

SMA Middle 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.

Tiffany Drees
Principal of the Middle School

July 23, 2020

SMA Middle School New Family Guide

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

This guide is intended to help new Middle School parents by providing a short description of some of the major Middle School events. Please keep in mind that the list below is not exhaustive and that events may be added to the calendar throughout the year. The SMA calendar can be found on our website at stmarys.academy be sure to check it frequently. After consulting this guide if you still have any questions, stop in the Middle School office and ask the administrator about it or send an email to your middle school representative.

Please note that due to the unique nature of the Covid virus, we are taking every reasonable precaution to ensure the safety of our community. For that reason, many of the previously held events listed below will likely move to some sort of socially-distanced or remote format. More details will be shared in the coming weeks.

Middle School Orientation: Before the first day of school, each Community Action Team teacher will invite parents to share with him/her their hopes and concerns in regards to their child's upcoming school year. The CAT teacher will also share some first-day-of-school details with you and your child at this time. Parents are asked to look for an email with a link to set an appointment in mid-August for these 20-minute conferences. Conference times will be on Friday, August 28 from 8:00 to 11:30 a.m. and Monday, August 31 from 8:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Back to School Night: (To be offered remotely this year.) A fast-paced, fun event for parents only, this event orients parents to the space and feel of the building and teachers. One goal for parents is to connect faces with names to facilitate conferencing with individual teachers during the school year as needed.

New Parent Breakfasts: (These events TBD.) You are invited to attend one of two New Parent Breakfasts typically held in early September. This is a great way to meet other new MS parents and kick off the school year. Look for information in July/August.

Late Start – On Wednesdays, school begins at 9:00 am, allowing teachers to attend early morning curriculum meetings. An 8:45 a.m. student arrival is ideal on late-start days. From 7:30 a.m. until 8:30 a.m., all teachers and staff members are involved in morning curriculum and cross-divisional meetings. Given the current restrictions that Covid presents, we will not

be able to offer a study hall for students during this time as we have in the past. We apologize for this inconvenience and hope to offer this service again soon.

Academy Parents Board Meeting: Academy Parents is the parent community that supports the mission of SMA through volunteering. Every parent or guardian of an SMA student is automatically a member of Academy Parents, and no additional sign-up or payment of dues are required. Board meetings are held once a month on a Thursday from 8:15 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. in the Sanders House Board Room, and all parents are encouraged to attend. Watch the Wildcat Weekly (weekly email newsletter) and check the school calendar for planned guest speakers and meeting dates.

Community Service Days: Students participate in community service projects approximately once each trimester with their Community Action Team (CAT). Other service projects occur within the school.

Prayer Service: Prayer Services occur once per month. Students plan and implement prayer services under the guidance of religion teachers.

Mass: Middle School masses also occur throughout the year. When we are able to gather again, Middle School masses will occur in the MS Commons. All-Academy masses will be held in Bishop Evans Sports Center.

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](#).

Hopper Family Golf Tournament: This is an event for adults and is held annually in September. The funds raised at the Hopper Family Golf Tournament benefit technology, performing arts, and tuition assistance. 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.

HS Information Night for Eighth-grade Girls and their Parents: An informational night for eighth-grade students and their parents to learn more about the SMA high school from a panel of HS students and the principal.

Fall Festival: (This event TBD.) Academy Parents sponsored event scheduled in October. All families, including siblings not at SMA, are invited. Come enjoy carnival games, bouncy houses,

pumpkin decorating, prizes, and delicious food, and more. Look in the Wildcat Weekly and Academy Parents newsletter for details.

MS Conferences: Students and parents or guardians attend formal conferences twice a year, typically in October and February. Parents, the CAT teacher, and student discuss the student's successes, challenges and plans. You will receive an invitation via email from the Middle School administrative assistant at least a week in advance. Informal conferencing is enthusiastically encouraged and welcomed as needed anytime during the year with any teacher.

Eighth-grade High School Application Family Meetings: These 40-minute meetings with the MS Principal begin during the Welcome Conferences and continue through December. The goal is to ensure parents, the student, and the school are working together on behalf of each student's application process to high schools. Please watch for an opportunity to sign up for this conference.

Bingo Night: (This event TBD.) Academy Parents sponsored event held in the Community Center in October. A fun evening for the whole family includes bingo, pizza and a Student Halloween costume contest with prizes.

Middle School Socials: (This event TBD.) Scheduled from 6:00-8:00 p.m. on Friday evenings twice a year in the SMA High School Forum and once off-campus. The off-campus social is called "The Island," and is scheduled in February (see description below). Be sure to put the socials on your calendar early and plan around them, as your child will most likely like to attend!

The Island: (This event TBD.) Academy Parents sponsored event and the major social event of the Middle School year! Held on a Friday night in February at an indoor volleyball facility called "The Island." Evening includes volleyball, a DJ, dancing, photo booth, dinner and snacks. SMA parent volunteers staff event. Great volunteer opportunity!

