

Dear Parents,

First, let us thank those of you who came to Parent Orientation. We appreciate the time you are taking to acquaint yourselves with first grade procedures, rules, and expectations. We feel there are some things that we need to communicate to you in order to make the school year go more smoothly for all of us.

We feel that you should be involved every step of the way. That's why we encourage you to join us for field trips, special events at school and to volunteer for recess supervision. If you have any concerns, please feel free to email us or call us before or after school. Our voice mail is checked each day after school. If you need to contact us during the day please call the office.

Religion

Our religion series this year is called "Call to Faith." Mrs. Heckle, our guidance teacher will be using the series, "Growing in Love." This will focus on human growth and development. We have also attached a sheet which has all of the prayers that your child should know this year. We will say them throughout the year, but saying them at home each day will help your child learn them more quickly. First grade will attend liturgies every Friday at 8:45 A.M. Please check the school calendar to see when your child will be attending liturgies. First graders are paired up with a 5th grade "buddy". They will sit with that student during liturgy.

Discipline

Learning to make good choices is just a normal part of growing up. Most situations can be handled by redirecting a student. On the first day of school, your first grader had a hand in making the classroom rules. The rules they came up with were recorded on a classroom chart. We review the rules daily. You can see a copy of the rules your child came up with in your packet.

Here at St. Francis, we will be using Positive Behavior Support program, otherwise known as PBS. This a school-wide program geared towards acknowledging and reinforcing positive behavior. It is a program that supports consistency with all staff members and students. Students will be rewarded based on the positive behavior they are exhibiting. There are different expectations for various places throughout the school building, both inside and outside. Those expectations have been taught by each classroom teacher and is displayed throughout the school.

Working together, we will try to eliminate problems and create a positive atmosphere where all students are learning.

What's the Scoop in 1st Grade?

There are many exciting things going on this year! We plan to visit the Science Center, Reiman Gardens and Blank Park Zoo. We will have the Des Moines Water Works, Junior Achievement, Mike Marsh and the West Des Moines Public Works come visit us in the classroom. Our science units require a high number of experiments and activities. Students will be interacting with the world around them during these units. We also plan to expose the children to a variety of animal life later in the year. An ant farm, butterfly nursery, tadpoles, and a chick incubator will be used to show the growth and changes these animals go through during their early life stages.

Weekly Newsletter

Each Friday a newsletter will be posted on the first grade web page, briefing you on the lessons for the following week. These lessons will align to our diocesan standards and benchmarks for first grade. In these letters we will also highlight special events that pertain to your children.

Study Skills, Responsibility, & Study Time

We want our students to be life long learners with strong study habits. We encourage you to make reading an important part of each day with your child. Reading to your child and sharing your love for books will help pass on that enthusiasm! We feel that at least 20 minutes a night should be spent reading with your child. These 20 minutes of reading is considered his/her homework. Please fill out our reading log and turn it in at the end of each month.

If time allows, your child can also work each night studying weekly sight words, spelling words, addition and subtraction flash cards, his/her list of prayers, or Take Home Backpacks which will be sent home each Wednesday. This will also instill healthy study habits that will be needed for his/her educational career.

Computer use in the Classroom

The students will have computer access very soon! They will be using KidPix, Millie's Math, Math Blaster, Mighty Math Zoo Zillions and Carnival Count Down during center time. Other programs and Internet sites will likely be added during the year. 1st graders will have opportunities to work with our computer teacher, Mrs. Diane Nitzel. Mrs. Nitzel will work with small groups and the whole class to introduce new programs to the students and complete projects. We hope to integrate computers into the many different areas of our curriculum. Be sure to check out our web site at www.stfrancisschool.org for first grade work.

Report Cards

Report cards will go home at the end of each trimester. You will see a number of categories broken down into sections of work habits, Christian values, and specific content areas. The student is given one of four grades for each entry:

- 4= Meets grade-level expectations with excellence.
- 3= Meets grade- level expectations.
- 2= Progressing towards grade- level expectations.
- 1= Attempts; not meeting grade-level expectations.

We welcome any questions or comments regarding report cards. Please call or make an appointment to discuss any concerns. Along with the report card a student portfolio will be sent home each trimester. Please look through the portfolio and report card with your child. Please return the portfolio with that trimester's work inside so we can compare growth throughout the year.

Notes Home

Some papers will be sent home throughout the week. Students will put these papers in a purple folder. Please look in the purple folder each night and return the folder with your child the next day. Most projects and class work will be kept at school until Friday. On Friday, student work and classroom notes will be placed in a large legal folder to be taken home. We ask that you review all papers in this folder and return the folder and any

returnable papers each Monday. We have found that this procedure saves us instructional time with your child. We hope that this will be a special time for you and your child to discuss the week and review their work. Your child works very hard during the day and loves to show off his/her work!

Birthday Treats

Our policy at Saint Francis regarding birthday treats is to send them home to be eaten. At the end of the day treats will be distributed and taken home. For this reason treats must be wrapped individually. Students may bring store bought treats or non-food items to be shared. We encourage treats to be from the list of peanut safe items listed in the handbook.

Super Star

Super Star is our program to let each child share about themselves. On Friday students will bring home a poster to complete and return to school on Monday. The students can also bring up to ten photographs to share. The pictures and poster will be displayed on the bulletin board for one week and then returned home. Your child may bring three treasured items to share with the class on the day of their presentation. While we encourage you to join your child for lunch from 11:45-12:05 and recess immediately following, please note that your child will be giving their presentation to their classmates only. Please refer to the classroom schedule for your child's *super star* day with their classmates.

Book Order

If your child would like to order books through the Scholastic Book Club, you need to write **one** check to Scholastic and enclose the check with the order form. ***Please do not send cash.*** Please label an envelope with your child's name. We will send home book orders at the beginning of each month. Book orders will be due on the date indicated on the attached note. Thanks for taking the time to order.

My Weekly Chart

Each week your child will bring home a weekly chart/binder that will be filled out by his/her teacher and needed to be signed and returned the following Monday.

In this chart we will include 5 subjects taught each day and their behavior overall for the week. Each subject will be marked with a 1 or a 2 (1=Needs continued practice 2=Understands Material). We will write down what is being taught when they receive a 1 to help you know what it is they may need more practice with at home. If they do receive a 1, we will be sure to take the time here at school to continue working on that particular material or send home some practice worksheets so each child is given the opportunity for growth and success.

The purpose of this chart is to stay on top of any issues that may arise, to monitor progress and to be on the same page with you as far as knowing where our students and your child are at.

Sincerely,

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