

August 28, 2007

Dear St. Monica Math student parents:

Welcome to a new and exciting school year. Let me introduce myself. My name is Deborah Harris and I am a member of the St. Rita Catholic Community. This is my 13th year teaching at St. Monica and I am a certified elementary and high school mathematics teacher. I have a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science with a minor in mathematics and a Masters of Business Administration from Southern Methodist University. I was in the high-tech business world for over twelve years and also a Girl Scout leader for the past thirteen years. My husband, Douglas, is the Associate Dean and Research Professor in the Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science and the executive director of the Cyber Security and Emergency Preparedness Institute at the University of Texas at Dallas. We have been married for 29 years and have a daughter named Sarah who is a senior finance major at Texas A&M and will graduate this December. As you can see, we are a family of educators.

Parents and teachers working together help students be the best they can be. You should never hesitate to contact me to ask questions about your child's math progress or any other matter regarding his/her learning experience. You may email me using Parent Access if you have it. My email is: dharris@stmonicaschool.org. Otherwise, you may call the main school office number to leave a message or you may send a **sealed** note. I will get back to you as quickly as possible. On the same note, if I feel it is necessary to communicate with you about issues of work or behavior, I will do so. Together we can make this school year the best your child has ever had.

If your child uses a private tutor, the tutor may feel free to communicate with me through the main school office or via email. Through this two-way communication, we can keep each other informed on your child's progress.

Starting August 27, 2007 a math lab will be available immediately after school on Monday through Thursday from 3:35 PM – 4:00 PM. It will be held in the math teacher's room. Students should bring their math book and notebook along with any questions they might have. At that time they can get specific problems resolved or sharpen their math skills or go over old tests. If math lab is canceled, a note will be placed on the teacher's door. Students should be picked up at the usual Middle School morning drop off location promptly at 4 PM. Students who are unable to attend math lab that day should feel free to talk with their teacher and request an agreeable time to meet either before school or during lunch.

In order to maintain a smooth running classroom, class rules and proper behavior are necessary. Students have discussed the importance of the following rules in making our classroom productive and fun. These are our classroom rules:

- Be in your assigned seat, ready to work when the tardy bell rings.
- Handle any personal business before coming to class.
- Be prepared for class by having all the necessary supplies.
- Respect everyone and their right to learn.
- Be a good listener and follow directions.
- Raise your hand to speak and put it down until others are finished talking.
- Respect the property and space of each individual.
- Remain in your seat while the teacher or fellow student is talking.

By allowing the students to help make these rules, I hope this will give them the ownership, motivation, and enthusiasm to abide by the rules. On the same note, students are expected to obey school rules and to develop skills of personal responsibility and polite interaction with others. For further details, please see your Family/School Handbook regarding behavior expectations and discipline.

My expectation for the school year is that your child strives to do his/her best in all things. I promise to do my best to encourage each and every student as often as possible. Responsibility is an important part of growing up. It is the responsibility of the student to find out the assignments and class work that has been assigned or missed during their absence of any kind. Missing the test review is not an excuse for not taking the test. If your child is absent for a test, he/she needs to schedule a time to take the test.

There are several areas regarding other requirements and grading listed below:

- Projects may be assigned. If so, rubrics will be given to the student the day the project is assigned explaining due date and how the project will be graded.
- Homework is typically given every night and due the following school day.
- In grades 6-8, all missing homework assignments (not due to an absence) will receive a zero. Notes to the teacher will not be accepted in place of the assignment. Homework that is faxed or delivered to the school once class starts will not be accepted.
- Most homework is graded and returned within 5 school days.
- A test review will occur the day before each test. If your child is absent for the test review, they are responsible for getting the review notes/assignment from another classmate. No new material will be covered that day.
- Tests are typically given every two weeks on Thursdays and are returned to the students (the exception being finals) the following week.
- All math work is done in pencil and corrected in red pen.
- All math homework will have a MLA format heading in the upper left hand corner and done on loose-leaf paper and put in their notebook. Class examples, notes, and reviews will be done in their math notebook for future use as test review material.
- Points will be deducted for an improper heading, papers done in ink, and those that are not neat and readable.
- In 6th grade, class work/homework counts as 35% of their total grade while tests/projects/quizzes count 65% of their total grade. In 7th/8th grade, the percentages are 25% and 75% respectively.
- The lowest daily grade will be dropped at the end of each quarter.
- Schoolbooks must remain covered throughout the school year and brought to class each day along with the proper supplies necessary for class.

Thank you for the privilege of instructing your child this school year. I look forward to a fabulous year of planning and teaching, being of service in any way I can, and getting to know your child. Together we will be an awesome team to make your child the best they can be.

God bless.

Deborah Harris

Middle School Math Teacher