



ST. MARK CATHOLIC SCHOOL
WHERE FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE MEET

NEW STUDENT NEWSLETTER- SUMMER 2017

Welcome to St. Mark Catholic School! We are so pleased to have you as part of our community.

Throughout the school year, you will receive periodic emails such as this one entitled "New Student Newsletter" containing information to assist with your transition during your student's first year at St. Mark. Whether you are brand new to our community, or a younger sibling of a current student is starting his/her first year of school, you should find something here that applies to your family.

While you will find that some of this content has already been communicated to you through other bulletins/emails, we hope that this special publication for our new families serves to reinforce important information, and also provides you with helpful details and tips.

This first newsletter recaps some important upcoming dates, as well as a few important school policies that pertain to the first days of the school year. It will also explain some of the terminology and programs that you will want to familiarize yourself with, and provides some tips to assist you.

In addition to this information, we want you to know that our Home and School Association has been working all summer to match our new school families with a St. Mark Host Family. You may have already heard from your Host Family. Others will be contacted very soon. This family will be your "go-to" resource for any day-to-day questions that arise before the start of school, and during the school year. Of course, you are always welcome to contact the school directly, but sometimes it's nice to have an experienced school family to talk to as well. If you have not been contacted by a Host Family by August 4, please send an email to debbie.reed@stmcs.net and we will connect you with a Host Family right away.

We hope you find this information useful as you become acquainted with our wonderful St. Mark school and church community.

Important Dates:

August 6: 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM, Cafetorium -- Back To School Sunday

Join us for 9:00 AM Mass in the church. Then meet in the Cafetorium for breakfast and a welcome from Principal, Patricia Opon, followed by a Back to School Information Fair (clubs/organizations, volunteer opportunities), school information tables (nurse, After School Program, etc.), the Used

Uniform Sale, school supply pick-up, class list posting, the St. Mark supply sale, and the Lion's Den spirit store.

Tips: Bring along your cell phone or camera to take a photo of your child's class list. You may want to refer to it later.

If you are unable to attend the Mass and breakfast, please plan to enter the gyms at 11:00 AM.

If you are shopping for used uniforms, bring your child along to try them on. Please note that both green and gray uniform pants and walking shorts will be included in the Used Uniform Sale. The green pants/shorts may be worn during the 2017-18 school year (in addition to the gray pants/shorts), however, only the gray uniform pants and walking shorts may be worn in subsequent school years. 2017-18 is the last school year that green pants/shorts will be permitted.

August 7-11: Staff Development Days

If you need to visit the school during this time, please call ahead to verify office hours, as staff will be periodically unavailable during training sessions.

August 11: 9:00 - 10:30 AM, School Buildings -- Pop-In Meet and Greet

All families are welcome to drop-off school supplies in the classroom, meet the teacher, and grades 4-8 may go to their lockers. Parents will receive a "First Week Survival Guide" for their student grade-level(s), as well as their carpool sign from the teacher. At 10:00 AM, a carpool drop-off/pick-up tutorial will be conducted. Student Ambassadors will be on hand to take new families around the building for a complete tour, should they want it.

Be sure to take a photo of your student(s) with the school mascot and share it on social media! In addition, all families may stop at the Receptionist's Office in the main school building or the ECE building on their way out and receive a welcome back to school gift and birthday cake in honor of St. Mark's 35th year!

August 14: First Day of School & Back To School Breakfast

School doors open early at 7:30 AM (first day of school only). School hours are 7:55 AM - 3:30 PM (including preschool). The After School Program will be in operation until 6:00 PM. Students should be in complete uniform on the first day of school.

Tip: It is a tradition for families to escort their child to their classroom on the first day of school. Many choose to take a photo of their child in their new classroom.

After drop-off, join other parents in the Cafetorium for a Back-To-School Breakfast hosted by the St. Mark Home and School Association. It's a great chance to meet and mingle with other parents.

