



SMA Lower School New Family Guide

Fall 2020

Dear St. Mary's Academy Families,

As we prepare to open our school this fall, we are doing such with the utmost care and consideration for the children, families, staff and general community's health and safety. We are providing you with key information below about updated policies and procedures in order to make the transition back to our program as smooth as possible.

All policies previously listed in the new family guide are still intact unless there is an update below. We are grateful for the input of experts and stakeholders who are advising us on the best course of action. **With the ever-changing environment we are currently living in due to COVID-19 all policies, procedures and schedules are subject to change.** We continue to monitor the rules and regulations and work with incredible professionals who are available to support us from the CDE, Tri-County Health Department and our school nurse, Debbie Bradley.

Please know that we will do our best to continue to communicate with you regularly and appreciate your patience while we navigate reopening our school. Thank you for your ongoing support and partnership. We can't wait to see your children!

As always, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Karen Smith
Principal of Lower School

Jane Hoogerwerf
Assistant Principal of Lower School

IT'S ON THE CALENDAR, SOMEONE MENTIONED IT, BUT WHAT IS IT?

Welcome to the Lower School community of St. Mary's Academy (SMA). This *New Family Guide* was prepared by Lower School parents for new Lower School parents.

At some point we were all new SMA families, so we want to pass along information to help navigate the SMA calendar, events and protocols. By no means is this an exhaustive list, and events may be added and subtracted to the calendar throughout the year. Your best source for up to date info is the SMA calendar found at stmarys.academy. In addition to the resource page on the parent page of the website, other great resources include the SMA Student Handbook, SMA Directory, the Wildcat Weekly (emailed every Wednesday afternoon), emails from your room parent representative ("room reps") and teacher, fellow parents, and information sent home in Friday Folders. And if ever you have any questions, you can always stop in the Lower School office and ask Lower School Administrative Assistant [Jackie Neal](#), she knows everything! ☺

Among the best ways to get to know the SMA community is to jump right in and volunteer. There are numerous ways to become part of the SMA community whatever your time and availability. There are moms' nights, dads' nights, class parties and new family events. Your teacher may ask for volunteers to help in small group classroom work or to stuff Friday Folders. Room reps may ask for contributions for class holiday parties or Admissions may need your help with tours. Parent volunteers are needed for Fall Festival, classroom reps, on the Lower School yearbook committee, for Grandparents' Day, stuffing envelopes as part of the small hands committee, Gala volunteers, Destination Imagination coaches, Health Fair presenters, AmeriTowne supervisors, Girls on the Run coaching, solicitors for Gala donations, contributors of napkins or muffins or coffee for Tuesday Treats or being a carpool helper at drop-off. The free online software, "Signup Genius," is a common tool used to solicit help and also to sign up for parent-teacher conferences. As current parents, we have found that the SMA community is small, so any and all help on your timetable is most appreciated.

THE BASICS

Morning Drop Off:

Staff will be waiting at the carpool line each morning from 7:40am - 8:00am to greet students and parents. Parents should arrive no later than 8:00am each day.

Start of School: The bell rings at 8:05 a.m., and students must be in their seats at this time.

End of School: School dismisses at 3:00 p.m.

- SMA staff will be waiting at the carpool line each morning from 7:40 am - 8:00 am to greet students and parents.
- Please arrive no later than 8:00 am each day.
- Parents will wait in the car, in the carpool line, until a staff member opens the car door and takes their child's temperature using a handheld no-touch thermometer.
- If the temperature is below 100.4, children will be asked to enter the building using the gym door entrance. Staff will ensure that as children transition to the hallway, they will remain at least six feet apart.
- Pre-K drop off and pick up procedures are unique to their program and is found in the Pre-K policy addendum handbook.

