals and at the same time reinvigorates those experienced principals who have faced the daily challenges of administration. Those teachers who are considering the ministry of administration have found the program a valuable opportunity to share their ideas and learn from those who are already in administration.

The Institute will be held at Vallombrosa Retreat and Conference Center in Menlo Park, CA (between San Francisco and San Jose) beginning at 4:00 p.m. June 29 and ending at noon on July 1, 2009 (which might provide an opportunity for participants to spend the July 4th weekend in

San Francisco). Tuesday and Wednesday evenings are free to allow participants the opportunity to see the local sites. The conference center has easy access to Caltrain for those who might want to go to San Francisco for the evenings.

Link to Institute site and download the brochure and application at: <http://www.ncea.org/departments/elementary/CatholicSchoolLeadershipInstitute.asp>.



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Year of St. Paul

June 29, 2008 - June 29, 2009



"For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

—1 Cor. 2.2

LITERACY AND NUMERACY: USING LITERATURE TO ENHANCE MATH SKILLS IN THE CLASSROOM

Connecting language arts and mathematics curricula is a beneficial strategy when working with young children. By integrating these two curriculum areas, teachers can ignite children's excitement about learning mathematics in the same way that books are used to excite children about language arts. Children who enjoy mathematics learn to look at literature in a new way, while children who enjoy reading view mathematics in a new way.

There are many other benefits to linking literacy and numeracy:

- Children's appreciation for both mathematics and literature is increased
- Mathematical skills are taught in a meaningful context
- Children are motivated to think and reason mathematically
- Children learn how to solve problems through stories
- Mathematics and language arts are both ways of communicating
- Mathematics and language arts are connected to the child's real world
- Mathematics and language arts both make use of symbols to represent ideas and information
- Literature motivates children to become involved in mathematics

Books You Can Count On

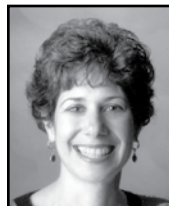
Math concepts can be taught using children's literature. Some of the concepts that children learn about in the early grades and books that can be used to teach these concepts include:

- **Number**
Numeral recognition can be taught using the book, *Right Number of Elephants*, by Jeff Sheppard. *The M&M's Count to One Hundred Book*, by Barbara Barbieri McGrath, teaches one-to-one correspondence among other skills. Counting is illustrated in the book, *Miss Spider's Tea Party*, by David Kirk, and also in the book, *Ten Little Ladybugs*, by Melanie Gerth.
- **Sorting and Classifying**
The book, *New Shoes, Red Shoes*, by Susan Rollings helps children with sorting and classifying skills.
- **Sequencing**
To help children with the concept of sequencing, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, by Eric Carle, and *Pumpkin, Pumpkin*, by Jeanne Titherington, are very good choices.

- **Geometry (shapes and positions)**
The book, *Rosie's Walk*, by Pat Hutchins, helps children understand the concepts in geometry.
- **Patterns**
Busy Bugs: a Book about Patterns, by Jayne Harvey, will teach children all about patterning.
- **Measurement (length, volume, weight, time, and temperature)**
The measurement of time can be taught using the books, *The Grouchy Ladybug*, by Eric Carle, or *Where the Wild Things Are*, by Maurice Sendak. Linear measurement can be taught using the book, *Inch by Inch*, by Leo Lionni. Jon Agee's book, *Full of Nothing*, can help children with the concept of volume.
- **Number Operations**
Fish Eyes, by Lois Ehlert, and *Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed*, by Eileen Christelow are good books to help children with the concepts of number operations.
- **Problem Solving**
To teach the concept of problem solving, the books, *Stone Soup*, by Marcia Brown, or *The Runaway Bunny*, by Margaret Wise Brown, can be used.
- **Fractions (parts and whole)**
The book, *The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear*, by Don and Audrey Wood, helps children understand the concepts of parts and wholes.

In conclusion, stories such as those listed here provide opportunities to learn and use mathematical skills in meaningful contexts. Children learn naturally across the curriculum, rather than through isolated bits of information separated into specific curriculum areas. Language arts and mathematics instruction share many skills. Integrating language arts and mathematics makes connections to real world scenarios. Both are means of communication and children benefit when they are taught together.

There are a wealth of good children's books available which present both interesting stories and interesting mathematical concepts to explore.



Julie Brunet
National Creative Consultant,
William H. Sadlier, Inc.



Renée McAlister
National Creative Consultant,
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WHAT IS DYSLEXIA?

