

## **“More” Notes for Parents**



**October 28, 2008  
1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Report Cards**

### **From the Dean of Students Office:**

It is hard to imagine that we have just finished 25% of the school year. Soon Thanksgiving break will be upon all of us and we will get a chance to recharge our batteries. I can say, without hesitation, that this is the best start to a school year in my nine years at St. Thomas More School.

I always enjoy seeing how the students come together each year to form as a community. This year, more than year's past, the new and returning students have become one. I credit the dorm parents, the RA's (student leaders) and the positive faculty for fostering this atmosphere of inclusiveness and comfort. In the dorms recently, the students and dorm parents discussed diversity and cultural tolerance. Because of this open dialogue in the dorms and the implementation of the residential life curriculum, the dorms seem more like a home away from home. This year an increased emphasis has been placed on a "welcoming" atmosphere in the dorms. All dorm parents have put posters and wall hangings up in the hallways and lounges. Mr. Ladd (B2 Dorm Parent) decorated his lounge with Halloween decorations. Mr. Hastings (B1 Dorm Parent) had a pumpkin-carving night with his boys.

At this point in the school year, the students are starting to become comfortable and acquainted with the "STM Way." While this is a good thing, complacency sometimes sets in for some. Historically, the first marking period Honor Roll and Chancellor's Club lists are the largest. From there, some students lose a little of their focus. We always tell the students to "finish what you start." As we reinforce this point from our end, please take time and reiterate it from yours'.

I welcome and encourage communication. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, comments and/or concerns.

Sincerely,  
Tim Viands, Dean of Students

Maura Howard, Assistant Dean

### **From the Academic Dean's Office:**



**“The second half of a man's life is made up of nothing but the habits he has acquired during the first half.”**

~Feodor Dostoevski

I believe that the power of the St. Thomas More School experience is captured in the last sentence of our mission statement; “Within a structured environment, we strive to motivate, nurture, and strengthen the intellectual, moral, physical, and social development of every student.” These are the habits that we hope to help our young men acquire during the first half of their lives. It is a gift that no one can take away from them.

I must say that I am very proud of our boys. They have had an outstanding first quarter. Not only did we have a strong increase in the number of students who earned Honor Roll status, we also had a significant reduction in the number of students who are required to attend Mandatory Extra Help sessions. This is due in large part to the focused efforts of this year's student body. Each student's commitment to seek help when needed, complete homework when tired, to be disciplined in the use of their Master Planners, and accept the reinforcement from home, has helped many students surprise even themselves. The next step is to continue these behaviors until they become habits of mind.

We have also added an additional layer of support for our students. In an effort to assist any student who misses school for reasons beyond their control, such as illness, injury, discipline, etc., they will be assigned to a “re-entry program” for a couple of days to help them get caught up on their assignments and back on track as much as possible. Mrs. Autencio has volunteered her time to facilitate this program.

I hope you are as excited about the next quarter as we are. I wish you and your son all the best and I look forward to seeing many of you on Parents Day.

Sincerely,

Mr. Steven A. Davis, Academic Dean

### **From the Athletic Director's Office:**

We started this year with good numbers in most of our sports. The cross country team had twelve runs and faired well in all of their meets. Soccer ended up with a total of 34 players for the JV and Varsity. The JV soccer team was competitive throughout the season. The varsity team had its ups and downs. Despite injuries, they made the SENE playoffs. Football started with lower numbers than usual. They have had a rash of injuries, but the players worked hard every game.

As we wind down the fall athletic season, we gear up for winter sports. The following athletics / activities are being offered this winter:

- PG Basketball
- Varsity Basketball

- JV Basketball
- 3rds Basketball
- Varsity Hockey
- Ski Club
- Weight Lifting
- Judo
- Yearbook

Students playing basketball should have basketball shoes. For students playing hockey, the school will provide a helmet (all other equipment should be provided from home; however, the school does have a limited amount of extra gear). Students participating in ski club may rent their skis and/or snowboards; however, it is recommended that they have their own equipment. Please do not hesitate to contact my office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,  
Mr. Don Handler, Athletic Director.

