



ST. AMBROSE
ACADEMY

Parent Handbook

2024-2025

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Welcome to a New School Year!

Thank you for choosing St. Ambrose Academy as your partner in the education and formation of your children. We are very excited to welcome your children to a new school year and to work side by side with you in helping them grow, learn, and mature.

A great home and school partnership is built on a foundation of strong communication. The St. Ambrose Academy Parent Handbook is an important layer in that foundation. As such, we ask every parent to commit to reading and abiding by the Parent Handbook and also reading the Student Handbook to be familiar with expectations of St. Ambrose Guardians. Throughout St. Ambrose documentation, “parent” implies “parent or legal guardian” when a legal guardian has been appointed in place of the parent.

Please keep the Academy’s students and staff in your prayers.

Getting to Know St. Ambrose Academy

Questions? Call Us!

The conviction that parents are the primary educators of their children is front and center in our mission statement. The teachers, administration, and broader community (many of whom have witnessed encouraging transformations in their own children’s academic blossoming) are eager to help families through the transition to St. Ambrose Academy and welcome them as part of the family.

God has blessed us with an amazing faculty and staff – be sure to check the school website to learn more about their backgrounds and qualities that make them such suitable mentors and models for St. Ambrose students. You may make an appointment with Academy staff by telephoning the school. Please keep in close touch with your children’s teachers and Academy staff throughout the year about your child’s experience at St. Ambrose. The Student Handbook describes the primary staff members supporting your student.

Mission Statement

St. Ambrose Academy is an accredited Catholic school whose mission is to assist parents in the formation of their children by providing a classical education rooted in the Catholic faith. Aware that all truth has its origin and end in the person of Jesus Christ, our students study Catholic theology and college preparatory subjects through the teachings of the Magisterium and the primary works of civilization’s greatest thinkers. Offered regular access to the Sacraments and mentored by teachers who foster a deep love of Jesus Christ, students see and are led to imitate the virtues which joyfully compel a life lived in knowledge, love, and service of Christ and His Church.

About St. Ambrose Academy

St. Ambrose Academy is dedicated to the spiritual and intellectual formation of today’s youth to produce Catholic leaders of tomorrow’s Church and society.

St. Ambrose Academy was incorporated on February 13, 2003. The board of directors has chosen the National Association of Private Catholic and Independent Schools (NAPCIS) as its accrediting body. NAPCIS granted a full six-year term of accreditation to St. Ambrose Academy in 2009, and every six years the term has been renewed. Our school structure and philosophy are modeled after the many successful modern Catholic schools in America that have rediscovered the formational wealth classical education has to offer.

Contact Information

St. Ambrose Academy is conveniently located just south of the Beltline on Madison’s west side. The address is:

St. Ambrose Academy
702 S. High Point Road Suite 209
Madison, WI 53719-4926

(608) 827-5863
www.ambroseacademy.org
info@ambroseacademy.org

St. Ambrose Academy admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national and ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Visitors: Please visit the school often! We are on this exciting journey together and want to be sure we always stay on the same page. Visitors, including parents, must be authorized to enter by Front Desk staff. Each visitor will be issued a visitor badge that must be visible at all times during the visit.

Parental Access to the Classroom: Parents are welcome and encouraged to participate in daily activities at the school. Parents may observe their children's classes provided that the observation is scheduled in advance and the parent has received permission from the Dean of Faculty, who ensures the parent's presence will not impede the educational process and classroom environment. Parents are not permitted to videotape anything while in the school.

Young Visitors: Students who wish to invite young friends or family to accompany them to school must receive permission from the Administrative Assistant, who will ensure the teachers can accommodate visitors, at least one day in advance. Student guests must register with the Front Desk upon arrival.

Forms, Fees, and Tuition Payment

Important forms are collected and stored on each family's FACTS account, including contact and household information, emergency contact, authorized pickup, medical information, student driver authorization, parent volunteer and participation policy and contract, volunteer training agreements, media release agreement, tuition agreement, state-required forms, and immunization form.

1. Students will not be admitted into the school until the enrollment process is complete in FACTS.
2. The St. Ambrose Academy mission depends on each family's financial commitment. If unforeseen financial hardship arises, reach out to the Business Manager as soon as possible to revise your payment plan.
3. Throughout the year families will be billed through FACTS for required field trips, standardized testing, and other similar fees.
 - a. Families who are unable to afford these costs are encouraged to contact the Business Manager about scholarships.
 - b. When dropping cash at the Front Desk, you may request a receipt.
 - c. Field trip, exam, activity, and other fees will not be reimbursed if a student misses the field trip or activity.
4. FACTS charges late fees for late payments.
5. Students whose parents are delinquent with tuition and fee payments will not be allowed to participate in field trips and extra-curricular activities, will receive an Incomplete on semester exams and grades, and will not receive report cards, transcripts, or a diploma.
6. A history of delinquency may result in the student not being re-admitted the following fall and in student records not being released until a payment plan is arranged.

New Parent Orientation Night

In mid-July and then again in late August during Orientation Week, St. Ambrose Academy hosts New Parent Orientation Nights for parents who are new to the school. Be sure to attend! You will meet other parents, learn a lot about the school, and receive great tips for kicking the new year off well.

Registration Day

Registration Day occurs during Orientation Week to help families start the year with the information they need to succeed. All parents, new and returning, must attend to receive and sign documents, including class schedules, and go through the necessary steps to prepare for the new school year. Staff will be available to guide parents through the process and answer questions.

Student Ambassador Program

The Student Ambassador program is a St. Ambrose Academy apostolate whose mission is to teach ambassadors to bring Christ's love to every new student. If enrollment allows, each new student is introduced to his own student ambassador, a student of the same grade and sex who knows the ropes and mentors the new student about the community like a beloved brother or sister.

Students volunteer for the ambassador program and are selected by the Dean of Academic Success. They complete a training program in which they engage in prayer, practice role playing, and learn about their mentees.

The student ambassador then accompanies the new student during orientation, sharing knowledge of the school's customs, rules, teachers, and social life. This continues throughout the first semester, as the student ambassador also provides social support and works as the "go-to" person for the new student.

Schedule & Calendar

The annual school schedule and calendar is distributed during the enrollment period.

Annual Calendar

The most up-to-date and complete scheduling and calendar information can be found on the school website's Family Portal. The website Events Calendar "public face" shows community-wide events, but when you log into the Family Portal, you will be able to view a private listing of all activities and events pertaining to our school community, including student, family, and community activities.

Daily Schedule

Students receive a personalized daily schedule on Registration Day.

Transportation

Respect for Other Tenants: We share the parking lots and public spaces of Holy Name Heights with other tenants. Parents and students are asked not to congregate in the parking lots or public spaces and to move briskly through at drop-off and pick-up time.