I have a group of friends known as the “Thursday Night Girls” and anytime we travel together, Char does the driving. When Char drives, you bless yourself, buckle yourself in and start saying the *Act of Contrition*. When Char asks for directions, the answer to turn left is always followed by a chorus of all of us shouting, “*Your other left.*” Perhaps you know someone like this. It is a great source of laughter for the Thursday Night Girls and a sure sign of this month’s topic, the learning disability that affects from 5% to 15% of individuals in the country: Dyslexia.

What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a difficulty in learning to read despite instruction, average intelligence, and an adequate opportunity to learn. The brain’s inability to translate images into understandable language is confirmed by brain imagery studies which show differences in the way the brain of a Dyslexic person develops and functions. This is NOT to say that Dyslexia is due to brain damage or a lack of intelligence. Those with Dyslexia are often capable or even gifted in areas that do not require strong language skills. If you happen to hold the belief that a learning disability implies a lack of intelligence, please see last month’s article.

About 85% of students with a learning disability have a learning disability in reading and language processing. When children with Dyslexia begin to read, they face learning more than 1,100 ways that letters are used in the written language to symbolize the 40 sounds in the spoken language. If Dyslexia is undetected in the early grades, other problems arise that mask the Dyslexia. Imagine going to work everyday to an environment where you are unable to access the very basic language of understanding on which everything else is built. Then imagine that you are the only person at work who seems to have this problem and everyone else seems to be annoyed that you aren’t “getting it.” You would be frustrated. You would begin to doubt your worth and your intelligence and eventually, either depression or anger would set in. This is the life of many children who are struggling with Dyslexia.

What are the Symptoms of Dyslexia?

The most common symptoms of Dyslexia are:

- Letter and number reversals (b – d - p, n - u, m - w)
- Words that look the same are substituted (sunrise – surprise, house – horse)
- Words that have the same letters are substituted (how - who, lost - lots)
- Small words are inserted or omitted (a, the, from, are, of)
- Difficulty copying from the board
- Problems with spatial relationships

What are the Strategies for Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a life-long condition that is genetic. Early identification and treatment is the key to helping Dyslexics achieve in school and in life. Most people with Dyslexia need a multi-sensory approach emphasizing hearing, seeing, and touching.

Schools can implement academic adaptations to help Dyslexic students succeed.

- Extra time to complete tasks and tests
- Several shorter tests given instead of one long test
- Help with taking notes, either technology or a peer
- Notes provided instead of copying from the board
- An extra book provided that can be written in/highlighted
- Tests given by tape and taken by tape

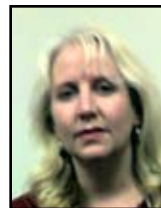
Dyslexic Directional Diagram *

This Dyslexic Directional Diagram is the beginning of an activity. The end of the activity is limited only by the imagination of the teacher and the students. Activities should be targeted to reinforce directional letters that are not only built from right or left, like b and d, but also built up or down, like n or u and m or w. The activity has a much better chance of success if a multi-sensory approach is utilized. The teacher can name a directional letter and the students compete to be the first team to lie on the floor and use their bodies to form the letters or students can use everyday items to build directional letters. *created by Dr. Ellen M.E. Wedemeyer

present the word	bold
present the word “pulled apart”	b o l d
present the stem of each directional letter (color coded)	! o ! !
student fills in directional letters and identifies the direction chosen	b o l d R L

Thought for the month: I had the privilege of working with a group of students who were Dyslexic. These students understood their disability and this understanding gave them power over their disability. They used that power to face academic challenges, to bond with each other and to poke fun at their disability. At the end of every class, they would shout in triumph, “Dyslexics of the World... Untie!”

Knowledge is Power, and we will talk more about that next month. I invite you to email me with any questions or issues pertaining to Catholic special education.



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STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES

Student-led conferences at the Middle School Level are beneficial to everyone involved. Parents and teachers must work together to develop the whole child, but at the ages of 12,13, and 14, children are very aware of their grades, study habits, capabilities, and goals. For this reason, it is essential that the student be at the conference and given the responsibility to speak towards his or her efforts in school. This mandatory conference includes the student, parents, and the homeroom advisor.

Many things go into preparing for a Middle School Student-Led Conference. Two weeks before the scheduled conferences, students are given several opportunities to reflect on their progress in the past two months. A Middle School Class Summary is routed through the teachers and filled out by the students in each class. Then, each student provides a brief synopsis of what he or she did in the past two months.

