

## Father Dueñas Memorial School

October 16, 2009

Dear parents, students, alumni, and friends of FD,

For the second time in a row, I am sending this letter, both through your sons, and through the official FDMS website, aware though I am that at least some of you will not get to read this.

The month of October is more than half-way through! The first quarter exams are behind us. The parent-teacher conference is coming your way on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Students will have no class and parents can start coming from 1:00 – 4:00 PM and then from 5:30 – 7:30 PM. Report cards will be distributed at the Cafeteria, and teachers will be available in their respective assigned rooms. I ask that parents limit their interaction with teachers to about five minutes to give everyone a chance to meet with teachers.

Yesterday evening, we had the first meeting of the **PARENTS' ADVISORY BOARD**. First of all, I would like to thank all those who came for the meeting and congratulate the new set of officers. Secondly, I ask for apologies since the meeting was called this late. Being new on board, there were simply a slew of things that needed to be attended to urgently, the issue of student discipline being one of them. Although the PAB is not intended to tell the Administration what to do and how to run the school, I would like you to know that we value the input and feedback you give us, and, needless to say, the help that the PAB gives to the school as we work hand-in-hand for its overall welfare and the students' total education. Let me put it to you straight ... We need you, and we appreciate your active, hands-on presence. Without the PAB, many of the slated activities for the year would not prosper for sheer lack of material and personnel resources!

The same goes true with regard to the pro-active presence of the alumni. To the alumni, who act either in their capacity as individuals or as registered members of the **FDAA**, go my sincerest thanks in advance. Even as I write, preparations are under way for a Golf Tournament hosted by the class of 1979, slated for Saturday, 17 October, 2009. Proceeds will go both to their scholarship program and to help support the capital needs of the school. I wish them luck and I encourage everyone to give whatever support they can give the organizers.

One of the topics we took up with the Board had to do with the school's short-term goals that need immediate attention given the approaching visit of the WASC Accrediting team, come April 19-20, 2010. Said short-term goals are tied-up with the **Kamalen Karidat** building, which ought to have been vacated and turned over to FDMS a few months ago. Our capacity to respond with dispatch to two important areas for growth identified by the WASC visiting team is based on the immediate and total turn-over of

the whole building to FDMS. The said building is envisioned to answer the need for expanded science laboratories and improved school library facilities. The Administration and Staff are currently working to respond adequately to three other areas for growth identified by the same team.

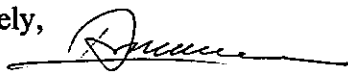
Another topic that came up during the discussion has to do with the amended handbook with specific reference to student rights and responsibilities. Whilst there were some apprehensions raised on the advisability of giving PUBLIC WARNINGS to erring students, the tone of the discussion with PAB turned in favor of the need to actually put more teeth to the rules of discipline, with responsibility and accountability to be given more emphasis through students' knowing exactly what the consequences of their behavior are.

In this regard, I could not agree more with the PAB when it was mentioned that parents who do not agree with the rules as stipulated in the handbook are actually free to send their sons for schooling elsewhere. In the meantime, we who deal with more than 400 high school kids everyday are faced with what appears to be a pervading and prevailing culture of lying, stealing, cheating on tests, papers, and homeworks, bullying, and – we highly suspect – a sneaking attempt at pushing drugs on and off campus.

Since FD is a Catholic school meant to be “strong in the faith,” you cannot fault us for insisting that this prevailing – if, un-Christian – culture gets nipped in the bud. One recurrent problem we are facing, to cite an example, is the oft repeated complaints of students, usually from the freshmen, whose lockers are broken into, and hijacked by others. Losses of expensive items like iPhones and iPods are another clear example. The same goes for the issue of bullying, gross disrespect for teachers, and the rampant plagiarism and copying of others' papers, etc. The list could go on. When the culture is deep-seated, a mere slap on the wrist simply will not do. As educators, our task is to instill a culture that is consistent with the Archdiocesan policies and the school's Vision-Mission. This we do positively through teaching and modeling. This we also do through what may appear, at first blush, to be negative – the institution of rules of accountability and responsibility. Both accountability and responsibility demand that students are informed clearly about certain consequences of their erring behavior. The goals of such are not punishment, per se, but the gradual instilling of the values behind those rules. And if one defies and infringes on such rules in public, the same “public” body, whose right to the common good has been trodden upon in some way, needs to know that those same rights are upheld and protected. Ultimately then, the whole issue of student discipline is meant to safeguard those values that the school stands for – as a Catholic learning institution for boys.

All subsequent letters will henceforth be posted only on the website.

Sincerely,



Fr. Vitaliano Chito Dimaranan, SDB