After-School Pickup: St. Ambrose does not provide supervision for students beyond normal school hours or after the conclusion of extra-curricular events such as practices, rehearsals, games, tournaments or meets. Once the school day has ended or the extra-curricular event has concluded, students are the sole responsibility of their parents. This responsibility includes providing for the student's timely transportation home at the end of the school day or extra-curricular event.

The Academy lease does not accommodate students loitering on the Holy Name Heights grounds. It is imperative that parents pick their children up on time. Chronic lateness will not be tolerated.

Activity Transportation: When students are being transported to and from a school activity, each group of students must be supervised by at least two VIRTUS-trained adults, and we rely on parent volunteers for help. Optimally, two adults ride in the same vehicle with students, but if a group must be split-up, two or more students may ride with a single chaperone as long as the group of two or more adults and students are together prior to getting into the cars and meet at the destination as a group. No adult driver (teacher, parent or volunteer) may transport only a single student unless that student is the driver's own child. If the school cannot arrange for an adequate number of drivers to meet this requirement, parents will need to arrange for the transportation of their own children.

Snow Days

The Director of Operations will declare a snow day when weather conditions (significant precipitation, dangerous temperatures, or high winds) warrant. St. Ambrose families are spread over a wide geographical distance with many student drivers crossing miles of rural roads, and we want to keep everybody safe. Local news stations (WISC-TV3, WMTV15, WKOW-TV27) and their accompanying news websites will make announcements beginning at 6:00 a.m. if school is delayed or canceled.

Extra-curriculars on snow days are usually cancelled too, but the Director of Operations may allow them to meet if conditions clear up. Notice will be sent out via e-mail if so.

Communication

We share information with families in a variety of ways, and we count on families to keep up with school communications so their children may have the best possible learning experience.

Weekly e-News

One of our best communication tools is the weekly e-News, emailed on Tuesday of each week. This email contains general school news, reminders, classroom information, and important dates. Parents are expected to read the weekly e-News and all other emails from the school.

School Website and Family Portal

Our Academy website has cutting-edge functionality and a contemporary feel and is packed with excellent information that both current and prospective families will find helpful. We encourage you to visit, explore, and share ambroseacademy.org.

Family Portal: The website features a private Family Portal: you can access it from the upper right corner when viewed on a computer or the lower left corner when using a smartphone. Each summer, we will send you a new password so you may access this part of our website, which will contain information relevant to current families that we want to keep more private. The Family Portal will be updated regularly as the school year progresses, so please check back often.

Family Directory

A family directory is made available to families during the first quarter of the school year to help parents to communicate with one another as their children build friendships. This directory is for school communication only. This information is not for solicitation or distribution and must be kept private within the school community.

Parent Grievance Process

Communication is essential to resolving problems. Parents who have a grievance regarding discipline, academics in the classroom, or any other matter, may take the following steps, based on Matthew 18:15-17 and the principle of attempting to settle differences directly, privately, and face-to-face.

1. First meet with the teacher, coach, or activity director in immediate charge of the activity where the problem arose. This first step is so important: so often, a simple conversation is enough to mend the problem. Assuming good intentions helps.
2. If the issue can't be resolved on the front lines, the parents may approach the Dean in charge of the area relative to the problem.
3. If the issue is still unresolved after meeting with the Dean, the parents may, after notifying the Dean, meet with the Head of School.
4. If all avenues have been exhausted, the family may write a concise letter to the Executive Director giving notice of the grievance and the attempts made so far to resolve it. This must be done within 30 days of the circumstances from which the grievance arose.
5. The Executive Director will resolve the issue after meeting with both parties or acting on the report of a Conciliator appointed by the Executive Director to meet with both parties.

Civil Communication

St. Ambrose Academy staff are partners with parents in the education of their children. This partnership requires a civil relationship to be fruitful. If communication becomes conflicted and either party exhibits bad temper, engages in personal attacks, or employs unwholesome, malicious, obscene, or abusive language, the conversation shall be immediately discontinued and referred to a supervisor. The following escalating steps will be taken, depending on the seriousness of the situation:

1. The offender's email will be blocked, and communication will be channeled through the supervisor for a time or permanently.
2. The offender will not be permitted to attend P/T conferences without another staff member sitting in on the meeting.
3. The offender will be denied access to school property and/or school-sponsored events.
4. The offender will be referred to the School Safety Committee and law enforcement.
5. The offender's children will be expelled from the school.

Communication Regarding Content

Course content is available in the online Course of Study. When "hot-button" topics arise in class, teachers send a letter home to parents alerting them so they may discuss these matters at home. The content of film, book, art, theatre, or similar clubs focused on enjoying books or other works of art will be announced in the e-news ahead of time, so parents know whether to allow their children to participate after school.

Divorce, Separation or Custodial Arrangements

St. Ambrose Academy seeks to respect the dignity of divorced and separated parents and to preserve as far as we are able the primacy of both parents in their children's education. The love of the child is bound up with the love of both parents. As such, Academy staff seek to maintain impartiality and confidentiality.

Parents should provide the Academy with any court orders or legal documents governing arrangements affecting the child's education. Communication with divorced or separated parents or the guardians of students under custodial arrangements will proceed as follows:

1. School communication goes to the legal guardians, who must file a release of information prior to sharing records with a custodian.
2. If the school initiates a communication, it goes to both parents.
3. If a parent initiates a communication, the school may reply only to that parent.
4. If one parent writes a valid note about a student (such as an excuse or permission slip), the school does not notify the other. The school assumes that one parent speaks for both parents.
5. Separated parents are jointly and severally liable for tuition and fees, with one billing agreement per student. Parents may use the court system to determine payment responsibilities.

Choice Families (WPCP)

All Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP) families are subject to the following policies.

Application Appeal Process

All WPCP applicants, regardless of their status in the prior school year, must apply for the program every year within the open WPCP application period, completing and submitting program applications electronically via the Online Parent Application (OAS) at www.dpi.wi.gov/choice and providing the school proof of student eligibility, including:

- Residency documentation
- Prior year attendance requirement if the student is participating in the WPCP
- Income documentation (if applicable)

The school will notify any applicants determined to be ineligible by email. If a parent believes this determination is in error, he/she may submit a written appeal within five (5) business days from the date of notification. The appeal must be made in writing, include all pertinent information supporting the appeal, and be received by the school at the following address. Parents are encouraged to complete the WPCP application early in the open enrollment period. Appeals must be received by the school no later than April 10:

WPCP Administrator
St. Ambrose Academy
702 S. High Point Road Suite 209
Madison, WI 53719-4926

All appeals will be reviewed by the school's WPCP Administrator within five (5) business days from the date of receipt. The WPCP Administrator will then respond to the appeal in writing to either accept or deny the appeal. This decision will be final.

