

Saint Mary's School of Sagada
PRINCIPAL'S BULLETIN, 2009-2010 SERIES # 16
October 2, 2009

Dear Parents, Students, Alumni, and Friends

During the recently held 2nd Quarter PTA Meeting last Saturday, the issue concerning the board policy of enforcing the student code of behavior 24/7 (twenty four hours a day, seven days a week) was raised. The policy states that for an enrolled SMS student, school rules and regulations apply—both on campus and off campus, during school days, breaks, and vacation—from the time of enrollment to the time of graduation or withdrawal from school. The concern was premised on that student violations of rules (like smoking and drinking), if committed beyond school hours and/or off campus should be the sole responsibility of the parents and in such cases, the school has no business meting out suspensions or any form of punishment.

During the very first PTA meeting in 2005-2006 when I assumed the position of Principal, I brought up the issue whether or not student monitoring (which includes behavior, social interaction, and academic progress) should be the joint responsibility of both the school and the parents off campus and beyond school hours. In most schools, teachers and administration stop being concerned about student behavior when school ends and resume only when classes begin or during school-sponsored activities. In such cases, the school is powerless to discipline students when they smoke or drink outside the very gates of the school, or get involved in rambles and petty crimes as long as school is not in session. Yet the school is eventually blamed for not teaching the students proper values.

It was an overwhelming response from the PTA at that time to recommend to the Board of Trustees the 24/7 policy regarding enforcement of school rules. The BOT approved the recommendation. This decision is based on the assumption and belief that the school and parents are partners in educating the children, not only academically but also behaviorally. As the policy was enforced, and student suspensions and exclusions had resulted, there were people in the community who grumbled and bad mouthed the school and its supposed interference on parental rights and responsibilities. These detractors should remember several things: 1) when students enroll in SMS, both parents and students agree to adhere to the rules and regulations set by the school, and this is evidenced by their affixed signatures on the enrollment form; 2) students and parents cannot pick and choose only specific provisions that they like—they must agree to all the provisions and conditions of their enrollment; 3) **that 16 out of twenty four hours, parents are the ones in a position to monitor their own children and inculcate the same values that they want the school to teach their children.** We all know that there is a problem with alcoholism in the Cordilleras. There is a national and municipal ordinance making it illegal to sell or serve liquor to minors. Yet you and I know that there are still many drunken teenagers wandering about the town, particularly during the curfew hours that the municipal legislators had mandated. Do these critics want us, the educators who are considered surrogate parents by the community, to turn our eyes aside and ignore the problem?

I once accosted a drunken SNHS student in the mission compound after 10:00 p.m. I gently asked him to go home, as it was already late. He retorted in a most disrespectful manner that he was not an SMS student. He was correct. He was not my student. However, as an adult and an educator, and someone who cares about these young people, I continued to admonish him and threatened to call the police. When he left, he continued to shout obscenities. As I walked back home, I asked myself why this is happening. Where are his parents? Do his parents care at all? Does the community want this kind of behavior from their children? More importantly, what should I, as an educator of children, do? I vowed though as long as I am principal of this school, I will do everything in my power to ensure that our SMS children learn the values that we preach to them.

In five years of continuous and consistent monitoring, the school culture has transformed positively, and I am proud that the majority of SMS students is respectful and law abiding. I am also aware that students, who are normal adolescents, will test the system, make mistakes and continue to make mistakes, and incur consequences like suspensions and work detail. But I am also proud to say that we, the SMS faculty and staff, and the great majority of our students and parents, care about each other to guide each other towards the proper paths of citizenship. I encourage every parent and guardian to act in partnership with, not in opposition to, the school in its quest to making our children responsible citizens and future leaders of our community.

Happenings and Events:

This week's main highlights are the parent teacher student conferences which commenced last weekend and continued this week after school. From initial feedback, it seems that students have improved from their first quarter performance. I am also gratified that in spite of the absence of their parents, many students, using their own initiative, have used this opportunity to find out how they are doing academically.

Because of inclement weather last weekend, some of the playoffs in volleyball and basketball have been re-scheduled after school this week. Hopefully, the intramural competitions will have been completed by the end of this week.

2nd Quarter exams are just around the corner, on Thursday and Friday, October 15 and 16. The days prior will be used for review and for assessments in the non-academic areas like music, PE, computer, and art. We intend to distribute report

cards by October 27 prior to the week-long semester break (October 28-November 4). A moratorium on activities, meetings, and rehearsals will be enforced starting the weekend of October 10 until after the last exam is administered.

Please be aware that the school will be closed during this break, including offices, dormitories, and canteen. We again request the public to use the church road to the cemetery for the November 1 preparations and celebrations. As in the past, the public will not be allowed to make a short-cut to the cemetery by passing through Stapleton Hall.

