

The Mustardseed

February 2012

Sharing the News of Norwalk Catholic School

We are making the difference! As you can see from this issue of the *Mustardseed*. We truly are getting through to our students. Although as educators, sometimes we wonder.

On the right we have a story about one of our sophomore students, Owen Dabek. Owen not only is a knowledgeable student, but as you will see in the story, has the confidence to share his gift of knowledge with his fellow classmates.

On the inside we ask our students why they love going to a Catholic school. The answers certainly show how we all are making a difference in their lives.

Finally, on the back page we share some of the stories from our Student Ambassadors. We asked these students which teacher has really made a difference in their life. These stories reflect the hard work of all of our staff in helping our children become the best they can be.

All of this does not happen without our community. Our success in educating our children relies on everyone inside and outside of our building. Thank you for all of your effort in helping us educate our children. Please enjoy the stories in this issue and take pride in your contribution to the development of all our students.

Matt Fair, Development Director



Exceptionality in English

By Mrs. Amy Hirzel

True exceptionality is difficult to find. As a teacher, I see a spark, sometimes even a glow, of it from day to day. However, earlier this year, sophomore Owen Dabek shone brightly in our Language Arts class, encouraging me to take a step back and let him shine.

We had been reading George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, a biting satirical novel about animals revolting against their masters. Although a seemingly simple story, it is an allegory for the Russian Revolution of the early 20th Century. Early in our study, Owen Dabek set himself apart with his vast knowledge of Russian history. He constantly



enriched our class conversations, and it became apparent that he should have the opportunity to not just enrich 5th period, but all the 10th grade classes.

I approached him with the opportunity to teach the novel's deeper connections to the Russian Revolution. He would be able to make a lesson and include anything he thought would be interesting and informative. With no reward other than the chance to help his fellow classmates, Owen eagerly dove at the opportunity. Through his research, he compiled an impressive amount of information and connections to *Animal Farm*. A consistently hard-worker, Owen eventually constructed a two-day lesson complete with a purposeful lesson plan, presentation and class assessment. Some of the most notable parts of his presentation included his audience listening to the Russian Internationale (Russian anthem connected to the animal's anthem), viewing surprising examples of Russian propaganda, and participating in a post-presentation assessment complete with the answers in Russian.

Not only was his presentation informative, it felt as if he had been teaching all his life. His university-level rhetoric as well as sense of humor allowed students to truly listen to the story he weaved in our classroom. The level of respect demonstrated by his peers helped Owen truly engage his classmates in the material. Owen's performance in our classroom clearly established the exceptional ability and work ethic that can be found at St. Paul.

Faith. Academics. Service.
Catholic Schools
Special Catholic Schools Week Edition

...being a part of many service opportunities through Catholic schools, I've found out about what really matters, taking care of others and helping those who need it out of the kindness of your heart. Having gone through a Catholic school, I have been able to be a part of many service and other opportunities that not many people get the chance to have, many that have made me the person that I am today.

Samantha (Junior)

... I get to read books.

Xavier (Kindergarten)

...The freedom to express your faith while at school through prayer. Prayer is expressed at school, as well as during, before and after sporting events. We look to God to help us perform to the best of our ability, that we and the opposing team or teams remain healthy and that sportsmanship is shown throughout the contest. These and many other intangibles are what makes attending a Catholic school so positive.

Connor (Junior)

I love math and learning is fun!

...unlike some of my other classmates, I came to St. Paul at the beginning of my junior year and I can honestly say that it has changed my life. I have learned so much more here at St. Paul, not only educational things, but becoming closer to friends, that I never really experienced before attending St. Paul. Most importantly I have formed a relationship with God that I have never been able to do prior to coming to SP. Coming to St. Paul has been such a blessing to me and I could not be more thankful.

Mike (Senior)

I like NCS because my friends are here and we get to sing in a choir. I love singing in the choir because my friends are in it, but my most favorite is, well, everything! I love art!

The teachers are great and I like to learn Spanish.

I am grateful for my Catholic education. St. Paul's is set apart because of its people, from the lunch ladies, to the teachers, to the seniors, and all the way through to the children at the Early Childhood Center. The people create an atmosphere about them that is unlike any other out there. To experience this atmosphere is to experience acceptance and caring in its purest form. The people make all the difference in the world. The building, the sports teams, the lunches, and the education are all great and could probably be found elsewhere, the people are one of a kind.

Andrew (Senior)

**I like NCS because I love NCS.
Megan (Kindergarten)**

I love NCS because of the cross with Jesus.

Isaac (Kindergarten)

I like Norwalk

A Catholic education has been a new experience for me. Being Protestant and being from public schools, I have been able to compare the two. Something I can say is that there is a kind of community here that is absent from the public school setting. I know everyone here and it is not only comforting, I know they will accept me, but even better to know that I am accepted.

Andrew (Junior)

I'm grateful for the love and unity St. Paul provides, both as a school and as a class. That being said, it gives us an opportunity to practice our faith and become the people that God intended us to be. Conflicts arise, but they only make us stronger. The kind of love that exists in this school is the kind of love that people dream about; the kind of love that you want to come back to, it is the kind of love that makes you realize that there is heaven on earth. And this is it.