Failure to Complete Application: Students from new families who do not complete the application, enrollment, and registration process by the required deadlines may be ineligible. Important deadlines include:

- April 17, 2025: Applications and enrollment documents must be completed and signed in FACTS.
- April 30, 2025: Enrollment process, including required school tour and in-person meetings (including assessment meetings for students in need of special services), must be completed.

Fees

A school may charge WPCP students, regardless of their income, fees to recover the cost of the following as set forth in statute: personal use items, such as uniforms, gym clothes, and towels, social and extracurricular activities if not necessary to the school's curriculum, musical instruments, meals, room/board for travel not necessary to the school's curriculum, transportation, and before-school and after-school child care.

Religious Activities and Instruction

WI Statute 118.60: "A private school may not require a pupil attending the private school under this section to participate in any religious activity if the pupil's parent or guardian submits to the pupil's teacher or the private school's principal a written request that the pupil be exempt from such activities." To request exemption from religious activities for your student, please schedule a meeting with the Head of School.

- Students whose parents opt them out of Mass will be placed in a silent study hall during Mass times.
- Students whose parents opt them out of a religion course will be placed in a philosophy course or another liberal arts course as assigned by the Dean of Faculty.

Service Hours

No service hours will be required of WPCP families, but as part of a community of people devoted to Jesus Christ, we hope all our families will volunteer eagerly for service opportunities as often as their circumstances permit.

State Testing

St. Ambrose Academy administers state testing for WPCP students as mandated by the State. Parents may choose to decline state testing for their children without penalty by submitting an opt-out form for each child for whom testing is being declined that will be kept in the student's file. The opt-out form applies only to the current school year.

Building Community Among Families

One of the goals of St. Ambrose Academy is to foster community among its parents. St. Ambrose offers many ways for parents to stay connected.

Parent Support

Home and School Connection

Home and School Connection is a parent volunteer organization which welcomes *all* St. Ambrose Academy parents to enhance our school community by:

- Deepening relationships through social activities geared toward students and parents throughout the year.
- Welcoming new families and staying in touch with current families.
- Supporting our amazing staff with fun “extras” to show our appreciation and bring a little of the “extraordinary” into the ordinary school day.

Together, we can extend the close-knit community on the St. Ambrose Academy school campus back home to school families. Check the website for information on how to connect with Home and School Connection.

Spanish-Speaking Outreach

Under the Home and School Connection umbrella, our Spanish-Speaking Outreach works to reduce barriers due to language to better connect Spanish-speaking families with each other and the wider St. Ambrose Academy community.

Spanish-Speaking Outreach focuses on accessibility by presenting important school information in Spanish. St. Ambrose Academy’s Spanish-speaking Ambassadors will act as interpreters to assist families as needed throughout the school year.

If your family needs a Spanish-speaking Ambassador to act as an interpreter at a school-related function, please contact the Front Desk at (608) 827-5863.

Let’s Coffee Break!

Enjoy a cup of coffee with other parents after morning school drop-off. Coffee Breaks will be once a week. Join us to build friendships and connect with the greater parenting community within our incredible school.

Facebook

Parents may communicate with each other on the Facebook St. Ambrose Academy School Parents group to seek advice from veteran parents, coordinate carpools, or connect about school-related happenings. Only parents are allowed in this group, and you will have to request access.

Carpools

A parent volunteer helps coordinate carpools for families who live in the same area. Contact the Front Desk at (608) 827-5863 to connect with that volunteer if you want to join a carpool in your area.

Parental Commitment: a Key to Success

St. Ambrose Academy seeks to place the education and formation of our children squarely in the context of the Faith we are striving to pass on to them. Pope St. John Paul II has taught us that our children are best served in an environment that presupposes humanity's dignity and purpose, where the Faith infuses all academic disciplines. St. John Paul II's vision of an integral education is the basis for our vision.

The Call to the Laity Is Your Call!

The "call to the laity" was one of the central themes of Vatican II and was at the foundation of the founders' decision to start St. Ambrose Academy. This theme was taken up and proclaimed with great splendor by Pope St. John Paul II. This call is first and foremost a call to holiness from which stems a new apostolic vigor as each individual draws near to Christ. The action of the Holy Spirit has been made manifest in the myriad of lay organizations that have formed as the result of this new vitality. St. John Paul II offers helpful guidelines for evaluating a lay association in the Catholic Church:

- *The primacy given to the call of every Christian to holiness*, as it is manifested "in the fruits of grace which the Spirit produces in the faithful" and in growth toward the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of charity....
- *The responsibility of professing the Catholic faith*, embracing and proclaiming the truth about Christ, the Church and humanity, in obedience to the Church's Magisterium. For this reason every association for the lay faithful must be a forum where the faith is proclaimed as well as taught in its total content....
- *The witness to a strong and authentic communion* in filial relationship with the Pope, in total adherence to the belief that he is the perpetual and visible center of unity of the universal Church, and with the local Bishop, "the visible principle and foundation of unity" in the particular Church, and in "mutual esteem for all forms of the Church's apostolate." ...
- *Conformity to and participation in the Church's apostolic goals*, that is, "the evangelization and sanctification of humanity and the Christian formation of people's conscience, so as to enable them to infuse the spirit of the Gospel into various communities and spheres of life." ...
- *A commitment to a presence in human society*, which in light of the Church's social doctrine, places it at the service of the total dignity of the person.

(Pope John Paul II, "*Christi fideles Laici: On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World*," par 30, 1988)

The St. Ambrose Academy staff and faculty strive to meet and live out these criteria provided by St. John Paul II. They sign a three-part statement each year at contract-renewal time:

- Oath of Fidelity to the Magisterium
- Profession of Faith
- Adherence to Catholic Teaching

By joining this endeavor, you have now become an integral part of how John Paul II's vision will be carried into the future. The call to which the St. Ambrose Academy founders responded is today placed on the heart of each and every community member. All families benefit from an "apostolic model" of parental involvement, which brings forth community benefaction. We hope our parents will join us in holding ourselves and each other to these standards.

Adherence to Catholic Teaching

Conflict with parents over the teachings of the Church threatens the fulfillment of the St. Ambrose mission. The following excerpts from *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* are examples of teachings sometimes denied by Catholics in our time. St. Ambrose students will be taught these truths, along with all teachings of the Church:

Eucharist (1324, 1374): The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life; in it the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.

Divorce (1601, 1650): The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament. In the case of civil divorce, the Church maintains that a new union cannot be recognized as valid, if the first marriage was.

Adultery (2380): The sixth commandment and the New Testament forbid adultery absolutely.

Sins Against Chastity (2351-2356): Lust, masturbation, fornication, pornography, prostitution, and rape are offenses against chastity; sexual pleasure is morally disordered when sought for itself, isolated from its procreative and unitive purposes.

Homosexuality (2357): Homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and contrary to natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. Under no circumstances can they be approved.

Gender Identity (2393): By creating the human being man and woman, God gives personal dignity equally to the one and the other. Each of them, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity.

