

# WOLF WATCH

— WEEKLY E-NEWS —

## News for the Week of January 6

### All School

#### **Gala Gab! Tickets and Student Raffle**

It's 2019—and Gala is eight weeks away, so book your babysitter for Saturday, February 23, and prepare to have a blast!

If you haven't reserved your seat at the party, [click here](#).

**The deadline to be acknowledged in the January mailing is this Thursday, January 10.** It's like the honor roll—we want to see your name listed!

### ANNOUNCING THE STUDENT RAFFLE

Attention, please! The Student Raffle is brand new this year. Here's the skinny:

- The raffle is open from **Monday, January 14, through Thursday, January 17, at noon.**
- On **Wednesday, January 9**, each student will go home with a “cheat sheet” and one FREE raffle ticket.
- **You can purchase additional tickets [online here](#) starting Wednesday, January 9.** (Please be sure to complete the request for additional information, including the student's name, grade, and homeroom teacher, and the number of tickets to be allocated.) Tickets are \$1 each, and prizes for all ages are on display on the Main Campus in the Anne Chisholm People Place.

- **After you purchase tickets online, our volunteers will have tickets ready for your child the following day.**
  - **Lower School and Middle School** students are able to pick up their envelope from the People Place and deposit tickets at their lunchtimes.
  - **Primary School and Upper School** parents can bring their students over to check out the prizes anytime between 7:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday through Wednesday, January 14-16, and until noon on Thursday, January 17. **Tickets can also be purchased on campus during this time.**
- **Prizes will be drawn Thursday and Friday.** Winners will be e-mailed.

### **Save the Date: Woolrich Luncheon Is March 5**

Please mark your calendars for this year's **Woolrich Luncheon on Tuesday, March 5**, when we will be honoring our 2017-18 award recipients:

- **Alison Salinas** will be traveling to Germany to study the collections of the Brothers Grimm.
- **Angela Flowers** will be traveling behind the former Iron Curtain to study the impact and lasting effects of the Holocaust and World War II.
- **Kimberly Dunn** will receive training in Krav Maga mixed martial arts and self-defense.
- **Amy Chandler** and **Julia Traber** will travel to Japan to study art and theater.
- **Melanie Wallace** and **Lydia Urbanek** will travel to France to study the cultural roots of fiction and fairy tales.
- **Carlo Minotti** will receive training in welding and fabrication.

We hope you can join us to hear about these educators' summertime adventures—which were made possible by the Sarah W. Woolrich Fund for Faculty—and how these unique opportunities are helping to bring classroom learning to life! Invitations will be mailed in late January.

### **Next Wolf Wear Sale Is January 11**

The Athletics Booster Club's next Wolf Wear sale will be held Friday, January 11. Visit us in the Concessions Stand near the gym on the Main Campus from 7:45-9:30 a.m.

Questions? E-mail [Eloise Taussig](#) or [Kara Montgomery](#).

## Hear Dr. Stixrud Speak on January 30

Dr. William Stixrud, co-author of the *New York Times* best-selling book *The Self-Driven Child* (also the recommended SFES parent summer reading book), will be the featured speaker at the Parents Association's upcoming Winter Parent Education Program.

- Dr. Stixrud will speak twice on **Wednesday, January 30, 2019—at 11:00 a.m. (the Lunch and Learn session) and again at 6:30 p.m. in the Fine Arts Center on the Main Campus.**
- Buy tickets for the 11:00 a.m. Lunch and Learn via [MySchoolAnywhere](#).
- Buy tickets for the 6:30 p.m. lecture at [StFrancisHouston.org/tickets](#).
- Please contact [Paola Lehman](#) for more information.
- If you have not bought this book, now would be an excellent time to purchase and read it prior to January 30! You can find it on Amazon [here](#).

## PA Board Nominations Are Due Friday

It's really hard to believe, but it's already time to start thinking about the 2019-20 Parents Association executive officers!

- If you are interested—or know someone else who is interested—in serving the St. Francis community on the Parents Association Executive Board, please contact Past-President [Jennifer Stringer](#).
- Using the names you submit, the Nominating Committee will assemble the slate of officers.
- Nominations are currently underway for the following board positions: president-elect, treasurer, communications officer, parent education officer, curriculum support officer, and at-large officer.
- The deadline to submit names via [this nomination form](#) is this **Friday, January 11, 2019**.

