

# MR. D'S FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS... (AND ANSWERS)

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**Q:** What time should my child arrive at school?

**A:** If your child rides the bus, the bus will drop them off at Pinecrest between 7:40 and 8:00, usually closer to 7:40. If you are dropping your child off... 7:40 is the time! Before that, students are not allowed to go down to classrooms, and nothing good is going to come from kids loitering unsupervised in the hallway. Much later than 7:40 and your child will be behind others when it comes to completing their morning assignments. The official start of the school day is the 8:00 bell, but if a student is walking in right at 8:00, it will be 8:10 before he's situated, and he'll start the day a bit behind. Want to avoid the traffic rush at 7:40? Drop your child off at the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> and Prairie Streets. There's no traffic, it's school property, there's a path, and it's a 1-minute walk to the front doors of Pinecrest.

**Q:** What if my child is going to eat breakfast at school?

**A:** The cafeteria opens for breakfast at approximately 7:40. Students should purchase their breakfast and bring it back to the classroom to eat it. Students who linger in the cafeteria will get a late start.

**Q:** What time is dismissal?

**A:** Kids Kampus, walkers, and parent pick-up students are dismissed at 2:30. Pick up in front of the building or the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> & Prairie to avoid the traffic. Be sure your child knows where to meet you! Bus students are released to buses at 2:35, and buses depart Pinecrest around 2:40-2:45.

**Q:** What if my child is going home in a different way than usual?

**A:** Please send a note. If your child is riding the bus home with a friend, send a note for the bus driver, too, or the driver may not let your child on the bus.

I can't stress this enough: Please arrange any special end of day routines with your child **before** the school day starts. There is nothing sadder than a student who doesn't know where she is supposed to go at the end of the school day. If your child rides a bus, be sure he knows the bus number.

Sometimes students decide during the day that they would like to have a friend come with them, and they ask to use the phone to call a parent for permission. This will not be allowed. Pre-arrange, and send a note, please.

Sometimes something comes up, and you may have to get a message about an end of day change of plans to me and your student. If it's before noon, send me a email ([jdestross@hastings.k12.mn.us](mailto:jdestross@hastings.k12.mn.us)). If it's past noon, I may not see your email in time... Call the office (651-480-7280).

**Q:** What if my child will be absent from school?

**A:** If you are keeping your child home ill, call the school office each morning before school starts at 651-480-7280 or 651-480-7281 to report the illness. If your child is going to be gone on a trip, let Mr. D. know early with an email or a note, and he'll let the office personnel know. If your child is only gone for a day, we can get caught up when he returns. If gone for several days, please contact Mr. D. about getting make up work. You may need to pick up the work in the office if books or other materials are needed, or Mr. D. may be able to email PDF copies of assignments to you if you have a way to print them.

**Q:** I want to eat lunch with my child at school. How do I do that?

**A:** I encourage you to do this at least once! 4<sup>th</sup> grade lunch is from 12:55-1:15. It is best if your child knows that you are coming. Plan to arrive at school a few minutes early. Sign in at the office, and come to room 31 to wait for students to be dismissed to lunch. They may still be out at noon recess when you arrive. Wait outside the classroom door... Don't go out to the playground as the aides will be trying to get students lined up. Walk to the cafeteria with your child's class. If you are buying school lunch, an adult lunch costs \$3.80. You can bring cash or you can pay with your child's account assuming there are enough funds in the account. If you are bringing lunch for you and your child, please bring something arguably nutritious... Bringing your child a 22 oz. soda when other students are drinking a carton of milk is not a good idea. I encourage you to eat school lunch. Be brave. After lunch, it's OK to walk with the class down the hall, but don't come back into the classroom, as we will be getting right back to work.

**Q:** What's the deal with flip-flops not being allowed at school?

**A:** They smack when kids walk around the room. Kids tend to slide them off, sit barefoot, and play with them. The most important reason is that they are not safe play attire. Every year lots of kids with flip-flops wipe out on the blacktop or seriously wound their toes. Flip-flops are just not appropriate for running/playing on the equipment and blacktop, and we want kids to run and play and get lots of activity and exercise.

**Q:** Why don't you allow students to leave gym shoes, sweatshirts, boots, etc. at school overnight?

**A:** This may make Mr. D. seem like an ogre, but he makes the kids clear everything out of the classroom closet each night. Why? First of all, he's really OCD, and the mess makes him crazy. More importantly, though... Shoes, boots, sweatshirts, etc. tend to smell, especially when half the class leaves them sitting in the closet... for days at a time... after a rainstorm. Also, after a while, most kids simply forget about what they left at school. Thanks for understanding.

**Q:** What's the deal with snack break?

**A:** Mr. D's class has snack break at 10:20 each day. We have a working snack break, not a "free time" snack break. Kids get about 15 minutes to eat while we go over assignments, have read-alouds, etc.

Remember that we no longer call it "milk break" for a reason... Milk is not available for purchase at snack break time (It's available at breakfast and lunch).

Mr. D. has no interest in being the snack police, but please try to lean toward healthy snacks. Pop and candy are usually not regarded as appropriate for snack time.

There is no refrigerator available for your child's lunch or snacks.

**Q:** Do you celebrate birthdays or half-birthdays?

**A:** **Yes!** We celebrate birthdays on the day of the birthday, or on Friday for birthdays that fall on weekends. If your birthday falls over a break, we'll celebrate it the last school day before the break. Half birthdays are celebrated in December, January, and February for those who have birthdays in June, July, or August. Half birthdays are celebrated 6 months after the actual day, so a July 10 birthday would be recognized on January 10, for example.

