



St. Mary's Academy

ST. ALBANS, VERMONT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why are you opening this school?

We wish to give families a high-quality educational opportunity that respects Christian values and honors the role of parents as the primary educators of their children. Our goal is to educate children in the truest and fullest sense by giving them the necessary tools of learning and by fostering wonder and love for all that is genuinely true, good, and beautiful. We emphasize classical learning because we want our students to read well, speak well, and think well and ultimately because truth and beauty are good in themselves and desirable for their own sake. We seek to incorporate our students into the wisdom of two thousand years of Catholic thought, history, culture, and arts so that they might understand themselves and their world in the light of the truth and acquire the character to live happy and integrated lives in the service of God and others. Education in this deep and comprehensive sense extends beyond the classroom and is more than just the acquisition of skills.

It encompasses the whole of one's life. For this reason, St. Mary's Academy will seek to involve families ever more deeply in the life of the school and in the education of their children.

Who is behind this effort?

The Catholic School Steering Committee includes people from all walks of life who care about the future of our Community and the need to strengthen families and support parents in educating their children. At present, we have a priest, a doctor, a nurse, business people, a family therapist, and several seasoned educators. Several of us are parents and grandparents.

When will the school open?

Our target is Fall, 2023.

Where will the school be?

We are currently negotiating with the people of St. Mary's parish, which has recently been merged with neighboring Holy Angels, for the use of the parish center property on Fairfield Street. We are in the process of determining what upgrades and structural modifications will be needed.

What is your expected enrollment?

Our target is to start the first year with between 40 and 60 children in grades 1-6.

When will you begin enrolling students?

We expect to start accepting applications and enrollment deposits by late Spring.

Will children wear uniforms?

Yes.

What will tuition be?

We are striving to make tuition equal to or less than the annual tuition other area Catholic elementary schools charge, which ranges from roughly \$5000-\$7800 per student per year. We will be fundraising to help defray costs and with a desire to provide tuition assistance to families with financial need.

What will the schedule be?

Tentatively, the school day will start at 8:20 and end at 2:30.

*We are exploring creative scheduling options to reduce our costs and lower tuition fees for families. For example, we **may** use a hybrid model which offers academics during the first half of the day (8:20-11:30) and optional enrichment programming in the afternoon hours, with individual tuition costs calculated based on which options are chosen. Details are still in progress.*

How many grades will you have?

We will start with Grades 1-6 and add a grade each successive year until we have eight grades. Depending on the first year enrollment, it is possible that we will operate multi-grade classrooms of up to 20 students each, with a professional teacher and a teacher aide in each room.

Will there be before/after school daycare?

This is not currently being considered. However, we are open to working with parents to make the building available for an earlier drop-off time in the morning to help accommodate parents' work schedules if a workable parent co-op plan is proposed. At this time such a plan would be at the initiative of parents and the discretion of the school administration.

What kind of curriculum will be offered?

We will use a classical curriculum, based on the time-honored concept of Catholic liberal education.

What is Catholic liberal education?

The term, "Catholic liberal education" is simply a description of the full vision of human formation according to the mind of the Church, desirable and accessible to everyone who has a soul. This approach is catholic with both a large and a small "c," meaning that it is universal. It is liberal, in the classical sense of the term drawn from the Latin liber, which means free. Authentic Catholic education frees us to see the truth of things, and to order our lives and our loves to that truth. With a 2,500-year proven track record, this gold standard of education produced many of the keenest minds and the holiest saints in history. It works.

How does Catholic liberal education relate to Catholic classical education?

Both are different terms for the same idea. For millennia, education was seen not as mere job training but as a search for wisdom and virtue. The Catholic Church took up this classical tradition in the liberal arts and sciences and ordered it toward Jesus Christ. "Classical" education is a kind of shorthand that speaks to the origins of the tradition; "Catholic liberal education" speaks to its end—freedom in Christ. Different schools choose different labels but they are all reclaiming the same path to human flourishing. These schools are at the forefront of an exciting renewal of Catholic education across the country.

What does a Classical Curriculum look like in practice?

Classical education depends on a three-part process of training the mind. The early years of school (K-4/5) are spent in absorbing facts, systematically laying the foundation for advanced study. In the middle grades (5-8), students learn to think through arguments. In the later grades, they learn to express themselves. This classical pattern is called the trivium.

Teachers help children to see all subjects as part of the human story, from language to mathematics, history to science. The focus is not simply on conveying information, but also on cultivating each child's intellectual faculties, including the ability to observe, to listen, to remember, to make connections, to speculate, to calculate, to persuade and to love that which is worthy of loving. By reading stories aloud and discussing them, teachers are developing those abilities and they are also forming the children's imagination. By examining and drawing objects in nature, children are developing their powers of attention. You can expect lots of history, fewer worksheets, more creative assignments, more writing, recitation of poetry and memorization of key building blocks of learning, such as math facts and parts of speech.

Where else is this model being used in education?

There is a renewal of the classical model sweeping Catholic schools across the country, with many existing schools switching to it every year. The [Institute for Catholic Liberal Education](#), which offers support to schools, reports that their membership doubled in the last year. In addition to seeking guidance from the ICLE for staff development and curriculum design, we are using as a model other schools that have successfully adopted the classical approach, such as [St. Jerome Academy](#) and [St. Teresa Catholic School](#).

I am interested in a teaching position. Are you hiring?

We expect to initiate a formal staff search in early Spring, but feel free to [reach out to us](#) for more information.