Abortion and Research That Destroys Human Embryos (2270): Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person - among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life.

Contraception (2370): Contraception is intrinsically evil. The innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life but also to a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality.

Woman Priests (1577): Only a baptized man validly receives sacred ordination. The Church recognizes herself to be bound by this choice made by the Lord himself. For this reason, the ordination of women is not possible.

Confession to a Priest (1484): Individual, integral confession and absolution remain the only ordinary way for the faithful to reconcile themselves with God and the Church, unless physical or moral impossibility excuses from this kind of confession. There are profound reasons for this. Christ is at work in each of the sacraments. He personally addresses every sinner: "My son, your sins are forgiven."

Teaching Authority (2034): The ordinary and universal Magisterium of the Pope and the bishops in communion with him teach the faithful the truth to believe, the charity to practice, the beatitude to hope for.

In enrolling your child at St. Ambrose, you assent to the Catholic vision set forth in the *Student* and *Parent Handbooks*. If you withdraw assent to any aspect of the St. Ambrose mission in word or deed, explicitly or implicitly, or if in the Academy's judgment the parent-school partnership is no longer functioning productively, you may be required to withdraw your child.

Please pray for your child and your child's teachers each day.

Service Hours

Many parents experience great satisfaction in helping to carry out the apostolate of Catholic education more perfectly. Volunteering at the school is a great way to meet other parents while meeting the real needs of the Academy.

When you register, you are given an opportunity to let us know of your special areas of expertise. Please always be on the lookout for ways you can share your gifts with our community. St. Ambrose Academy maintains a Sign-Up Genius site to organize volunteer opportunities. The site is available from the school website Family Portal and is regularly linked in the weekly e-news.

Parents are required to give 60 service hours per year per family (not per student), tracked by the Administrative Assistant via Signup Genius, unless an exception is granted by prior arrangement between the parents and the Business Manager. The Academy highly values service hours as they bring parents into the school and build community. Service hours save the school from many expenses, raise money for the school, provide support for staff, and make school events possible.

Unfulfilled hours will be invoiced at the end of the school year at \$15/hour to recover in part the actual costs of a family's lack of service hours. Report cards will not be released until that commitment is met. In an emergency or case of hardship, families may approach the Business Manager to request other arrangements. The school may also approve a substitute such as a grandparent or responsible and qualified older student to cover hours the parent had signed up for. Families are encouraged to invite friends and family to volunteer at the school as well. There is always a need.

There are two types of qualifying hours:

- Hours posted on the Signup Genius site (hours not entered here will not be counted):
 - Facility care: custodial, cleaning, maintenance, grounds work
 - Supervision: study hall supervision, lunch / recess monitoring
 - Driving/chaperoning: gym, field trips, school-sponsored events
 - Event assistance: school-sponsored or qualifying partner-sponsored school events (athletic, social, extra-curricular, fundraiser, etc.)
 - Assisting with or participating in fundraisers such as raffles or Scrip sales and assisting the development office with benefactor nurturing and growing business sponsorships
 - Staff support: helping with staff tasks and projects
 - Other specific tasks posted on Signup Genius
- Hours appointed by school officials (these hours will be tracked by supervisors):
 - Those appointed to a specific operational role (e.g. volunteer teaching, Learning Coach, or coordinator of Home & School, e-News, or Service Days, etc.)
 - Hours given *pro bono* by a parent with professional expertise to meet a school need (e.g. accounting or bookkeeping assistance, website or graphic design, IT support)
 - Board and committee service

Examples of hours that do not qualify:

- Daily carpooling
- Family-organized parties for students
- Baking or dropping off food or door prizes for an event or bake sale (note, however, that the family may ask for an in-kind donation receipt)

Safe Environment

All employees and volunteers are required to comply with the Diocese of Madison Safe Environment Program, including receiving the Protecting God's Children For Adults (Safe Environment) training prior to working or volunteering and passing a background check. Field trip volunteers will receive trip-specific safety training. Volunteers also sign a Volunteer Code of Conduct. Those who seriously violate the Code of Conduct may be reported to the Diocese of Madison and dismissed from the Academy volunteer corps.

Persons charged with or convicted of crimes of battery, harassment, sexual assault, or child abuse will face restrictions on unsupervised access to school premises.

Volunteer Code of Conduct

During the FACTS admission process, parents assent to following and supporting the policies and procedures of the Academy, including agreeing to this Code of Conduct:

Our children are among the most important gifts God has entrusted to us. As a volunteer, I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this Volunteer's Code of Conduct as a condition of my providing services to the children and youth of our school. As a volunteer, I will:

- Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Set appropriate boundaries with the children.
- Avoid situations where I am alone with children at school activities.
- Avoid inserting myself into the conversations of the students; avoid tasteless jokes and friendly banter, being aware that children are easily made uncomfortable by unwanted attention.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than excessive criticism, competition, or comparison when working with children.
- Refuse to accept or receive expensive gifts or other gifts that may be misinterpreted from children or their parents without prior written approval from the Business Manager and parents.
- Report suspected abuse to the Head of School or appropriate civil authorities.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children.

As a volunteer, I will not:

- Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while volunteering.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- Pose any health risk to children (e.g., by volunteering while affected by a fever or other contagious disease).
- Strike, spank, shake, or slap children.
- Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade children.
- Touch children in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Acquire, possess, or distribute pornography, especially pornographic images of minors, by whatever means or using whatever technology.
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates children.
- Use profanity in the presence of children.

I understand that as a volunteer working with children, I am subject to a thorough background check including criminal history. I understand that any action inconsistent with this Code of Conduct or failure to take action mandated by this Code of Conduct may result in my removal as a volunteer with children.

Scrip

St. Ambrose Academy awards hundreds of thousands of dollars in tuition assistance annually, and our tuition assistance need grows as we grow. To help meet this need, we ask every family to purchase Scrip gift cards, a top fundraiser for nonprofit organizations across the U.S. Families may use the gift cards for everyday purchases (groceries, fuel, dining out, home improvement, and more) instead of cash or credit cards. The retailer donates a portion of each card directly to the school without costing the family anything or causing any more.

- Each family is invited to purchase \$250 in Scrip gift cards (or more) during the school year.
- Families receiving tuition assistance are invited to purchase an additional \$250 Scrip for every \$1,000 in tuition assistance, up to a family maximum of \$2,500.00 for the school year. For example, a family receiving \$3,000 in tuition assistance purchases \$1,000 Scrip throughout the school year (\$250 base amount plus 3 x \$250 for each \$1,000 in assistance accepted).
- A reminder with year-to-date spending will be sent to each family near the end of each semester.

Please visit the www.RaiseRight.com website to learn more and to sign up. You are welcome to reach out to the Development team for tips to maximize convenience.