August 18: 12:00 NOON -- Early Dismissal Day

Lunch will not be served. The After School Program will be in operation until 6:00 PM. Please pack a lunch for all After School Program students.

August 21: 6:30 PM, Cafetorium -- Middle School "Parent Information Night" (grades 6-8)

This evening is designed for "parents only" to come and meet the teachers and learn how they can help make the learning experience a successful one. Please make whatever arrangements necessary so you can attend the event. The entire program is usually complete by 8:00 PM.

Tip: Be sure to pick-up the coveted "5 Points on a Test" pass from your child's Middle School Home Base teacher. This allows your student to receive an extra 5 points on any test throughout the school year.

August 22: 6:30 PM, Cafetorium -- Preschool-5th Grade "Parent Information Night," (grades PK3-5th)

This evening is designed for "parents only" to come and meet the teachers and learn how they can help make the learning experience a successful one. Please make whatever arrangements necessary so you can attend the event. The entire program is usually complete by 8:00 PM.

August 23: Individual School Pictures

Students should be in full school uniform, including the school sweater.

School Policies:

After School Program - Space is limited and spots are filled on a first-come basis. The registration form is located in the "After School Program" Handbook below. Registration forms may be turned in to the school office between now and August 14. The After School Program is available starting the first day of classes on Monday, August 14. As a reminder, students must be registered for the After School Program prior to attending. **It is not a program that is designed for drop-ins.**

Handbooks - St. Mark has developed handbooks which provide useful information to our parents and students about our various programs. These include the Volunteer Handbook, After School Program Handbook, and Athletics Handbook. Please carefully review the handbooks that pertain to your family.

Electronic copies of all handbooks are accessible at any time on the school website.

1. Volunteer Handbook

A Volunteer Handbook has been developed to assist all of our wonderful school volunteers. It provides general volunteer guidelines that we ask everyone to follow. The last page of this handbook is a "Volunteer Pledge" form that every school volunteer must sign and return to the school office prior to serving. A new Volunteer Pledge form must be submitted each school year.

Please [click here](#) to read the Volunteer Handbook, then print, sign and return the Volunteer Pledge form before beginning your volunteer service. Please also note that a link to the Diocesan Social Media Policy is included in this handbook, and that it contains a signature page that must also be signed and returned.

2. After School Program Handbook

An After School Program Handbook has been developed as a reference for our families who participate, and also contains the registration form. If your family will take advantage of this

program, please read the handbook in its entirety, then complete and return the registration form to the school office.

Please [click here](#) to read the After School Program Handbook, then print, sign and return the registration form by August 14.

3. Athletics Handbook

An Athletics Handbook has been developed for those 5th-8th grade families who have students participating on school sports teams through the Dallas Parochial League. It provides general guidelines pertaining to St. Mark and DPL athletics. If this applies to your family, please read the handbook in its entirety, then sign the Parent Code of Conduct Agreement and return it to the school office.

Please [click here](#) to read the Athletics Handbook, then print, sign and return the Parent Code of Conduct Agreement before the first practice (click the link located at the end of the document, and scroll down to the "Documents" section to access the agreement).

School Uniform Labeling - Please label all uniform pieces with the student's name. Academic Outfitters is able to embroider names inconspicuously on sweaters/vests. In addition, school families have utilized the services of two websites that can create inexpensive iron-on and stick-on name labels:

[Mabel's Labels](#)

[Inch Bug](#)

Terminology, Programs & Tips:

Home & School Association (HSA) - The organization that coordinates the majority of our school activities including fundraising, development of community, and spiritual formation. Most parent volunteering takes place through the HSA.

Tip: Getting involved in HSA is one of the best ways to meet other parents at St. Mark, and to truly experience the St. Mark environment. [Click here](#) for more information.

RenWeb - This is a web-based school management system that you access from your computer. Use RenWeb to see homework assignments, lesson plans and grades, as well as to update your contact and family information. Each Sunday, teachers post the lesson plans and homework assignments for the upcoming week. This is a valuable tool for planning your family's week. Log in through the school's website or at www.renweb.com. St. Mark's District Code is: STMCS-TX. You will need to create a username and password. Please contact the school office if you experience any problems accessing RenWeb.

