



**STRIDE Pride
Newsletter
December 3, 2009**

Remember its December A Message from Mr. Beutel

There are many things about December that cause us to reflect about the year and the season. Wouldn't it be great if we could do these reflective type things all year long? Don't you think the world would be a better place? So when you see me wandering around with a blank look on my face just think that I am thinking and reflecting about how fortunate I am to have the opportunity to work in a school like STRIDE Academy. I am glad to report that we have done so many wonderful things here at this school that I reflect about how this school is different from any other. That is what we set out to do. Coming from the public education sector I have always been supportive of the right of our children to an education because our forefathers thought it important enough that we have an educated populace so that our citizens could participate in the governing of this country. Including preserving the rights and freedoms we have enjoyed and protected and saved for all of us to enjoy and for the next generations to enjoy. America will be tested in the next generations and we have to stand strong and together united in our mission. Kind of like what we do at STRIDE Academy...we stand strong and united in our mission to provide the very best educational experience for our students and families. We couldn't have done this without the kids and parents who have been so supportive and wonderful with their thoughts, prayers, and contributions they go beyond me even being able to come close to telling enough people thank you, but THANK YOU!

During this time of the year, I like to think about what a wonderful childhood I had and the love that I enjoyed in my family. This time of the year is a celebration of traditions and many that are surrounded by the joy of being home or close to people we love. I just read an article by a very spiritual person and he said that this time of the year we all want to be surrounded by family and be able to feel the genuine love of the season that every holiday season brings to each and every one of us when we are with our families. I really believe that all a child wants when they are growing up is to be cared for and nourished by love and the security that can be provided in their homes. I also believe that every child needs to be told how much they are appreciated for who they are. They also need to be told that each of them has been given to us as a blessing and we are to learn about each child's gift.

So to remember December is to remember many things. Why do we take so much time to stop and think about these things? Are our lives so full of clutter and busy-ness that we don't have the time to stop, sit and think? I think that is the way our society and lives are sometimes, do we have the power to change that, WE SURE DO!! I am as guilty as the next person to not coming into work when I could be at home. So I am thankful for December and the Christmas season as it makes me stop, sit, and think about all the good things that we have enjoyed during the last year and to also reflect about those things that effected my life sometimes changing it in a very positive or very negative way but I was able to make it through. Our life, each and

every day, is a gift and when each day ends we should be able to sit down and say thanks for the gift of each day.

So to bring this note some closure; Isn't the real meaning of this season being about a gift that was given to us long ago so that we would learn about love, peace, and how we need to make the world a better place by learning and caring about each other enough so that every person knows they are loved and cared about. I know each of us has been blessed with something that we can share or give to someone else who may not have that same privilege and/or opportunity take the time during this December to do something about that. Make it a point to enjoy the slowness of the season when we sit down with our kids, our husbands and wives, our mothers and fathers, uncles and aunts and we look around and think about how much we are blessed. It is also important to remember in our thoughts and prayers those who are less fortunate than we are and to know that each and every person many of them children are just looking to be remembered.

My wish is that each and every one of us takes the time to remember our families and someone who has meant something to us in our lives and tell them I LOVE YOU or Thanks You made difference to me in my life. Then take the time to remember December and why during this time of the year we all stop to think about the world being a better place? Then think about why we think that there was a reason that was long ago a gift given to the world so that we would have an example about how to make this world a better place for everyone. May all of you have a Joyous and Blessed Holiday Season and a Prosperous and Healthy New Year!

MERRY CHRISTMAS!!! Feliz Navidad!!! Happy Kwanzaa!! Mele Kalikimaka!!!

Middle School Update

STRIDE Academy's school board approved moving forward with the development of the STRIDE Academy Middle School. The construction company and builders will be Granite City Innovative Builders. The ground breaking has not been established as of yet, but we will let every one of our families know. We are extremely excited and pleased with these developments as we begin to put together the finest middle school in the Central Minnesota Area. The Middle School will thrive with a rich academic program, supported by the many tenets we believe in here at the STRIDE Academy Elementary school. We will have a full activity program and many other amenities that a middle school should have. We will have an open house and several parent information sessions to inform the families attending now and for future families as well. Let us know if you want to have your children a part of the Middle school and let others know that we have begun the process of development. If indications and developments in the local education community continue to go in the direction they are going I would suggest getting signed up as soon as we have registration available for people to register their children. WE of course will continue to have the best Elementary program in the area as we continue to build this school system called STRIDE Academy 4142.



