



Mary, Mother of the Redeemer Catholic School

1321 Upper State Road
North Wales, Pennsylvania 19454

February 16, 2010

Dear Parents,

At the Home School Meeting on February 8th I offered an update on the changing look of grading/assessment. The following article does a wonderful job providing the rationale and supporting the Archdiocesan plan for addressing the needs of our students. MMR continues to grow and strive for excellence, and we take great pride in our commitment to the implementation of best practices.

Teaching and Learning in the 21st Century "Characteristics of a 21st Century Classroom"

As we move further into the new millennium, it becomes clear that the 21st Century classroom needs are very different from the 20th Century classroom needs. In the 21st Century classroom, teachers are facilitators of student learning and creators of productive classroom environments in which students can develop the skills they will need in the workplace. The focus of the 21st Century classroom is on students experiencing the environment they will enter as 21st Century workers. **The collaborative project-based curriculum used in this classroom develops the higher order thinking skills, effective communication skills, and knowledge of technology that students will need in the 21st Century workplace.** The interdisciplinary nature of the 21st Century classroom sets it apart from the 20th Century classroom. Lectures on a single subject at a time were the norm in the past and today collaboration is the thread for all student learning. 20th Century teaching strategies are no longer effective. Teachers must embrace new teaching strategies that are radically different from those employed in the 20th Century classroom. The curriculum must become more relevant to what students will experience in the 21st Century workplace.

Changes in the Classroom

The 21st Century classroom is student centered, not teacher centered. Teachers no longer function as lecturers but as facilitators of learning. The students are learning by doing, and the teacher acts as a coach, helping students as they work on projects. Students learn to use the inquiry method, and to collaborate with others--a microcosm of the real world they will experience once they leave the classroom.

Students no longer study each subject in isolation. Instead, they work on interdisciplinary projects that use information and skills from a variety of subjects and address a number of essential academic standards. For example, books assigned in reading or English, may be set in a country that is also being explored in social studies. The final reading of an English book report may require that specific social studies standards be met as well.

Textbooks are no longer the major source of information. Students use multiple sources, including technology, to find and gather the information they need. They might keep journals, interview experts, explore the Internet, or use computer software programs to apply what they have learned or to find information. Instead of being reserved only for special projects, technology is seamlessly integrated into daily instruction.

In this new classroom, flexible student groupings, based on individual needs, are the norm. The teacher still uses whole group instruction, but it is no longer the primary instructional method used. Teachers assess student instructional needs and learning styles and then draw on a variety of instructional and learning methods to meet the needs of all the students in the classroom. **The focus of student learning in this classroom is different. The focus is no longer on learning by memorizing and recalling information but on learning how to learn.** Now, students use the information they have learned and demonstrate their mastery of the content in the projects they work on. Students learn how to ask the right questions, how to conduct an appropriate investigation, how to find answers, and how to use information. The emphasis in this classroom is on creating lifelong learners. With this goal in mind, students move beyond the student role to learn through real world experiences.

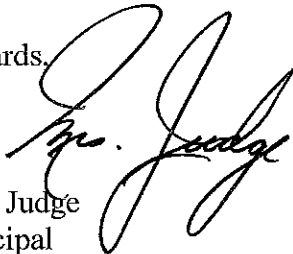
Just as student learning has changed so has assessment of that learning. **Teachers use a variety of performance-based assessments to evaluate student learning. Tests that measure a student's ability to memorize and to recall facts are no longer the sole means of assessing student learning. Instead, teachers use student projects, presentations, and other performance-based assessments to determine students' achievement and their individual needs.** The goal of the 21st Century classroom is to prepare students to become productive members of the workplace.

The characteristics of the 21st Century classroom will be very different from those of in the classrooms of the past because the focus is on producing students who are highly productive, effective communicators, inventive thinkers, and masters of technology.

**"Learning is what most adults will do for a living in the 21st century."
- Perelman**

Regards,

Mrs. Judge
Principal

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mrs. Judge", written over the typed name and title.