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Arithmetic gets a boost at DeSoto Central Middle School from ability to review online

By Raina Hanna / Special to DeSoto Appeal

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Students in sixth-grade math classes at DeSoto Central Middle School have an edge when doing their math homework -- if they forget how the teacher said to solve a problem, they can watch the lesson again on the Internet.

Jennifer Stripling, the school's sixth-grade vice principal, said the program was the result of brainstorming solutions to improve the school's math scores, which were lower than the school had hoped.

"One thing that came up was that many parents tell us that they have trouble with their children's math homework," Stripling said. "They either didn't know how to do it or learned a different way than was being taught."

This school year, that issue has been more or less resolved because all the sixth-grade math teachers are recording their lessons and uploading the video files to watchknowlearn.org, a free educational video web site. From there, the lessons are viewable both on that site and the school's web site, desotocountyschools.org/dcm/ on each teacher's home page.

This type of video lesson program is commonly referred to as "Flipping the Classroom" because the traditional lecture can be viewed outside of class, and class time can be spent on inquiry-based learning. That allows teachers to take the time to answer questions without fear of not covering all of the lesson or rushing it.

At the moment, teachers are recording their lessons during their planning periods. However, by the end of the school year, Stripling hopes teachers will be recording themselves teaching their classes instead of recording just the lessons. Students would then not miss a single word of what they may or may not have heard in class.

"The teachers are constantly reminding students that now there is no excuse for not knowing the lesson or how to do their homework since the lessons are available to them at home," Stripling said.

Patricia Franklin's son attends sixth grade at DeSoto Central Middle. She said she is thankful to have the video lessons as a backup and as a reference.

"I learned math my way and they are often doing a different way at school with their teachers. This helps me help him do it the way the teacher is teaching them," she said.

Franklin also said has not had to push her son to make use of the video lessons.

"He goes and watches them all on his own whenever he wants, but I also like to watch them with him when I can," she said.

Her son, Bryce Smith, said he grasps many of the concepts in class but is thankful for the lessons when he may have missed something or needs to have it reinforced.

"When I need it, I'm glad it's there because it helps me with the math problems," he said. "I really hope they have this again next year."

To date, the school has uploaded about 90 lessons. That number is increasing as the school year continues.

Stripling said the school has already seen some benefit to the program.

"We won't see results in testing until December, but teachers have definitely noticed an improvement in students' classroom performance," she said.

While all the sixth-grade math teachers are participating, teachers in other grades and subject areas at DeSoto Central Middle are also using the technology to record their lessons and make use of the Watch Know Learn video library to provide additional lessons to their students.

The school is focused on math this year but is considering adding language arts video lessons next year.



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