



# *The Benedictine Counselor*

## *Newsletter of Benedictine Counseling Services*

*A Ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia*

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Benedictine Counseling Services (BCS) is preparing a monthly newsletter, *The Benedictine Counselor*. The newsletter will be made available to Catholic schools in the Diocese of Arlington and to other interested parties, and it is intended to provide information of interest for teachers and parents.

The Catholic Church's teaching, stated in the Baptismal rite and statements by the Pope and Bishops, has wisely stated that parents are the first educators of their children. For anyone familiar with Catholic schools, it is clear that teachers are foremost in assisting in this important task. We hope that *The Benedictine Counselor* will support

parents and teachers – and all those involved in helping children to grow as happy, healthy, faith-filled persons.

Benedictine Counseling Services began in 1988 and is a ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia. The primary focus of BCS has been to provide school counselors for Catholic schools. Services are being extended at this time to include counseling, psychological, and consultation services for individuals and families, particularly for residents at BARN (Benedictine Aid and Relief for Neighbors) and other women and children who are homeless.

**Advent** begins our Church year. During Advent we recall the centuries of longing for the coming of the Messiah. King David, Isaiah the prophet and so many of God's people longed for the day when Jesus would be born. We also recall the waiting of Mary and Joseph for the birth of the baby, Jesus. For those of you who have waited for a baby or a baby brother or sister, you know the excitement, the concern that

everything go alright, and the wishing that the time would go quicker. As a family it is important to have a spiritual preparation for Christmas, besides all the other preparation. In the midst of all the other "important" things to do, there is one most important Person to prepare for. During Advent the Church reminds us it is Jesus' birthday we prepare for.



Elsa Perez, Sr. Glenna Smith, Erin Gaudreault, Kathy Persson, Pauline Meno, Linda Zegley  
Not pictured: Mary Sandiford, Tammie DiPaolo, Steve Palmer, Administrative Assistant.

#### According to Brain Research – Emotion affects Learning and Teaching

Many years of brain research are enhancing our understanding of learning and of the learner and have the potential to impact our teaching in exciting ways. Some of what is considered “tried and true” has, indeed, been tried over the decades and is proving to be true, but other aspects of teaching and learning can be improved by attention to emerging results from the research.

The role of emotion in learning is one area of interest. Various parts of the brain must work together to facilitate learning. Basically, when the cerebellum and brain stem, the limbic system (considered the emotional center), and the neocortex communicate effectively, learning can happen. If there is an impairment of sorts in the communication among these parts of the brain, learning is not as efficient or cannot occur. In this context, the “emotional center” of the brain becomes a major player. The impact of emotion, e.g., whether the child feels safe or threat-

ened, happy or sad, etc. can assist or hamper the child’s ability to learn. The more we are aware of and responsive to this aspect of our children in our classrooms and at home, the better chance the child has of learning to his/her potential.

With an understanding of brain dynamics, parents and teachers can have an even greater impact on students' learning by intentionally creating environments that are stimulating and safe, challenging and respectful. When adults are cognizant of a child's emotional compass, real change, real learning is possible for all children.

#### **A Few Resources** (among MANY):

Brain Connection [\\_www.brainconnection.com/\\_](http://www.brainconnection.com/)

Neuroscience for Kids [\\_http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/neurok.html\\_](http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/neurok.html)

New Horizons for Learning [\\_http://www.newhorizons.org/neuro/front\\_neuro.html\\_](http://www.newhorizons.org/neuro/front_neuro.html)

Brain Gym [\\_www.braingym.org/\\_](http://www.braingym.org/)

Diane Connell - Brain-Based Strategies to Reach Every Learner (2005)

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