

October 18, 2013

Dear Parents, Students and Friends of St. Augustine School:



AT THE CONCLUSION of our first six weeks of school, there is much to celebrate and an equal number of exciting things to look forward to in the coming month. We are experiencing a wide range of changes, have launched some new programs and welcomed into our community many new students and their families.

Given that we anticipated the beginning of the building of our new school, we have initiated a number of changes to help us all grow into the changes that we will embrace with a whole new school facility. Our new building (now displayed in the model at the entrance way of the school) will in its first phase have the capacity to have ten fully functioning classrooms. This will, in the first phase of our school, allow for at least sixty additional students. We know from years of turning away students that it was important for our Parish to consider embracing more children in our new building. Therefore, the plans for the new school will eventually allow for fifteen classrooms, with each of the three floors having 5 classes on that level. The creation of the 2/3 blended classes was to help parents, students and teachers begin the important process of developing the actual capacity to expand our population while maintaining our very high standard for academic

excellence. We are appreciative of the support that we are receiving, as well as for the honest input of teachers, parents and students that we have experienced. I am very proud of our young students for their perseverance, determination, openness to do their best – Actually, I think of them now as ‘pioneers’ – young people willing to trust, work hard and be positive when facing challenges that they had not expected.

We have changes in the office structure as well; we said ‘goodbye’ to *Mrs. Furchalk* after many years of faithful service to our community, and welcomed *Mrs. Heidi Battiston* to work alongside *Mrs. Luttrell*. *Mrs. Battiston* is working part-time this year, and will transition to full time in 2014, as *Mrs. Luttrell* plans to retire to spend more time with her husband, their elderly parents and large extended family. I am most grateful to *Mrs. Luttrell* for her new role as ‘coach’ for *Mrs. Battiston*, and I know that we will be well-prepared at the office level for the many transitions that are to come over the coming eighteen months and into the future.

Program leadership also occurred within our Learning Resource Team with the retirement of *Mrs. Pat Stout*. *Pat* had worked in our School for many years, and was dearly loved by us all. *Mrs. Danielle Kozak* has moved into the position of primary LAC teacher, and provides much-needed leadership of special needs programs for our younger students. *Mrs. Stout* has chosen to act as a ‘library volunteer’ over the course of this year, and will continue to be seen around school as she is able to help us in that capacity.

For those of you who are not aware, we have a significant commitment to serving the needs of our families, who have children with special needs. For twenty-four years, St. Augustine’s has had the blessing

of special needs students within our population, and for the 2013-2014 school year, our nine special needs students are continuing to receive excellent support through the service of the eight Educational Assistants [EAS].

Our Parish said goodbye to *Fr. Chris Lynch* as he was called back to the Prince George Diocese – Fr. Chris is missed by the Vancouver College community and by those in our parish who had come to appreciate his thought-provoking homilies. Should you ever travel through PG, I'm sure he'd love to have a visit with your family.

Our Oblate Fathers in the Vancouver area said 'goodbye' to their fellow priest and friend, *Fr. Ken Forster*, OMI – Pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in the downtown east side. Fr. Ken has become the new Oblate Provincial, and now resides in Ottawa, where he works with two other Oblates to give direction and provide leadership to the Oblates across Canada, and oversee Oblate Missions around the world. Please keep him and his team in your prayers as they continue the good work of the Oblate Fathers around the world.

Teaching assignment changes have seen *Mrs. McFaul* returning to Grade 4 and *Mrs. Vales* moving up to teach Grade 6. I have greatly appreciated the adaptive changes that both teachers have made to accommodate their new assignments and have been blessed to have many conversations with them about their new experiences.

We are all working hard – and I am extremely grateful to every member of the teaching and support staff for the incredible time, energy and commitment that is taking place to meet expectations, requirements and serve the needs of the students in their care.

As for myself, I had expected that our school year would have begun differently. I had expected that we would already be under construction – and am so aware of all the reasons that we are still completing the processes required to start this awesome project in the best manner possible. The efforts of our building team have been huge: working with Architects, the City of Vancouver, our Parish

Finance Committee, the Archdiocese of Vancouver, the Faith and Foundation fundraising team, myself as representative of the staff and our Pastor. The thousands of hours of volunteer time over the course of the past twelve years is a testimony to the dedication of our team: *Vic Vela, Marko Simsic and Nick Maile*. Please keep them in your prayers as they work to ensure that all the necessary items meet the requirements that we face on all levels.

For all our donors, we will be hosting a **Donor Recognition reception on Thursday, October 24** at the Parish Centre – please come if you are able and learn first hand from our amazing team how everything is coming together.

Most days, I feel like a bit of juggler – still leading the school as Principal, and often called to support the various teams helping with our building project. We all consider what we are doing a privilege – and we continue to ask for your prayers, your generosity of time, and especially at this time, for everyone to continue to be generous with your financial support. So many before us did exactly that – and with everyone's faithful support, we can guarantee strong, family-centred, Catholic education to families into the future.

Please consider the following:

- Making your contribution to the **WALKATHON**; remember our goal of \$225.00 for each family's contribution to meet our overall goal of \$40,000.
- Attending our **Donor Recognition event** October 24 (please call 604 736-4455 to RSVP)
- Joining us for our **monthly Mass** on November 6 at 9:30 AM being hosted by the Grade 5 class
- Coming to our second **in-school concert**, November 20th at 11:00 AM
- Ensuring that **your children come to our three November Masses dressed in their school uniforms**: the weeks of November 2/3; 10/11; and 16 and 17 are set aside for our Fall Campaign as we continue to raise the necessary money needed to finance our the building of our new school

Just in case you are not aware:

We have been working on providing more regular communications with families. The 6 key avenues are:

Thursday Notes from the Office: these bulleted notes reflect items that we wish to bring to your attention. (We hope to be able to post these on the website and will let you know if we are able to accomplish this – then you could find ‘old ‘NOTES’ if you missed on through email.)

Faith and Foundation website:

www.faithandfoundation.com which has become a vital means of communicating current events, posting notification, updating progress on our building, posting pictures and stories, informing the broader community on our Parish/School events such as Pass the Torch.

The Principals’ Blog: launched just 6 weeks ago as a way to keep people informed about some of the little and wonderful things that happen in and around school and its life. It’s located in the upper left hand corner of the home page of our website . Just click on the ‘red apple’

Newsletters: written less often than in the past, as the above tools are happening more frequently at this time.

Parish Bulletin notes: these occur at key times of the year to inform the broader Parish of events or news about the school.

Letters and notices from Teachers: these come home in hard copy, as most of them require that you are fully aware of upcoming events, and often request your physical support with supervision or transportation.

Thank you, everyone, for being part of such a wonderful community of “good and faithful servants” – just as Jesus calls us to be. Have a wonderful weekend,

Fondly



Principal