Tuition Credit Family Referral Program

The best ambassadors of St. Ambrose Academy are families. Your personal encouragement speaks volumes to families looking for a great environment for their child(ren). Through casual conversations, personal invitations to events, and encouragement to contact the school for more information, your personal witness is invaluable in inviting others to SAA events and to get to know the school more. This program encourages you to spread the word about our great school even more actively and rewards you with a tuition discount for helping grow SAA.

Note: Families who participate in the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP) at St. Ambrose Academy are ineligible for the Tuition Credit Family Referral Program because no tuition is paid directly to St. Ambrose. We encourage those families to be ambassadors of St. Ambrose by sharing invitations with prospective families to St. Ambrose events, sending materials that might be of interest, and encouraging them to reach out to the school to inquire about their child(ren) enrolling!

To receive credit for new family referrals:

1. The new family informs the Director of Advancement that its enrollment was due to the influence of the family receiving the discount. Only one SAA family may receive tuition credit for a newly enrolled family. A tuition credit cannot be split between families.
2. The referring family informs the Director of Advancement by July 1 of the families with whom they have shared their experience at St. Ambrose, invitations to St. Ambrose events, or answers to questions about St. Ambrose Academy as an option for their child(ren). This makes us aware of connections between current and prospective families and ensures the appropriate current family receives the tuition credit.
3. Tuition Credit Drawing: If 10 or more total new families enroll for the upcoming year by July 1 and credit SAA families, the referring SAA families will be entered into a drawing to receive an extra \$1,000 one-time tuition credit for the upcoming academic year spring semester. Referring families receive 1 entry per new family successfully referred and enrolled until at least the beginning of spring semester.
4. If a referred family departs prior to the beginning of the spring semester, no referral credit will be issued, but if the new family stays at least a semester, after the semester is completed, the referring family will receive a \$500 one-time credit off spring tuition (regardless of the number of children enrolled from the new family). Referring families who receive tuition assistance will have the one-time \$500 credit deducted off their actual tuition owed.
5. Faculty & staff are eligible for the discount at a 10% level.

6. A current family enrolling a new student who is a sibling of a current student is not eligible. Referrals are eligible for non-sibling new students only.
7. Families who refer many new families may receive multiple one-time credits up to the cost of tuition for their children. No excess credit will be paid out as cash. The balance will not carry forward to a new academic year.

The Family Portal contains documents to assist you in spreading the word about St. Ambrose Academy:

- Frequently Asked Questions: contains great information for you to share about the Academy itself.
- Tips for Connecting New Families: helpful tips as you think about families you'd like to invite to an event, parent tour, student shadow day, or phone call with the Director of Enrollment.
- Ambrose Advantage: polished brochure that you can download and share with others, including prospective families or benefactors.

Thank you for all of the ways you contribute to our school. We are blessed to have you and your students as a part of this community!

Solicitation on School Grounds

Parents, please note that no brochures for sales of any items or catalogues for fund-raising may be brought to school or passed out at school without the Business Manager's consent. This guideline ensures that no organizations with possible anti-Catholic agendas are promoted.

Academics

The St. Ambrose curriculum is designed to provide an outstanding foundation in the critical academic disciplines of math, science, history, literature, logic, rhetoric, composition, and language, crowned by regular study of and growth in the Faith.

What is Classical Education?

Educational Philosophy Statement

We believe that education should be pursued as an end that is not only useful but good in itself. We form the whole person in virtue—intellectual, moral, and theological. Drawing primarily upon the great works of western civilization, we build our curriculum upon the classical trivium, the “three ways” of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, equipping students with the basic tools for mastering any subject. Modeling the well-lived Christian life and striving to create a classroom environment aimed at knowing, loving, and serving God, teachers lead students to the discovery and appreciation of truth, goodness, and beauty. As a community of persons pursuing education as our common good, we are committed to helping each student reach his or her full potential in the pursuit of this noble goal.

Classical Pedagogy

The Student Handbook goes into detail on St. Ambrose Academy’s classical approach to learning, which includes in-depth study of the classical works of Christendom and the western world. Our Socratic question-based teaching, used in many of our classes, prepares students for college and a lifetime of learning. Small-group discussions demand participation and understanding of the subjects, resulting in excellent verbal communication skills and self-confidence.

Our dedicated faculty members use a variety of methods to give our students the tools they need to master our curriculum with an enthusiasm that comes from true understanding of the profound ideas of the ages.

Please [visit the website](#) to watch our video describing classical education and read up on how our time-tested classical pedagogy drives the St. Ambrose Academy classroom.

Course of Study

Academics at St. Ambrose Academy are organized around historical “cycles” through specific historical periods. The historical topic for each cycle is integrated in the History, English, and Religion courses, with the other courses reinforcing these topics when possible, resulting in a unified and interdisciplinary approach to each historical period. Courses also emphasize the development of logical thinking and rhetorical expression.

- The Junior High (Grades 6, 7, and 8) cycles through World, American, and Church
- The Senior High (Grades 9-12) cycles through Ancient, Medieval/Renaissance, American/Civics, and Enlightenment/Modern.

Students who attend St. Ambrose Academy all seven years cycle through all seven periods.

The full [Course of Study](#) is on the St. Ambrose website. It lists all academic and elective courses, course descriptions, and reading lists.

Grade Placement

The Academy is responsible for grade and course placement, which, in accord with academic standards, will be determined by the Admissions Committee based on factors that may include evaluation of student records, school references, placement testing, and parent/student interviews. Non-native English speakers may be required to take a TOEFL examination to determine course placement.

When concerns exist regarding a matriculating student's proficiency in a particular area, the student will be placed on academic probation, and a parent meeting will be required to create a plan of action to close the academic gap(s). The Dean of Academic Success will conduct a review at quarter's end to check progress and determine that goals are being met and grade placement is appropriate. If not, the student may be placed in a different grade or course of study.

Credit Transfer

If your senior high student is transferring in from another school or homeschool, you may ask the Dean of Faculty to evaluate whether completed credits may be counted towards the Standard or the Classics diploma or, if your student's prior credits are not approved, towards the Transfer diploma, according to St. Ambrose Academy's academic standards.

- The Dean of Faculty will request the sending school's curriculum or homeschool portfolio as well as an assessment of student content mastery.
- Transfer credits are awarded on the St. Ambrose Academy credit unit system.
- Though approved transfer credits may count toward the total number of credits required for graduation, they may not necessarily fulfill specific course requirements for graduation.
- Transfer credits do not count toward the St. Ambrose Academy GPA, but they will appear on the student transcript.

Moving from Junior High to Senior High

St. Ambrose Academy holds graduation exercises for students from the Junior High in Grade 8. While graduation from the St. Ambrose Academy Junior High is excellent preparation for Senior High, it does not guarantee admission.

