

Divine Mercy Academy



Family Handbook

2022-2023

Contact Information

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Prepare for life with seriousness and diligence. Always remember that only if one builds, as Saint Paul says, on the foundation which is Jesus Christ, will one be able to construct something really great and lasting. With the liveliness that is characteristic of your age, with the generous enthusiasm of your young hearts, walk towards Christ. He alone is the solution to all your problems. He alone is the way, the truth, and the life; He alone is the real salvation of the world; He alone is the hope of mankind.

Pope St. John Paul II

Speech to Children, Guadalajara, Mexico

June 2022

Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome to Divine Mercy Academy! It is an honor to begin this unique partnership with you as we strive to educate our children in a truly Catholic and Classical manner. When we began this journey in 2019, we spent a considerable amount of time refining a mission statement. I think it would be prudent for us to walk through this together as we start off.

Guided by the wisdom of our patron, Pope St. John Paul II, Our Mission is to partner with parents in their roles as the primary educators of their children, so as to foster a love for truth, beauty, goodness, and learning by providing students with a foundation of wisdom and virtue, so that they may bear witness to the kingdom of God. We desire to form disciples of Jesus Christ, who are made free to realize their full potential by living joyfully in accordance with the truth revealed by God through nature and the Catholic Church. We do this by providing a challenging and integrated Catholic liberal arts education.

Pope St. John Paul II, brought the message of Divine Mercy to the world through his teaching and in the way he lived his life. In his encyclical on Divine Mercy, he states, "The Message of Divine Mercy has always been near and dear to me... which I took with me to the See of Peter and which it in a sense forms the image of this Pontificate."

Pope St. John Paul II describes Divine Mercy as the answer to the world's problems and the message of the third millennium. Not only did he beatify and canonize Sr. Maria Faustina Kowalska, the nun associated with the message he also established Divine Mercy Sunday (the feast day associated with the message) as a feast day for the entire Church. On that day, Pope John Paul II declared, "This is the happiest day of my life." Over and over again, Pope John Paul II communicated the need for us to turn to the mercy of God as the answer to the problems of our times. Remarkably, Pope John Paul II died on the Vigil of Divine Mercy Sunday (the evening before the feast day).

We have named ourselves Divine Mercy Academy, as we seek to manifest Pope St. John Paul II's message about the answer to the problems of today.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, in paragraphs 2223, 2225, 2226, and 2228 states, "Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by *creating a home* where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for

education in the virtues. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery - the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the "material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones"... Through the grace of the sacrament of marriage, parents receive the responsibility and privilege of *evangelizing their children.* Parents should initiate their children at an early age into the mysteries of the faith of which they are the "first heralds" for their children. They should associate them from their tenderest years with the life of the Church. *Education in the faith* by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God. The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents...As those first responsible for the education of their children, parents have the right to *choose a school for them* which corresponds to their own convictions. This right is fundamental. As far as possible parents have the duty of choosing schools that will best help them in their task as Christian educators."

Divine Mercy Academy will not take on the "grave primary duty" of parents to educate and train their children in the Catholic faith, but we will assist parents in their task as Christian educators by providing a spiritually nourishing and intellectually challenging environment that will correspond to the convictions of parents whose primary goal is to prepare their children for eternal life in heaven.

The aim of Classical Education is Truth, Beauty and Goodness, which are called the "Transcendentals". These transcendentals are the ultimate desires of man. They transcend all space and time, pointing toward the objective Truth that is God.

Our focus is in forming faithful young adults, instilled with wisdom and virtue. Wisdom empowers a person "to judge and order all things in accordance with divine norms and with a connaturality that flows from a loving union with God." So while knowledge and understanding enable a person to know and to penetrate the divine truths, wisdom moves us to "fall in love" with them. We want our children to "fall in love" with Jesus Christ. Moreover, we are inculcating virtue. CCC 1803 states, "A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions. The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God." We want our children to fall in love with God and to be like Him. The natural extension of this relationship with God is to then witness to others about God by word and action. Pope Benedict XVI says, "The proclamation of the Gospel remains the primary service that

the Church owes to humanity, to offer the salvation of Christ to the man of our time, who is in many ways humiliated and oppressed, and to orientate in a Christian way cultural, social, and ethical transformations that are unfolding in the world."¹

Additionally, he exhorts us to "[h]elp each other to live and to grow in the Christian faith so as to be valiant witnesses of the Lord. Be united, but not closed. Be humble, but not fearful. Be simple, but not naive. Be thoughtful, but not complicated. Enter into dialogue with others, but be yourselves."²

We seek to partner with parents in creating disciples of Jesus Christ – by educating students in the Truth and providing an environment where the Truth can be freely lived out. Our chosen instrument in this is a Classical Liberal Arts Education. But do we really know what we mean when we say ‘classical education’? Most of us have not been classically educated, so do we really know what it is? Could we explain it or defend it well to someone else? We want to avoid descriptions which imply that we simply teach Latin in addition to other courses... So what should we say? It’s important that we all understand the how and why... We need to understand the very real way in which all of the hard work over the past year has brought us to a place where we can offer this best sort of schooling – classical.

According to Aristotle, you know what something is when you know its four causes: the material cause, the efficient cause, the formal cause, and the final cause. The formal cause is the thing’s shape or soul. The material cause is what it is made of. The efficient cause is who or what makes it, and the final cause is what its purpose is. Let’s now apply this to classical education.

Let’s begin with the material cause – the child itself. Our aim is the proper formation of the child, plain and simple. Next is the efficient cause – the teacher. While curricula and texts are important, it is really the teacher who brings these things to life in the mind of the child. The teacher leads their students in their pursuit of wisdom and virtue. It is therefore vitally important that our teachers be devout, orthodox Catholics who are striving to be saints.

