

Greetings, parents! We wanted to follow-up our Back-to-School night info with a short email update about math class specifics. (Actually...it ended up not being very short! Forgive!) Hopefully this info will answer any burning questions and also put your mind at ease if math class gives anyone in your family the jitters.

Class Structure - We will be doing lots mixing it up with class grouping/structures and will provide lots of 'station' days so kids can get support that is tailored to their level for that particular skill. It's a great way to keep all kids at the just-right challenge level. This means your child will be working with both teachers and in both classrooms, but all of your child's grading will be handled by his/her official math teacher only. Last year's kids (and adults!) found this structure really fun and produced wonderful academic results, too. Win-win!

Math Fact Fluency - We cannot emphasize enough how important it is for kids to have mastered their basic multiplication facts in order to tackle this year's curriculum without tears, headaches and stress. Kids who do not have their facts down will find homework taking much longer than it should and will feel bamboozled by some of the skills that should be relatively easy (ie, finding the factors of a number). Here are some ideas to help:

- Flashcards (we gave time in class last week for kids to make a set)
- Out-loud practice with a parent
- Math apps ([Math BINGO](#) is a good one!)
- Computer programs ([XtraMath](#) is free, but kinda boring option. [Reflex](#) math is awesome, but does cost \$30 for a parent account. It provides tailored practice with lots of different "game" options.)

As old-fashioned as it may sound, your child's entire math attitude will be largely impacted by their math fact fluency. Please help us get all fifth graders up-to-speed with math facts.

Homework - Homework will almost always be given out on Monday and returned to us on Friday morning. If your child needs an extension to get the work completed (this may be especially needed when they have been absent) please just write a parent note on the packet or shoot us an email. We encourage kids to ask questions all week about homework vs. waiting until the night before it is due to realize they need a little help. We used to give out homework that was always due the next day and have found that the packet gives families the option to pace the work in whatever way best works with your schedule. It also gives kids a tiny try at time management which helps a bunch when they start preparing for middle school.

The challenge option is open to all kids. Kids who take the 'challenge' don't have to get the answers correct but they must have plenty of problem-solving to show they gave it a valiant try. If your child shows any work on extra paper (which is great) we'd like them to attach it to the homework packet.

Corrections and make-up points - Any child can make up scores below 70% by completing corrections and/or a make-up assignment. While we are happy to provide this option, we do

not always have the bandwidth to give individual nudges to kids who are not returning the make-up work. (We made this a fun estimation problem last week--we have roughly 200 kids so even 1 paper a day translates to 1,000 pages to manage! No wonder we can't keep track of it!) We like to put the responsibility on the kids vs. adults (parents & teachers) to help get them in the habit of becoming more independent, but it is helpful if parents keep an eye on the [gradebook](#) to help support kids getting those low grades fixed. This will also help prevent a last-minute stressful correction stampede right before report cards are due.

Extra support - As we mentioned at BTSN, we are lucky to have an awesome math intervention teacher (Mrs. Schroeder) to help us during math class this year. She will be used flexibly--working with any and all kids in small group and while "pushing in" to the classroom. Around mid-October we will begin after-school tutoring on Wednesdays. This is a service offered free-of-charge and an awesome way for your child to get a little extra math support in a smaller group setting. We will keep you posted on that start date.

BLEND - We have a math course set up in BLEND (the district's slightly-new LMS) and have enrolled kids from both trios so we can streamline many of our electronic lessons and materials. For now, there is not much happening there except we do upload an electronic version of the HW packets in BLEND, which sometimes comes in handy for parents. Soon, we will be taking some assessments there, too, which makes it a handy way for kids to practice/re-test efficiently.

STAAR scores from last year provide a little snapshot of academic needs. While they cannot provide a full picture of a student's growth we see that we had more kids than normal struggle a bit on last year's math assessment. We want to be sure we are working hard to fill in any gaps and/or boost that confidence back up for kids who found math difficult or confusing. It does take a math village and we really appreciate you taking time to read this update and help provide gentle nudges from home to stay on top of the work. We will be working hard this year, but we also know that the kids will feel really proud of themselves when our year wraps up. It is quite lovely to send them off to middle school feeling accomplished with a successful year under their metaphorical math belts.

We are looking forward to a positive, productive year. Thanks again for the support. (We promise we will not overwhelm you with long emails like this often so thanks for hanging in there for this initial info blast!)

-Lorrie & Bess