Junior High students at or above 3.0 GPA are admitted to the Senior High with a positive assessment of student behavior and family acceptance of the school mission, tuition, and service hour obligations. Students with less than a 3.0 GPA through the third quarter of eighth grade go through a separate enrollment process for matriculation to the Senior High, including the following:

1. Faculty recommendation
2. Assessment testing for math and Latin via in-house placement exams, which assist the school in determining what services will likely be needed and how to place students in the Senior High curriculum
3. Admissions Committee review of the student's junior high record to assess the likelihood of success in Senior High

If a student earns a GPA below 3.0 in the 8th grade at St. Ambrose, he or she will be placed on academic probation for the first semester of Senior High. The student will be assigned an Academic Success Plan or a Learning Services Plan and will be placed under the guidance of Learning Services.

Course Placement

Course Acceleration: Students taking courses ahead of grade level must maintain a B- in a course, plus teacher permission, to remain advanced.

Sequenced Courses: In the Math and Latin courses, content is sequenced. Thoughtful placement in these courses is especially important.

- Advancing in Math:
 - Senior High Calculus Track: To be placed on the Calculus track in Senior High, students must begin with Geometry in 9th grade. To advance to 9th grade Geometry, 8th graders enrolled in Algebra must achieve a minimum grade of B- in the second semester.
 - Senior High Pre-Calculus Track: Those without Junior High Algebra or with a C+ or lower in 8th grade Algebra will be placed on the Pre-Calculus track, which begins with Algebra in 9th grade. Algebra 8 teachers may recommend that students who achieve the B- minimum still be placed on the Pre-Calculus track at the parents' discretion. Parents may choose to register their child in Senior High Algebra even if he achieved the B- minimum for Geometry, but they should be aware:
 - Space may not be available in Senior High Algebra I.
 - Algebra I uses a different textbook and approach but does repeat content from 8th grade Algebra.
 - The student will lose the option to achieve the Calculus Track.
 - Summer Options:
 - Students entering 9th grade who have not achieved the required B- grade have the option to work on Algebra over the summer and be retested in the fall for placement with permission of the Dean of Academic Success. Students will be asked to provide, no later than June 30, a study plan and a brief reflection on how they plan to overcome the obstacles that prevented them from reaching the grade threshold the previous semester. If they do not, they will not be eligible to advance in math or Latin.
 - Students entering the Pre-Calculus Track who experience success in math and have the ambition to accelerate the pace may have the option of outside study (see Student Handbook) to get on the Calculus Track.
- Advancing in Latin:
 - 8th grade students who achieve a B- or higher in Latin B will be enrolled automatically in Senior High Latin II for 9th grade. Parents may choose to register their child in Latin I even if he achieved the B- minimum for Latin II, but they should be aware:
 - Space may not be available in Senior High Latin I.
 - Latin I repeats content from Latin A and Latin B.
 - The student will then be required to take a minimum of two years of Senior High Latin instead of just one.
 - The student will lose the option to take Latin V.
 - Students who receive a C+ or lower in Latin B will be placed in Latin I on the recommendation of the Latin B teacher with approval by the Dean of Academic Success.

Homework

Homework is a part of St. Ambrose Academy's educational mission: the curriculum requires students to do work outside of class, not simply to teach them how to organize their time, but as a pedagogical necessity. Creating "self-learners" requires that students do some "self-studying." Parents play an important role in helping young people become independent learners by creating an environment at home where their children have the time and space needed to study independently.

Study Hall

Study Hall plays an essential role in fostering self-learners. We treat study halls with the same gravitas as our courses; students are expected to exhibit the same level of academic behaviors and decorum we expect in the classroom. As such, we teach all students how to succeed in study halls. All study halls begin with a period of silent study, which helps students work through their assignments on their own. Most study halls will follow that with "collaboration time," in which students are able to work together on group projects, collaborate on assignments, or just hang out.

Creating a Positive Environment at Home for Homework

Depending upon the students' abilities, their experience, their study-habits, and their extra-curricular activities, the homework load can be more or less burdensome. Over the years some parents have commented that their child is spending too much or even all their time on homework. No two situations are the same, as the causes can be multiple. We are always happy to receive such feedback because it either demonstrates that the child needs some help or assistance that we can provide or that the curriculum needs to be evaluated in light of current student needs. Please contact your child's teacher directly about any class in which your child is struggling.

Before contacting the teacher, however, here are some things to consider regarding your child's activities with regard to his or her homework. The list below includes real situations that we have encountered with students that might help you, as the parent, in your overall analysis of your child's homework load.

- **Set a Time Limit for Homework:** Take a look at some of your child's homework assignments and ask your child how long a specific assignment took. It is not uncommon in a school that encourages academic excellence for students to put needless extra effort into simple tasks, and a certain perfectionism can sometimes creep in. A student who is getting straight A's but putting in three times more effort than necessary is not necessarily succeeding. Learning how to prioritize and use the time available is another great benefit of having homework. One strategy you can use here is to put a time limit on homework. Tell your child that only a certain amount of homework time is *allowed*. Once there is a limit in place, students typically find they are able to use the time more efficiently. Along these lines, enforce a strict bedtime. If students know that they *cannot* stay up later than 10 or 11 p.m., they will be more creative about overcoming whatever obstacles keep them from finishing within a set time frame and will be more likely not to waste study halls, etc.
- **Control Distractions:** If your child is working alone in his or her bedroom it is quite possible he or she is not spending every moment on homework, but that homework is being interspersed with social media activities, texting, flipping through magazines, chatting on the phone, or staring out the window. Students are not being dishonest when they say, "I was studying," but they conclude they spent "three hours" on homework, when only about thirty minutes of actual work has been done. Such a study environment goes directly counter to one purpose of homework, which is to teach the student how to remain focused on a task when they are outside the constraints of the classroom. Consider creating a public space for your children to work on their homework so you can help your child to stay focused. The distractions of noise can be overcome much more easily than the distractions of being a teenager alone in one's room. Thirty minutes of focused work accomplishes much more than hours of distracted work. You might also consider

checking your children's social media pages; all posts have a date and time stamp on them. Some universities using a classical curriculum do not even allow internet in the dorms.