The formal cause is the goal of the teacher with the instruction – the desired end of a child fully formed in accordance with their capacity, body and soul – filled with virtue and armed with true wisdom.

The tools of this process will be the great works of literature and truths spoken by the best minds of Western Civilization. They will know how to think, and what (the right thing is) to do.

¹ Pope Benedict XVI Links Evangelization and True Peace, Vatican City, October 7, 2007

² Pope Benedict XVI, Genoa, Italy, May 18, 2008

One of the tools in this process is Latin. Latin teaches our students mental discipline. It's rigorous and systematic. Latin was the language of the Christian faith for over a thousand years, and possesses a critical place in classical education.

The final cause is simply to develop children of God, who will know, love, and serve God in this life, and become saints, happy with Him in eternity.

In summary, classical education begins with a child (material cause), who is taught by a teacher (efficient cause), to think and speak well via studying Latin, great books... the liberal arts (formal cause), for the greater glory of God (final cause)!

It is my hope that each of us will continue to grow in our understanding and appreciation of classical education during this academic year. As we work to bring these beautiful subjects alive for your children, rest assured that we will be doing everything we can to achieve that final cause.

Jesus we trust in you!

Deo gratias,

Ali H. Ghaffari
Board President

Divine Mercy Academy

TRUTH ~ BEAUTY ~ GOODNESS

2022-2023 HANDBOOK

***“Be not conformed to this world,
but be transformed by the renewal of your mind
that you may discern what is the will of God,
what is good, pleasing and perfect.”***

Romans 12:2

The Mission and Philosophy of Divine Mercy Academy

The Mission of Divine Mercy Academy

Guided by the wisdom of our Patron, Pope St. John Paul II, Our Mission is to partner with parents in their roles as the primary educators of their children, so as to foster a love for truth, beauty, goodness, and learning by providing students with a foundation of wisdom and virtue, so that they may bear witness to the kingdom of God . We desire to form disciples of Jesus Christ, who are made free to realize their full potential by living joyfully in accordance with the truth revealed by God through nature and the Catholic Church. We do this by providing a challenging and integrated Catholic liberal arts education.

The Vision of Divine Mercy Academy

To become a center of classical excellence in the Catholic faith tradition. Divine Mercy Academy is a place where young Catholics actively and joyfully engage in the process of becoming saints. Through their love and example, we aim to evangelize the world.

School Philosophy

We believe that Divine Mercy Academy students are entitled to an excellent education provided in a caring atmosphere with Christian values. To assist us in meeting this goal, we must have a strong Catholic Identity, varying educational techniques, and active parental support. We strongly encourage parents to become involved in the life of the school, just as the school seeks to support the life of the family.

Catholic Identity

The student's growth in faith is the central purpose for Divine Mercy Academy. Students are challenged to achieve their highest potential. They are encouraged to live their faith in word and deed in their church and larger community.

Board of Directors and Teachers

Divine Mercy Academy Board Members and Teachers must be practicing members of the Roman Catholic Church, they must state their loyalty to the Holy Father, profess an absolute commitment to the magisterium, affirm that they are living in accordance with the laws of the church, recognize the importance of a classical liberal arts education, and advocate the Catholic position that the parents are the primary educator of the child.

Catholic Culture Association

The DMA CCA believes the development and nurturing of the school community is best accomplished in an atmosphere of trust and cooperation with the consideration and respect of the distinctive qualities, talents, abilities, and needs of each person. By providing a vehicle for service, social, and fundraising activities in support of the school, the DMA CCA recognizes the importance of its role in affirming the school community and its members as living expressions of God's love.

The Divine Mercy Academy's Catholic Culture Association (CCA) is composed of dedicated parents and teachers who work together to provide activities and funds to the school. With the hard work and commitment of our families and staff, our school is able to make strides. The DMA CCA provides an example for our students that together we can make a difference in our community and make it a better place.

"That they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." John 17:21

Students

Divine Mercy Academy aims at inspiring its students to become faithful, virtuous, and intelligent disciples of Jesus Christ, who seek to embrace the True, the Good, and the Beautiful. Such a goal is essential to a school that models itself in the Catholic tradition, for catholicity involves the response of wonder at the recognition that all that is true,

good, or beautiful is of God and, indeed, is a manifestation of one or another aspect of God's nature. The integration of faith, virtue, and reason that we seek to achieve in our school's curriculum finds its attestation – so we prayerfully hope – in the lives of our students. With respect to faith, we seek to set before students the Tradition in the embrace of which they may journey toward their ultimate end—Beatitude with God. With respect to intellectual virtue, far more important than students merely fostering intellectual ability is promoting the desire to understand, a willingness to face challenging questions, and a tenacious diligence in the pursuit of learning. With respect to moral virtue, we encourage students to acquire the Cardinal Virtues, enlivened by the Theological Virtues, through engagement in co-curricular activities, charitable acts of mercy, and in the pursuit of the common good in the public square. Divine Mercy Academy aims to introduce young men and women to the Great Conversation, a conversation informed by familiarity with the great ideas and the perennial debates that swirl about them. Our graduates will have begun the intellectual journey in which they gain insight into first principles, learn how to express themselves logically and eloquently, and acquire an integrated body of knowledge. They will therefore be preparing a solid foundation upon which to build their lives and go into the world pursuing faithfully, boldly, and charitably vocations that serve Christ and His Church.

Parents

Parents, the primary educators of their children, establish a partnership with Divine Mercy Academy when they choose our institution. This choice implies that parents trust and support the school in her mission, goals, curriculum, and forms of teaching and discipline. When issues arise, parents are expected to seek resolution of them in orderly, charitable ways, collaborating with the school's administration and faculty. Only when parents and the school truly work as a team can the formation of young men and women be successful. Parents typically contribute to this formation at home, where they can make their homes to be environments supportive of the habits of faith, sound moral character, and intellectual culture. Parents who send their children to school are not absolved from their responsibility to teach their children the Faith:

Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith.

Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God.³

Likewise, it is expected that parents oversee the academic progress of their children by offering assistance to them in school studies, organization, and general habits of personal and academic responsibility. Of great importance, too, is parental attendance at school events and volunteering to work at school activities. Parents contribute to their child's formation at school when they assume that the faculty and administration will act in good faith and when they initiate communication about their own particular needs and concerns — and rightly hold the school accountable for a timely, appropriate response. We are obliged to provide such a response, for we realize that parents remain the primary educators of their children and have the moral duty to guide their children towards responsible adulthood.

Faculty

The ultimate aim of the educational vision set forth in this document demands that Divine Mercy Academy recruit and continuously form a faculty that fully embraces and bears witness to the unity of faith and reason, the Catholic understanding of the human person, to the authentic character of a liberal education, and to the school's particular mission. At all levels, members of such a faculty should be committed to the intellectual life in its fullest meaning with an enduring sense of wonder about God and His creation and with a habitual desire for the attainment of wisdom — that is, the intellectual, emotional, and artistic maturation of the human person. They must have a Catholic mind and heart and a desire to cultivate Catholicity in the school's students. As Pope Benedict XVI writes:

Education is the most interesting and difficult adventure in life. Educating—from the Latin *educere*—means leading young people to move beyond themselves and introducing them to reality, towards a fullness that leads to growth. This process is fostered by the encounter of two freedoms, that of adults and that of the young. It calls for responsibility on the part of the learners, who must be open to being led to the knowledge of reality, and on the part of educators, who must be ready to give of themselves. For this reason, today more than ever we need

³ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2226. 13 Educating Young People in Justice and Peace (Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2012).

authentic witnesses, and not simply people who parcel out rules and facts; we need witnesses capable of seeing farther than others because their life is so much broader. A witness is someone who first lives the life that he proposes to others.

Teachers at Divine Mercy Academy endeavor to invite students into a world of mature faith, conversation, and behavior, a world that should daily be obvious to our students as they observe their teachers engaged in an ongoing pursuit of wisdom, marked by an integration of faith and reason to which the students are also summoned. The integration sought should not be that of an individual teacher, but of a fellowship of teachers in mutual communication and collaboration, for together we see farther than we do alone. The success of our school requires that the members of the faculty broaden their lives to each other, and that they seek the unity of a shared educational pursuit characterized by charity.

General Information

Accreditation and Certification

Divine Mercy Academy is certified by the State of Maryland. The accreditation process begins 3-4 years after the school has been in existence, and will be pursued at that time. The classroom teachers are degreed in accordance with the Maryland Department of Education regulations. The Student-Teacher ratio is approximately 5:1.

Enrollment at Divine Mercy Academy

All families must sign an Enrollment Contract for the school year. This contract includes, but is not limited to, the recognition that the school must develop a working budget, and parental obligation to pay tuition for the full academic year is unconditional. No portion of such fees, paid or outstanding, will be refunded or canceled. In the case of absence, withdrawal, or dismissal of children from the school, any and all of the tuition and fees are immediately due and payable.

Tuition

Please refer to the school's website for current tuition rates. Family discounts are available for multiple children of the same family enrolled during the same school year. A limited amount of financial assistance is available to families each year. See Tuition Assistance below. Tuition is paid through TADS.

Tuition Assistance

Parents should first apply for financial assistance through TADS. The DMA admissions officer utilizes the TADS system to determine awards for families.

A referral program is offered to current families (who are paying standard tuition rates) who refer new families to Divine Mercy Academy. A \$500 tuition credit may be awarded if an existing family refers a new family that enrolls children at DMA. The credit is applied once the new family submits their signed contract.

Withdrawal of Students

Families withdrawing students from Divine Mercy Academy should notify the school in writing as soon as possible. Once all financial obligations are met and a Release of Records form is received from the new school, official school records will be sent directly to the new school.

Parent–School Agreement

As the primary educators of their children, parents/guardians freely make the choice of a Catholic education for their sons/daughters. Registration and acceptance at Divine Mercy Academy, and signing of appropriate documents required by the school, constitutes an agreement by the parent/guardian to accept and abide by the rules and regulations of the institution and to support its philosophy of education.

Parent Communication

Open communication between parents and school is always crucial to the success of the whole organization. You are welcome to contact the teacher whenever you have a question or concern about your child's education. Conferences with individual teachers must be arranged through the office or individual teacher. Appointments can be made before or after regular school hours.

In the event there is a concern involving your child, or Divine Mercy Academy Policies, or procedures the appropriate chain of command is:

1. Discuss the issue with the teacher concerned.
2. If you have approached the teacher and if problems persist, make an appointment with the head teacher to discuss the problem.
3. If the concern or problem persists a school board member may be asked to intervene.

Student Information

It is very important that we have accurate addresses and phone numbers and emergency numbers. If you move or change your phone number, please let the office know immediately. If you will be out of town you must write a note and share a copy with the office and your child's teacher(s) indicating who is in charge of your child in case an emergency should occur.

School Directory

A school directory, listing all DMA students/families, is included on our EDUCATE communication site and will have families' names, addresses and phone numbers. If you do not want to be included, please indicate this within that system.

School Property

Divine Mercy Academy reserves the right to search student items brought onto school property.

Smoking Policy

Smoking is not permitted on school grounds or in the school.

Cell Phones and other Electronic Devices

Please do not send your children to school with electronic devices (including headphones, apple watches, kindles, etc.) . If needed, the school office phone is available for students during these hours. If a cell phone or other electronic device is used, seen, or heard during school hours, it will be confiscated. It will be released to a parent or legal guardian.