This helps them identify what they like about school and the areas in which they struggle. Throughout the two weeks before the conference, students collect work samples from each class to show their parents. As students collect their

work, it is kept in a folder by their homeroom teacher.

Students are given a Conference Script which helps them organize their thoughts and prepares them for presenting work, strengths, and areas on which they need to work. Not only are academic concerns discussed, but social and behavioral issues are also addressed. There is direct student accountability with all parties present. Since students see five or more different teachers in a day, it is important to also have “drop in” times between scheduled conferences in case parents have specific questions or concerns with a teacher other than the homeroom advisor. Overall, student led conferences at the Middle School level are very beneficial for the student, their parents, and the teacher. Parents and teachers work hard to provide a stable, healthy learning environment for their children. Student led conferences allow students to take an active role in their own learning.



Nancy Ronhovde, Principal, Guardian Angels School, Chaska MN, nronhovde@gachaska.org

SPECIAL TEACHERS AND THE REGULAR CLASSROOMS

St. Stephen the Martyr School (Omaha NE) is a Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade school. There are special teachers in the following areas: physical education, music, technology/computers, Spanish, and library/media. Many times, we try to integrate the program of our special teachers in our regular classroom curriculum areas. This is not always easy to do, since St. Stephen has more than 900 students. Many times these joint ventures happened through the simple means of sharing and communicating a need, want, goal, or comment about a classroom issue. This initial sharing is key.

Over the years, we have nurtured an environment where the teachers communicate with each other through a variety of methods: formal and informal meeting times, e-mail, phone calls, before and after school, even on weekends and in the evenings! We have worked hard to instill a climate of support. We are open to new ideas and express these to our classroom peers. Teachers come to rely on each other. Once true and open communication takes place, these ideas flow. And, not far behind the idea is the experience.

Some ideas that we have tried over the past few years in our middle school (6th, 7th, 8th grades) are:

Spanish and Social Studies: the Spanish teacher worked with the middle school social study teachers on

geography; using maps and charts, of the many countries that have Spanish as their first language. In Spanish class, the students also discuss current events from such areas as Columbia, Venezuela and Ecuador.

Spanish and Math: in a unit on school supplies the students measured items in centimeters, meters, and listed items according to size. They made bar graphs. They also used Spanish terms to describe mathematical shapes and perimeters.

Spanish and Religion: The students in all grades cover the Day of the Dead, All Souls Day, Our Lady of Guadalupe and Juan Diego. Each year we have done a few Spanish Masses with the children.

Spanish and Computers/Technology: the computer teacher taught the children how to insert foreign characters into word documents. The older middle school students made a video using Spanish vocabulary to instruct the younger primary students.

Music and Science: our fifth graders created their own songs that describe the process of photosynthesis.

Music and Socials Studies: our eighth graders learned three verses and harmony to the Star Spangled Banner. The words and history of the Star Spangled Banner are part of the curriculum in the eighth graders Social Studies course.

Physical Education and Computers/Technology: this involved researching nutrition for health/physical education units and formulating a school-wide wellness plan. The fourth and fifth grade students researched heart and healthy living by accessing the internet. They later participated in the “Jump-Rope-Heart” for the American Heart Association.

Media/Library and Social Studies, Science and Literature: this involved investigating topics for our annual history fair, science fair, and other topics (such as various authors). These take place in conjunction with our middle school teachers and the media/librarian. This person covers research methodology with the students, e.g., how to cite sources

appropriately and avoid plagiarism. When the students visit the media area they receive instruction and experience that is supported by the work assigned by the classroom teachers.

We have noticed a higher level of student involvement with these joint projects. The students have been receptive and positive with these endeavors. The teachers have also enjoyed these experiences and have built relationships among themselves.



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NEWS ABOUT THE YEAR OF ST. PAUL

THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL

The conversion of St. Paul is recounted twice in the New Testament. In the earlier of the accounts, *Gal. 1*, Paul personally attests to his change of heart, going from persecutor to advocate of Christianity. His account is interesting for two reasons: First, Paul asserts that he has not received the Gospel from others, but directly as a result of God’s revelation (*Gal. 1.1, 11-12, 15-17*; cf. *1 Cor. 15.7-10*). He was thus able to say that he, too, was an Apostle. Second, his own account lacks the drama of that found in *Acts 9.1-31*, the famous incident on the Road to Damascus, a story that is known by every Christian, but was not immortalized in art until the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

“Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? He asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ The reply came, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.’ The men who were travelling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.” (*Acts 9.3-9*). Afterward, Paul’s sight was later restored by Ananias and he was baptized (*Acts 9.17-18*; for *Acts 9.7*, cf. *Deut. 4.12*). *Acts 22.6-11*

reinforces *Acts 9*, as Paul recounts his conversion experience to the Christians in Jerusalem.

