

St. Joseph School Academics

Transforming St. Joseph School into

a "School of the Future"

This 2008-09 school year, a group of teachers and students have begun the process of transforming the school into a place where students and teachers want to be because both the curriculum and the teaching methodology are exciting and purposeful while using the tools that are relevant to the 21st century. This new philosophy is called "School of the Future" and is being championed in Hawai'i by the Hawai'i Association of Independent Schools. St. Joseph School is the first independent (private) school in East Hawai'i to embrace the School of the Future model.

School of the Future uses the methodology known as constructivist pedagogy which is "the creation of classroom environments, activities, and methods...with goals that focus on individual students developing deep understandings in the subject matter of interest and habits of mind that aid in future learning."

To become a School of the Future, St. Joseph needs to implement project-based learning and adapt the use of technology in the learning experience. The characteristics of project-based learning are that (1) learning is driven by challenging, open-ended problems, (2) students work in small collaborative groups, and (3) in addition to their traditional responsibilities teachers will take on the role of facilitators of learning. Students will be given the opportunity to use a rich mix of technology – such as laptops, iPods, and cell phones – as both resources and means of increasing their learning.

We are especially excited about one of the partners we have in this process. The University of Hawai'i at Hilo Teacher Preparation Program is working with our School of the Future team to develop curricula and methodology. University students are being paired with our teachers across the school, from kindergarten through grade 12, starting in spring 2009. Together, they will develop lessons using constructivist methodology and a rich mix of media and technology. Many of our teachers are doing research and have already begun to develop lessons on their own. St. Joseph School will begin formally piloting constructivist classes in the 2009-10 school year.

The School of the Future team is composed of Mrs. Susan Wehrsig (team leader), Sr. Barbara Jean Wajda, OSF, Mrs. Carmen Stack, Mrs. Janan Malinowski, Ms. Miri Sumida, Mrs. Marion Buscher, Ms. Katie Virkus, two high school students (in 7th and 11th grades), and two UH Hilo professors. Our development director, Dr. Patrick Naughton, is facilitating the process. Please contact any of these individuals if you are interested in participating in the school's transformation or for further information.

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