If you want to send in treat for your child's birthday... School district policy says send a healthy treat, or non-food item, but Mr. D is not the treat police, and will not refuse whatever you choose to send. He is more concerned that students eat healthy on a daily basis rather than focusing on what treats they may choose to have on special days.

**Q:** How can I volunteer at school?

**A:** The reality is that there aren't a lot of in-classroom volunteering opportunities in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. We will need parent chaperones for our field trips. I'll send out info on chaperoning when the trips are coming up. I almost always have more volunteers than we have spaces for chaperones, so I draw names of those interested from a hat. There are many volunteer opportunities throughout the school... See the volunteer registration form by clicking the link under the "Misc Links" menu at destross.com.



 Volunteer Registration

**Q:** What's the scoop on homework in 4<sup>th</sup> grade?

**A:** There are written assignments nearly every day in math and spelling, because these are "practice makes perfect" subjects. There will be occasional homework in language, social studies, and science.

For the first half of the year, Rocket Math practice sheets will come home almost every day. Your child will need your help and a signature every night on Rocket Math. Don't panic. Rocket Math is designed to take less than 5 minutes each night.

Mr. D. almost never gives an assignment without giving at least a bit of time to get started on it in class. If your child always seems to have assignments done at school, she probably uses time wisely and understands the material well. If your child seems to have lots of homework all the time, it's possible that she is wasting in-class work time, or she may be having trouble with the content.

If your child has no homework, have them practice spelling words, practice multiplication facts, practice states and capitals, and read for at least 20 minutes each night.

**Q:** How can I keep up with what's going on at school?

**A:** 1) Check your child's planner every day, and then look in the front of their daily folder to see if the assignments are neat and complete. Remove old assignments and other papers from the back of the planner every night. Sign the planner each evening to let Mr. D. know you checked. Your child will earn an auction tickets when the planner is complete and signed.

2) Read the newsletter. A new one is given to students every Friday, and the current one is always featured at destross.com. The new newsletter is typically posted on Friday morning for the upcoming week. Pay special attention to the left side of the newsletter. It contains a calendar of upcoming events, the day 1-4 rotation schedule, and any special info you may need.

3) Check your email and texts, and read the ones Mr. D. sends. If you aren't getting any email or texts from Mr. D, be sure to sign up!

**Q:** What's the deal with the tickets?

**A:** Students earn tickets for many things... completing assignments, getting planners signed, online practice, odd jobs around the classroom, answering trivia questions, scoring well on spelling tests, etc. Students keep track of their own tickets, and at the end of each trimester, we hold an auction.

**Q:** What's the deal with Mr. D?

**A:** Mr. Destross grew up in Hastings, went to college at James Madison University in the state of Virginia, and has been teaching for 31 years. He went to elementary school at Pinecrest! He has taught at every school in Hastings except the high school, ranging from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade to 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Mr. D. is married to Annie, and has 2 kids, John and Lauren. Mr. D. likes to go canoeing in the BWCA, reading, working in the yard, and going out to dinner. He likes Slim Jims, Caramello bars, and Caribou coffee. He hates moles that dig up his yard and when students are absent. He is OCD and likes things labeled and in straight rows.

Many parents of current students were Mr. D's students themselves. When Mr. D. starts getting grandchildren of former students in class, he will retire.

**Q:** How do I get in touch with Mr. D?

**A:** Please do not call Mr. D.'s classroom directly during school hours... It will disrupt the class. If it's short notice and you need Mr. D. to get a message right away, call the office (651-480-7280). Otherwise, email is the preferred method of communication. ([jdestross@hastings.k12.mn.us](mailto:jdestross@hastings.k12.mn.us)). Of course, you can always send a note, but make sure that your child remembers to give me the note. Please don't send messages in the daily assignment planner. Mr. D. often has students check the signatures, and he may never see your message. Mr. D. does have a Facebook page, but he makes it a policy to not accept friend requests from current students or their parents, since he needs a life away from school. Thanks for understanding. Former students are welcome to send me a friend request when they reach the age of 21. Mr. D. currently has former students on his Facebook friends list that are in their 40s.

**Q:** Is there anything you need for the classroom? Do you need donations of any kind?

**A:** Mr. D. usually doesn't have a lot of needs for his classroom, but there are some things you can do:

- 1) Start saving Box tops For Education. The only ones we collect at Pinecrest are the pink label ones from General Mills. We don't collect the milk tops, Campbell's soup labels, etc. Send them in any time. Mr. D's class always wins or places in the box top contest. Why are these so important? We get a dime for each one, and that can easily add up to thousands of dollars for Pinecrest in a school year.
- 2) Order books from the Scholastic Book order. They're usually cheaper than you can buy them at Walmart, and there's a good selection on grade-level. When we purchase books from Scholastic, we earn points with which we can get free books for our classroom library. Last year, we earned over 150 new books from Scholastic to add to our classroom library.
- 3) Near the end of each trimester, Mr. D. will ask for donations to the class auction. The more items we have, the more exciting the auction! Auctions are a good way for kids to feel good about the work they've done all trimester. Please consider a donation when it's time.
- 4) Mr. D. has a classroom wish list on Amazon. Items on the list are usually art or science supplies, or something we can use to make a special day more fun. The books you see on the wish list are from the "Maud Hart Lovelace Challenge". If you're feeling overly generous, you can find the wish list by clicking the link under the "Misc Links" menu at [destross.com](http://destross.com).



A button with a red heart icon and the text 'Classroom Wish List'. An arrow points from the text in the previous block to this button.

Answers to lots of your other questions can be found at [destross.com](http://destross.com)... Be sure to bookmark it on all of your devices today!

