

## Reading for Life II

Last fall on these pages I wrote an article explaining the deliberate reasoning behind how and why we work to develop a culture of reading at Princeton Academy of the Sacred Heart. As we begin construction of the William E. Simon Chapel Library I want to share with you some of the same deliberate thinking that has gone into its design.

The location of the chapel library was chosen for a number of reasons. It is at the center, the very heart of the school. Easy access from both the lower and middle school areas validates the importance of reading as a habit of self-education, recreation, and personal growth. Its location at the entrance of the school lets visitors and prospective students know the value that we put on reading. Finally, combining a chapel and a library supports the idea that the spiritual and intellectual are not in opposition, as too many in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would have us believe. In fact, they are intertwined. A religious I know put it very succinctly when she said; “We want our students to see God in poetry, in physics, in all of His creation.”

Combining the collections of the lower and middle school supports our culture of reading by encouraging every student to read at his own pace. Many of our students read above grade level, and separate libraries can limit a growing reader’s choices or force a school to waste resources on multiple copies of books for two locations. Just as adults don’t mind occasionally re-reading a book they read when they were younger (I highly recommend Huxley’s Brave New World), students, too, enjoy the comfort of re-reading a favorite story or author. Finally, adults and older boys in the same space as our younger boys serve as powerful role models to one another, reinforcing reading for information, for knowledge, or just for the sheer joy of it.

Studies consistently show that boys, to a greater extent than girls, are drawn to technology. Unfortunately, they also tend to show that more often than not the draw to technology is in the form of the many games available for computers and computerized gaming devices. Consequently, we have decided that our library, while high tech (it will have wireless connectivity and a computerized catalog), will have low visibility technology. Rather than rows of desktop computers taking up space and enticing our students with promises of games and instant messaging, we intend to create large open areas for reading and study that will have comfortable chairs and cushions for relaxation and study carrels and tables for work. Laptops will be available at the circulation desk, and students will be allowed to check these out for purposeful use. But the main intent of the design is to draw our students to the printed word.

Developing a love of reading is one of the most important things you can do for your children. Make sure to visit the library regularly, and when our chapel library is completed, visit it as often as possible.