

**December 31, 2015**  
**Principal's Newsletter**

*"It always seems impossible until it's done"*  
Nelson Mandela

**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year**

As we celebrate this Christmas season and move into 2016, we continue to embrace our school mission, climate, and culture. Throughout the year, we speak to our students in classrooms and level assemblies about the importance of self-respect and respecting others. I know this conversation also takes place in the homes of our students as parents partner with us in a values-based Catholic education for their children. We are blessed to be in a Franciscan community where peace, love, and respect are values that are lived out and modeled every day.

In a troubled world, St. Francis Prep's charge is to educate our young women and men to use their hearts and minds to shape the future; our students graduate as well-educated individuals of character. We are proud to live within this Mission and to ensure we provide our students, faculty, and staff a safe and secure environment at all times. In this joyous season, we reflect on all of our experiences during the past year, both the victories and struggles, and ask God to guide us on our 2016 journey. There is no greater gift for a child than a well-rounded Catholic education, and no greater gift for a parent and educator than seeing a young person develop, grow, believe, and achieve!

***Merry Christmas*** – Mr. McLaughlin

**Building Improvement Plan**

The students, faculty, and staff were informed before we left for Christmas vacation that the West Ramp will be closed starting Dec. 22nd until the end of January. Work continues on the Music rooms and the upgrade to the ramp, school bookstore, and girls' restroom.

***From the desk of Mr. Castellano:***  
**COURSE SELECTION**

During the first week of January, we will begin the process of course selection for the 2016-2017 school year. Students will attend assemblies to hear about the process, and guidance counselors will visit a class on every level to discuss course selection. Students will have until 4 February to discuss courses with teachers, counselors, and parents and guardians: all course selection must be completed by **4 February**.

Please encourage your child to take full advantage of this time in order to make the best choices for the next school year. We make some changes in June, but many classes are closed; changes cost \$40. Students are best served to make wise choices now. The entire course book is posted on the school web site now. Link: [Course Book 2016-2017](#)

Students may choose to take an extra credit or an H period class if they are in good academic standing and have good attendance and punctuality. There is no application form. Students who do not meet the criteria for H period or extra credits will be removed from these extra classes. Pre-registration for certain classes will begin on Sunday, 24 January. There is information about pre-registration on the web site, and students will get more information at assemblies and during class visits.

We encourage students to take the most appropriately challenging classes for which they are eligible. This selection is unique for each student. Please encourage your child to speak with his or her

teachers and guidance counselor to make the best decision. Each department has its own criteria for honors and A.P. classes and its own process for receiving approval. Classrooms teachers are the best source of information about getting approval for honors classes. Guidance counselors will give advice about a student's overall course load.

Please contact your child's guidance counselor or Mr. Castellano (ext. 209) with questions about course selection.

### **PSAT RESULTS**

Our sophomore and junior students took the PSAT in October. The PSAT is a practice test for the SAT, a major college admission test. About 2% of the students in the nation receive recognition from the National Merit Scholarship Corporation based on their PSAT results. Each year, we have between 10 and 15 students who are so recognized. For the vast majority of students, however, the PSAT serves as practice and preparation for the SAT. PSAT scores are not seen by colleges and do not influence college acceptance.

We recently received a message from the College Board, the organization that oversees the PSAT and SAT, informing us that students will receive an e-mail in early January; this e-mail will provide them with an access code so they can view their PSAT results. At that time, we will also return to students their test booklet. Later in January, we will have assemblies on how to understand the results, interpret the score report, and prepare for the SAT. We encourage students to go over the score report with parents and guardians and to review their entire test on their own. English and Math teachers will take a class to go over some of the questions. Students with questions about the PSAT should speak with their guidance counselor.

All juniors should take the SAT or the ACT (another major college admission test) sometime in the Spring semester. Colleges accept either SAT or ACT scores for applications. SAT and ACT scores are important because they influence college acceptance and can qualify students for various scholarships. Juniors should discuss the time of the test with their parents and guardians and their guidance counselors. We strongly recommend that all students do some type of explicit test preparation. This preparation may be a course, individual tutoring, or using a test preparation book or on-line program. That is a family decision. Please feel free to call your child's guidance counselor to discuss this decision.

Sophomores will take the PSAT again in the Fall of junior year. There is information available on the College Board web site: [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org).