## Primary School

### From the Division Head

Happy New Year! I hope you have all had a wonderful holiday. Thank you for your prayers and support in the weeks I was on leave recovering from

surgery. I am grateful for this time, but I am very eager to see you and your wonderful children again. I've missed you!

Last spring, I read *The Self-Driven Child* by William Stixrud, PhD, and Ned Johnson. As a school administrator, and as a parent of two children who spent their academic careers in independent schools, I was already very aware of the angst that parents feel about preparation for college. In my experience, it started early, in the preschool years. The conversations at birthday parties, T-ball games, and social gatherings often centered on what parents worried about academically. "Was playing with blocks really important?" "The school my neighbor's child attends expects them to all be reading before kindergarten. Why aren't we doing that here?"

And then later, when my children moved from lower school to middle school, and then to upper school divisions, the anxiety intensified. I heard parents ask, "Is my son's ERB/ACT/SAT score high enough to qualify him for top-tier colleges?" "My daughter has to take all AP classes to be competitive. She loves dance, but there's no time in her schedule for that. Besides, careers in dance do not pay well." There was a lot of fear and a lot of pressure—for students and parents. But it doesn't have to be that way.

We are so fortunate to welcome Dr. Stixrud, co-author of *The Self-Driven Child*, as the featured speaker for our Winter Parent Education Program. In his practice as a neuropsychologist, he has seen the negative effects of stress in children and the benefits of giving them some control and choice in their lives.

Even if you haven't read *The Self-Driven Child*, I hope you will attend one of the two speaking sessions on Wednesday, January 30. The Lunch and Learn session will be held at 11:00 a.m. ([Buy Lunch and Learn tickets here.](#)) The evening session is at 6:30 p.m. ([Buy tickets to the evening session here.](#)) Both sessions will be held on the Main Campus. Please contact [Paola Lehman](#) for more information.

If you would like to purchase and read *The Self-Driven Child* prior to January 30, you can find it on Amazon [here](#).

Enjoy these last days of the holiday. We'll see you Tuesday morning!

Amy Whitley, MA  
Head of Primary School

## **Help Us Spread the Word About St. Francis**

Do you know any friends or neighbors who could be future St. Francis Wolves? St. Francis's scheduled Primary School group tours have concluded, but anyone interested in setting up a tour may e-mail [Margaret Yerkovich](mailto:Margaret.Yerkovich@stfrancis.org).

## **Primary School Dining Hall Menu**

To view the Primary School Dining Hall menu, please click [here](#).

## **Mark Your Calendar**

### **Monday, January 7**

- *School Holiday*
- 

### **Tuesday, January 8**

- *School Resumes*
  - *Chapel: 9:30 a.m.*
- 

### **Wednesday, January 9**

- *Chapel: 9:30 a.m.*
- 

### **Thursday, January 10**

- *Epiphany Celebration (Mrs. Ferguson's T/Th Pre-Primary Class)*
- 

### **Friday, January 11**

- *PS Epiphany Celebration*

- *Wolf Wear Sale*
- 

### **Monday, January 14**

- *Spring Explore and Extend Classes Begin*
- 

### **Tuesday, January 15**

- *Chapel: 9:30 a.m.*
- 

### **Wednesday, January 16**

- *Chapel: 9:30 a.m.*
- 

### **Thursday, January 17**

- *Parent Step-Up Visit: Parents of Mrs. Ferguson's T/Th Pre-Primary students visit Primary I*
- 

### **Friday, January 18**

- *Parent Step-Up Visits: Parents of Pre-Primary (Meriwether, Oteiza, Britton, and Ferguson M/W/F) students visit Primary I; parents of Primary I students visit Primary II*
- 

### **Monday, January 21**

- *Martin Luther King Jr. Day: School holiday*
-

## Tuesday, January 22

- *Chapel: 9:30 a.m.*
  - *Pajamarama Ingathering*
- 

## Wednesday, January 23

- *Chapel: 9:30 a.m.*
  - *Pajamarama Ingathering*
- 

## Thursday, January 24

- *Barker's Pajamarama: Mrs. Ferguson's T/Th Pre-Primary*
  - *Pajamarama Ingathering*
- 

## Friday, January 25

- *Barker's Pajamarama: Meriwether, Oteiza, Britton, and Ferguson M/W/F Pre-Primary, Primary I, and Primary II*
- *Pajamarama Ingathering*

## Lower School

### **From the Division Head**

I hope your holiday was filled with joy, family and friends, and some much-needed rest and relaxation.

