

Seamless Transitions

Every year I meet with students at each grade level, followed later in the week with an opportunity to talk with their parents — the Mornings with Mo program. Sometime in January, I meet with the fifth-grade students who are looking forward with some anticipation to entering Middle School. They share their fears with me: getting lost between classes, forgetting their locker combination, being the youngest again, bumping into big eighth graders, not knowing the teachers. Then, in the following fall I meet them again as sixth graders, as I just recently did, and ask how it actually turned out. They can hardly remember their worries.

Jamie and his sixth-grade team have thought this all through as they have so much of their program. It is not an accident that the transition works seamlessly — the sixth-grade teachers meet with the fifth-grade teachers to talk about the students, the program, and to consider any potential issues. The fifth-grade teachers help Jamie determine advisors and class assignments since they know the kids so well.

This year, when I met with the sixth-grade students, their level of maturity and comfort in speaking with me was striking. They frequently mentioned the increased level of freedom and independence they felt being in the Middle School. One girl shared that she asked her parents not to check assignments on the website, but to trust her to do that. One boy acknowledged that though there was more freedom, which they all enjoyed, there was also more responsibility. Unlike their locker combinations, the added responsibility did not engender worry in the kids but a sense of competence, confidence, and growth.

A huge value of a K-12 school is that what we learn about our students can inform the teachers in the next grade up, even between divisions. The first year in

high school is a big step for students, even if they have been in our Middle School for three years right next door. However, in eighth grade the students have few worries about high school. In fact, they are anxious to get there and experience all that it offers: freedom, independence and increasing responsibility.

The difference between fifth-grade worries and eighth-grade confidence is remarkable and reflects more than simply three more years of maturity. It's also the result of careful planning and constant communication among Middle School students, teachers and parents. With that kind of work going on in the background, I'm thoroughly confident that these students are ready for their next big challenge — and so are they.

— *Mo Copeland, Head of School*



SGS Board Report – The Next 50 Years

The theme of this magazine is “Transition,” and as Board Chair that is something I have been thinking a lot about lately. Last June, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of our first graduating class. Several of those graduates came back and were thrilled to see all the changes at the school. Yet all said that even though the school looked completely different, that special something that makes Saint George's unique was still there.

We are now heading towards the next 50 years in the school's history. And our challenges are different than the ones they faced in the first 50 years. Setting up the school, making payroll from week to week — those were the kind of issues that concerned them.

Luckily for us, the school is on solid financial footing despite the economy throwing us a curveball recently. We have no debt and, from years of frugal budgeting, we even have savings.

But there are different issues facing us in the years to come. Issues such as a tuition ceiling — that price above which Spokane won't pay even for the best education in town. Or the issue of full enrollment. Now that might sound like a reason for a celebration. However once we hit that point, our yearly revenue flattens while the costs of running the school continue to rise, in some cases dramatically. So how does the school prepare now for these issues?

The Board has formed a Task Force comprised of Board members, faculty, staff, and parents to look at these issues and others which affect the future of the school. Our goal is to have a dynamic five-year plan by the end of the school year. We will be soliciting your input; please give us your thoughts.

Transitioning successfully from the first 50 years to the next 50 years is a goal I think we can all agree on.

— *Wendy Start, President of SGS Board of Trustees*