AFTERNOON PICK UP

- Our new **SchoolPass app** replaces phone calls, emails, and handwritten notes for student attendance, arrival, and dismissal changes.
- Parents will announce their arrival from the safety of their car via the SchoolPass app (or automatically via GPS notification).
- The relevant teacher or staff is immediately notified via email and dynamically on the School Pass website, which will be displayed on a projector or large screen in the classroom.
- Students will exit through the Lower School gym in a socially distanced manner.
- Parents who have a student in both Lower and Middle School will first pick up the Lower School student and then move to the Middle School pick-up location.
- Pre-K afternoon pickup is noted in the Pre-K policy handbook

Dress Code: The dress code is pretty straightforward. The school does not allow logos other than the SMA logo on polo shirts, and the tops may be any color as long as it's a solid color, no stripes. Bottoms can be in the color of navy, khaki, brown or black. Tights must be a solid color. If a student brings snow boots, the student must bring an additional pair of shoes to be worn in the classroom. Lands End, Old Navy, the Gap, and Target are all good places to find acceptable clothing that meets the school uniform requirements. For more details, the SMA website includes a Lower School Dress Code [document](#). For more details, the SMA website includes a Lower School dress code document.

Dress Down Day: Two Wednesdays of every month students are allowed to wear "free dress" as long as they still comply with dress code rules (no spaghetti straps, short skirts, logos with profanity, etc.). Important to note, students may **ONLY** participate in dress down days if they

have participated in the community service donation that month (see Late Start Donations). Also watch for announcements of “spirit days” which will provide another opportunity for students to wear something other than the standard uniform.

SMA Apparel: SMA apparel (including polo shirts, t-shirts, and hoodies) is available for order online the first week of every month. You have the option of having the items shipped to your home or picking them up at SMA in the Advancement Office. The online apparel stores can be accessed on our website under the About Us tab. The link will also be communicated in Wildcat Weekly and on social media each month.

Extra Pair of Shoes Needed: To help preserve the gym floor, each student is required to keep one pair of athletic shoes at school that is designated for INDOOR use during PE class. The shoes your student wears to school are considered for outdoor use. The extra pair of shoes should be brought to school the first week of school.

Class Assignments: In August, you will receive your student’s teacher and class assignment. You will then be sent an email to schedule a time during the orientation days for you and your student to go into the classroom to meet the teacher. This will be done in a systematic and safe way. Virtual options will also be available.

Grateful Plate: Grateful Plate is our lunch provider and will be offering pre-packaged orders in lieu of hot lunch this year. In order to ensure social distancing, students are eating in their classrooms and will bring a cold lunch from home or purchase an entree from Grateful Plate. Please have your children bring a water bottle from home with clear liquids. We will not be providing milk this year. Information will be sent on how to register for an account.

After-School Activities: This fall we will not be offering the classes or clubs below in order to maintain health guidelines and recommendations from the state and Tri-County Health. Orchestra will tentatively be offered before school this year however. Please look for information to come.

- **Wildcat Adventures:** SMA brings in outside vendors to run after school programs. Each year the activities vary, as do the time and dates offered. Past activities include Taekwondo, computer coding, lego-robotics, yoga, ballet, and drawing. You will receive an email in August informing you of the after school activities that will be offered during the fall term and the cost associated with them; and then again in December for the spring term.

- **Brownie & Girl Scout Troops** are active in the Lower School and run by parent volunteers. At this time there is no active Cub Scout Troop.
- **Destination Imagination (DI):** SMA has very active DI clubs and is successful in competing at local, state, and global competitions. DI is run by parent volunteers. It is an imaginative and educational program that applies 21st century skills using STEAM (STEM+): Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math through creative and collaborative problem solving. DI teams begin as early as Kindergarten. The teams usually meet from December – March and compete locally in March.
- **Drama/ Performing Arts:** Watch for announcements of a drama club where your child could have the opportunity to perform in a school play.
- **Orchestra/Band:** SMA Lower School has a robust beginning and advanced school orchestra. Students may begin orchestra as early as 1st grade. Orchestra meets two mornings per week before school. Students are required to take one private lesson during the week, arranged with their music teachers before, during, or after school. Contact [Heidi Synder](#) for more information. No Lower School Band due to COVID-19.
- **Choir:** Choir is available for 4th and 5th graders in late fall and spring, with performances at the Christmas and spring concerts. Practices are after school. Please contact [Roberta Hamilton-Griggs](#) for more information. 2nd through 5th graders can join the Joyful Noise Choir.
- **Loretto Leaders:** Students in 3rd – 5th grade may apply to be Loretto Leaders. These students help with morning carpool, assist Admissions with tours, and perform other leadership roles within the Lower School.
- **School Paper:** Students in the 4th and 5th grades can become contributing writers to the school paper. This is a great publication emailed out to the SMA Lower School community. Meetings take place after school.
- **Girls on the Run:** Depending on whether there is a sponsor, SMA has a Girls on the Run program. This activity is open to 3rd-5th grade girls on Fridays for two months during the fall. Parent volunteers and coaches are welcome and always needed.

