

St. Monica School Information and Frequently Asked Questions

Question: **What is the maximum number of kids per class?**

Answer: There are two classes for each grade level. Class size is capped as follows:

- K-4: maximum 20 students per session (morning and afternoon session)
- K-5: maximum 24 students per session (morning and afternoon session)
- 1st-8th grades: maximum 25 students per class (two classes per grade level)

Q: **Which high schools do St. Monica graduates attend?**

A: St. Monica graduates typically feed into five schools for secondary education:

- Dominican
- Marquette
- Divine Savior Holy Angels
- Whitefish Bay
- Nicolet

Q: **How do St. Monica students perform academically versus their public and private school peers?**

A: Please refer to the test score information in the red information folders you received. As the test scores indicate, St. Monica students consistently outperform their public school peers in such standardized testing. Qualitatively speaking, SMS students consistently achieve “Honor Roll” status at the high schools they attend (on average, 75% or better of SMS graduates make honor roll at their high schools each quarter!). The vast majority (greater than 95%) of SMS graduates go on to receive a college education, many from some very prestigious catholic universities. Please reference the information packet, in which included is a listing of colleges being attended by recent SMS alum.

Q: **Does St. Monica School encourage interaction among all grade levels?**

A: Yes, St. Monica School faculty absolutely encourages and supports such interaction. Primarily, this is fostered through the “Buddy Class Program”, in which students in K-4 – 8th grades participate. Each school year, a partnership is developed between classes in two different grade levels. This grade-level partnership is maintained each school year so teachers in these grade levels can build a tradition of appropriate, rewarding activities. This program allows for in-school interaction between students of all ages, fosters development of leadership skills and responsibility values, and leads to a greater sense of community and ministry.

Q: **What is the teacher-student ratio at St. Monica School?**

A: While such ratios can be helpful in assessing a school, they can also be deceptive. Since state of Wisconsin public schools incorporate “specials” (i.e. music, physical education, art, etc.) into such ratios, we do as well. Hence, the current teacher-student ratio at SMS is approximately 1:15.

Q: **How many St. Monica teachers have advanced degrees?**

A: Nine St. Monica teachers possess advanced degrees (about 35% of the total faculty), and several others are in the process of obtaining an advanced degree at this time.

Q: **What is the average experience level of St. Monica teachers?**

A: For the current school year, St. Monica teachers have, on average, over 15 years of teaching experience. Three St. Monica School teachers are Kohl Fellowship recipients, considered by many to be one of the highest honors an educator in the state of Wisconsin can receive.

Q: **What is the average class size?**

A: The average class size is approximately 22 students.

Q: From where does the St. Monica student body come?

A: St. Monica students primarily come from the surrounding North Shore and greater Milwaukee communities, including Whitefish Bay, Glendale, Fox Point, Brown Deer, Mequon, and Milwaukee.

Q: Are there efforts to increase cultural diversity in the student body?

A: As is its mission, St. Monica School is focused upon providing the finest in Catholic education to all of God's children. To this end, the school welcomes all students. More specifically, the school has developed an educational partnership with All Saints Parish in Milwaukee; the partnership allows All Saints Parish families to attend St. Monica for in-parish tuition rate. In addition, a Multicultural Arts Committee has been established and is very active throughout the school year. This team is composed of a diverse and talented cross-section of St. Monica families who work in tandem with St. Monica teachers to develop a more focused attention upon multicultural instruction in the classroom. Each semester, the student body is introduced to a new country – its culture, people, and history. In theory, students are educated about 20 different countries by the time they graduate from SMS.

Q: Is foreign language instruction offered?

A: Yes. Spanish is a requirement for all students in 1st-8th grades. Prior to the 2003-2004 school year, this foreign language requirement applied only to junior high students. However, the requirement was extended to the primary and intermediate grade levels in response to Curriculum Subcommittee recommendation, parent input and recognition of the importance of establishing a basic foreign language foundation at younger ages.

French was no longer offered after 2005-2006 due simply to a lack of student interest.

Q: How often do students in each grade level have foreign language/ music/art etc.?

A: This can be broken down as follows:

• **Foreign Language**

- 1st-5th once per week
- 6th-8th four times per week

• **Music**

- K-4 and K-5 once per week (full class period)
- 1st – 5th twice per week (full class periods)
- 6th – 8th once per week (full class period)

• **Physical Education**

- K-4 – 3rd twice per week (generally for 30-minute periods)
- 4th – 8th twice per week (full class periods)

• **Art**

- K-4 and K-5 instruction is in the classroom
- 1st – 8th once per week (full class period)

• **Computer Technology**

- K-4 instruction is in the classroom
- K-5 – 8th minimum once per week (full class period)

• **Guidance**

- K-4 and K-5 once per week (20-minute period)
- 1st – 8th once per week (ranges from 30-minute period to full class period)

Q: What resources are available in the St. Monica computer lab?