- **Over-Commitment:** What extra-curricular activities is your child engaged in? How far is the commute? How many hours of the day is your child spending on sports, the musical, or driving back and forth between practice and home? Does your child have a job? If a child is over-burdened in general the *first* thing the child may blame is the homework load because it may be the least enjoyable. Speak with your child's coach or activity director if the activity is taking up too much time.
- **Study Hall Use:** Ask your child to honestly assess how he or she is using study-hall time. We seek to create a quiet atmosphere of work in the study hall, but we don't stand over the student's shoulders. A great deal of student homework, if not all, can be accomplished in study hall if the time is used properly.
- **Struggle in One Subject Dominates All Others:** Ask your child if he or she is struggling with any course in particular. It could be that one subject is more difficult or confusing and is dragging your child down. If this is the case, please contact the teacher for that subject. The teacher can evaluate the work of each of the students in his or her class, reassess the classroom strategy, give you a context for how your student's work rates in comparison with his or her peers, and offer assistance as needed.
- **Pacing with Long-Term Assignments:** Ask your child what he or she is currently working on. Teachers will assign larger *long-term* assignments, and typically these all come due at the same time (end of quarter, just before vacation, etc.). These assignments are given well in advance so that students can learn to pace their work, doing a little bit at a time over a longer period. If students put these tasks off until the last day, they are bound to suddenly feel overwhelmed with "too much homework."
- **Homework is Just One Obligation in the Life of a Student:** If your child is using homework complaints in order to get out of household chores, to put off going to bed, to avoid family or Church activities, or to avoid getting out of bed on the weekends, please keep in mind that some teenagers are always looking for excuses not to do these things; they will use whatever works. Making them fulfill their other obligations in spite of homework (within reason) will help them to be more efficient and focused when it comes time for homework and prepare them for the multiple tasks of adulthood.

Homework Log

If, after considering these possibilities, you conclude that the problem is not study habits or lifestyle, the best thing you can do for the school is to ask your child to keep a "homework journal" for one week. It is difficult for us to address the concern about "too much homework" without specific details. If there is a problem with an over-load of homework, the administration will be the first to want to correct it, but we depend upon your help in pinpointing the source of the problem.

1. Ask the Dean of Academic Success for a Student Homework Log.
2. Participate with your child in logging focused study time spent on assignments for a week.
3. If your child is struggling in a particular subject, first discuss the problem with the teacher.
4. If that does not resolve the problem, speak with the Dean of Academic Success.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

St. Ambrose teachers are eager to speak with parents about their child's progress in school. Attending parent-teacher conferences and the orientation evening is a great way for parents to stay in touch. Parent/Teacher conferences are held at the end of the first and third quarters. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend.

8 Steps to a Great Parent-Teacher Conference:

1. Drop-in during the scheduled PTC times.
2. Review your child's Progress Report and grades.
3. Decide which classrooms to visit. Prioritize visiting with the teachers in whose classes your child might be struggling. It may not be possible to visit with EVERY teacher.
4. Seek out those teachers in their classrooms. If a teacher is occupied, find a chair outside the classroom and wait.
5. Plan on a 5-minute conference. Think about the most important issues your child has. You may want to set-up a private conference by phone or in-person to address lengthier issues.
6. Ask questions! The teachers will be ready with information on your child's behavior and grades, but don't be afraid to ask questions. How is your child getting along with others? Is he/she a leader? What can we work on at home?
7. Follow up with your child. Get the most out of Parent-Student Conferences by discussing (where possible) teachers' feedback and impressions with your child. Encourage better habits or communication, if needed.

Succeeding at St. Ambrose

Academic Success

Academic success comes not primarily from intellect, but from non-cognitive skills such as sound academic behaviors, grit, learning strategies, and social skills. Our teachers and our learning coaches inspire students to develop these skills to become not only stronger learners, but good citizens and hardy Catholics. We encourage students, under the guidance of faculty or learning coaches, to set long-term goals for academic success using a system called WOOP, as described in the Student Handbook.

Learning Services

Learning Services provides academic support for students who benefit from attention outside the standard curriculum. The overarching goal of Learning Services is to create an environment where all students feel good about learning and the support they are receiving. We accomplish this by creating a space where students can see themselves improving and experience the results of hard work.

The Dean of Academic Success will create an Academic Success Plan (ASP) for students who work under the guidance of Learning Services. The ASP will outline a student's academic goals, provide a timeline in which to achieve them, and indicate the means by which the student is mentored and how the student's success is measured.

Accommodations and Modifications

Some students may need *accommodations* such as extra time on tests, a quiet room for test taking, assistive technology, and other supports. In rare cases, some students need *modifications* to what is taught in the SAA curriculum. In both instances, parents collaborate with Learning Services by providing a diagnosis from outside experts who are equipped to identify the student's specific learning challenges.

To obtain a diagnosis, parents should submit a neuropsychological exam from a trained specialist. If that is cost-prohibitive, parents can consult their local school district to have their student evaluated. In some cases, Barton tutors for dyslexia from the Learning Atrium can provide a diagnosis of dyslexia. Please contact the Dean of Academic Success who can help you to obtain this part of the accommodations and modifications process.

In some cases, students who are not native English language speakers are eligible for accommodations and modifications. To assess whether they qualify as English Language learners, St Ambrose will rely on an ACCESS assessment from the Madison Metropolitan School District.

The Dean will then use the information as the basis of a Learning Services Plan (LSP), which will list appropriate and workable accommodations and, in rare instances, modifications that will be implemented in individual courses. This list will conform to interventions the Academy believes it has sufficient resources to implement successfully. Each LSP must be approved by the child's parents, the Academic Policy Committee, and the Executive Director.

Keeping Students Healthy

Please be sure students are sent to school well rested, well fed, and with a nutritious sack lunch and water bottle to stay hydrated. Help them arrive clean and neat for another school day! The Student Handbook describes the expectations for student hygiene.

Student Illness

In order to prevent the spread of disease at St. Ambrose Academy, the following measures are to be observed:

- **Hygiene:** Students are expected to wash their hands and cover their coughs.
- **Cleaning:** Students assist in cleaning and disinfecting the school every day before Chapel.
- **Contagious Disease:** If your student has caught a communicable disease (e.g. chickenpox, colds, COVID, diarrhea, flu, lice, mononucleosis, pertussis, pinkeye, strep, vomiting), students should quarantine according to CDC and local public health regulations. The State of Wisconsin maintains a Childhood Communicable Disease chart that parents may find helpful as it indicates signs, symptoms, period of contagion, and criteria for exclusion from school.
- **Symptoms of Illness:** Students should be kept home (and will be sent home from school) if they exhibit symptoms of illness including but not limited to distracting cough or sneezing, difficulty breathing, fever (above 100.4), chills, muscle pain, vomiting or diarrhea, distracting earache or sore throat, eye drainage or pinkness, or unusual rash. Students may return when symptoms are gone.

Student Mentoring

The Dean of Students, Student Mentors, and Chaplain are available to mentor students who demonstrate or express a need for extra behavioral, emotional, mental, or social support. Students may seek guidance from a mentor on their own, or the Dean of Students may assign a student mentor to work with a student demonstrating a need for support. Parents recognize that Academy support staff will, when necessary:

- Create safe pathways of communication for students to address behavioral, emotional, mental, or social needs and refer student concerns to parents when professional help appears to be needed.
- Work with small student groups on the importance of social inclusion for all.

Students, parents, and staff members should never hesitate to reach out to the Dean of Students, Student Mentors, or Chaplain for support and guidance.