Lunch and Snack

We provide a time for morning snack break. Children should come to school each day with a nutritiously healthy lunch and snack, as well as milk, water or juice from home.

DMA does not provide microwaves to heat lunches. Parents are discouraged from delivering restaurant lunches for their children. Students will enter the lunchroom, proceed to their assigned tables and eat with good manners. Grace is said. Nut allergies restrictions will be promulgated as they impact us.

Recess Guidelines

Children go outside for recess daily. Please be sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather. No child may be excused from recess without a daily written excuse or phone call from the parent or guardian. Excuses are only accepted for situations such as acute asthma or environmental allergy, fractures, etc.

Early Dismissal

A parent picking up a student early should send an email, text, a phone call, or a written note to school that morning. The child will be called from the classroom when the parent reports to the office.

No child, under any circumstance, will be allowed to leave school during the school day with an adult other than a parent or guardian without prior permission from the parent/guardian.

Tardiness

A student is tardy if he/she arrives after 8:00 am.

Dismissal Procedures

Student dismissal will begin at 3:20 pm on regular school days. Parents / Guardians are asked to wait in their cars in the carline which forms in the parking lot. Students will be escorted to their vehicles by DMA staff or parent volunteers. Only passenger side doors should be used for student loading. Please wait for the cars in front of you to move before moving forward or pulling out of the car line. Students who are not picked up by 3:30 pm on regular school days or 12:15 pm on early dismissal days will be taken to After Care.

Attendance

If your child is absent from school, a parent must report the absence, please call or text the school office by 9:00am. Whether you call or email when your child is not going to be at school, please leave the following information:

- child's name
- grade/teacher
- reason for absence
- homework plan if applicable

In the event of an absence, assignments can be made up and full credit received if the reason is:

- illness of student • death in the immediate family or family emergency
- court appearance • quarantine • exposure to contagious disease • medical and dental appointments that cannot be scheduled outside school hours

A note from parents to the school is to be sent by parents for each absence. If a student is absent for four consecutive days or more, a doctor's excuse must accompany the student upon return.

Vacations are discouraged during school days. Students are required to visit each tutor to come up with a plan to make up missed work and to take any assessments that were missed.

Inclement Weather/Snow Day/Emergency Closing Procedures

We DO NOT follow Anne Arundel County Schools. The school will send an email and text when school is closing for weather no later than 6:45am. If weather conditions indicate the possibility of an early closing once school is already in session, parents will receive a text and email. If parents cannot arrive at school on time for the early closing, they should have a friend or family member assist them by picking up their child(ren). Stay and Play will not be available on any day school closes early for inclement weather.

Visitors

For the security of our school community, all doors are locked throughout the day. Parents and other visitors must report to the school administrator upon entering the building. When volunteering or visiting during school hours, you will be asked to sign in and out and you will be asked to wear a badge showing that you are a visitor. Parents dropping off a lunch, or other items, are to leave the item with office personnel who will deliver them.

Emergency Drills

To ensure orderly and safe evacuation of the school in emergency situations, we will regularly hold drills in accordance with Maryland State Law. Students will be taught how to evacuate safely in the event of fire, to shelter in place during a lockdown, and how to protect themselves during a weather emergency.

Health

An Annual Student Health Survey form is required for each student for updating the student's health file with current and pertinent information (updated at least every three years, or with a vaccine change, whichever is less). In the event of a serious accident during school hours, we will attempt to notify parents before any medical care is given. If an accident occurs during a field trip, the nearest medical care facility will be utilized.

According to the Maryland Department of Education a student should be temporarily excluded from school for:

- A temperature of 100 or higher – any fever should be gone (unmedicated) for at least 24 hours before the student returns to school
- Most inflammatory eye conditions, such as pink eye
- Rashes or eczema that is known to be contagious or infectious
- Head cold of any consequence, especially with a persistent cough and excessive drainage
- Sore or inflamed throat -- if strep throat is diagnosed, the student needs to be on medication for at least 24 hours before returning to school
- Discharge from the ears
- Body lice or head lice
- Diarrhea

If your child is sent home ill with a possible contagious condition during the day, he/she will not be permitted to return to school that same day. Students who were sent home, or have been absent during the school day, may not participate in extracurricular events that day or evening. Any fever should be gone for at least 24 hours before returning to school. Children who vomit at school must go home and remain home for 24 hours.

Medication Policy

All medication will be kept in a locked medicine cabinet.

1. The school administration will administer all medications if at all possible, otherwise a parent will be called to administer the medication. Students are not permitted to medicate themselves at any time, with the exception of students who are authorized by their doctor to self-administer inhalers or Epi-pens (see allergy alerts).

2. All prescription medication to be administered during school hours must be in the original prescription container marked with the student's name, the name of the medication, the accurate dosage, and when it is to be administered. Any dosage changes must have a doctor's written statement (which may be faxed to the school) or a new original prescription container. All prescriptions must be current within the year.
3. All prescription medication, including inhalers that are administered on a regular basis, must have a completed "Prescribed Medication Permission Form" on file. This form can be obtained from the school office.
4. Medications, such as antibiotics, that are ordered to be given 3-4 times a day which necessitate a dose to be given during school hours, please request an extra bottle from the pharmacist so just the amount of medication needed at school can be sent in to avoid having the student carry the medication back and forth each day.
5. Non-prescription medications to be given must also be in the original container (please, no baggies) with written authorization from a parent/guardian/medical professional detailing when the medication is to be given and the reason for giving it.
6. If it becomes necessary to give a student medication that is not kept at school, a parent/guardian may come to school and administer the medication. Please inform the office beforehand.

Allergy Alerts

It is the parent's responsibility to alert the school staff to allergies. Once informed, the school staff will take the necessary time to understand the child's allergies and will develop a plan that both reasonably protects the child and creates the least restrictive environment for the other children in the classroom and school. If a student carries an EPIPEN or inhaler with him/her, the physician's order must state this requirement.