Melissa (Sophomore)

I never thought my Catholic education would mean as much to me as it does now. I've attended both public and private schools, preschool—high school, and my most memorable experiences were in Catholic school. In preschool, it was learning how to write my name. In middle school, it was being given the chance to know God on a whole new level. Today, in the near end of my senior year, I'm not only thankful for the outstanding education and college prep I've received, but also for the chances I've had to serve others and make life long friends. It was through our service hour and senior project assignments that I decided my college major, as well as met some of my best friends. Catholic education means more to me than it did when I was younger, and will probably mean more to me in college.

Olivia (Senior)

I love NCS because we get to learn about God.
Ben (Kindergarten)

I like to be in a Catholic school because we get more one on one time with teachers. There is smaller classes so we get helped more. With the Church involved in our learning it teaches us to be better people all around. It teaches us to respect what we have and not take things for granted. I like going to a Catholic school because our school is really peaceful, there aren't many problems and we all get along. Our Church and alumni built this Catholic school for us so we just respect it that much more.

Hayden (Freshman)

... we can pray.
Tom (Kindergarten)

Catholic School because...

...I get to be at Church.
Ashton (Kindergarten)

...it's the best school ever!

... I love Mrs. Englert and Sister Pat helping me.
Hannah (Kindergarten)

I am grateful for my Catholic education because it makes me feel like I am part of something huge. The school and church combined create a support system for each individual student. There is never a time where you feel like there is no one to talk to or go to for help. Building my faith with my peers allows me to be open with others and practice it daily. Going to mass every Friday is something that shows how connected each student is because of their faith. Attending St. Paul High School has created an environment to build strong relationships with peers, staff, priests, and God.

Corynne (Senior)

I have attended a Catholic school since preschool. That means for about fifteen years. I have been exposed to the unique qualities that are present in this school. At the start of this year I saw a new eighth grader and he had dropped his books down the stairs. Not one, but five people stopped to help him. I take pride in my school because of little things like this. It is so easy to ignore people or situations where we could be helpful just because we may have to walk a little farther to get to class, but many times we don't.

The different experiences that we can have because of what is offered to us is amazing. Through retreats and classes we have grown as classmates, friends, and Christians. Feeling this type of bond makes it easier to understand why helping others is so important.

Kelsey (Senior)

...I like the Knight book in the library.

...when we play outside no one gets mad when we play football!

My favorite teacher is...

By Rachel Bleile, Grade 6

My favorite teacher is Mrs. Weisenberger because she is nice and she made it fun to learn. I had Mrs. Weisenberger for my fifth grade teacher. She taught my three favorite classes which were Math, Religion, and Social Studies. When Mrs. Weisenberger would teach she would tell stories about her life that was related to the subject being taught and this made it more interesting.

I enjoyed learning about the Indian tribes that lived in Ohio many years ago. Since Mrs. Weisenberger is not old enough to have any real life stories to tell of her own, she had an Indian speaker come to talk to the fifth grade. He wore clothes that were made out of animal skin, told us what life was like for Indian boys and girls, and explained the kind of foods the Indians ate.

Mrs. Weisenberger was also my older sister, Courtney's, fifth grade teacher. If Brooke is lucky, maybe she will have her too. Did you know that she is also my neighbor? I'm glad Mrs. Weisenberger was my fifth grade teacher.

By Sheridan Conney, Senior

My favorite teacher here at St. Paul is Mr. Wasiniak. He is very enthusiastic and always makes class interesting. I have taken Biology, Anatomy and Physiology, and Marine Biology with Mr. Wasiniak and each class was always interesting. He is the kind of teacher that always pushes you to do your best and he never gives up on you. He is constantly challenging his students to work to the best of their ability so that in the end the hard work will pay off. He tries his hardest to make sure that everyone understands what he teaches and does not hesitate to stop a lesson to explain certain subjects. Mr. Wasiniak is a very smart, caring person and we are lucky to have him as a teacher.

**I like to go to NCS because I like Mrs. Phillips and my friends and Jesus and God.
2nd Grader**

By Lindsey Llewellyn, 8th Grade

At Norwalk Catholic School, we have many excellent teachers. They strive to give us the best education possible. Our teachers truly care about the students in their classes and will go out of their way to help any students that need it. The teachers that we have are high qualified and are always prepared. We definitely have some of the best teachers around.

With so many great teachers, it is very difficult to pick a favorite. Each teacher has a unique way of running their class. Some teachers do more projects while others do more work in the textbooks. With each teacher, however, you are always challenged and expected to work to the best of your ability. You are responsible for showing respect to your teachers, administrators, and other students here at NCS. Our teachers really do hold you to a higher standard. If I had to pick a favorite teacher, however, it would have to be Mrs. Meyer. She is an excellent teacher, and I have learned so much in her classes. In her seventh grade reading class, we read several novels and learned not just about the book, but also about the time period when it took place and what was going on at this time. In her social studies classes in seventh grade and currently, we go through a chapter and then do a project or other activity to assure that we fully comprehend a subject before moving on.

One thing that I really enjoy about Mrs. Meyer is her attitude towards learning. She is very energetic and supportive. She is laid back, but she makes sure that we get all of our work done and that we learn. She teaches us in fun and exciting ways. She is always ready to make class enjoyable. This makes class much better and makes the students in her class respect her. Mrs. Meyer encourages us to work hard and succeed.

Mrs. Meyer's classroom atmosphere is very welcoming and inviting. She, along with many other teachers at NCS, work to help all students. The environment here at school is peaceful and relaxed. Our teachers strive to give us the best education possible. Our administrators work to enforce discipline in our school and keep it running smoothly. Our school is really an excellent place to go.