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Dear 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Parents and Guardians:

In a few months your child will be reaching another milestone. He or she will be finishing elementary school and will be getting ready to start middle school. At this junction many families look at all the options that are available for middle school. For many the question is transferring to public school or staying at Sacred Heart. To help you make an informed decision, we are including in this letter information regarding our improvements and updates to our Middle School. We continue to strive to make the educational experience at Sacred Heart the best for you and your child.

At Sacred Heart School it is our goal to foster our students' growth intellectually, socially, emotionally and spiritually. We strongly adhere to our Mission Statement, which states: *"Our Sacred Heart School community exists for the purpose of guiding all of its students, recognizing each child's unique learning style and abilities, toward Catholic faith-based values and morals, academic excellence, creative expression, responsible citizenship and physical development."* We provide a distinctive environment that allows the faculty and staff to work together with the parents in all aspects of our students' education. Our school is fully committed to providing a superior academic program in a safe, value-centered and faith-based environment.

Here are some recent highlights for our school that you may or may not be aware of:

- Our school has been reaccredited by New England Association of Schools and Colleges and by the Connecticut State Department of Education.
- In the 2010 standardized tests, both our 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades scored at a grade equivalent that is over 2 years ahead (8.7 and 10.6 respectively) while the 7<sup>th</sup> grade scored over one full year of their current grade level (8.6).
- Our middle school now has a chapter of the National Junior Honor Society (NJHS).
- We have dynamically integrated technology in the classroom through the use of interactive white boards in every classroom and online resources.
- We have updated and renovated many of our facilities including our science lab with new equipment and technology, and have established a plan for additional renovations in the upcoming years.
- All new curriculum acquired has been purchased with online and digital resources for teachers and students.
- SHS acquired 10 Netbook computers used as tools for our new and innovative middle school Library Sciences Internet Research curriculum.
- We continue to offer our highly successful Advanced Math for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students.

- The RISEN Learning Resource Center, led by a full-time, certified special education teacher continues to provide academic support for all our students.
- We have increased the number of extracurricular programs, which now include, Altar Servers and liturgical participation, Athletics (soccer, basketball and track and field), Band, Children's Choir, Drama Club, NJHS, Boy & Girl Scouts, Service Club, Student Ambassadors, and Student Council.
- Our students also participate in local and statewide competitions such as Math Counts, poster and essay contests and the Knights of Columbus Spelling Bee, as well as having the opportunity to participate in Future Musicians Regional and All-State Band concerts.
- We actively celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, Peace Day, Veterans Day, Martin Luther King Day, Black History Month, St. Patrick's Day, Memorial Day, and many other ethnic, religious and community celebrations.
- We continue to welcome guest speakers including Junior Achievement and Pfizer Science Expo among others.
- Our emphasis on safety includes controlled access to the school with buzzer and outdoor security camera, as well as 8 indoor cameras with a recording device monitor all main hallways, church vestibule and the cafeteria.
- Our efforts to provide a healthy environment have resulted in one of the lowest school absenteeism rate in Groton.
- We provide many opportunities for charitable work and for the development of leadership skills, giving our students a foundation that leads them towards social responsibility.
- Religious education continues to nurture our students' spiritual life, and now includes our 8<sup>th</sup> grade retreat that focuses on spiritually preparing our graduating class for high school.

Characteristics that make SHS attractive to middle school families are a caring faculty and staff, a diverse student body, a smaller school size, updated facilities, differentiated instruction approach, emphasis on respect and courteous behavior, robust school-parish collaborations, and strong parent-school ties. Indeed, there are plenty of opportunities for parental involvement allowing our families to establish a partnership with our school as well as a strong sense of community. For all these reasons, many families choose to continue at SHS through the middle school years. Whether our graduates choose to go to a Catholic high school or a public school, our alumni not only successfully adapt, but they excel in their new schools. Many come back and tell us how well our middle school prepared them for the challenges of high school.

We acknowledge that no school is right for all students. Ultimately, as parents, you are tasked to assess your family's unique circumstances and needs and make the decision that is right for you and your child. We hope that this letter has provided you with information that will help you determine if we are the right institution for your child's middle school years. We would also like to invite you to a Middle School Open House, prepared exclusively for our 5<sup>th</sup> grade families by our middle school teachers. The Open House will take place on Monday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at 5:30 PM in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade room. We have very much enjoyed having you as part of our school and look forward to having your child at our school next year. Regardless of your decision, we stand ready to assist you in any way possible as our students transition into their next big phase of their educational journey.

Wishing you the peace and the love of Christ,

Soraya V. Betancourt-Calle, Ph.D.  
Principal