

St. Rose School Profile 2008 – 2009

St. Rose School, which opened in 1931, was the first Catholic elementary school in Santa Rosa. Although the faculty is now 100% lay teachers, the heritage and traditions of the Ursuline Sisters continue to influence the school. It is a challenge to maintain our ties to the Ursuline community since there are so few Ursuline Sisters left in our area.

We continue to make full use of our school facilities which include our main building, the Multipurpose Building, two portable buildings, and a new preschool facility. During the summer of 2008, construction began on a new preschool which was completed in January of 2009. The new building provides a learning space and outdoor play area specifically designed to meet the needs of preschoolers. The project also included moving and expanding the faculty/visitor parking lot. There is currently a \$700,000 debt on this project. Most of the financing has been provided by the Knights of Columbus, *Churchloan* Division through a 20 year mortgage. The Ursuline Sisters were helpful to us in ascertaining a new site for the preschool which helped to strengthen the relationship between the school and the Sisters.

A major retrofit was completed to the roof/overhang on the south side of the building during the summer of 2008. Extensive wood rot due to leakage of rain gutters necessitated this project which cost \$75,000. In addition, a retaining wall that will contain erosion in the primary play yard was also constructed.

In the fall of 2008, the installation of Front Row Seat surroundsound systems was completed in the First through Eighth Grade classrooms. Teachers and students are pleased with the results.

St. Rose School is staffed by dedicated lay teachers. The majority of the faculty has been here longer than ten years. There are two teachers who are completing their second year with us and two teachers who will soon complete the two-year *BTSA* program that is now required for a clear credential in California.

The focus for staff development continues to be in the area of differentiated instruction. The recent focus of differentiation has been in two areas: the specialized learning needs of boys and teaching gifted students in the regular classroom. In order to satisfy the Basic Catechist renewal requirement teachers may choose their own coursework or work together to complete the *Why Catholic? Journey Through the Catechism* program.

Maximum enrollment is 360 students. Current enrollment is 334. We believe that this is due to the economy, as we lost 20 students last August just before school opened. We have stepped up our recruitment efforts. In addition to regular school tours, a kindergarten preview day, outreach to the various preschools in the area, and online advertising in the local newspaper we have instituted an early registration program. If there is space available in the particular grade, the prospective student has visited the school and has met enrollment criteria, we have offered parents the opportunity to save their child's space for the upcoming school year. Currently ten new families have taken advantage of this plan. We have also added additional signage to the multipurpose building that is visible from Old Redwood Highway and helps to make people more aware of the school's existence.

In order to facilitate retention of our current families, the principal is continually reassuring them that tuition will not be raised for the upcoming school year, and that we will not be cutting programs or instructional days as the public schools may be forced to do. The tuition freeze was made possible because the teachers agreed to forego a salary increase, including the step.

Seventy-two percent of our families are listed as active parishioners of St. Rose Parish and fulfill the requirements set forth by the pastor. An additional thirteen percent are active at other parishes in Sonoma County. The tuition plan was recently revised so that all active Catholics pay the same rate. A family rate was added for families who are non-active or non-Catholic.

One of our most valuable assets is our community spirit. Parent participation is strong and includes a very active Parent Association, Dad's Club, Advisory Council, and a weekly Bible study group. Most of our families exceed the annual requirement of 25 hours of service. St. Rose parents model service to the community, and our students follow the

example set by their parents. Our Advisory Council is very active and extremely helpful to the school administration. They are currently updating the Long-Range Plan. A new focus in the area of community is strengthening the relationship with preschool parents who have not yet enrolled their children in the elementary school.

The pastor and associate pastor are very supportive of the school. The associate pastor visits the school two to three times a week. The pastor attends Advisory Council and Finance Committee meetings. He was also very active in the task force that was convened to obtain a new facility for our preschool. Both priests are supportive in helping teachers improve the quality of school liturgies.

We continue to seek a more ethnically diverse population. Although the number of Hispanic and Asian families remains somewhat constant, the percentage of families in the multi-racial category has increased by 14%, bringing the total percentage of students of color to 26%. In addition the number of Hispanic families that have parents with limited English seems to be growing, as the socio-economics of this demographic has improved in Sonoma County. There is a designated parent who is bi-lingual to assist Hispanic parents with limited English. We also have several new families who are immigrants from nations in Africa.

At St. Rose School great care is taken to nurture and educate the student intellectually, spiritually, socially, emotionally, and physically. A sincere effort is made to identify and meet special needs of our students. On-site professional tutoring and speech services, as well as educational testing for students who have learning difficulties are available. There is a half-time resource teacher on staff who runs a pull-out program and an after school homework club. There is good communication between the resource teacher and the rest of the faculty.

Discipline is a team effort between the home and the school. At St. Rose School the discipline policy is outlined in the parent handbook and is in accordance with diocesan guidelines. The school administration, counselor, and teachers work diligently to address each discipline problem in an age appropriate manner. It is rare to have serious discipline problems.

Personal responsibility is the focus of our attendance and tardy policy. Most

children have good attendance and arrive at school on time. A small group of families tend to have difficulty with punctuality, however. Regularly advising parents of continued tardiness and including this in the effort grade for the citizenship award has resulted in improvement for some families. In some instances the school counselor and principal have had confidential meetings with parents that resulted in improvement. For some families, punctuality is still not a priority.

Over the past five years, approximately 80% of our graduates have matriculated to Catholic high schools. Those who attend other high schools do so to take advantage of magnet programs (such as the Art Quest Program and the International Baccalaureate Program) or for financial reasons. Articulation with the Catholic high schools in our area indicates our students are well prepared for higher education.

Proficiency in basic skills is typical of St. Rose graduates. The attainment of Student Learning Expectations (SLEs) is evidenced by the success our graduates have while continuing their education. In addition, the results of our standardized test scores fall within the higher ranges of diocesan averages.

We are currently working to ensure that all members of the school community are very familiar with the *SLE's*. Students in Grades 2 ó 8 have bookmarks with *SLE's* listed. Teachers routinely ask students, in a variety of ways, to identify the *SLE* being addressed by a particular assignment.

The *SLE's* are attained by a strong learning program that includes reading, English, spelling, math, science, social studies and fine arts. The curriculum in these areas are informed by the *California State Standards*. Religion is also a core subject and is based on the diocesan religion standards.

Suggestions made by the parents for new programs and school improvement have also been realized. During the 2008-09 school year, a Spanish program was instituted for students in Grades K ó 4. There are plans to expand the program through 8th grade as the budget allows. Having an academic Spanish class in the junior high may necessitate increasing the total instructional time provided to these students. P.E. instruction has increased from once a week to twice a week.