Faculty Corner: *This week's reflections are by Arlene Agbasil, born and raised in Baguio, of Ibaloi heritage. She graduated from the University of the Cordilleras, with a BSE degree in Secondary Education, majoring in Filipino. Her work experience before joining SMS include teaching Filipino and the college level at SLU, and at the high school level in Calvary Christian Life School in Baguio.*

Sa buhay ng tao ay dumarating ang araw na tayo ay kailangang magdesisyon kung alin ang mas nakabubuti para sa atin. Pinili ko ang paaralan ng SSMS at dito ako napadpad sa Sagada, alam kong iba ang paaralan na ito sa dati kong pinagtrabahuan at panibago na namang pakikibagay sa akin, lalo na sa mga mag-aaral at sa mga makakasama ko sa trabaho.

Pagpasok ko sa silid-paaralan ay iba't ibang ekspresyon ng mukha ang aking nasilayan. Alam kong maraming katanungan ang nagsasalimbayan sa kanilang isipan. Gaya ng; ano kaya ang istilo ng pagtuturo ng titser na ito? Mabait kaya? O masungit?, na hindi nila alam ay ganoon din ang tanong na umuukilkil sa aking isipan.

Lumipas ang araw at buwan, alam kong ikinukumpara ako ng mga estudyante sa kanilang dating guro, sumagi na rin sa aking isipan ang pagkukumpara, ngunit ito'y karaniwan ng nangyayari, "normal lang ito", wika nga nila, ang pagkukumparang ito ang aking tuntungan upang maging positibo ang aking pananaw sa buhay at sa pagtuturo. Ngunit, sa ganang akin, hindi ako puwedeng magkunwari at maging isang taong hindi naman ako, hindi ko kailangang baguhin ang aking personalidad o pagkatao upang mapaluguran ang lahat, dahil mahirap. Ipinapakita ko kung sino at ano ako, ito ang aking pagkatao at ako ay ako.

Ang mahalaga, ginagawa ko ang aking makakaya upang maturuan ang mga mag-aaral para maging matagumpay na mamamayan sa hinaharap. Gaya rin ng pagtanggap ko sa kanila bilang "Sila" at bilang kabataan na nag-aaral at isinilang ngayong bagong milenyo, sapagkat kung hahanapin ko sa kanila ang personalidad na gusto ko ay hindi magiging matagumpay ang aking pagtuturo at ang pagkatuto nila. Ang tanging magagawa ko bilang isang tagapagturo ay itama kung anuman ang kamalian nila at ituwid sila sa tamang landas.

Ang aking nasaksihan sa intrams na ginanap noong nakaraang biyernes ay kakaiba sa ibang paaralan, bagaman iba sa pangkaraniwang intrams ay mabababanaag mo pa rin sa mukha ng mga estudyante ang galak at tuwa. Pagdating sa laro ay talaga naming hinusayan nila, kung nagkakamali man ay tuloy pa rin ang laro at mabababanaag mo sa kanilang mukha ang kasayahan.

Bilang tagapagsanay ng larong chess sa intrams, nakita ko kung paano maglaro ang mga kalahok sa nasabing paligsahan, ang ibang manlalaro ay tira ng tira na hindi iniisip kung iyon ba ang tamang piyesa na igagalaw, sa iba naman ay pinag-iisipan pang maigi at talagang binabantayan ang bawat galaw ng kalaban. Ang nasabi na lang ng isang manlalaro noong natalo siya ay "SAYANG".

Ang larong chess ay parang buhay kung magkakamali ka ng igagalaw ay hindi na ito maibabalik pa, magsisi ka man ay huli na. Ang "Touch Move" ay tumutukoy sa pagkakamaling ating nagawa sa buhay, na hindi na maibabalik pa ngunit nagbibigay ng aral upang hindi na ito maulit at para tayo'y matuto, kaya sa bawat paghawak natin sa piyesa ng chess ay siguraduhin muna nating iyon ang tamang galaw upang matalo ang kalaban. Gaya rin sa buhay, kailangan ang bawat kilos natin ay tantsado upang walang gaanong masasaktan. Piliin natin ang tamang landas upang hindi tayo magsisi sa huli.

Arlene Agbasil
Filipino Teacher

Please note the following interschool competitions which selected SMS students will participate:

October 10-11	Math Quiz, Damath, and Science Poster Making (in Bontoc)
October 12	Super Quiz Bee in Bontoc
October 16-17	Science Quiz Bee, Sci-Dama, Collage making, Science Trivia in Bontoc

More next week,

Dennis Gomowad Faustino
Principal