Vacation

Vacations during school terms are strongly discouraged. St. Ambrose offers significantly more vacation time than the average school.

Bullying

The Student Handbook outlines the policy on bullying. School staff partner with parents to help prevent bullying behavior among students. Some strategies that parents can use to become more aware of their child's socio-emotional well-being at school include:

- Checking in with the child at the end of the day by asking specific questions about how the day went. Some examples are: "What games did you play at recess?" "What was your favorite class today?" "Do you have any interesting stories to tell me about what people did or said today?"
- Noting any changes in the child's behavior at home.
- Watching how the child is treated at drop-off and pick-up.
- Taking study hall or playground duty to watch how the child interacts with others.

If it becomes apparent that there is a problem, according to our bullying policies in the Student Handbook, we ask parents to describe the alleged incidents in writing to the Dean of Students. Parents and staff working together can help St. Ambrose students solve problems.

Partnership Sports

Sports offered in partnership with one or more WIAA-member schools involve competition at other schools. As result, St. Ambrose Academy can neither enforce nor guarantee that the rules and policies provided in school handbooks will be enforced with respect to your student or followed by all participants, coaches, or spectators in the course of your student's involvement in this activity, whether at practices, games, or events. These rules and policies include, but are not limited to, those concerning dress code, use of cell phones and other electronic devices, public displays of affection indicative of a romantic relationship, student monitoring, disrespectful/blasphemous behavior, Safe Environment training/protocols, health and safety protocols, sexual identity standards, requirements that students use pronouns and bathrooms corresponding to their biological sex, and requirements that athletes compete on teams corresponding to their biological sex.

Planning for the Future

College Planning

The Academic Advisor assists juniors and seniors with college admissions, making information from a broad range of college admissions offices available. Check the Student Handbook and school website for resources for college planning as well as checklists for your juniors and seniors as they explore college opportunities. Transcript requests for college applications may be made through the Dean of Students.

Vocational Planning

Each student spends time, usually during sophomore year, completing an aptitude assessment and interest survey called *PrinciplesYou* developed by the SCOIR college planning website. The goal with the assessment results is to introduce the students to a large variety of professions for which they may have an aptitude. The Academic Advisor meets with each student to discuss the results and encourages the students to share their results with their parents. The Development Office works with the Academic Advisor to welcome local professionals and alumni willing to come to speak to the senior high students about the kind of work they do. Parents interested in sharing their vocation stories and talking about their professional journeys with our students should contact the Academic Advisor.

Technology and Personal Devices

Parents, as the primary educators of their children, delegate academic instruction and integral formation to St. Ambrose Academy in a partnership which demands mutual understanding and unity of purpose. The role of the Academy in no way diminishes the responsibility of the parents. The work of protecting and preparing young people to fulfill their vocation to personal sanctity demands vigilance and perseverance. Of all the threats to our shared work, the most pervasive is the danger posed by smartphones and other personal devices, both in their behavior-altering power and the content they make accessible.

Without careful reflection and meaningful intervention on the part of parents, a child is vulnerable to the influence of a device which by its very design undermines the spiritual and intellectual formation we intend to impart. Unlimited access to an internet-connected device threatens first, the child's innocence, which parents and teachers are morally bound to protect; second, the attention required to participate in the deep reading, discussion, and contemplation which our curriculum facilitates and requires; third, the child's mental, emotional, and physical health.

In addition to the principal danger to innocence and the potential for interpersonal conflict posed by these devices, morally corrupt, passive, or excessive use is linked to and in some cases demonstrably causes inability to direct attention, decline in academic performance, loss of quantity and quality of sleep, increased anxiety and depression, and addictive dependence on the device.

Simply put, St. Ambrose Academy cannot fulfill its mission to provide an integral formation to students of any age who have unlimited or unregulated access to technology outside of school hours, nor can the faculty provide remedial instruction or tutoring to students whose ability to direct their attention or complete their work has been eroded by excessive use of personal devices.

Realities and Recommendations

The administrative team of St. Ambrose Academy wishes to impress upon families the following realities and to make some recommendations for responding to them:

Realities:

- The average age of first exposure to pornography is now 11 years old (some sources say as young as 8).
- Most children learn about the dark side of the internet from a friend with a device outside the home.
- While a good first step, no filter, lock, or blocking software is actually kid-proof.
- Every social app (one that connects its users) is a potential gateway for pornography and predators.
- All ratings on apps are provided by the companies which distribute them, creating an incentive to downplay dangers. YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, etc. are all gateways to adult content. Apps like TikTok have been banned in other countries because of their ties with child abduction.
- There are services, like Gabb Phones, that provide cellphone service and devices without data. No child at St. Ambrose is ever without access to a phone if needed.
- Any phone that can access Wi-Fi in your home can access all of the internet in any public location.
- Perpetual digital connection and communication is linked to decreased empathy, social competence, and resilience in the face of challenges. Children (and adults) are losing the ability to engage in meaningful self-reflection and conversation.
- Children follow what we do, not what we say, so parents must change their own relationship with technology before expecting children to follow.

Recommendations:

- Begin conversations with children by age 10 about what to do when they encounter pornography.
- Communicate that no device is owned by the child independently, but if given at all must be treated as a piece of equipment which is the parents' property.
- Only permit device usage in public areas of the home, such as the kitchen, never in the bedroom.
- Place a filter on your router and appropriate blocks on each device a child might use. We recommend Google Family Link (for Android users) and the service Bark as a back-up for when filters fail.
- Put away screens an hour or more before bedtime. Charge devices somewhere they cannot be retrieved.
- Set family goals about reducing device use. Model sacrifice and changes in behavior yourself.
- Return to offline devices like alarm clocks, datebooks, and handwritten notes. Use devices only for their intended purpose: phones are for phone calls, computers are for work, etc.
- Face-to-face conversation is capable of healing many of the wounds and deficits caused by early and persistent device usage. The number of family meals a child experienced growing up is a more powerful predictor of success than hours spent in school, playing sports, etc. In particular, do not allow children to argue, apologize, or cancel plans via text.

For additional arguments, statistics, and practical how-to's: Covenant Eyes: www.covenanteyes.com

Updated Academy Electronic Device Policy

See Student Handbook for updated Electronic Device Policy. Parents will be required to sign a Technology and Personal Device Agreement and a Device Disclosure form at the beginning of each academic year.

What is True Success?

Many saints have modeled Mother Teresa's famous lesson about success with their lives: "I do not pray for success. I ask for faithfulness." Naturally, parents want their children to enjoy success at St. Ambrose in academics, athletics, and the arts and to be well-liked and surrounded by caring friends. Grades may reflect how much a student has learned, but academic success emerges from a love of learning. St. Paul, moreover, identifies the true test of success: run the race so as to win an imperishable crown of righteousness. True success at St. Ambrose is growth in virtue, and virtue is its own reward.