The faculty will be here early tomorrow morning, readying their classrooms for your precious children. Everyone is always ready to get back to school after such a nice, long break.

A faculty member kindly shared a wonderful [article](#) with me that I, in turn, want to share with you. Learning more about raising happy, healthy,

successful children is a never-ending journey. This research-based article gives us all fantastic ideas on guiding our children. Enjoy!

**On the topic of raising children, please consider reading the book *The Self-Driven Child* and plan on attending one of the author's talks on Wednesday, January 30.** The book is a pertinent and informative read, full of parenting wisdom.

I'm excited to announce that **we have two faculty members who recently completed master's degree programs: Christine Nguyen and Ryan Kochei.** We know that working full-time while working toward an advanced degree is a big load. CONGRATS to both!

**Linden Womack, our third-grade STEAM teacher, is just embarking on her master's degree in educational technology.** We wish her the best in her pursuit of knowledge; what a wonderful way to be a lifelong learner!

We can't wait to see your children back in the halls and classrooms. Thank you for sharing them with us—they are the center of all we do!

Have a wonderful week,

Carol Christ, MEd  
Head of Lower School

### **Help Us Spread the Word About St. Francis**

Do you know any friends or neighbors who could be future St. Francis Wolves? St. Francis's scheduled Lower School group tours have concluded, but anyone interested in setting up a tour may e-mail [Kathryn Spinelli](#).

### **Mark Your Calendar**

#### **Monday, January 7**

- *School Holiday*

---

#### **Tuesday, January 8**

- *School Resumes*
- 

### **Wednesday, January 9**

- *Dress Uniform Day*
  - *Epiphany Eucharist: 8:05 a.m.*
- 

### **Monday, January 14**

- *Birthday Chapel:* Students with a birthday between January 1-19 will receive a birthday pencil in Chapel today
- 

### **Wednesday, January 16**

- *Student Holiday*
  - *Parent Conferences*
- 

### **Monday, January 21**

- *Martin Luther King Jr. Day:* School holiday
- 

### **Wednesday, January 23**

- *Birthday Chapel:* Students with a birthday between January 20-26 will receive a birthday pencil in Chapel today
- 

### **Friday, January 25**

- *Pajamarama Day:* More details to come!

## Middle School

### **From the Division Head**

Happy Sunday and Happy New Year, Middle School families! I hope this finds you well.

Welcome to 2019! Let's have a great second half of the school year together.

It's a beautiful day, and we are Wolves!

Sincerely,

Connor Cook, EdD  
Head of Middle School

### **St. Francis and St. Cecilia Form Symphonic Orchestra**

In order to provide additional opportunities for our budding musicians, St. Francis has partnered with St. Cecilia Catholic School to form the Memorial Villages Symphonic Orchestra. Those Middle and Upper School students seeking an accelerated ensemble experience are invited to audition. [Click here to learn more.](#)

### **Help Us Spread the Word About St. Francis**

Do you know any friends or neighbors who could be future St. Francis Wolves? St. Francis's scheduled Middle School group tours have concluded, but anyone interested in setting up a tour may e-mail [Kathryn Spinelli](#).

### **Parents and Business Owners, Buy Your Yearbook Ads Today!**

Each year, **eighth-grade parents are invited to place a full- or half-page ad** in *The Howler* yearbook to congratulate their student on eighth-grade graduation and to celebrate and reflect on the special times their child has shared with friends and teachers at St. Francis.

**All parents are also invited to place ads for their local businesses.** *The Howler* yearbook is an excellent resource for building professional relationships within the St. Francis community while supporting

the entrepreneurial efforts of our yearbook staff. It is also an excellent way to advertise a community business.

**The deadline to create and purchase yearbook ads is Sunday, February 3, at 8:00 p.m.**

Please e-mail Yearbook Instructor [Steve Johnson](#) for further details.