### **Upcoming Events & Dates:**

- Saturday November 1- SAT Testing @ STM
- Saturday November 8- Parent's Day /  
Homecoming
- Saturday November 8- Founder's Dinner @  
Foxwoods MGM Grand
- Friday November 14- Progress Reports  
Close / ½ Day
- Friday November 21- Thanksgiving Break  
Begins @ 2:00pm
- Sunday November 30- Thanksgiving Break  
Ends @ 7:00pm

### **Dorm Blogs:**

**BENE'S 1** - Over the past four weeks the Benedict's one floor has been engaged in recycling, Xbox tournament and three residential life meetings during which we discussed life on the floor, conservation and sustainability, as well as giving back to the community. Bene's 1 has also been involved in athletics this fall - four football players, three cross-country runners and around twelve soccer players live on the floor. In the up-coming months there will be activities ranging from pumpkin-carving, Super Bowl party, dodge ball and game night; during culture night international students will be invited to cook their country's food for their dorm mates. I would like to encourage you to engage your sons in discussions about their STM community. I would also welcome any ideas or suggestions from you that would enhance our Bene's 1 community.

-Mr. Jonathan Hastings, Benes 1 Houseparent

**BENE'S 2** -This year the kids on the floor are getting along extremely well. The lounge and hall are kept clean and the kids demonstrate respect for the community as well as for each other. Everyone works together to maintain a supportive environment and make everyone feel like they belong. The few conflicts we may have don't escalate because there isn't a lot of tension in the community. Everyone on the floor agreed to install energy efficient light bulbs in their rooms as part of our commitment to conservation and they were rewarded with a dodge ball game during the beginning of the study hall. We have had community meetings about the topics of diversity and respect for property. If you have any questions about your son, feel free to contact me at [gladd@stmct.org](mailto:gladd@stmct.org).

-Mr. Gregory Ladd, Benes 2 Houseparent

**KENNEDY 1** - Students have continued to build our community and bond with each other throughout the entire first quarter. They have done an excellent job creating a friendly and positive atmosphere, striving to make everyone on the hall feel at home. Our residential life curriculum has covered topics such as environmental sustainability, respect, and diversity. The hall has done a great job taking these ideas and incorporating them into our day to day lives. Over the start of the second quarter we will continue to cover more life skills in our residential meetings and have a hall (team) building activity to encourage the strong communication and the friendships that have already begun. It's been a great to start to the year and I hope the students see that it continues.

-Mr. Matt Quinn, Kennedy 1 Houseparent

**KENNEDY 2** - K2 continues to work hard this year. Many students now have closed-door study hall due to their hard work in class. The students have created a strong community and are working together to build a great atmosphere. We enjoy being part of the community.

-Mr. Enrico Jelani and Mr. Michael Gerowitz,  
Kennedy 2 Houseparents

**EDMUNDS 1-** Over the first few weeks, most students have settled into a routine, trying to balance academic commitments with those of athletics, while at the same time trying to find at least a little time for themselves. The campus is buzzing with talk of the NFL football season, the World Series, and the Italy trip that we're taking with students over Easter Break 2009 (if you want you son to go, please contact us as soon as possible - the deadline to sign up is Dec 1<sup>st</sup>).

On our floor specifically, everyone seems to be doing very well. Since the floor is a good mix of both postgraduates and seniors, much of the daily discussion is about colleges, essay writing, and various sports (we have 2 kids from Tampa Bay on the floor - they've given the Red Sox and Yankees fans a good ribbing). Many of our students engage in friendly competitions, whether in the gym playing basketball, in academic discussions, or on the floor playing video games. Play time gives way to study time every night at 7:30, although many students actually start study hall on their own even earlier. As we've discussed, respect for each other is a key element of living together in such a diverse community.

STM has instituted a residential curriculum, and we on first floor Edmunds have had dorm meetings on the role of an upperclassman, recycling and conservation. The boys have made a commitment to reducing energy consumption by turning off lights and by taking shorter showers. We're also collecting cans and recycling them, with the proceeds going into the dorm floor fund. In the next few weeks, we'll be having floor meetings designed around different topics such as alcohol and substance abuse, their role in the community and others.