A: The St. Monica computer lab offers students an outstanding array of modern technology resources. Currently, there are 26 computers, all of which use Windows XP and XP Office. This is essentially a 1:1 computer to student ratio, allowing all students to have their own computer during lab instruction. All computers connect to the Internet via RoadRunner. A brand new, state-of-the-art color laser printer was recently purchased for the lab and is already in use. The strategic plan developed by the Technology Committee resulted in a complete overhaul of all hardware in the lab

over the course of the past three school years; beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, all 26 Dell computers in the lab are three years old or newer. Additionally, two digital video cameras and a digital camera are now part of the computer curriculum. A mobile laptop lab consisting of 20 laptops is available for use by our Junior High students for in-classroom instruction.

Computer technology instructor Mrs. Linda Weckwerth, a veteran of over 20 years at SMS, teaches formal lessons Monday – Thursday. With the resources at her disposal, she is able to instruct students in Microsoft applications (i.e. Word, Excel, PowerPoint), specific graphic arts software programs (i.e. Kids Pics Deluxe 3), and modern-day topics (i.e. responsible and safe Internet usage). Additionally, Mrs. Weckwerth provides students in the primary grade levels (first through third grades) with a stimulating typing curriculum via the “Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing” and “Type to Learn 3” software. She encourages “buddy class” activities during lab instruction and works with teachers of all grade levels to foster cross-curriculum learning opportunities.

Q: What type of instruction is offered via the Guidance curriculum?

A: Instruction varies based upon grade levels. In K-4 and K-5, instruction centers on the understanding and use of “feeling” words and the idea that we are all different and yet all God’s children. In primary grade levels, instruction might focus upon inclusiveness and friendship. In upper grade levels, the principles discussed are more complex and begin to prepare students for choices and challenges they will face during their high-school years. Thus, the instruction varies in complexity and intensity, depending upon grade level.

For more specifics, interested parents are welcome to speak directly with Mrs. Stewart.

Q: Is a human growth and development curriculum offered to upper grade-level students?

A: Yes. This program was just recently added to the curriculum, and is being taught by Mrs. Shumaker and Mrs. Stewart. Instruction begins with basic principles (i.e. hygiene basics) for fourth-grade students, and continues for students in 5th – 8th grades. As with the overall Guidance curriculum, instruction varies in complexity and intensity depending upon grade level.

For more specifics, interested parents can speak directly with Mrs. Shumaker or Mrs. Stewart.

Q: How is religious education integrated into classroom curriculum?

A: Religious education is an integral part of the curriculum on a daily basis. Classroom prayer is a daily activity, occurring first thing in the morning and often times prior to lunch and end-of-day dismissal. Formal religion instruction increases in frequency and intensity as students progress through grade levels. Regardless of the amount of formal instruction that takes place in a particular grade level, our faith is at the very center of all that students do at St. Monica School. It is at the very heart of the “manners program”, and it is the foundation of the “buddy class” program. It is also the basis for the ministry and service initiatives that students fulfill.

Q: Do students attend weekly Mass?

A: Students in 1st – 8th grades attend Mass once per week, every Wednesday morning. During these Wednesday Masses, students handle various responsibilities (i.e. petitions). Most Wednesday mornings, there is also a prayer service for all students, the responsibilities for which are assigned to one specific grade level or class. Essentially, each grade level is responsible for planning and executing one prayer service per school year.

Q: How is ministry and service integrated into classroom curriculum?

A: Ministry and service is an integral part of the overall religious education that all St. Monica students receive. Examples of such ministry and service initiatives can be seen in the 2nd grade’s trips to area elderly care facilities, the school-wide rice-bowl student fundraiser, the Catholic Schools Week school supply drive (for less-fortunate Catholic school students), and the 8th grade class trip to South Dakota. Each class in every grade level participates in some type of ministry and service initiative; flexibility is offered to the classroom teacher and his/her students to select the initiative. Many of these efforts have become traditional annual efforts.

Q: How do primary grade-level teachers provide aid for students requiring additional reading focus?

A: Primary grade-level teachers can work in tandem with the school's reading specialist, Mrs. Lisa Darling. She offers outside-classroom reading instruction every morning, Monday – Friday. Mrs. Darling works with those students who are identified (by the classroom teachers) as being in need of some additional assistance. This instruction occurs in her classroom (in the lower level of the school); she works individually with students or in small group settings. While the primary focus is on reading skills, comprehension is also emphasized. This intensive, concentrated aid is incredibly helpful in improving students' reading skills. Mrs. Darling also provides Math support for primary grade-level students who require more intensive help.