## **Mark Your Calendar**

### **Monday, January 7**

- *Student Holiday*
- 

### **Tuesday, January 8**

- *Classes Resume for Students*
  - *Tuesday Schedule/Regular Uniform*
  - *Bible Study for Eighth Graders: 7:15-7:45 a.m. in the Christian Education rooms at the end of the Middle School hallway*
- 

### **Wednesday, January 9**

- *Eucharist Schedule/Dress Uniform*
  - *Bible Study for Seventh Graders: 7:15-7:45 a.m. in the Christian Education rooms at the end of the Middle School hallway*
  - *Epiphany Eucharist: 11:05-11:55 a.m.*
- 

### **Thursday, January 10**

- *Thursday Schedule/Regular Uniform*
- *Bible Study for Fifth and Sixth Graders: 7:15-7:45 a.m. in the Christian Education rooms at the end of the Middle School hallway*
- *MS Councils Meeting: 9:15-10:00 a.m. in classrooms*

---

## Friday, January 11

- *Friday Schedule/SFES Spirit Dress*
  - *NJHS Meeting (Geo Bee Challenge): 7:15-7:50 a.m. in Dr. Bedard's classroom*
  - *Wolf Wear Sale: 7:45-9:00 a.m. in the Concessions area near the Gym*
- 

## Monday, January 14

- *Monday Schedule/Dress Uniform*
  - *Eighth-Grade Field Trip to Holocaust Museum: 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.*
  - *Chapel: 10:45-11:15 a.m.*
  - *TIP Meeting: 3:30 p.m. on the South Campus*
- 

## Tuesday, January 15

- *Tuesday Schedule/Regular Uniform*
  - *Bible Study for Eighth Graders: 7:15-7:45 a.m. in the Christian Education rooms at the end of the Middle School hallway*
- 

## Wednesday, January 16

- *Student Holiday*
  - *Parent/Teacher Conferences: 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.*
- 

## Thursday, January 17

- *Thursday Schedule/Regular Uniform*
- *Bible Study for Eighth Graders: 7:15-7:45 a.m. in the Christian Education rooms at the end of the Middle School hallway*
- *MS Class Meeting: 10:45-11:15 a.m. in the FAC*

---

## Friday, January 18

- *Friday Schedule/SFES Spirit Dress*
  - *NJHS Meeting (Geo Bee Preliminary Competition): 7:15-7:50 a.m. in Dr. Bedard's classroom*
  - *WEB Leadership Training: 10:45-11:15 a.m. in Mr. Duran's classroom*
- 

## Monday, January 21

- *Martin Luther King Jr. Day: School holiday*

## Upper School

### **From the Division Head**

I hope that this message finds you well-rested and fulfilled at the end of a joyous holiday vacation. The St. Francis faculty and staff will be back on campus tomorrow for a full day of trainings and meetings. We are excited to greet our students (your children) on Tuesday and continue our learning adventure!

As promised, this week's message includes some excerpts from the next three chapters of *The Self-Driven Child* that resonated for me as both an educator and a parent.

### **CHAPTER 3 ("IT'S YOUR CALL': KIDS AS DECISION-MAKERS")**

#### Start With the Basics

Adopt the following three precepts when it comes to your kids:

1. "You are the expert on you."
2. "You have a brain in your head."
3. "You want your life to work."

When you buy into these three things, it's much easier to tell your kid, "It's your call. I have confidence in your ability to make informed decisions about your own life and to learn from your mistakes."

### What We Say vs. What We Want

When we say we want children and teens to make their own decisions as much as possible, what we really want is for them to make informed decisions. It's our responsibility as parents to give the information and the perspective that we have—and that they lack—in order to enable them to make the best possible choices. Once properly informed, kids usually do make good decisions for themselves, and their decisions are almost always as good as or better than our own.

### What "It's Your Call" *Doesn't* Mean

- We need to set clear ground rules, while keeping in mind that our ultimate goal is not to produce compliant children as much as children who understand how to act and interact successfully in this world.
- Kids feel most secure when they know that adults are there to make the decisions they're not yet ready to make themselves.
- You want to parent with honesty—that's what builds trust. You want to show your kids that you have respect for them. And if you're going to foster autonomy, you have to genuinely let them have more control, bit by bit.
- If there's conflict surrounding an issue, use collaborative problem-solving, a technique developed by Ross Greene, PhD, and J. Stuart Ablon, PhD, that begins with an expression of empathy followed by a reassurance that you're not going to try to use the force of your will to get your child to do something he doesn't want to do. Together, you identify possible solutions you're both comfortable with and figure out how to get there. If your child settles on a choice that isn't crazy, go with it—even if it's not what you would like him to do.
- Your kids have to be willing to listen and to think through the options, period. Beyond this, if a child is seriously depressed or suicidal, all bets are off. Her logic is impaired and you cannot start with the baseline belief that she wants her life to work out.