Paul’s conversion is not the norm for most conversions to Catholicism. In general, people are impelled to join the Church through the example of someone they know. Benedict XVI took up this difference when he treated the event on 3 September 2008 at his General Audience (available at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20080903_en.html).

“And to this account, received from tradition, he adds: “Last of all ... he appeared also to me” (*1 Corinthians 15:8*). Thus he clarifies that this is the foundation of his apostolate and of his new life. There are also other texts in which the same reference appears: “Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship (cf. *Romans 1:5*); and elsewhere: “Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” (*1 Corinthians 9:1*), words with which he alludes to something that all know. Finally, the most complete text is found in *Galatians 1:15-17*: “But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus.” In this “self-apology” he underlines decidedly that he is also a true witness of the Risen One, that he has a mission received directly from the Risen One.



“We can see that the two sources, the Acts of the Apostles and the Letters of St. Paul, converge in a fundamental point: The Risen One spoke with Paul, called him to the apostolate, made him a true apostle, a witness of the resurrection, with the specific charge to proclaim the Gospel to the pagans, to the Greco-Roman world. And, at the same time, Paul learned that, despite the immediateness of his relationship with the Risen One, he must enter the communion of the Church, be baptized, and live in harmony with the other apostles. Only in this communion with all will he be able to be a true apostle, as he wrote explicitly in the First Letter to the Corinthians: “Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed” (15:11). There is only one proclamation of the Risen One, because Christ is only one.

“As we see in these passages, Paul never interprets this moment as an event of conversion. Why? There are many theories, but the reason is very obvious. This change of his life, this transformation of his whole being was not the result of a psychological process, of a maturation or intellectual and moral evolution, but it came from outside: It was not the result of his thinking but of the encounter with Jesus Christ. In this sense it was not simply a conversion, a maturing of his “I,” rather, it was death and resurrection for himself: a life of his died and a new one was born with the Risen Christ.

“In no other way can this renewal of Paul be explained. All psychological analyses cannot clarify or resolve the problem. Only the event, the intense encounter with Christ is the key to understand what happened: death and resurrection, renewal on the part of him who revealed himself and spoke with him. It is in this more profound sense that we can and must speak of conversion. This meeting was a real renewal that changed all his parameters. One can now say that what before was essential and fundamental for him, now has become “rubbish” for him; there is no longer “gain” but loss, because now only life in Christ is what counts.

“However, we must not think that Paul locked himself blindly in an event. In reality, the opposite occurred, because the risen Christ is the light of truth, the light of God himself. This enlarged his heart, and opened it to all. At that moment, he did not lose all that was good and true in his life, in his heritage, but understood in a new way the wisdom, truth, and depth of the law and the prophets; he appropriated them in a new way. At the same time, his reason

opened to the wisdom of the pagans. Having opened himself to Christ with all his heart, he became able to engage in a wider dialogue with all, he made himself everything to all. Hence he could really be the apostle to the pagans.

“Let us now look at our situation. What does this mean for us? It means that also for us, Christianity is not a new philosophy or new morality. We are Christians only if we encounter Christ. Of course he does not show himself to us in that irresistible, luminous way, as he did with Paul to make him Apostle of the Gentiles.

“However, we can also encounter Christ in the reading of sacred Scripture, in prayer, in the liturgical life of the Church. We can touch Christ’s heart and feel him touch ours. Only in this personal relationship with Christ, only in this encounter with the Risen One do we really become Christians. And in this way, our reason opens, the whole of Christ’s wisdom opens and all the richness of the truth. Therefore, let us pray to the Lord to enlighten us, so that, in our world, he will grant us the encounter with his presence, and thus give us a lively faith, an open heart, and great charity for all, capable of renewing the world.”

Paul is venerated by all Christians and is a symbol of ecumenical reconciliation. The Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul is celebrated on 25 January 2009 and is the last day of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. It is on this day that the Holy Father celebrates Vespers in the Basilica of St. Paul’s-Outside-the-Walls, in the presence of those belonging to Eastern Orthodoxy and the Protestant denominations.



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