Q: What is the focus of the K-4 program?

A: The K-4 grade level primarily focuses upon social skills needed to be successful in a group and classroom setting. Such skills might include listening skills, manners (i.e. taking turns, raising hands, not interrupting), and treatment of fellow students. Academically, the program offers an introduction to the alphabet and numbers. Each session (morning and afternoon) runs about three hours per day. For more specifics, please speak with Mrs. "K", our very much-beloved K-4 teacher!

Q: Are parents able to be involved in the K-4 and K-5 classrooms?

A: Absolutely! In fact, in K-4 Mrs. K. asks that each family (Mom or Dad) consider assisting in the classroom once per month. This help is invaluable to her, and allows parents a wonderful opportunity to be involved in a hands-on manner. In K-5, Ms. Mullaney also utilizes Mom and Dad helpers with classroom activities, special projects, and field trips.

Q: Can you tell me more specifics about the upper grade-level science curriculum?

A: Students in 6th-8th grades have classroom instruction with Mrs. Bond in the science lab. Class is very application-driven; there is appropriate lecture and focus upon textbook content, but it is heavily reinforced with laboratory experiments and "real-world" application of concepts. Students participate in the annual Science Fair held each February. Each May, students in 6th and 8th grades build a prototype of a rocket and take a field trip to an area forest preserve for "launch day".

Mrs. Bond has developed her own curriculum that covers different material depending upon grade level. The specific curriculum breakdown is as follows:

- 6th grade: general and physical science
- 7th grade: life science
- 8th grade: chemistry and earth science

Q: What type of academic and social support is available for St. Monica students?

A: Given the challenging nature of the academic environment at St. Monica, academic and social support is provided in a variety of ways. For example, Mrs. Darling (reading support specialist) assists primary grade level students in need of additional reading assistance (as determined by the first, second, and third grade teachers). Junior high students can make use of after-school help offered three days per week by designated junior high teachers. Additionally, the school employs an Academic Support specialist, Mrs. Meg Nelson, to assist students in 4th – 8th grades who require additional assistance. And, from a social perspective, Mrs. Stewart (guidance counselor) is available to assist students with any concerns. These measures of academic and social support are designed to offer a nurturing atmosphere in which all students can succeed and attain their fullest potential.

Q: What type of activities do students participate in during physical education?

A: The physical education curriculum is divided into units of study. In 4th-8th grades, units of study include volleyball, basketball, football, floor hockey, and soccer. Time for more random activities and games is built into the curriculum. In kindergarten-3rd grades, focus is less unit-intensive and instead emphasizes "mini-units", games, and general physical fitness development. Students have gym class

twice per week, for 45-minute class periods. Primary grade levels have 30-minute class periods. For more information, please speak with Mrs. Nicole Klaas, SMS physical education teacher.

Q: Is a band program offered at St. Monica?

A: Yes. The band classroom is located directly across from Donovan Hall (the school cafeteria). First-year teacher Mrs. Jenny Wszalek, a graduate of Cardinal Stritch University, was very involved with the instrumental music program during her time as a music education major. She has also taught private lessons to woodwind students in the Milwaukee area for over 10 years.

As Band and Orchestra Director at SMS, Mrs. Wszalek leads individual lessons and group rehearsals on a weekly basis. Instrumental music offerings include band and orchestra ensembles and chamber music groups. Students in grades 4-8 are eligible for these music offerings.

For more specifics, interested parents are welcome to speak directly with Mrs. Wszalek.

Q: Can you please provide examples of the school's ability to fund budgetary initiatives?

A: St. Monica School funds major budgetary initiatives each and every school year. Needs are prioritized and are then fulfilled accordingly. Major initiatives of late that have been funded have included a substantial increase in staff compensation (and overall change to the compensation structure); a major renovation of the gym; the major renovations of the science and art labs; technology purchases for the computer lab; new science and math textbook series; whiteboards for the classrooms; the junior high lockers; new microscopes for the science lab; new technology in the classrooms (i.e. Smart Boards); and a complete overhaul of the playground equipment. In addition, the school recently added a part-time aide for the K-4 classroom, and also added Spanish instruction to the primary and intermediate grade-level curriculum.

Q: Is the parish financially supportive of the school?

A: The St. Monica Parish community offers a generous and consistent level of support to the school. This financial support comes in the form of a pre-determined amount that assists the school in meeting its budgetary needs. The Parish community is truly a partner in helping the school provide its students with the very best in Catholic education.