### 6 Reasons the Authors Are Right

1. Science is on their side.

- When you are given room to make your own decisions, it allows you to feel in charge in other contexts. The brain is learning to make hard choices and protecting itself from the stress of feeling hopeless. It is also benefiting from the internal motivation that comes from autonomy.
  - The brain develops according to how it's used. This means that by encouraging our kids—and requiring our adolescents—to make their own decisions, we are giving them invaluable experience in assessing their own needs honestly, paying attention to their feelings and motivations, weighing pros and cons, and trying to make the best possible decisions for themselves. We help them develop a brain that's used to making hard choices and owning them. This is huge and will pay big future dividends.
2. Kids shouldn't feel like an empty extension of their parents.
    - Suffering, though painful to watch, is essential for the development of resilience.
    - Remember that magic line: "I have confidence in your ability to make informed decisions about your own life and to learn from your mistakes."
  3. Giving kids a sense of control is the only way to teach them competency—in decision-making, and in whatever skill they're learning.
    - As the adage goes, "Wisdom comes from experience, and experience comes from bad decisions."
    - They need practice.
    - Agency takes practice.
  4. You don't always know what's best.
    - There are many paths to success, and sometimes we only find the right one by getting a little lost.
    - Serendipity is the stuff of life. All that parental planning isn't always for the better.
  5. Kids are capable. Really.
    - When faced with a problem, a kid will often come up with a solution that neither parent had thought of.
    - While we can't entirely stop teenagers from making impulsive choices, we can entrust them with the ability to make informed decisions about things that are important to them. Research has found that by the time kids are 14 or 15, they generally have adult-level ability to make rational decisions. In fact, most cognitive processes reach adult levels by mid-adolescence.
  6. Good decision-making requires emotional intelligence. Kids need to learn what matters to them.

## A Sense of Control in Action

- Encouraging your child to make informed decisions hinges on your being behind them and offering guidance. It means saying something like, “I trust you to make a good decision, and this will ultimately be your call, but I want to be sure you make the best decision possible, so I’d like to help you think through the pros and cons of either option. I also want you to talk to people who have more experience and to get their feedback. Finally, I think it’s important that we talk together about a possible Plan B if your decision doesn’t go the way you want.”
- Teenagers are the closest to legal age, and they are the ones who most need to hear this message: “I have confidence in your ability to make informed decisions about your own life and to learn from your mistakes.” That doesn’t mean they won’t make mistakes—they will. But with every mistake, they’ll develop better instincts and self-awareness, especially if you help them process what went wrong without blaming or saying, “I told you so.”

## What About Kids Who Seem to Continually Make Poor Decisions?

- Believe it or not, this is rare. We only want kids to make *informed* decisions and will override a child’s decision if it seems crazy. But if your child is repeatedly making the same bad decision, then it is even more important that they practice exercising judgment—with your help—so they can get better. If frequent chemical use is a problem, remember, all bets are off and you need to intervene. For most judgment lapses, though, we suggest asking Dr. Phil’s question, “How’d that work for you?” and discussing ways to make better decisions next time.
- Letting them get stuck every once in a while, while you’re available to help them get out of the ditch, can actually help them grow.
- Giving kids more choice when you can makes it easier for them to accept authority when they need to.

## **CHAPTER 4 (“THE NON-ANXIOUS PRESENCE: HOW TO HELP YOUR KIDS FIND A SENSE OF CONTROL BY FINDING YOUR OWN”)**

### What You Need to Know About Parental Anxiety

- Parental anxiety isn’t new. Parents have worried about their kids ever since having kids was a thing, but we believe it’s worse now than before. Why? For one, we have a lot more information than we’ve ever

had before. In days past, we had to be okay with not being able to reach our kids at every waking minute.

- Our anxiety is seeping into our kids. Children don't need perfect parents, but they do benefit greatly from parents who can serve as a non-anxious presence. In fact, a recent study showed that other than showing your child love and affection, managing your own stress is the best thing you can do to be an effective parent.

### Trickle-down Anxiety

- Though sensitive children are more susceptible to a negative environment, they also thrive in a calm and loving environment.
- Epigenetics refers to the ways that experience affects genes by turning the function of specific genes on or off. So while children may be born with some genetic predisposition, it takes experiences to “turn on” the specific genes that ignite depression or anxiety. Turning these problematic genes to the “on” position is all too easy to do, and it can happen in at least two ways:
  - Secondhand stress
    - Stress is catching, like an emotional virus.
    - Stress most often results from feeling a low sense of control over events or the environment we live in—and the less control we experience, the more stressed we feel.
    - In the absence of a story or explanation, people tend to create their own, and often the scenarios kids will come up with are more alarming than the truth.
  - Behavior
    - It's common sense. If we're unable to accept our kids as they are, how can we expect them to accept themselves?