Safety and Security: For security purposes, all the doors to the Lower School are locked. If you need access to the Lower School during school hours please use the main entrance facing the Sanders House. You will have to ring the doorbell and be buzzed in. All visitors must sign in

and all students leaving must be signed out. SMA is fortunate to have Officer Kaz of the CHVPD as our School Resource Officer. Officer Kaz makes frequent visits to the SMA campus and routinely patrols our school, while also providing safety instruction to our students. If, for some reason, the students must be evacuated from the campus, there is a formal and thorough plan to have the students safely go to the Latter Day Saints Church at 999 E. Tufts Ave. for parent pick up.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Orientation (2 days): Back To School Orientation will take place on August 28th and 31st from 8:00 a.m. - 12 p.m. You will receive an email from the Lower School to schedule a time to meet with your teacher. Please note that you do not need to be at orientation both days. There will also be a virtual option to attend.

LS 101: Lower School 101 will be a virtual event on August 18th at 6:00 p.m. This will be a time to learn about the important highlights as well as a time for questions. A link will be sent closer to the evening.

Back to School Night: September 9th and September 10th, 2020 will be a virtual event. This is for parents only. You will hear from our Lower School principal, learn about the curriculum, and meet your student's teachers. This event is very important and an opportunity for questions. There will be a schedule sent to you.

Late Start Wednesdays: Every Wednesday is a late start day meaning school begins at 9:05 a.m. This allows teachers to attend early morning curriculum meetings. Students are asked to arrive no earlier than 8:45 a.m. since teachers are not in the classroom before that time.

Late Start Donations: In keeping with the Loretto School Values, "late starts" usually have a community collection or charity donation associated with it. Students are encouraged to bring designated items like canned food, baby diapers, or old coats as a donation. If a student brings a donation, the student is entitled to "dress down," meaning they do not have to wear school uniforms and may wear presentable clothing of their choice, on the last Wednesday of the month. Students may ONLY participate in dress down days if they participate in the community service project at least once that month. Jeans are acceptable as well as non-collared shirts. No short shorts or violent pictures or profanity are allowed.

Lower School Assemblies: Our assemblies will be held virtually until we are able to gather in larger groups. Students will participate and present through a live or pre-recorded presentation. This link will be accessible to you and sent to you. Generally, Lower School assemblies are held every other Friday and begin right after drop off, around 8:10 a.m. All students K-5 attend the community sharing times. Parents are welcome and encouraged to attend as this is a great time to meet other parents. After drop off, parents find seats along the side of the Lower School gym. Check with your teacher and the monthly calendar, as each grade is highlighted at an assembly or two throughout the year. For example, if you have a Kindergarten student, you will want to mark your calendar for the assembly in which the Kindergarten performs. Assemblies usually last 35 minutes. Parking can be difficult on assembly days but additional parking is always available in the High School/Middle School lot on the north side of campus.

Assembly Dress Code: On the Fridays that assemblies are held, students must wear the blue and white dress code: blue bottoms with a white top. Please refer to the dress code document for additional information.

Mass and Prayer Services: Our Masses and Prayer Services will be held virtually until we are able to gather in larger groups. Students will participate and present readings and prayers through a live or pre-recorded presentation. This link will be accessible to you and sent to you. Throughout the year, usually every month, Mass will be scheduled for the Lower School in the gym. A visiting priest will preside. Parents are always welcome to attend, and many do so. Students who have received their first communion are offered communion and all students are offered a blessing. Please check with the office and calendar for dates.

Mass Dress Code: On days when Mass is scheduled, Lower School students follow the blue and white dress code, navy blue bottoms with a white collared top.