Providing treats in school

Because we may have children with allergies, parents must first contact the teacher to inquire if treats are acceptable in class. The teacher will then take appropriate steps to ensure the safety and participation of everyone.

Curriculum

Divine Mercy Academy provides a classical education for children in a faith centered environment. Using the classical method, the order to our world is stressed in everything we do and throughout all the subjects our students study. Our children learn “how” to learn, acquiring the tools of learning which make this possible. Respecting the classical trivium, we strive to feed the soul as well as the intellect. Children respond beautifully to this approach to learning, quickly becoming people who love to learn.

Schedule:

See Appendix

Assessment

We will assess children on their growth in both character and academics. Report cards may use a variation of the grading scale as deemed appropriate by the classroom teacher. Grading in Kindergarten, First and Second Grade depends upon intellectual development and ability, growth in knowledge and skills, neatness, completion of work, and on task time. Grading in Second through Eighth Grade depends upon: tests, quizzes, class participation, homework/daily work, projects/reports. We will assess children’s growth in character by measuring their behavior according to the Salesian Way.

Field Trips

All field trips are academic and/or spiritual in nature, and are aligned with grade level curriculum. A signed permission slip must be filled out for a student to participate in a field trip. Teachers and Administration have the right to prohibit a student from participating in a field trip when circumstances warrant. Parents are asked not to bring others along, including siblings, when they are chaperoning.

Homework

Homework is an essential part of the learning process. A certain amount of homework is necessary to reinforce what is taught at school. The student who successfully learns the process of completing homework also is mastering self-discipline, independence, initiative and responsibility. If minimum work requirements cannot be met, students will be placed on academic probation and placed on a program to assist them.

The purpose of homework is to foster habits of independent work-study, to reinforce learning that has taken place at school, and to relate school learning to out-of-school interests. Parents are asked to foster an atmosphere conducive to doing homework and stress the importance of the responsible completion of homework to the student. Homework includes written and/or study work, projects, and purposeful reading. Students at all grade levels are expected to complete homework assignments and turn them in on time. Assignments missed because of excused absences must be completed in the same amount of days that the student is absent.

Homework should provide:

- Nightly Reading (about 20 minutes - including the weekends)
- An extension of classroom activities
- An evaluation tool for both the teacher and student
- A positive learning experience emphasizing quality not quantity.
- Additional opportunities to learn time management and organizational skills

Teachers will:

- Check assignment book each day in class
- Provide assignments relevant to class work
- Use assigned homework as an assessment tool
- Consider the age and capabilities of the student when preparing assignments
- Consider the time required to complete an assignment

Parents will:

- Check assignment book each day at home
- Provide adequate time and a suitable place for the student to complete homework
- Be available for questions, but remember that homework is the child's responsibility
- Contact the teacher when their child consistently has difficulty completing assignments

Students will:

- Clarify homework instructions with the teacher
- Take home materials needed to complete assignment
- Budget time
- Return all completed work to the teacher by due date

Homework Assignment

- For Kindergarten, the tutor will communicate assignments to parents through homework journals, handouts or electronic means.
- Students in all grades will use the provided assignment notebook

Make-Up Work

Students who have an excused absence have the same amount of time missed to make-up missed work. Example: If a student was ill 2 days, then they have 2 days, upon return to school, to complete and turn in missed assignments/activities. Homework may be requested before 9:30 a.m. on the day of the absence. Homework will be placed in the school front office to be picked up.

Physical Education

Students attend P.E. each week. Participation is expected except when a child has a note from a doctor releasing him/her from gym class. A doctor's note is required indicating the appropriate level of P.E. activity if a student has sustained a fracture or injury. If a student has worn a cast or a splint, a doctor's note is required to resume PE activity.

Promotion and Retention

Students who have successfully completed grade requirements will be promoted to the next grade. However, a teacher/administrator may decide it is in the child's best interest due to academic or emotional immaturity to retain that student in his/her current grade level. Parents will be notified by the beginning of the third trimester if a student is in jeopardy of being retained.

Kindergarten-1

A decision to retain a student in the Kindergarten program shall be based on the progress of the child, especially with regards to the level of maturity attained and the ability to handle the academic program of the next grade. This decision will be a consultative one involving the teacher, parents, and administration.

Grades 2-4

Inability to read causes more children to experience failure or lack of progress in school than any other single factor. The foundation in reading is laid in the primary grades, especially the first two grades. Hence, in the primary grades, promotion is to be

determined mainly by the student's progress in reading. It is important to determine the overall ability of the student.

Grades 5-8

Students in grades 5-8 are required to pass all core classes.

Promotion to the next grade also demands that students maintain a general average of 70% or above.

Reports to Parents

Reports of your child's progress will be made during the year. Report cards are sent home at the conclusion of each trimester. A mandatory Parent/Teacher Conference is scheduled in the fall and additional conferences will be provided upon request throughout the year.

If a teacher observes that a child is having difficulty with classroom work, parents will be notified by phone or in writing and an appointment may be made to discuss the child's progress. Report Cards and notes home are tools to communicate how your student is progressing in school.

Discipline

Discipline Policy:

The goal is to form disciples of Christ by encouraging virtuous living and clear expectations of behavior and the consequences for not following them. We hold up the Salesian Way as our code of conduct. (See appendices)

The following have been determined by administration, faculty, and staff to be the non-negotiable essential requirements of a well-mannered DMA student:

1. Walk in the hallways.
2. Listen while others are talking.
3. Keep your hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
4. Do not threaten another with physical violence or verbal abuse (includes name calling, humiliation, gossip, bad language).
5. Be honest. Do not steal or cheat.
6. Greet adults and each other with courtesy. Stand up when an adult enters a classroom and greets the class.
7. Be in full uniform each day.