### Calm Is Contagious

- We love the term “non-anxious presence,” but we didn't invent it. It was coined by Edwin Friedman, a rabbi, student of complex systems, and consultant. In Friedman's view, we live in a chronically anxious and reactive society in which there are too few people leading our families, schools, and organizations who can serve as a non-anxious presence. He makes the case that groups work best when leaders are true to themselves and are not unduly anxious or worried—and thus do not communicate undue worry or fear to others.
- When your home is a calm space, free of excessive fighting, anxiety, and pressure, it becomes the place to regenerate that your kids need.

They can go back into the world and better deal with fraught social dynamics, academic stresses, and challenges like tryouts or auditions, knowing that at the end of the day they have a safe place to recover.

### How to Be a Non-anxious Presence

- Make enjoying your kids your top parenting priority.
- Don't fear the future.
  - When fear rears its head, remember to take a long view. Life isn't a race, and the world is full of late bloomers.
    - Mark Twain said, "When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I couldn't stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years."
  - Make peace with your worst fears.
    - Whose life is it?
    - Your responsibility is to love and support your child. It isn't your responsibility to protect him from pain. You can't.
    - If you want to keep your children as safe as possible, the best thing to do is to give them experience and teach them judgment.
    - Experience is typically a better teacher than words.
    - "We don't need you to make us feel safe. You made us feel brave, and that's even better."
- Adopt an attitude of nonjudgmental acceptance.
  - In their book *Rapid Relief from Emotional Distress*, Gary Emery, PhD, and James Campbell, MD, recommended that we teach ourselves to make peace with reality by first honestly accepting it for what it is. They advocate a formula known as ACT: Accept, Choose, Take Action. In the context of your kids, it might look like this:
    - I **Accept** the idea that my kid is underachieving / doesn't have friends / can't read, and I see this as part of his path. (Acceptance is a powerful stance. For one thing, accepting your children the way they are conveys respect. Acceptance is also a choice, and choosing to accept that "it is what it is" increases our sense of control. It's the opposite of thinking that we have to change something we can't change.)
    - I **Choose** to create a vision of myself as a calm, compassionate parent who has a supportive relationship with my son.

- I will **Take Action** by offering to help, focusing on his strengths, setting limits where necessary, and modeling acceptance and self-care. I will also seek help from others if my child needs assistance with reading, math, or any area where a third party can help him more than I am able to.

## CHAPTER 5 (“INNER DRIVE: HOW TO HELP YOUR KIDS DEVELOP MOTIVATION”)

### Research Says ...

- Research over the last four decades has repeatedly demonstrated that incentives like sticker charts, consequences, and other forms of parental monitoring that are “laid on” children actually undermine enduring self-motivation. What we’re trying to do is to help kids motivate themselves and to realize that they have something important to offer the world. We want to help them learn to run their own lives and seek to make them more meaningful.
- Rewards can erode self-generated interest and lead to interest only in the reward itself.

### What Makes Us Tick?

- It’s all in your mind(set)—Carol Dweck’s “growth” (as opposed to “fixed”) mindset
- Self-determination
  - Psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan have developed one of the best-supported theories in psychology, known as self-determination theory (SDT), which holds that humans have three basic needs: a sense of autonomy, a sense of competence, and a sense of relatedness.
  - The best way to motivate a child (or an adult, for that matter) is to support their sense of control.
  - “Competence” is more about our feeling that we can handle a situation than it is about being really great at something. Remember that you can’t develop competence for your children, and any attempt to do so will just undermine their own motivation.
  - “Relatedness” refers to the feeling of being connected to others, of being cared about.
  - “Integrated regulation” is a child’s identification with the values and goals of the people who care for him and love him unconditionally.

## Dopamine: Your “Get Up and Go” Aid

- So how do you help a child develop a healthy dopamine system? The answer is surprisingly simple: encourage them to work hard at what they love.

## Sculpting a Motivated Brain

- When kids work hard at something they love and find challenging, they enter a state of what’s come to be called “flow,” where time passes quickly and their attention is completely engaged, but they’re not stressed.
- People experience flow when they simultaneously reach the states of both high intrinsic motivation and high attention.
- The best way to motivate a child for the things you think he should focus on is to let him spend time on the things he wants to focus on.
- Finally, it can be helpful to remember that what motivates one child will not necessarily motivate another. Some kids are motivated largely by a desire to have close personal relationships or to help one another, while others are energized by the desire to achieve at a high level or by a love of learning new things and gaining new skills.