As winter approaches, the boys are beginning to look into the different options they have for college. We've offered advice on the subject and will continue to do so. If there is anything we can do or if you have any concerns, please feel free to contact us via email.

-Mr. and Mrs. Florencio, Edmunds 1 House Parents

**STM News:**

- Mr. Gabe Rotman, Assistant Director of Admissions, traveled to Asia as part of the Association of Boarding Schools annual admissions fair.
- Mr. Schnaidt, English Department Chair, has been posting writing samples of his classes on the STM website.
- Mrs. Vanessa Florencio, Art Teacher, has been posting pictures of the art projects her students have been creating on the website.

### **STM on the Web:**

Please visit [www.stmct.org](http://www.stmct.org) to find out more information about your son's experience. The school's website features updated athletic, academic and residential life information. Under the PARENT & STUDENT portal, parents will find a detailed school calendar, school news, dining hall menus and nutritional information, special events, and the athlete of the week announcement.

### **Contacting Faculty and Staff:**

Every faculty and staff member has an email address and voicemail extension. Links to all email addresses can be found on our website- [www.stmct.org](http://www.stmct.org). Feel free to contact your son's teachers, coaches, dorm parents and advisor.



### **Enclosed with this mailing you will find...:**

- Your son's first marking period report card and comments from his teachers.
- First Marking Period Honor Roll Certificate, if applicable.
- A letter from your son's advisor.
- The Chancellor's Club list for the first marking period and the month of October.

- Your son's first marking period disciplinary record, if applicable.

## Supplement from the Health Office

What a beautiful fall season it has been here on Gardner Lake. The trees are starting to turn and the students have settled into life here at St. Thomas More. It seems like only yesterday everyone was moving into the dorm and meeting each other. I remember the boys' faces as they took the campus tour that first night. Some were scared, with hints of homesickness. Others walked around happy to be on their own. Time does pass quickly; it is hard to believe that the first marking period is complete.

I wanted to let you know that we have started giving the flu vaccines. The process should be completed by the Thanksgiving break. Also I will be sending home information to all families regarding immunizations. Several of our boys are missing documentation on required immunizations. All immunizations must be on file in order to be compliant with the State of Connecticut Guidelines. Feel free to call or email the office to verify this information.

Attached is information on concussions. This fall we have had several students who have had moderate to severe concussions. These types of injuries are getting a great deal of attention now. Many physicians are sending their patients to have an impact study. It is a series of tests that are performed soon after a concussion occurs. It allows the doctor to see how severe the concussion is.

*Content Source: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Injury Response Heads Up! Concussion Information for Physicians Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

What is a Concussion?

- A concussion is a disturbance in brain function that occurs following either a blow to the head or as a result of the violent shaking of the head.
- In the United States, the annual incidence of sports-related concussion is estimated at 300,000. Estimates regarding the likelihood of an athlete in a contact sport experiencing a concussion may be as high as 19% per season. Although the majority of athletes who experience a concussion are likely to recover, an as yet unknown number of these individuals may

experience chronic cognitive and neurobehavioral difficulties related to recurrent injury.

#### Common Signs and Symptoms:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Signs observed<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Appears to be dazed or stunned</li><li>○ Is confused about assignment</li><li>○ Forgets plays</li><li>○ Is unsure of game, score, or opponent</li><li>○ Moves clumsily</li><li>○ Answers questions slowly</li><li>○ Loses consciousness (even temporarily)</li><li>○ Shows behavior or personality change</li><li>○ Forgets events prior to hit</li> <li>○ Forgets events after hit</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Signs reported by athlete<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Headache</li><li>○ Nausea</li><li>○ Balance problems or dizziness</li><li>○ Double or fuzzy vision</li><li>○ Sensitivity to light or noise</li><li>○ Feeling sluggish</li><li>○ Feeling "foggy"</li><li>○ Change in sleep pattern</li> <li>○ Concentration or memory problems</li></ul></li></ul>
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#### Loss of Consciousness

- Upon ruling out more severe injury, acute evaluation continues with assessment of the concussion. First, the clinician should establish the presence of any loss or other alteration of consciousness (LOC). LOC is relatively rare and occurs in less than 10% of concussive injuries. The identification of LOC can be very tricky as the athlete may lose consciousness very briefly, and this event may not be directly observed by others. By definition, LOC represents a state of brief coma in which the eyes are typically closed and the athlete is unresponsive to external stimuli. LOC is most obvious when an athlete makes no attempt to brace his or her fall following a blow to the head. Any athlete with documented LOC should be managed conservatively, and return to play is contraindicated.