SAT scores are important, but they are 1 piece of the application package students will send to colleges in the Fall of senior year. Colleges also look at the following items: overall average; classes taken; level of difficulty of classes; extra-curricular activities; service; recommendations; student essay. Receiving the PSAT is a good opportunity for students to re-dedicate themselves to their school work. Good grades in good classes are as important as good SAT scores, and good work in school will also result in improved SAT scores.

### **SAT REGISTRATION**

The College Board offers the SAT at many locations on different dates throughout the Spring. Students may check this information at [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org). Registration is done through the College Board web site. This Spring, St. Francis Prep is offering the SAT on Saturday, 7 May. We encourage students who want to take the SAT at St. Francis Prep to register early: there are a limited number of seats available, and these seats fill up early. St. Francis Prep does not control who gets to take the test at the school. Please encourage your child to register early. Students should do explicit test preparation. We wish students all the best on this phase on college preparation.

**A Message from Mr. Woods, Director of Technology**

In January, we will be conducting pre-registration (Jan. 24th, for some classes) and overall course registration (Jan. 28th) for next school year. Students will need to log in to the PowerSchool Student Portal to register. Students who have lost their PowerSchool Portal passwords should go to the Computer Lab in W201 to get a replacement password.

YOU CANNOT PRE-REGISTER or REGISTER WITHOUT A PASSWORD! PLEASE DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE TO GET A PASSWORD. LATE REGISTRATION COULD AFFECT YOUR COURSE SELECTION IN CLASSES WITH LIMITED SEATING.

**Thank you to our SFP Volunteers**



**English Class Trip**

The seniors in Ms. Pietryga's Gothicism class visited the Museum of the City of New York on December 11. They toured the exhibit, "Jacob Riis, Revealing New York's Other Half," as part of their reading of the novel The Alienist in which Riis is a character.



### SFP Sports

#### **Boys' soccer**

Junior John Salinas was named by MSG Varsity to All-City Second Team. Junior Sheldon May earned Honorable mention.

#### **Girls' Swimming**

Coach Danny Finn, Julia Courtney , Olivia Santos, coach Andrew Meditz . Congratulations to Julia and Olivia for qualifying for the States Championships.



Presentation Soup Kitchen



The Football Team serving Thanksgiving Dinner at the Presentation Soup Kitchen.

The faculty, staff, and students of St. Francis Prep prepared and served our annual festive Christmas dinner for approximately 150 poor and homeless people at Presentation Soup Kitchen at Presentation Catholic Church in Jamaica on Thursday, December 17th. In honor of Pope Francis' birthday on December 17th, SFP sold t-shirts to raise money for the Soup Kitchen. We are excited that we were able to present Presentation Soup Kitchen with a check for \$1,000 to be used to serve the poor and the homeless in Jamaica, Queens. Many thanks to Brother Joseph Bach, O.S.F., for helping to organize the event.

### **Project Joy**

PROJECT JOY, sponsored by the Franciscan Youth Movement (FYM) under the leadership of Brother James, OSF, made many elderly and lonely people happy during this Christmas season. The school community wrote over 1000 Christmas letters and cards. These were delivered by FYM, who visited with the residents, sang to them, read the letters to them, and presented them with gifts. Three busloads of students on different days visited Queen of Peace Nursing Home where students also do monthly service retreats. Letters and cards are also being delivered to St. Alberts, Maria Regina, and St. Joseph's. Under the supervision of Mr. Soto, letters and cards written and decorated in Spanish were also delivered to a number of Hispanic groups at CHIPS, Holy Redeemer, St. Luke's, and Our Lady of Loreto .Brother James, OSF, thanked FYM for witnessing and showing leadership in putting our Franciscan values into practice.



#### Artificial Intelligence Class

On Wednesday, December 16, 2015, Mr. Sciame's Artificial Intelligence Class went to Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. There they listened to a workshop presented by Dr. Roger Berkowitz, who discussed the intertwining of humans and robots during the next few decades. Specifically, he discussed the entrance of robots into the fields of care giving and how that may influence human relationships. Students debated whether they would or would not use a babysitting service featuring robots.



#### A Christmas Carol and the Christmas Tree Lighting

On Dec. 4, SFP hosted its 2nd Annual Christmas Tree Lighting and it's production of A Christmas Carol.



