

August 2018

Dear Parents,

Greetings from Saint Mary School! I am looking forward to a successful start to our year. The children may feel a bit overwhelmed, but please help me reassure them we will work together to ensure success! Over the first few days, we will be settling into our routine and will gradually introduce the expectations for each subject area. This letter will highlight some important information that will enable your child to learn about responsibility and excel in school this year.

Our class homepage is an excellent communication tool and provides insight to what we are doing in class. It will be updated weekly with upcoming tests and projects. Daily homework and specific assignments are written in student planners. It also has multiple resources to support your child's success across the curriculum. Check it out!

<http://www.saintmaryschool.net/grade-3-mrs-williams>

Homework

It is my belief that homework should be “designed,” not just assigned. To that end, homework assignments will reinforce the concepts we are covering in class and are expected to take no more than approximately 1 hour per evening. If your child is consistently spending more time than that, please let me know. Children will often have time to begin working on homework assignments in class if they use their time wisely. I encourage them to do so; they work hard all day in school and need some “down time” at home.

Weekend homework will be kept to a minimum and will consist of a reading log, math, studying for upcoming tests, and occasional projects. I do encourage reading over the weekend!

Please support your child when homework is assigned and help him/her complete it on time to the best of his/her ability. If you see your child is struggling with a particular concept, please note on the homework so I can follow up on it in class. Homework is an opportunity for growth in self-discipline and organizational skills. Completing assignments and turning them in on time can improve one's grade. However, if a student neglects to complete assignments in a timely manner, progress and grades will be negatively affected.

Illness or emergency situations will excuse your child, although, it is the responsibility of the *student* to make up all missed assignments. Please send a signed note explaining the absence or circumstance the next day of school in order for your child to be excused. An absent folder will go home with the student when they return to school. Completed work should be returned in the folder within *three* days of returning to school.

Overview of Subject Areas

We have adopted a comprehensive English Language Arts program, *Journeys*, which includes reading, phonics, spelling, writing, English grammar, listening, and speaking. ***Journeys provides significant digital support.*** Students are encouraged to utilize all the customized digital resources located on our class homepage.

Reading is an integral part of learning. Daily practice with reading skills will promote greater learning across the curriculum. We will have nightly reading logs, weekly tests, read chapter books, and have a Battle of the Books competition in the Spring. Detailed reading expectations for the year are located on our class homepage.

Accelerated Reader (AR) is a fun way to get kids reading different genres of books at an appropriate level. Children can read books either at school or at home, and take tests in class.

In ***spelling***, students are expected to master high-frequency words in addition to weekly lists of words. New lists will come home in the students' planners each Monday and tests will be given every Friday. We will work with the words daily in class and students will have reinforcement homework during the week. Since the spelling program focuses on students being able to spell across the curriculum, tests will also include "unseen dictation sentences" which will be new to the students, but will consist of words learned in prior situations. The sentences will be graded on formal sentence structure, capitalization, and punctuation. Children are also given the opportunity to earn extra credit in spelling by completing 6 "Spelling Pie" activities each week. The Spelling Pie is located on our class homepage. You do not have to wait until the lists come home on Mondays to begin; feel free to begin working with the words over the weekend if you wish.

We will do a great deal of writing throughout the year to expose the children to many different types of written expression. Writing skills will be reinforced through our study of grammar as well. In ***handwriting***, we will be learning the art of cursive through, *Handwriting Without Tears*.

Math "Knowing mathematics is doing mathematics." Through Saxon, we will deepen our knowledge of place value, addition and subtraction skills, problem solving skills, multiplication, division, money, time, measurement, and geometry. A strong emphasis will be placed on students mastering "facts" at an automatic level. Learning addition, subtraction, and multiplication skills with speed and accuracy will bridge a smoother transition into more advanced math skills. We will have daily drills so children can see a steady progression in their abilities. The drills will be checked for speed, accuracy and progress. We will take grades on these drills regularly. Daily review at home (using practice sheets, flash cards, computer games, etc.) will aid in their success.

Religion is “taught” all day, every day. We take time to pray several times a day and will recognize God’s ever-presence with us as we work, play, eat, and travel throughout our school day. Our faith will be strengthened by learning about our Church community and its leaders. The children will also learn how they can best love and serve God in their daily lives. We are blessed with the opportunity to attend Mass as a school each Thursday at 8:15 and invite you to join us when possible. You are welcome to take your child to sit with you at Mass. We ask that you choose a seat either behind all the classes or in the areas with no classes. It is much easier for small children to be attentive during Mass if they can see, so we ask adults not to sit with the classes, as this may block the view of the children behind.

Science and Social Studies are taught in units. In science we will explore the solar system, organisms, energy, and matter using the Discovery Education “Techbook”, a web-based program which utilizes video, animation, hands-on activities, virtual labs, and e-books. Our Social Studies units will focus on community, map skills, the regions of the United States, and current events.

Students will be tested in all of the above areas. Tests will be announced in advance, and written in the planners. Check our class homepage for updates.

Grading is based on correct completion of work, quizzes, homework, participation, projects, neatness and effort. The grading system is: A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79), D (60-69), and F (below 60).

Our lunch time is 11:50 so feel free to send in a DRY, NON-MESSY, HEALTHY snack with your child. No drinks, please! We will have a “working” snack time each day.

Each Friday, a folder will be sent home with completed and graded school work, along with school notes and information for you to look through with your child. Please sign and return their “Friday Folder” each Monday.

Thank you for all of your help and support. I look forward to getting to know each of you and your children better throughout the year. If you have any questions concerning your child’s progress in class, please feel free to reach me through e-mail at madeline.williams@saintmaryschool.net.

God Bless,

Mrs. Williams