8. Electronic devices are not allowed at school unless specifically requested by the teacher.
9. Participate in class and follow teacher assignments.
10. Take care of books and school property. Do not cause vandalism or damage.

A Behavior Incident Report will be emailed and sent home with any student who gets 3 misbehavior incidents in one week (from any teacher, in any class).

Any family whose student either 1) threatens physical violence or verbal abuse or 2) cheats or steals will get an immediate phone call from the teacher or member of the Leadership Team.

In the case of physical violence, the student accused will not be allowed back in school until the parent conference takes place.

The consequence for premeditated intent to harm with physical violence:
1st offense – 1 day suspension, write out plan for improvement, letter of apology
2nd offense – asked to leave school, must pay balance of full year tuition

The consequence for verbal abuse:
1st offense: 1 day in-school suspension, letter of apology, write out plan for improvement
2nd offense: 2 day in-school suspension
3rd offense: asked to leave school, must pay balance of full year tuition

Vandalism and deliberate damage to property must be replaced at the expense of the parents. In addition, there will be in-school community service hours.

The Administration reserves the right to limit all school-related extracurricular activity participation based on a student's conduct and/or effort grade.

Harassment and Intimidation

Harassment or intimidation shall include, but not be limited to, verbal or physical threats, offensive or threatening communications, gossip, unwanted or offensive contact, obscene or threatening gestures, or other form of willful conduct intended to place

someone in fear or in physical danger. Students making such threats in any form face detention, suspension, and/or expulsion.

School Policy also strictly prohibits any form of sexual harassment, which shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- inappropriate or unwanted physical contact (e.g. grabbing or touching a person's private areas);
- inappropriate physical gestures (e.g. rude hand gestures or exposing private areas of the body);
- inappropriate language or suggestions of a sexual nature; and derogatory and/or offensive jokes and comments

Bullying

Bullying is a form of violence that hurts others and it is strictly prohibited at Divine Mercy Academy. Parents and teachers should be alert to bullying at school or during school-sponsored activities where a student or group of students intentionally and repeatedly uses their power to hurt other individuals or groups. Bullies' power can come from their physical strength, age, financial status, popularity, social status, technological skills, or by association.

Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying occurs when any person is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another individual or group using the Internet, interactive and digital technologies or cell phones. We reserve the right to discipline students for actions taken off-campus if actions are intended to have an effect on another student or they adversely affect the safety and well-being of a student while in school.

Reporting Harassment or Bullying

Any occurrence of bullying or harassment should immediately be reported to a student's teacher and / or the administration. The Head Teacher will investigate the incident and take appropriate disciplinary action, if necessary.

School Uniforms

School uniforms are designed to take the pressure off competition and economic status for students. Uniforms encourage a neat, consistent appearance and assist students as they concentrate on their studies. The uniform code is strictly enforced by the school

faculty and administration. All uniforms should be clean, pressed and free of holes. Shoes and socks must be worn at all times.

1. All Grade levels:

Summer Uniform- Worn before November 1st and on or after April 1st.

All students shall wear a short sleeved collared blue shirt with logo on the left breast. This shirt can be purchased from Land's End. Boys shall wear non-pleated khaki shorts with a brown belt and white crew socks. Younger boys who have trouble with belts are excused from wearing one.

Girls shall wear khaki skirts (with black bike shorts) or skorts. All skirt hems must fall at or below the knee. Girls shall also wear black socks.

Winter Uniform- Worn between November 1st and March 31st

All students shall wear a long sleeved collared blue shirt with logo on the left breast. This shirt can be purchased from Land's End. .

Boys shall wear non-pleated khaki pants with a brown belt and white socks.

Girls shall wear their skirts with black leggings and black socks (worn so that no skin is showing). Families may order khaki skirts and pants anywhere but they are available from Land's End.

To order go to Landsend.com/myschool and give them the school code 900197492. Or call 1-800-469-2222 and give them the school code.

Jackets- A gray fleece jacket with the DMA logo is available and may be worn in school during cooler weather. **Go to our website (Divinemeracy.md) for more information.**

The administration reserves the right to determine the definition of appropriate school dress. Parents may be called to bring a change of clothes for students who are inappropriately dressed. The children generally go outside, even when the weather is cold. During these times, it is necessary for them to have hats, gloves, scarves, etc.

Occasionally DMA allows students to have "Dress Down Days" where they may dress out of uniform. Children may wear jeans, khakis or other clean, casual type slacks with appropriate tops. T-shirts, sweatshirts, etc. may be worn, but they must be appropriate to the Catholic environment of DMA. It is permissible for girls to wear a casual skirt on

“out of uniform” days, as long as the skirt follows the guidelines for uniform skirts and the hem touches the top of the knee or longer.

Shoes- Requirements for shoes can be found on our website. All grades can wear non lacing shoes if parents prefer this option.

Requirements for All Grades

Hair must be pulled back from the face, above eyebrows, and not a distraction from learning. It must be generally clean and neat (no unnaturally colored or spiked hair, and no bizarre cuts or designs). For boys, hair should be cut above the eyebrows and around the ears; hair should not fall over the collar. Hair accessories should be simple; no scarves or dangling headbands may be worn. Royal blue, white or black, please.

Jewelry

Please keep all jewelry simple, modest, and safe. All necklaces should be of religious nature and worn inside the uniform shirt. Nothing should distract from learning.

DMA Physical Education 2022-2023 *Sportswear*

1. **Students will need to wear their DMA PE uniform on their PE days.**
Go to Landsend.com to order uniforms.
2. The PE uniform consists of black shorts and a gray t-shirt with logos. Gray sweatpants and sweatshirts with logos are to be worn in winter. All PE items should be purchased through Land’s End.
3. Children must have their own non-scuff (light colored soles) tennis shoes to change into on PE days. Tennis shoes should be in good condition, no light-up or neon colored shoes. Solid neutral colors are preferred.
4. Children need to be dressed in a complete PE uniform on PE days. No mixing pieces from regular uniform in with PE uniform.