### Common Cents

Students from our Common Cents Enrichment Program visiting the NYSE.



### Music Department

December was a busy month for Prep's Music Department. Junior violinist and Concertmistress of Prep's Chamber Orchestra, Georgia Herrera, was selected to perform as a member of the New York State School Music Association's (NYSSMA) All-State Symphony Orchestra from December 3rd to 6th. Georgia earned this opportunity based on her perfect score at her NYSSMA festival solo adjudication last May.

On December 2nd, our Chamber Orchestra presented an assembly concert for students at St. Kevin Catholic Academy. Our Chamber Choir helped bring some Christmas cheer to Prep's annual Christmas Tree Lighting on December 4th. On December 6th, our Jazz Band lent a helping hand to St. Francis College, when they performed at Madison Square Garden as the college's Pep Band. On December 17th, students from the Chamber Orchestra performed at Presentation Parish Soup Kitchen to help enliven a special Holiday meal for those in need in the Presentation Parish community. And on December 19th, the Chamber Orchestra performed at Prep's Party for Our Friends with Special Needs.

But the highlight of the month was the Music Department's annual Christmas Concerts. In all, over two nights, 11 ensembles and over 550 students shared their talents with sold out audiences. The two performances were capped off with our traditional performance of Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus," which included students from St. Andrew Avellino Catholic Academy and I.S. 77 performing with Prep's Concert Band and Prep Chorus.

Look for even more exciting things from the Music Department in 2016, including our Concert for Beginning Students on January 29th, and the Jazz- Pop Concert on March 18th.

**Christmas Party for Our Friends with Special Needs**

[Facebook Slideshow HERE](#)

*"Preach the Gospel at all times; when necessary, use words." St. Francis of Assisi*

We would like to take a moment to thank everyone who, through great generosity, gave others a wonderful Christmas. The party, Saturday, December 19, could never have been as successful as it was without everyone's generosity and support. Every guest left happy and grateful to the entire Prep Community for this event. Students, faculty, and staff have shown what it means to live the words of St. Francis. Thank you!

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!  
Suzanne Camus and AnnMarie Rich



**Happy Birthday Pope Francis!**



#### **Alvernians and National Honor Society Toy Project**

For the past five years, the NHS Franciscan Chapter has assisted P.S. 65 with their Christmas Toy Project. Mr. Jeff Adler, parent of three SFP alumni, works at the Mother Hale Academy, Public School 65, located in the South Bronx. Most, if not all, of the students come from families that live at or below the federal poverty line. Together with the student actors and crew of The Christmas Carol, over 250 presents were given to the children in Grade 2-5.



#### **Bio-Tech and AP Biology Classes**

On Tuesday, December 15th, Ms. Ashkenazy's Biotechnology and Mr. Boylan's AP Biology classes visited the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in Lake Success; this is the North Shore- Long Island Jewish Health Systems Lab. The students participated in a lab to help them better understand their own ancestry. During this trip, students were given the ability to use cutting edge, high-tech equipment to test their DNA for the presence or absence of an ALU gene. The ALU gene is a "jumping gene," a DNA

sequence that reproduces by copying itself and inserting itself into new chromosome locations. The ALU gene only "jumps" into certain nationalities, such as Asia, or certain parts of northern Spain. The presence or absence of this gene enables the students to gain insight into their ancestral origins dating back to 1,000 years ago. The students were then able to see their results by using some of the latest technology, a Chip Analyzer. The Chip Analyzer analyzed the student's DNA and allowed them to compare individual results by graphing the information. Students then went on a tour of North Shore-LIJ's Clinical Core Lab, which is one of America's most modern medical laboratories. They were able to see where blood samples are taken to and how they are analyzed. About 90% of the operations within the lab are done robotically.



#### Hope Lodge

On December 1, the following students provided community service here at the American Cancer Society's Hope Lodge: Daniel Diaz, Mike Mavra, Chris Mecir, Bryan Reinah, and Antonio Spaleta. These young men, in partnership with their mothers, served dinner to the guests of Hope Lodge. The hours they spent here included set up of the space, dinner and beverage service, and clean up. Most important, they enlightened the spirits of the 60 patients and caregivers who are calling Hope Lodge their temporary home while in New York City for treatment.



Ugly Christmas Sweaters in the Art Department



**HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!**