Golf Tournament: This is an event for adults and will be held on Monday, September 21 at Valley Country Club. The funds raised at the Hopper Family Wildcat Classic benefit technology resources for both students and faculty. To support the Golf Tournament you can become a sponsor and/or sign up as an individual player. Players and volunteers enjoy a very fun post-game reception. Helping out with the tournament is a great volunteer opportunity! Watch for school-wide emails, mailings and announcements in Wildcat Weekly for details. Visit <https://www.stmarys.academy/support-sma/community-events/golf-tournament> to register or learn more.

Family Picnics: (Will depend upon guidance from our local health department) Weather permitting, two family picnics are held for Lower School families during school lunchtimes. There is a fall picnic, usually scheduled in September, and a spring picnic, usually scheduled in

April. These are wonderful times for families and the SMA community. Parents and guardians bring a picnic blanket and their lunch and join their student for lunch on the playground. We recommend you put this on your calendar as soon as the dates are published as you won't want to miss it. Lunch usually lasts 35 minutes. Parking in the Lower School lot is limited so remember you can also park in the north parking lot.

Fall Festival: (Will depend upon guidance from our local health department) This is an Academy Parents sponsored event scheduled in October. All families, including siblings not at SMA, are invited. (But please keep an eye on little ones, as supervision is not provided.) The festival is filled with carnival games, prizes, and food held on the SMA campus. The cakewalk is always a favorite activity, and families are encouraged to donate a cake prior to the event. This is definitely a favorite event for SMA Lower School families. There is a minimal cost associated with attending. Mark your calendar so you don't miss this fun event and check the Wildcat Weekly for details.

Lower School Teacher Conferences: In October and in March parents/guardians are invited to attend formal conferences with their student's teacher. These are held during the day, and school is not in session for the two days of scheduled conferences. Childcare is not provided, but some teachers include students in their meeting. This is a one-on-one opportunity for parents and teachers to share successes, opportunities for growth, and plans. Online sign up for conferences begins several days in advance of the meetings, so watch for an email from Jackie Neal that will allow you to schedule your slot for conferences. Slots fill up fast, so if you aren't able to be flexible then sign up as soon as you see the email. During the fall conferences, there will be a Scholastic Book Fair in the Lower School gym. (To be determined) Teachers often request and certainly appreciate a donation of books for their classroom.

BINGO Night: (Will depend upon guidance from our local health department) This is an Academy Parents sponsored event held in the community center around Halloween. Like the Fall Festival, this event is a FAVORITE with all school divisions, but especially Lower School families. Students love dressing up in their Halloween costumes for the contest and can win prizes. Families have great fun playing BINGO, with free pizza and drinks provided. There is no cost to attend.

Grandparents' Day: (Will depend upon guidance from our local health department) In November, grandparents are invited to enjoy breakfast together along with performances by SMA students. They will then accompany their grandchild to his or her classes for the morning. Make sure you have provided a mailing address for your student's grandparents so that they receive a mailed invitation. Usually the school day is a half-day. If grandparents are not able to

attend, grand “friends” are welcome. Parents are discouraged from attending in lieu of a grandparent due to space constraints.

All Academy Sing-a-long: (Will depend upon guidance from our local health department) This event is for students only. It is a time for all divisions to come together and sing Christmas songs.

Gala: (Will depend upon guidance from the local health department) Scheduled for Friday, April 30, 2021 at the Hilton Denver Inverness, the Gala is an adults-only night of dinner and drinks and a fantastic fundraising auction. Gala proceeds benefit tuition assistance and program resources. To support the Gala, you can become a sponsor, purchase a ticket to attend the Gala, donate an item to be auctioned at the event, and/or volunteer the night of the Gala. This is a not-to-be-missed event! Contact Lea Frank, lfrank@stmarys.academy if you are interested in getting involved!

5th Grade Mass: (Our attendance will be determined at a later date) Each March, a special Mass is held at the large cathedral downtown for SMA 5th grade students along with other archdiocesan schools. The 5th grade homeroom teacher will send home information regarding the dates of this Mass.

Pioneer Day: In the spring, the third graders begin learning about the pioneers, the Oregon Trail, and how the settlers came west. On Pioneer Day, students and volunteer parents dress in pioneer clothing and participate in activities like panning for gold, archery, doll making, and beading. This is a big favorite!