## Common Motivation Problems and How to Approach Them

- **The Saboteur:** “My kid just can’t seem to motivate himself to do what he knows he needs to do. It’s like he’s deliberately sabotaging himself.”
  - If this is your child, you can help your kid to see how things that don’t seem so important now may be important to their long-term goals.
  - You can also help him find his own reasons for working hard at the things that are important to him.
  - The powerful tool of writing your goals down
  - Some additional strategies for igniting the Saboteur include: frequent exercise; social support; stimulation; a healthy, high-protein diet and enough rest; circuit training; and incentives.
- **The Enthusiast:** “My kid is motivated—just not about school.”
  - As long as these kids are working hard at something they really enjoy doing, they’re shaping a brain that will eventually enable them to be successful.
  - Working hard to get better and better at something that’s important to you is one of the best things you can do for your brain.

- You'd be surprised at how many kids will listen to your suggestions if they feel you're taking them seriously.
- Remember, if a kid isn't motivated by school, he's not motivated by school, and you can't make him want to do better. Taking away something that does motivate him isn't going to solve the problem, and may, on the contrary, further dampen his motivation.
- **The Eeyore:** "My kid isn't motivated to do anything. He doesn't seem to know what he wants."
  - Once you rule out more serious problems (depression, substance abuse, etc.), you can encourage Eeyores to get involved in service activities and negotiate limits on TV and video games. You can expose them to things you think they might enjoy. But the most important thing you can do is express confidence that they will find something they love to do.
  - You can also emphasize the importance of self-awareness. They need to consider their special talents and life purpose. They should ask, "What do I want? What do I love to do?" You can help them ask these questions, even if you can't supply the answers. Hard as it may be to accept this, it's your child's responsibility to find interests and motivation in life.
  - It's at the intersection of interest, talent, and self-awareness that kids are able to find a sense of direction.
  - Helping Eeyores requires a combination approach:
    - Stay calm and focus on maintaining a strong relationship with your child—which frequent cajoling undermines.
    - Ask your child if she would like to feel more comfortable in new situations—to feel less nervous about them. If she says yes, you could suggest that she work with an expert who knows how to help kids feel more confident about taking on new challenges.
    - Negotiate a reasonable "compromise" between your desire for your child to be active and engaged most of the time and her desire to do as little as possible that's unfamiliar or challenging.
    - Physical activity can be motivating to all kinds of kids.
- **The Hermione Granger:** "My kid is stressed out of her mind. In her view, it's Yale or nothing."
  - Hermiones are intensely—even unhealthily—driven to excel or to live up to someone else's expectations. Their motivation is largely fear-based, as they experience anxiety about not being able to

achieve the high goals they've set for themselves—or that others have set for them.

- So how do you even begin to fix this? How do you encourage internal motivation for a kid who is so reliant on external signs of achievement? First, ask her if she'd be willing to hear some information that might help her to work with a lot of motivation but maybe a little less fear and anxiety.
- Encourage her to think about her highest values—what's truly most important to her—and ask her to consider whether, when she thinks about them, she's driving herself in the right direction. Then help her set goals that are values-based, because when we set goals we're in control of, our minds are happy.

### Suggested Activities

- Make a point of speaking with your kids about what it is they want in life. What do they love to do? What do they feel they're good at? If there's a reason they're here, what might that be?
- Explore where your child's true inner motivation lies. You can do this by asking when in life he or she feels "really happy." Kids with a healthy self-drive will commonly think of times when they perform well in school or in sports, are engaged in pleasurable pastimes, or do something fun with their friends or family. In contrast, kids who are obsessively motivated or have difficulty sustaining motivation and effort will often say that they feel happiest when they have no responsibilities, when nothing is expected of them, and when they feel no pressure.

I look forward to hearing about what resonated most for you from these chapters. Next week, I'll share with you my highlights from chapters six, seven, and eight. Happy reading!

Here's to a great start to 2019. I look forward to seeing you this week and learning more about your holiday adventures!

Sincerely,

Cara Henderson  
Head of Upper School

**Please Sign Up for January 16 Parent Conferences**

**There is no class on Wednesday, January 16, so that advisors can conduct conferences with their advisees and the advisees' parents.** With the assistance of their advisor, students will lead the conversation on academic and social/emotional strengths and revisit the goals they created in October. This will also be an opportunity to debrief the Immersions and Explorations experience.

