

August 24, 2010

Dear 8th Grade Families,

Another warm welcome to the 2010/2011 school year, the year our children graduate! This year will bring us many joys in our parenting journey and perhaps a few challenges or two. This packet contains important information to launch our year.

First you will find your child's results on the UC Berkeley Diagnostic Testing Project, one of several measures we consider in determining Math placement in our Jr. High program. We also consider previous Math course grades, ITBS scores and student motivation and commitment. Please understand that not one score was responsible for your child's placement. Your child's Math placement is listed next to his/her name.

General Math includes grade-level, conceptual content and practice. Extension Math operates beyond general concept development, at a faster rate with greater depth. It is important to note that the purpose of a leveled Math program is to meet students where they are in their development. We do not want them struggling, but we do not want them unchallenged.

It is the expectation of our partner high schools that our students graduate with a solid foundation in Algebra I. All St. John graduates, regardless of their placement in Jr. High Mathematics, will complete Algebra I

In addition to our regular classroom programming, we look forward to the exciting opportunity of outdoor education in the beautiful Yosemite National Park.

The Yosemite National Institute (YNI) is a non-profit organization that provides experiential field science programs in nature's classroom to inspire a personal connection to the natural world and responsible actions to sustain it. The YNI staff is experienced in teaching young people and adults. All are college graduates with natural history backgrounds and interests appropriate to the national park setting. Small group instruction with trained leaders encourages an understanding of the basic principles of ecology through intimate association with a natural environment. I believe this to be an exceptional educational opportunity.

We've got some quick organizing to do as our trip is scheduled for Monday, 9/20 to Friday, 9/24. We are blessed to participate in the 4 –night program due to the tremendous popularity of this outdoor learning experience.

- 1. Total Cost of Trip:** You will be informed if you did not pay for this trip during registration. The price includes transportation, YNI tuition, room, board and dinner on the trip home. If you are in need of financial assistance, please contact me directly.

2. **Dates/Times of Trip:** The bus will depart from the school parking lot at 10:00am on Monday, **September 20**. The bus will return to the school parking lot around **9:00pm on Friday, September 24**.
3. **Transportation:** Transportation has been arranged through California Wine Tours. Due to the long ride, students will be permitted to bring electronic entertainment devices, granted they can be operated in silent mode. These devices are not permitted at the YNI program, so they will need to be stored and not used. Any such devices are not the financial responsibility of St. John the Baptist Catholic School. Snacks are allowed on the bus.
4. **Chaperones:** Mrs. Ham and Mrs. Giaquinto will be the staff members attending the trip. We will need a minimum of 6 parent chaperones as well. Chaperones will be chosen based on Diocesan security clearance requirements and gender-balanced for tent cabin supervision. The YNI charge per adult is \$328. Parents are encouraged to “share” the week. **Please let Mr. Gallegos know as soon as possible if you are interested in chaperoning.**
5. **Emergency Car:** One chaperone must be willing to drive up in their personal car so there is a car available in the event a student becomes ill or injured. All other adults must ride on the bus.
6. **Lunch for first day/Dinner on last night:** Please send a bag lunch with your child for the ride up. The bus will stop for a picnic along the way. On the return trip, the bus will stop for dinner on the way home. The cost of dinner is included in the total trip fee.
7. **Behavioral Expectations:** As this is a school-sponsored, educational trip, the school’s disciplinary policy applies. Students are representatives of St. John the Baptist Catholic School and are expected to act as if they are on campus. They are also expected to comply with all YNI rules, which will be clearly explained to all participating students.
8. **Faith Component:** We will expand the YNI curriculum by including prayer and thanksgiving throughout the program.
9. **On-Line information:** Details about the YNI program can be found at www.naturebridge.org/yosemite Click on the sections “Campuses” then “Yosemite Institute” then “Parents” and you will find a comprehensive description of the experience including meal information, what to bring and emergency numbers.
10. **Students not Attending:** If you prefer your child not participate in this trip, he/she will be expected at school during these days and alternative assignments will be provided.
11. **Medical Emergencies:** In case of a medical emergency, students will be taken to the Yosemite Medical Clinic facility in Yosemite Valley, where a copy of each student's medical form will be on file. This facility is professionally staffed at all times.
12. **Registration Form:** This enclosed form must be completed and returned to school as soon as possible. The deadline for completed forms is Wednesday, September 1.
13. **Medical Release Form:** This enclosed form must be completed and returned to school as soon as possible. This form must also be returned by Wednesday, September 1.

We are blessed to offer this opportunity for our Eighth Graders. The Yosemite experience will extend our classroom to God’s outdoors during a beautiful time of year and provide valuable hands-on learning. Through the guidance of highly trained outdoor educators, Mrs. Ham, Mrs. Giaquinto and parent volunteers; our students will begin the year immersed in the educational and spiritual mission of our school community. We look forward to this preparing them for an incredible journey toward graduation.

In Peace,

Nancy Jordan
Principal
St. John the Baptist Catholic School