Tip: On Sunday evenings, login to RenWeb and print your child's homework assignments and lesson plan for the week. They are always subject to change in the classroom, but this will give you and your child an opportunity to see an overview of what will be expected that week.

Prefect Program - Five days of prefect duty (cafeteria and recess supervision) are required of all families with students attending Preschool through 5th grade (families with only a Middle School student are not required to perform prefect duty). These days do not need to be consecutive, but all five days must be served within the school year. The time commitment is 10:45 AM to 1:00 PM. To sign-up, you may access the Prefect Calendar on the homepage of the school website under "Quick Links" by [clicking here](#). Prefect guidelines are available [here](#).

Each family is required to pay a \$100 Prefect Fee by the beginning of the school year. This can be paid [online](#) or by sending a check to the school office. Once you have served the five days, your \$100 fee will be refunded to you.

Tip: Sign-up for your perfect days early and all at once. This insures that you can reserve the days that are most convenient for you. Childcare is offered periodically. If you have small children who need supervision while you volunteer, be sure to sign-up during the weeks when childcare is offered.

Safe Environment Program -The Safe Environment Program has been adopted by the Diocese of Dallas and St. Mark the Evangelist Parish to provide a safe and secure environment for the minors of our school. All school volunteers MUST be Safe Environment trained and cleared to participate in any school volunteer activities such as room parent, library duty, class trips, prefect (lunch/recess) duty, Field Day, DPL athletic team coach, etc. To learn more about the program, [click here](#).

Tip: Complete your Safe Environment training as soon as possible. This allows you to fully participate in all school/volunteer activities. Mark your calendar to retrain online each year at the same time, preferably during the summer months. Safe Environment Training is valid for one year, and must be updated annually.

Lunch - You can have lunch with your child anytime. Simply check-in at the front desk where you will receive a visitor badge. Designated family lunch tables are located at the back of the cafeteria. [Click here](#) for the daily lunch schedule, and to set-up a lunch account for your child (optional).

Lion's Den - This is the place to purchase your St. Mark spirit wear. The Lion's Den is open Friday mornings from 7:30-8:15 AM during the school year. Simply sign-in at the front desk and visit the store in the Cafetorium. If you are unable to visit in person, you can shop online anytime [here](#).

Tip: The first Monday of each month that school is in session is Spirit Day. Students are allowed to wear jeans, slacks, Capri-style pants, the school skirt, or the school pants/walking shorts* with a St. Mark t-shirt or sweatshirt of their choosing. Students may wear any closed-toe shoe. The Lion's Den is the perfect place to stock up on spirit shirts. The first Spirit Day of the school year will be Monday, September 11.

*Walking shorts may only be worn during the 1st and 4th quarters.

Electronic Payment of School Fees - We offer electronic payment for all fees except tuition. [Click here](#) for more information.

Best Way to Stay Informed - In general, the best way to stay informed is to read all school communications, especially the **Weekly School Bulletin** which is sent via email each Friday during the school year. The school website (www.stmcs.net), and social media sites including [Facebook](#) (St. Mark Catholic School), [Twitter](#) (@stmarkcatholic), and [Pinterest](#) (St. Mark Catholic School) should also be checked on a periodic basis. If you haven't already done so, please take some time to navigate these sites and pages, and make sure you are following St. Mark on social media. Once school starts, if you do not receive the Weekly School Bulletins, be sure to check your spam settings.

We look forward to seeing you at Back To School Sunday on August 6.

Enjoy the remaining days of summer! In the meantime, please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions that you may have.

Once again, welcome to the St. Mark community.

Sincerely,

The St. Mark Staff

St. Mark Catholic School is a two-time recipient of the U.S. Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Award. This means that our students consistently score in the top 15% in the nation on standardized tests.



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