

# Math Update

December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Greetings Parents!

I hope you are having a hope-filled Advent season! I felt it was important to give you an update from the math classroom. There have been some changes I have made in student expectations and overall organization. Please forgive me for not communicating these changes sooner.

Accelerated Math (AM) is an integral part of the math curriculum here at St. Mary's. AM allows students to review and practice concepts introduced in class. Each week the students' goal is to master five objectives—four objectives for fourth graders as they have less AM time. Mastering objectives includes demonstrating knowledge of a concept on a practice of around five problems per objective and then continuing that mastery on a test. Therefore, to master five objectives a week a student would need to do roughly fifty problems, not including some review problems they will get throughout the week on practices and/or tests. Each grade has forty minutes per day dedicated to AM. To assure forward movement in students learning math I am considering altering our schedule to spend some time on basic math facts, as I believe students would benefit from strengthening their ability to quickly recall those fundamentals.

My policy on homework focuses on students learning from mistakes. Each student gets full credit for their homework, as long as it is complete and work is clearly shown. We review the assignment together and take time to discuss particular problems together as a class. I encourage the students to take notes on their homework in an effort to encourage them to learn from their mistakes and improve upon a particular concept. I read a book recently that stated "If you never make a mistake, then you likely haven't learned anything at all." While I don't encourage the students to get problems wrong, I do encourage them to analyze the problems they get wrong and try to discover and learn from their mistake.

Along with learning from mistakes on homework, I also use this policy on exams. While I do not give full credit for exams just for getting it done (I'm sure the students wish I did ☺), I do allow each student to earn a portion of points they may have lost on an exam by re-working similar problems from the textbook. This practice strengthens student learning, just as we adults make corrections and adjustments when we're learning something new. Many math concepts depend on mastery of previous concepts, and more than one opportunity to demonstrate learning increases likelihood of students succeeding in the future.

I have created a website to help students and parents monitor assignments and important dates at home. While it is incomplete, it does include a calendar of each class's lesson for the day and homework assignments. The site link is:

<https://sites.google.com/site/stmarysmath/>

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns please do not hesitate to e-mail at: [jmitchell@st-marysschool.com](mailto:jmitchell@st-marysschool.com) or call at 246-2469 ext. 243.

Mr. Jake Mitchell