Warn my children to avoid the precipices of pride and haughtiness and to walk in the pleasant meadows of modesty; not to be dazzled by the sight of gold; not to lament that they do not possess what they erroneously admire in others; not to think more of themselves for gaudy trappings, nor less for the want of them; neither to deform the beauty that nature has given them by neglect, nor to try to heighten it by artifice; to put virtue in the first place, learning in the second; and in their studies to esteem most whatever may teach them piety towards God, charity to all, and Christian humility themselves. These, I consider the real and genuine fruits of learning, and I would maintain that those who give themselves to study with such intent will easily attain their end and become perfect.

Saint Thomas More to his children’s tutors

Teacher Qualifications

Jeanette Cohn - 8th Grade Homeroom/Humanities Tutor

Jeanette Cohn has been teaching for 36 wonderful years. She began her professional career in the medical field working as a private duty nurse. She became involved with homebound children and felt the call to teach. In 1985, she earned her bachelor's degree at USF in Exceptional Education with a minor in Early Childhood Development. She was employed in public and private school systems for 13 years working mostly with special needs children between 6 months and 12 years old. In 1998, she answered the call to home school her 7 children and continued in the vocation for 21 years. During those 21 years she mentored parents in formational education and tutored children in various facets, including homeschool tutorials and private tutoring, mainly in the areas of reading, writing and Literature. Her educational philosophy encompasses a strong passion to embrace each child as being uniquely, beautifully created and, thus, should be taught as such. Igniting their love for learning, she approaches her instruction on the specific formation of each child engrossing him/her in engaging conversation, implementing memorization, while fostering a desire to explore every aspect of learning. She is looking forward to working at Divine Mercy Academy cooperating in the mission of helping each child become what God intended.

Mary Etta Jeske- Specials Tutor- Sacred Art & Art History

Mary Etta Jeske is a mother of three children and has been married for 31 years. She has home-schooled her children for nine years, and enjoys teaching Art History, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, and Classical Fine Art. Mary Etta has been a classical fine artist and an art teacher since 1993. A business major in college, she additionally attended four years at The Mitchell School of Classical Fine Arts and is certified to teach level 1 in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. She served for many years as an office manager for the Allview Center for Family Enrichment, where she presently volunteers and teaches an art/home arts girls' club.

Kristyn Zylka - Admissions and Development

Ms. Zylka graduated from Georgetown University with a degree in French, a certificate in Business Administration, and a Master's in Public Relations and Communications. She joins us after more than ten successful years in the Public Relations sector working for Public Relations firms and as an independent consultant.

Lisa O'Keefe - 2nd Grade Homeroom/Humanities Tutor

Mrs. O'Keefe graduated cum laude from Vanderbilt University in 1998, dual majoring elementary education (K-8) and special education (Birth-21). She then taught in the Tucson Arizona public school system from 1998-2001. After marrying and starting a family, she chose to stay home and homeschool for 10 years. She and her family moved to Maryland in 2004, where she came into the Catholic faith during Easter of 2005 at St. John the Evangelist in Severna Park. Since then, she has instructed in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and taught preschool through third grade classes. An avid hockey fan, when she is not spending time with her husband and four children, she is cheering for the "Caps", reading, doing puzzles, organizing things and people, and traveling to new locations.

Kelly O'Connor - Specials Tutor- Ward Music & Band/Orchestra

Kelly O'Connor, mother of seven children aged 21-6, holds 15 years of homeschooling experience, including three homeschool cooperatives. She has worked as a parish music director for three years, and served on liturgical teams across 10 parishes.

A Michigan native and Marine Corps spouse of 24 years, Kelly and her husband have lived in 13 different duty stations. Her extensive travel has given her an appreciation for multiple cultures and diversity in a growing world. A parental advocate for special-needs children, she is experienced in accommodating students that require more tailored care for success. She studied Instrumental and Choral Music Education at Central Michigan University, and is passionate about Biblical theology, History, Literature, Jazz and Classical music.

Catherina Marshall - Specials Tutor- Physical Education

Catherina is excited to be a part of DMA as our Physical Education Tutor. A native of Peru with French ancestry, she brings to the position a lot of creativity plus a rich cultural background and a lifelong passion for human expression through movement. As a child and a youth, Catherina studied ballet and performed at the Municipal Ballet of the cosmopolitan city of Lima during the school year while attending a renowned British academy (San Silvestre School). She spent her summers on her family's remote dairy farm in the Andean highlands where she helped to teach catechism to children. Later she obtained a social anthropology degree from the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru in 2006 and studied dance in Sao Paolo, Brazil. Catherina earned a Master's degree in Dance Movement Therapy from the University of Barcelona, Spain, in 2008. Returning to Lima, Catherina started her own independent dance movement therapy practice. She focused both on special needs children and on the elderly and found ways to enrich her work by incorporating her Catholic faith into the methodology. In 2013, she married and moved to the United States. Catherina is the mother of two little girls and simply loves to dance with them! Inspired by their simplicity, flexibility and joy, she is in the process of putting together a new methodology for families to pray, play and dance together.

Susan Hughes - 5th Grade Homeroom/Humanities Tutor

Susan Hughes is a graduate of St. Joseph's University with a BA in Elementary Education and Special Education. She is certified in Maryland from grades 1-6 and has over 20 years of teaching experience in Catholic Education. Susan always wished to become a teacher and her dream was fulfilled the day she stepped foot in the classroom. Her teaching philosophy is rooted in meeting students where they are and encouraging them to grow academically and spiritually through self discovery and the natural gift of wonder and awe.