Lower School May Crowning: Students are asked to bring a flower for a ceremony to crown the statue of Mary in front of the Sanders House. Parents are welcome to attend, however the ceremony usually lasts about 10 minutes.

5th Grade Continuation: Graduation from Lower School occurs in a “continuation” ceremony and celebration. The 4th grade families play host to plan the event so that the 5th grade families can enjoy the end of their time in SMA Lower School and mark their student’s move to middle school. Watch for announcements from your room parent on how you can help.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Academy Parents (AP): Academy Parents is the parent community that supports the mission of SMA through volunteering. Every parent and guardian of an SMA student is automatically a member of Academy Parents. No additional sign-up or payment of dues is required. The mission of Academy Parents is to build community and enhance the educational and social experience of each SMA student and family. Academy Parents sponsors events and programs that assist parents and teachers in their effort to develop lifelong learners while providing opportunities for social interaction. The Academy Parents organize events such as Fall Festival, teacher appreciation activities, and Thanksgiving pies.

Academy Parents Board Meeting: Board meetings are held one Thursday each month (times vary) in the Sanders House Board Room. All parents are encouraged to attend. Watch the Wildcat Weekly or check the school calendar for meeting dates, planned guest speakers and/or any changes to the meeting time or place.

Grade Representatives: Each grade will have class representatives to communicate monthly updates from the Academy Parents board meetings, school-wide volunteer opportunities and needs of your teacher. Grade Reps liaison between your teacher and parent activities, organize volunteers and items for room-specific events and needs, act as ambassadors for new families coming into your grade, participate in and volunteer for Academy Parent functions and organize grade level socials outside the classroom.

Thanksgiving Pies: This is a school-wide, Academy Parents organized event right before Thanksgiving. Parent volunteers are at carpool drop off and/or pickup to receive the pies donated by parents. As an SMA parent, this is one of the easiest things you can do all year, just bring a pie (homemade or purchased!) during the designated time and date for drop off. Parent volunteers then wrap the pies in decorative wrap and each SMA staff member then gets to choose a pie to take home and enjoy during the Thanksgiving holiday. This is a great way for SMA parents to show appreciation! A sign up to donate a pie will be emailed to all parents approximately one week before the drop off day.

Tuesday Treats: “Tuesday Treats” is a tradition to thank our teachers each month. Each grade is assigned a month in the school year, and on the first Tuesday of the month the grade provides tasty and nutritious snacks for all the teachers and staff in the Lower School. Sign ups will go out for parents to bring things like granola bars, fresh fruit, bagels, muffins, plates, cups, napkins, and silverware. This is so appreciated by our hardworking SMA faculty and employees and so easy to do.

Bulletin Board: Each grade is assigned a month to decorate the bulletin board across the hall from Jackie Neal's office. The board is often seasonally themed with the final board in May highlighting the graduating fifth graders. Room parents may recruit helpers for this.

Community Outreach: As part of Academy Parents, parents volunteer to coordinate community outreach for SMA Lower School families and teachers in times of need and in times of celebration. If a Lower School family is experiencing a significant life event, the community outreach coordinates help and community support. They can also help in welcoming someone to the community. If you know of a family in need of support, or you need additional support, contact Jackie Neal and she can reach out to the parent coordinators.

SMA Prayer Group: The SMA Prayer Group meets the first Wednesday of each month at 9:15 a.m. in the High School Chapel. Parents are welcome to attend. For additional information, contact [Adriana Williams](#).

Morning Carpool Drop Off: (Parent volunteers will not be used this fall) Another great opportunity to meet other SMA students and families is to volunteer with Mrs. Smith to safely help students out of their cars during morning carpool drop off (7:40 - 8:05 am). Help welcome them to school and send them off on their day with a warm smile. In addition to spending time with our lower school principal, this volunteer opportunity is great because you are done by 8:10 a.m. Don't forget to bring a warm hat and mittens on cold days.

Health Fair: The PE department hosts an annual health fair every spring to educate Lower School students on a variety of topics. Themes may include dental hygiene, eating healthy, pool safety and exercise. Parents and outside speakers are welcome to come present and volunteer.