#### Post-Concussion Syndrome

- Although the majority of athletes who experience a concussion are likely to recover, an as yet unknown number of these individuals may experience chronic

cognitive and neurobehavioral difficulties related to recurrent injury. Such symptoms may include chronic headaches, fatigue, sleep difficulties, personality change (e.g. increased irritability, emotionality), sensitivity to light/noise, dizziness when standing quickly, and deficits in short-term memory, problem solving and general academic functioning. This constellation of symptoms is referred to "Post-Concussion Syndrome" and can be quite disabling for an athlete. In some cases, such difficulties can be permanent and disabling. In addition to Post-Concussion Syndrome, suffering a second blow to the head while recovering from an initial concussion can have catastrophic consequences as in the case of "Second Impact Syndrome," which has led to approximately 30-40 deaths over the past decade.

#### Consulting w/ a Doctor

#### Recovery

- Athletes that are not fully recovered from an initial concussion are significantly vulnerable for recurrent, cumulative, and even catastrophic consequences of a second concussive injury. Such difficulties are prevented if the athlete is allowed time to recover from concussion and return to play decisions are carefully made. No athlete should return to sport or other at-risk participation when symptoms of concussion are present and recovery is ongoing. In summary, the best way to prevent difficulties with concussion is to manage the injury properly when it does occur.

#### Treatment

- At the forefront of proper concussion management is the implementation of baseline and/or post-injury neurocognitive testing. Such evaluation can help to objectively evaluate the concussed athlete's post-injury condition and track recovery for safe return to play, thus preventing the cumulative effects of concussion. In fact, neurocognitive testing has recently been called the "cornerstone" of proper concussion management by an international panel of sports medicine experts.

- Current management guidelines (i.e. Grade 1, 2, 3 of concussion) are not evidenced-based and little to no scientific data to support the arbitrary systems that are in place to manage concussion. As a result, there are currently 19 different management criteria available for concussion management. As a result, they are often misused and misinterpreted.
- Traditional neurological and radiologic procedures, such as CT, MRI, and EEG, although helpful in identifying more serious concerns (e.g. skull fracture, hematoma, contusion), are not useful in identifying the effects of concussion. Such tests are typically unremarkable or normal, even in athletes sustaining a severe concussion. The reason for this issue is that concussion is a metabolic rather than structural injury. Thus, structural neuroimaging techniques are insensitive to the effects of concussion.
- Athletes should complete the following step-wise process prior to return to play following concussion.
  - Removal from contest following an signs / symptoms of concussion
  - No return to play in current game
  - Medical evaluation following injury
    - Rule out more serious intracranial pathology
  - Step-wise return to play
    - No activity - rest
    - Light aerobic exercise
    - Sport-specific training
    - Non-contact drills
    - Full-contact drills
    - Game play
- The goal of treatment is to allow the brain injury to heal. Concussions are treated differently depending on their level of severity. Treatment may include:
  - Rest - provide adequate time for recovery. Do not rush back into daily activities for work or school.
  - Preventing re-injury - avoid activities that might jolt or jar your head. Never return to a sports activity until your doctor has given you clearance. Ask when it's safe to drive a car, ride a bike, work or play at heights, or use heavy equipment.
  - Observation by a responsible adult - ask someone to awaken you every few hours as

advised by your doctor. The doctor will explain how to watch for complications such as bleeding in the brain.

- Limiting exposure to drugs - do not take medicines without your doctor's permission. This is especially true to aspirin, blood thinners, and drugs that cause drowsiness. Avoid use of alcohol or illicit drugs.
- Consult with a Credentialed ImPACT Consultant for a full recovery

As always if you have any questions do not hesitate to contact me directly in the health office, phone: 860-859-1900 ext 136 or by email: [lcole@stmct.org](mailto:lcole@stmct.org) . Have a wonderful Thanksgiving.