Q: Is there a waiting list for any grade levels/classes?

A: At this time, for the current 2009-2010 school year, there is very limited space available in most grade levels. However, our current 1st and 3rd grade classes are full, and several other grade levels are very near capacity (including 4th and 7th grade classes). When classes do fill, a waiting list is established. Families with children in these grade levels can add their name to the wait-list at any time. Given how blessed we are as a school community to have the confidence and trust of so many school families – and thus to have an expanding enrollment – we do advise prospective families to complete the registration process as soon as possible upon making a final decision.

For more specifics, please speak directly with Tom Mlada, SMS Development Director.

Q: Is onsite after-school childcare programming available to interested parents?

A: Yes. Beginning with the 2005-2006 school year, St. Monica School contracted with Milestones, Programs for Children, to provide onsite childcare programming. The space used by Milestones also serves as the parish co-op nursery; the Milestones staff has done a fantastic job of preparing this as a fun, relaxing, educational environment. The onsite Milestones programming is offered as both a before-school and an after-school option, with care provided from 7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Programming is also available on non-school days.

For more information regarding Milestones onsite childcare programming, please contact the direct line at (414) 967-3039.

Q: Is financial aid available to interested parents?

A: Yes. Each school year, a generous pot of available funds is available to parish member families who seek financial aid. These dollars are intended to help these families provide their

children with the finest in Catholic education. The application process is confidential. Applicants must be parish members and must demonstrate a commitment of time and talent to the parish community.

For more specifics, please speak directly with Tom Mlada, SMS Development Director.

Q: Is there a hot lunch program offered at SMS?

A: Yes, a hot lunch program is offered at SMS. During the 2009-2010 school year, Taher Professional Food Service Management Company is once again providing the St. Monica School hot lunch program. Under the National School Lunch Guidelines, an "offer vs. serve" program is available -- where students must choose three or more of the five meal components offered. The cost of a "Type A" meal this year will be \$2.35 (this does include milk). Cold lunch milk will be \$.35 a half-pint. Free and reduced-fee lunch program options are available for those who qualify.

The lunch program is computerized. Each student is given an account number that feeds into a family account. Whether you have one child or numerous children in the school, a family account is automatically created. Each child is then given an identification card that is maintained in the cafeteria so they are not lost or misplaced.

Each morning, your child's teacher will collect hot lunch or cold lunch milk participant names. Your child will indicate at this time which meal choice he or she is selecting. Student names will be verified in the cafeteria as they pass the lunch checkpoint. Your child's lunch identification card will then be computer scanned and the cost of a hot lunch or cold lunch milk will be deducted from the family account. Your family must maintain a positive balance in order for your child to draw purchases from it. You are encouraged to send regular payments on a weekly or monthly basis to cover anticipated meals. The money remains in your account until your child draws from it. Money will be credited into accounts as necessary. Checks will need to be made out to the St. Monica School Lunch Program. Please keep in mind that a daily lunch is \$2.00, \$10.00 per week, or \$180.00 per semester for a single child.

Lunches must be paid for in advance. Accounts must be kept up to date. St. Monica School families are able to view their lunch account status on-line at any time. In order to do so, please click on the following link: <http://www.wordwareinc.com>. Please note: you will be leaving the St. Monica School website with this link.

Once you access this website, you will need to scroll down to "Family Account Services." Click on the link, choose "WI" and click on the "continue" button. Then, find "North Shore Schools" and select it. Enter your family lunch ID and your pin number to sign in (the pin number is set to the last four digits of your phone number).

St. Monica School is proud to work cooperatively with Taher Professional Food Service Management Company in offering our school families nutritional lunch options, including free and reduced-cost milk and meals. **If you have any questions, please contact Rosa in the Food Service Office at (414) 351-6595 or (414) 351-7160 ext. 2145 between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.**

Q: How do I register my child(ren) for SMS?

A: Mrs. Debbie Lynch, St. Monica School secretary, coordinates the registration process. While registration is not a first-come, first-serve process, it is to your advantage to register as soon as conveniently possible.

For more information, please contact Debbie at (414) 332-3660.

Miscellaneous Information

School Board Committee (advisory board): does not set policy as in public schools, but does set the following:

- Tuition
- Budget
- Review curriculum as set forth by teachers/principal
- Continually review technology

Home & School Committee (similar to a “PTA”):

- Dinner Dance/Auction
- Magazine Sale
- Other fundraisers and school-related activities

Booster Club: handles fundraising for athletic program purposes

Other Committees (school parent involvement is always welcome!):

- Multicultural Arts Committee
- Recruitment Committee
- Development Committee
- Technology Committee
- Curriculum Subcommittee