Young AmeriTowne: This is an award-winning leadership program through the Young Americans Center for Financial Education. The organization is located in Cherry Creek and provides educational programs for 4th and 5th graders. Their aim is to teach students about business, economics and free enterprise in a fun hands-on way. Students interview for jobs and spend a day running a mock-town. Parents are encouraged to help and volunteer. This is much anticipated and thoroughly enjoyed by the kids!

MISCELLANEOUS

SMA Gift Giving Policy: St. Mary's Academy employees (faculty and staff) may not accept cash gifts, gift cards, favors, services, or tickets from SMA students or parents. This policy is

established to avoid the impropriety and the implied or actual influence upon an employee's impartial judgment towards students and their families. **Group gifts from more than one family are not allowed**, as such gifts place parents in the difficult position of soliciting funds from other parents. The SMA Annual Fund generously provides for employee appreciation throughout the year including a cash Christmas gift and an employee appreciation luncheon. The most effective way to support SMA employees is to make a gift to the Annual Fund. This ensures equitable treatment for all SMA employees and needed resources in the classroom. While St. Mary's Academy families' appreciation for faculty and staff is greatly valued, the community's observance of this policy is essential to establishing equity and integrity within the school community. Please remember that hand-written notes and/or a personal sharing of genuine appreciation is always welcome.

Annual Fund: The cornerstone of SMA's annual fundraising effort is the Annual Fund. Each year the fund is allocated to the greatest areas of need at St. Mary's Academy. SMA strives for 100% participation from its faculty, staff, and parent community. The fund operates through a Five Weeks of Giving each fall.

Friday Folders: Your student will be given a blue SMA folder that will come home Friday afternoons. This folder is filled with informational flyers and past schoolwork. It's an excellent resource for information right in your student's backpack. It should be emptied and returned to school on Monday. Due to Covid- 19 teachers will be sending the majority of information digitally.

Extended Day Care: (Information as to changes will be communicated to families) Extended Day Care is referred to as EDC. Before and/or after school care is available daily from 7:00-8:00 a.m. and 3:00-6:00 p.m. for a fee. Students will be walked to and from their classrooms to the EDC room. Students receive a snack, indoor and outdoor play time and homework time. Parents may contract for care for the whole term. For more information contact Beth Hansen at bhansen@smanet.org.

Inclement Weather: Be sure to sign up for SMA alerts so if there is a school delay or if school is canceled you will receive a text and phone call with the updates. It's an extremely effective, accurate, and efficient system, although it may mean that your phone goes off at 5 a.m. on a snow day. The system will also notify you of any security issues and security drills should they arise.

Cell Phones: The policy is that 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students may bring a cell phone to school. If they do, the cell phone MUST be left in the school office with Jackie Neal between 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Party Invitations: Invitations to your student's birthday party, or any other party you might have, may not be given out at school unless the entire class is invited.

Challenge Foundation: Founded in 1998, the Challenge Foundation partnered with St. Mary's Academy to offer low-income, high-achieving students from Aurora Public and Denver Public School an SMA education. Approximately 30 Challenge Foundation scholars attend SMA currently. SMA provides office space in the High School for the Challenge Foundation staff.

PUBLICATIONS

Lower School Handbook: Where to find guidance on dress code, absences from school, conferences, carpool protocol, Internet usage, etc. Very important information!! The Handbook is online, and can be found on the parent page of the SMA website under "Lower School Resources."

Directory: A hard copy of the directory is distributed to parents during orientation and/or the first week of school. A searchable directory is also available on the parent page of the website. The directory contains useful information such as contact information for students, parents and staff, Academy Parents, Board of Trustees and a list of all students by grade.

Wildcat Weekly: A weekly bulletin emailed home every Wednesday afternoon. It is full of important dates and information. Make it a habit to read this publication weekly to avoid missing events and deadlines! This is also a great way to learn about the exciting things going on in the Middle and High Schools.

Calendar: Online calendar of all SMA events--academic, social, community and athletic. It can be filtered for lower, middle or high school events. Link found at the top of the SMA website under "Calendar."

Impact Report: Each fall an annual report is published and reports on the previous fiscal year's events and activities and provides a financial summary.

Dated: July 24, 2020