Teaching of Religion at STRIDE

In today's society, the teaching of religion in the classroom has all but gone away. Not because schools can't teach about religion, but because of all the polarizing opinions concerning the issue. For the past twenty years — between the fear of stepping on toes and the fear of "the church-state thing" — it has been nearly taboo (Klee, 2002).

STRIDE Academy has been using the Core Knowledge curriculum since our inception in 2005. The Core Knowledge curriculum gives our students a deep understanding between religion and its affects on history. In the first grade alone, children encounter the polytheistic faiths of the ancient Maya, Aztecs, and Inca, as well as the Egyptians and Babylonians. First graders are also introduced to some major world religions, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These topics reassert themselves throughout the later years of the Core Knowledge curriculum: for example, in the third grade study of Rome, the Byzantine empire, with the rise of Christianity; or in the fourth grade, the rise of Islam and the Crusades; or in the later study of such religiously inspired movements as abolition or the American civil rights movement of the 1960s (Klee, 2002).

Parts of the above article are from remarks delivered by Mary Beth Klee at the 3rd National Core Knowledge Conference.

STRIDEs Objectives to Teaching about Religion

STRIDE Academy Definition of Religion: A belief system that pertains to specific matters of ultimate concern as part of a larger literary or historic tradition and that includes specific activities and/or rituals.

STRIDE Academy Answer to Why is it Important to Teach About Religion?

- Part of history
- Different accounts of events
- Produce literate and historically informed citizens
- Understanding of our neighbors

STRIDE Academy Essential Features for Developing lessons, units, and presentation.

- Must be objective – does not promote one religion or point of view over another.
- There is an identified academic and secular purpose to the instruction.
- Instruction promotes understanding of diversity within and between religions.

Supporting materials used in creating the above.



Publications from the First Amendment Center (www.firstamendmentcenter.org) about teaching about religion in the public schools.

Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum. 1998. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Statement from ASCD. "The proper role of religion in the school is the study of religion for its educational value. The task is to teach about religions and their impact in history, literature, art, music, and morality. It seems natural that the art curriculum, for example, must pay attention to the impact of Christianity on the work of Michelangelo, just as a history class focusing on the colonization of America must pay attention to the religious upheaval in sixteenth-century Europe that fueled that colonization."

Teaching About Religion in the Public Schools Position Statement from the National Council for the Social Studies. "Knowledge about religions is not only a characteristic of an educated person, but it is also absolutely necessary for understanding and living in a world of diversity. Knowledge of religious differences and the role of religion in the contemporary world can help promote understanding and alleviate prejudice. Since the purpose of the social studies is to provide students with a knowledge of the world that has been, the world that is, and the world of the future, studying about religions should be an essential part of the social studies curriculum. Omitting study about religions gives students the impression that religions have not been and are not now part of the human experience. Study about religions may be dealt with in special courses and units or wherever and whenever knowledge of the religious dimension of human history and culture is needed for a balanced and comprehensive understanding."-- Jason Ulbrich, Education Director

GREETINGS FROM SIXTH GRADE

The year has brought many exciting things in sixth grade already. For science we made rockets and launched them into the sky, in language students will read poetry next week during our annual coffee house performance, and in social they are blazing through many exciting things including Judaism, Christianity, World Deserts and Ancient Greece.

I would like to also welcome my new teaching partner, Ms. Ahmed, who took over the place Ms. Kolstad resigned from. Hopefully, she will be my replacement when I go on maternity leave in May and June.

Coming up in the February the sixth grade will again create and run the Annual Family Fun Night at STRIDE Academy. This is a carnival-type atmosphere where families can come, play games to earn prizes, enjoy others company, and eat food. The profits from the event go toward the sixth grade end of the year trip to Wolf Ridge Environmental camp.

Mary Swanson

