

Saint Mary's School of Sagada
PRINCIPAL'S BULLETIN, 2009-2010 SERIES # 3
June 23, 2009

Dear Students, Parents, Guardians, Alumni, and Friends

I apologize for this late bulletin which should have been distributed last Friday. I was overwhelmed by a series of planned and unplanned events that kept me from writing. For one, old age has crept in, and I couldn't walk because of bone spurs on my left foot and arthritis on my right hip. Secondly, our visitors from ABS-CBN arrived late last Friday to visit SMS and Ambasing ES throwing our planned schedule off track. Anyway, the party left yesterday, and things are back to normal.

We are now in the 4th week of school. So far so good—there have been no major disciplinary cases although there are some transitional adjustments, particularly among students and faculty who are new to SMS. Although I was initially amused by the pranks and behavior of our new freshmen, I surmise that the first lesson freshmen and their parents need to learn is that SMS is a high school, and not an extension of elementary school. In a high school, students are trained to make independent choices; students are expected to actively participate in the process of learning; and students are taught self-reliance in matters like studying and preparing for school. Looking at this batch of freshmen, who are perceivably young--both in physical appearance and in maturity, I find myself policing their unnecessary yelling, screaming, chasing, shouting, giggling, and as a contrast, I have to also deal with their shyness, passiveness, bewilderment, and irresponsibility. At times, I find myself in a quandary because I believe school should be a happy place, and laughter is a clear indicator of feeling safe and secure in our school environment. On the other hand, I see the necessity of emphasizing the seriousness of purpose, particularly in a school setting. Upperclassmen and parents, any piece of advice?

Past Events:

The 1st quarter SMSSI Board of Trustees was held in La Trinidad last June Saturday, June 13. I am happy to report and share with you the major highlights of the meeting. The chairman, Rufino Bomasang, will be attending the Alumni Homecoming hosted by the Canadian Chapter of the SMS Alumni Association. A considerable amount of donations have already been pledged and collected to support the last year of the faculty chairs scheme, complete the gymnasium, and set up the endowment fund. Mr. Bomasang also announced his plans for another golf tournament sometime in November to raise money for the second computer lab. My principal's report focused on student enrollment, faculty staffing, and the calendar of activities for 2009-2010. The finance committee presented the 2008-2009 financial statements which showed a net income of P88,317.58 before capital expenditures. Most of the net income was then spent towards the replenishment of textbooks, the purchase of textbooks for kindergarten, and 100 more monobloc classroom chairs. The financial statements are currently undergoing external audit. However, these will be shared with the PTA during their meeting on Saturday, June 27 and will also be posted on the SMS website.

We would like to thank Mrs. Chiqui Say-awen, our Business Manager, for her work on the school's finance, and bid her farewell, as she will be assuming a new job as division accountant for the Department of Education in Bontoc. In her place, we welcome Ms. Marie Odlos, as our new school accountant. Ms. Odlos just passed the government licensure exam for certified public accountants.

Other highlights of the SMSSI Board Meeting include the approval of the following school policies recommended by the Finance and Scholarship committees:

- 1) As part of faculty benefits, a P50% discount on tuition shall be awarded to legitimate dependents of SMS faculty and staff in the Kindergarten and in the High School.**

Rationale: The ultimate objective is to retain qualified faculty and staff at SMS by recognizing the latter as valuable stakeholders in the development of the school in their capacity as parents. Providing educational benefits for faculty and staff dependents is standard among educational institutions.

- 2) Two or more siblings enrolled in the High School for a given school year are eligible to receive a 20% discount on tuition. The discount is not automatic, and should be applied for, through the Financial Assistance (Scholarship) Committee of the Board of Trustees. The granting of financial assistance to siblings is subject to the committee's guidelines which are based on financial need. The sibling discount is not applicable for families who receive other financial assistance from the school and other organizations.**

Rationale: The discount, which has been agreed in principle during a prior Board meeting, is aimed to recognize the value of family loyalty to SMS, as well as ease the financial burden of families in sending two or more children to SMS within a given school year. The practice of providing sibling discounts is commonplace among educational institutions.

3) The Scholarship Committee shall be empowered to offer partial financial grants.

Rationale: Currently, the Committee determines whether or not an applicant to financial grants is qualified. Also, the fund for grants is limited in number. As the SMS tuition has substantially increased in four years, the burden of coping with the increases has become greater, and the current guidelines (e.g. a child of a parent who is fully employed is disqualified for seeking financial assistance) have become too astringent. This situation can be remedied by empowering the Committee to determine other possible and applicable factors that affect the family's ability or inability to pay the SMS tuition, such as number of children in college, and /or the sufficiency and reliability of funds generated from self-employment (farmers, entrepreneurs, and merchants, etc.)

The approved policies are in effect this current school year.

Faculty Corner: *The following are thoughts and reflections by one of our veteran and most effective teachers, Mr. Michael Benter, who has served SMS as a Social Studies and Filipino teacher for the past four years. Mike grew up in Baguio City, with antecedents from Pangasinan and Aklan. His father is currently an officer with the National Police stationed in Camp Dangwa, La Trinidad. Mike belongs to the Church of the Latter Day Saints, through which he has undergone missionary work in Mindanao, and eventually gained experience and expertise as a teacher and youth leader. He is a firm advocate of inculcating universal Christian values among the youth through self-reflection.*

It can be said that one of the roles of a teacher is to effect a positive change among its students. I often reflect on how well I am magnifying my calling not just as a subject area teacher, but more importantly as an **educator**. Am I really communicating? Not just talking to my students? Is there a far-reaching effect among my students after they leave my classroom? How am I going to measure my success and effectiveness as a change agent among the young? Is finding the answers to my questions a work in progress, knowing that "one shoe does not fit everybody?"

The desire to be better at what I do motivates me to continue reflecting, while monitoring my growth through the entries in my personal journal. My journal entry dating back to January 15, 2006 helps me to be more determined and enthused when frustrations are imminent. I wrote . . .

I am a novice in this school. I am inexperienced. I am diffident and afraid. During the first few months of the school year, I often compare myself to my fellow teachers (on how good they are and how they know their material). I envy them, for they are smart and confident.

A year after with the exact day- January 15, 2007, I wrote in my journal . . .

It was a wonderful roller coaster ride for me. I am very much privileged to learn and teach El Fili. It changed my impressions on Rizal. It helped me overcome my shortcomings. It helped me realize that I can "pull it through" with sheer determination and audacity. I want to sound a trumpet and declare the message of this novel to those who are willing to listen and learn. I will continue learning this novel. I will challenge myself to be better.

As I look back and read the pages of my journal, I've seen the growth in me and my transformation as a reflective educator. Writing reflections helped me monitor my success and effectiveness. I once said in my class that the inability or unwillingness to reflect is a lifetime failure. I think it is a quality that matters most in order for us to be an effective change agent in the lives of who we teach.

Michael D. Benter

The next bulletin will be distributed this coming Friday, June 26. The 1st school dance will be held from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Please attend the 1st High School PTA meeting at 10:00 a.m. this Saturday, June 27 in the school theater.

Dennis Gomowad Faustino
Principal