Grandparents' Day: (This event TBD.) Held annually in November, Grandparents are invited to enjoy breakfast together and performances by SMA students. Grandparents will then accompany their grandchild to classes for the morning. Make sure you have provided a mailing address for your child's grandparents so that they receive a written invitation in the mail.

All Academy Sing-along: (This event TBD.) A time for the entire Academy to sing Christmas songs together.

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SMA Gala: Held the last Friday in April each year, 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](#) if you are interested in getting involved!

MS May Crowning: Eighth-grade students crown a statue of the Virgin Mary during this traditional ceremony honoring Loretto, the class, and their journey together through MS. The ceremony is held in the MS Commons and parents are welcomed to attend. It is a short and sweet ceremony.

SMA Apparel: SMA apparel 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. Watch for the link in Wildcat Weekly each month.

(ALL TRIPS AND EXCURSIONS temporarily on hold.)

Excursions: Class trips are offered each year of Middle School. Some of the trip fees are included in tuition while others require additional payment. In September, the sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade classes take separate two-day camping trips. Fees for the trip are included in tuition.

Other trips include:

Snow Mountain Ranch- Attended by sixth-grade students in the spring, this is a two-night trip in Winter Park, Colorado. Students will stay in dorm style accommodations and participate in team-building activities, mini golf, swimming and hiking. You will receive more information on specifics such as what to pack and expect closer to the dates. Fees for the trip are included in tuition. (Subject to change.)

Keystone- Attended by seventh-grade students in the spring, this is a two-night trip to a science camp in Keystone, Colorado. Fees for the trip are included in tuition.

Optional Excursions for seventh and eighth-grade students include:

Peru Partnership- This two-week (optional and by application) trip to a small village in the Cusco region of Peru is preceded and followed by small group meetings for the travelers in preparation and for closure. Seventh and eighth-grade students work alongside of Peruvian people on a service project and explore the rich culture, both present and past. The trip is

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scheduled for November 7 or 8 to 20 or 21. An informational meeting is scheduled in the MS on Thursday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. for interested students and parents. Requirements for travel include a healthy and resilient constitution, ability to hike and work, consistent school attendance, academic stability, mental/emotional health, flexibility, and openness to new foods and different cultural traditions. The trip fee is ~\$4500 and is not included in tuition. Seventh and eighth-grade students complete an application to be considered to represent SMA in Peru. Not all applicants join the travel team.

Cochiti Pueblo Partnership- This optional, six-day tent-camping trip takes seventh and eighth-grade students who are accepted through an application process to the west of Santa Fe in partnership with the World Leadership School and will be scheduled in spring of 2019 (possibly April 29-May 3). Students collaborate with local students, engage with the Cochiti culture, and explore their leadership styles. Seventh and eighth-grade students complete an application to be considered to represent SMA in Cochiti. Not all applicants join the travel team, which is limited in size to 25 students. Preceding the application process, additional information will be provided. The trip fee is \$500 with waivers in line with tuition assistance.

An Optional Excursion for eighth-grade students is:

East Coast History Trip - This 8th grade tradition occurs in the spring. The weeklong trip includes a visit to our nation's capital where students tour monuments, visit museums and experience the culture of our government. Jamestown was recently added to the trip. The cost is approximately \$1700 (not included in the tuition).

PUBLICATIONS

Middle School Parent / Student Handbook – Where to find guidance on dress code, absences from school, conferences, carpool protocol, internet usage, etc. This is helpful information. The Handbook is online, and can be found on the parent page of the SMA website under “Resources.”

Directory – A hard copy of the directory is distributed to parents at Back To School Orientation. An online version is also available on the SMA website. The directory contains lots of 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 Wednesday bulletin emailed newsletter, full of important dates and information. Make it a habit to read this publication weekly to avoid missing events, volunteer opportunities and deadlines!

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Calendar – Online calendar of all SMA events, academic, social, community and athletic. It can be filtered for lower, middle or high school events. The online calendar can be found at stmarys.academy.

Faith Walk – A Campus Ministry Monthly Newsletter

MISCELLANEOUS

Two Pairs of Shoes Needed – To help preserve the gym floor, each child is required to keep two pairs of athletic shoes at school, one that is designated for INDOOR use and the other for OUTDOOR.

Tuesday Treats – Parents in each grade may volunteer to bring treats on one Tuesday of each month as a sign of appreciation for the teachers and staff. The sign up is typically done through SignUp Genius. The treats are set up in the lounge for the teachers and staff.

Thanksgiving Pies – Academy Parents organized event to provide a pie to each SMA teacher and staff. Parents will be asked via email to bring a pie to school prior to Thanksgiving break. Parent volunteers are at carpool drop off and/or pickup to receive the pies. Each 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!

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 handwritten notes and/or a personal sharing of genuine appreciation is always welcome.