

St. Simon Parish School

Educating Children to Know, Love and Serve God and His World

August 27, 2010

Dear Parent of 4th Grader:

Approximately once a week during this year as part of Religion class, your child will participate in a 45-minute period on Fridays devoted to discussing and practicing the skills needed to make and keep friends. Your child may be very good at these skills already, may need a great deal of help, or most likely is somewhere in between. Regardless, all students can develop their social skills further by working on them.

As you know, the teachers here at St. Simon's emphasize the values of respect, kindness, and inclusiveness, and regularly deal, as best they can within their time constraints, with friendship and social issues as they arise. In addition, the Bully-Proofing Your School program gives some further guidance about dealing with conflict and with bullying situations.

However, the 4th grade year is the first time in their school life when we address friendship skills as a part of the curriculum. The focus of instruction for Gr. 4 Religion class is the Christian way of life, i.e. our call to live as Jesus did. Friendship class provides a means and an opportunity for translating this theme into the everyday social lives of the students. You would probably agree that a child's social life has an effect on every other aspect of his/her life, including learning. This only increases as the children get older. Developmentally, this age group seems the ideal time to address the area of friendship since the children are moving away from being quite so self-centered and are much more concerned about the feelings and reactions of their peers. While this friendship class works no miracles, it does provide an opportunity within a group setting for skills to be introduced formally, for some practice of these skills to occur, and for the students to discuss the concerns that they have.

I have attached an overview of the topics that we will attempt to cover this year. Since I adapt the curriculum to the actual concerns of the students, this list can change depending on which concerns arise in class.

During the year your child will be receiving numerous handouts which will be placed in the student's "Friendship Folder." Although this folder will be kept at school, I will periodically send home some of the handouts that we are using so that you will be aware of the content we are covering. This will also give you an opportunity to discuss some of the skills your child is learning and allow you to make them more specific to his/her particular situation and relationships. These handouts are to be returned the next day in their envelope, accompanied by your initial.

No grades are given in the friendship class. However, students are required to be attentive to the presentation of skills and to participate in all activities and discussions. You can be a great support to what we are trying to accomplish by periodically asking about what is being learned in class and by encouraging your child to practice the skills being taught. These can be practiced at home with brothers and sisters, as well as with neighbors and classmates. Sometimes, I will assign the practicing of a skill as homework. Please ask your child what they plan to do and how it went after they did it. They might also need your help in deciding what action to take.

The Gr. 4 “Class Page” on the St. Simon Parish School website has a link for “Friendship Class.” This site contains letters, forms, and information that I will send to you occasionally during the year.

If any of you would like to talk over the content of the class in more detail, ask a question, or raise any specific areas of concern, feel free to telephone or email me. I am also offering an evening on **Monday, September 13, from 7:00 to 8:30 P.M. in the school library** when we could do this as a group. If you would be interested in participating in an informal meeting with other parents, please fill out, detach, and return the form below with your child by Tuesday, August 31.

Sincerely,

Ms. Roberta Head
School Counselor
(650) 988-9307
rhead@stsimon.org

KEYS
TO
FRIENDSHIP