Please click the name of your child's advisor below to sign up for your conference:

[Mrs. McMillian](#)

[Mrs. Matzen](#)

[Mr. Zacaraev](#)

### **ISAS Arts Festival: Plan to Register Soon!**

In arts classes this week, our students learned more about the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS) Arts Festival. According to the festival website, the event began in 1967 with an invitation from the Casady School Choir to the choirs of Wichita Collegiate and Holland Hall to participate in a joint program. Since then, it has grown to be the nation's premier annual regional arts festival among independent schools. Typically occurring each spring at a different member school campus, the festival is a collaborative enterprise among over 40 participating schools.

Rather than a competition for prizes or rankings, the ISAS Arts Festival was designed from its inception to be a celebration of sharing and learning, with critiques by professional artists and performers. This approach has fostered creativity and experimentation, and has proven to be an exceptional opportunity for schools to come together to understand, learn from, and appreciate qualities in one another's programs and facilities.

The festival has been instrumental in the development of strong arts programs in participating ISAS schools and has been richly inspirational to their students. Thus, it has grown in both stature and popularity over the years—and, this year, all of the Founding Freshmen at St. Francis have indicated interest in participating. **The festival this year is April 11-13 in Austin. Registration deadlines are rapidly approaching and are strictly enforced.**

- Registration will require a \$100 nonrefundable deposit, plus medical information, consent-to-treat forms, and other information to be uploaded to the festival website.
- St. Francis will also require additional forms to travel, a signed behavioral contract, and attendance from at least one parent/guardian at a parent information meeting (details TBA).
- **Please be on the lookout for registration information to come via e-mail from Justin Doran.**

### **St. Francis and St. Cecilia Form Symphonic Orchestra**

In order to provide additional opportunities for our budding musicians, St. Francis has partnered with St. Cecilia Catholic School to form the Memorial Villages Symphonic Orchestra. Those Middle and Upper School students seeking an accelerated ensemble experience are invited to audition. [Click here to learn more.](#)

### **Please Share the Word! Upcoming US Admissions Tours**

Our best advertising is word-of-mouth, so please tell your friends and neighbors to come learn more about St. Francis at one of our Upper School Admissions Tours, which are held most Wednesdays at 9:00 a.m.

### **Mark Your Calendar**

#### **Monday, January 7**

- *School Holiday*
- 

#### **Tuesday, January 8**

- *Day 3 Schedule/Regular Uniform*
  - *Swim Practice:* 6:35-8:00 a.m. at the Houston Racquet Club
  - *Chapel:* 9:30 a.m. in the Crum Gym
  - *Boys and Girls Basketball Practice:* 4:15-5:45 p.m.
-

## Wednesday, January 9

- *Day 4 Schedule/Regular Uniform*
  - *Boys and Girls Basketball Practice: 4:15-5:45 p.m.*
- 

## Thursday, January 10

- *Day 5 Schedule/Dress Uniform*
  - *Swim Practice: 6:35-8:00 a.m. at the Houston Racquet Club*
  - *Eucharist Chapel: 9:50 a.m. at the Chapel on the Main Campus*
  - *Girls Basketball Practice: 4:15-5:45 p.m.*
  - *Boys Basketball Game: 6:30 p.m. at St. Thomas Episcopal High School*
- 

## Friday, January 11

- *Day 6 Schedule/SFES Spirit Dress*
- *Girls Basketball Game: 4:00 p.m. at The Kinkaid School*
- *Boys Basketball Game: 4:30 p.m. in Crum Gym*

## Church

### **Spring First Communion Classes Begin Sunday**

First Communion classes begin this coming **Sunday, January 13**. This eight-week course is designed to prepare second-grade students to receive the Holy Eucharist. If you would like to sign up or request further information, please contact [Nichole Hilgert](#).

### **Discovering Christian Meditation**

An opportunity for silent prayer at the church is now available:

- Tuesdays, 5:00-5:30 p.m.
- Thursdays, 7:30-8:00 a.m.

These sessions are in the St. Clare Chapel and are led by Father David Price.

We find the roots of Christian meditation in the practice of Jesus recorded in the Gospels and in the content of the Epistles. We see it developed further in the writings of the desert tradition of the early church. Come learn a bit about it, gain a few hints about the practice and, mostly, come and pray.