Dr. Ester Sesmero - Specials Tutor - Science (Upper School)

Dr. Ester Sesmero was born in Spain. Right before she started college she heard the call from the Lord to consecrate her life to Him. In 2005 she joined the Secular Institute of the Crusaders of Mary while studying for her Bachelor's degree in Chemistry at the Autonoma University of Madrid. The Crusaders of Mary is a community of lay consecrated women who are passionate about the education of the youth. At Autonoma

University of Madrid, she was heavily involved in campus ministry and through that experience of witnessing her faith in a secular environment, she learned what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. She arrived to the U.S. in 2011 and studied for her doctorate in Chemistry at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC).

Since Fall 2011, Ester has taught the Confirmation group (7th and 8th grade) at St. Peter's on Capitol Hill and ministered to the youth attending the Youth Conferences at Franciscan University of Steubenville. During her time at UMBC, she started and led the Women's group of the Catholic Retrievers (UMBC Campus Ministry). This women's group is a community of women who support each other in their faith journey and the desire to grow closer to Jesus and bring others to Him. Ester graduated with her Ph.D. in May 2017. From Fall 2017 to Spring 2019, she taught at Catholic University of America, Community College of Baltimore County, George Washington University and Montgomery College.

Ester is grateful for the opportunity to join Divine Mercy Academy. She is excited to teach our students to think critically, ask good questions and be in wonder and awe at the gift of Creation. Her teaching philosophy is: "I believe in you, you are going to be able to do it, and I am here to help you!"

Jack Grimes- 6th Grade Homeroom/Humanities Tutor

Jack Grimes was the Director of Math Content Development for the Classic Learning Test, a new college entrance and high school assessment exam. Jack also teaches Geometry at Israel Henry Beren High School, the secondary school for Ner Israel Rabbinical College in Pikesville, and he was a founding faculty member for Chesterton Academy of Annapolis.

Jack earned a bachelor's degree in Philosophy and Political Science from Tufts University. He worked several years as Senior Legislative Aide for a State Assemblyman in New Jersey. After beginning graduate studies in Theology at Seton Hall, he discovered a passion and talent for teaching, which he put to use as a volunteer catechist and later as a full-time academic mentor for BrainStorm Tutoring. For more than five years with BrainStorm, Jack worked with hundreds of students to prepare for all sections of the SAT and ACT, as well as improve in their high school Math and

Humanities courses. Jack continues to offer tutoring privately through St. Catherine Test Prep.

Raised as a nominal Lutheran, Jack experienced a profound Evangelical conversion to love for Christ at the end of high school. Fervent pursuit of understanding the faith in college led to his reception into the Catholic Church on Divine Mercy Sunday a few years after graduation. Jack enjoys steering students towards reflection on the reality behind the grammar, reading, and math they are studying. As a tutor and teacher he loves to encourage thought about invisible nouns and intangible verbs, the power of questions and distinctions, and the elegance of equations so that his students have a chance to ponder the nature of truth, goodness, and beauty.

Laurena Sarver- Reading Specialist

Laurena's family has been her primary focus through the years, but she has been blessed with opportunities to always continue keeping her hand in teaching as well. Laurena has been married for almost 32 years to Lewis, who is a Montgomery County police officer. They are active members of their parish. The Sarvers have four children who have had the opportunity to attend Catholic schools. All four graduated from OLPH School.

Laurena's career in education began in a Catholic school where she taught second grade for two and a half years, and then third grade for half a year as a long-term substitute in the Washington Archdiocese. Her love for teaching reading began in college. She graduated from Towson State University with a degree in Early Childhood Education. Laurena earned her Master's Degree in Reading Education from Bowie State University. She is certified in Orton-Gillingham and has used this approach to reading instruction as a private academic tutor for over 20 years. Being able to help struggling learners has become a passion of hers, and being able to do this in a faith-based setting she feels is ideal. The opportunity to bring faith into teaching reading is the best!

In her free time, Laurena loves spending time with family and friends, going to the beach, walking, going to Christian music concerts, learning more about her Catholic faith, and volunteering at church and in her community.

Anne Marie Kubik- Teaching Assistant- Kindergarten

Anne Marie graduated from Villanova University in 1999 with a BS in nursing. Upon graduation she was commissioned as an officer in the Army Nurse Corp. She served honorably for 6 years specializing in OB/GYN with various assignments in HI, CA, and VA. She volunteered as an instructor for Sacrament prep/Faith Formation for 2 years while on Active Duty. She entered civilian life in MD as a postpartum nurse and lactation consultant at Saint Agnes Hospital. She volunteered for seven years performing Ultrasounds and teaching parenting classes at the SP/Annapolis/Bowie Pregnancy Clinic. She has been married for 16 years and has 4 children whom she homeschooled using a classical Catholic curriculum for the last nine years. She is excited to join the staff at Divine Mercy Academy and share in their vision of making saints. When not in the classroom, you can find her on a hiking trail enjoying God's creation.

Christine Butrim- 7th grade Homeroom/Humanities Tutor

Christine received her undergraduate and graduate degrees in Special Education from the University of Maryland, College Park. She has taught in a variety of settings including public school, private parochial school and homeschool co-ops and tutorials. She is skilled at integrating curriculum and inspiring wonder in her students. Beyond her own classroom, she has experience developing educational support plans for students with learning challenges. Christine and her husband have been married since 1989 and have two adult children. She has lived in the area for over 20 years.

Rina Brown- 4th grade Humanities Tutor

Rina, born and raised in Ohio, has been married for 30 years, and has two wonderful children, and a feisty poodle. She graduated from Youngstown State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics and worked in the actuarial field as a pension consultant. She then moved to Europe for 3.5 years for an exciting adventure, where she traveled extensively and taught conversational English.

She started her journey in classical education by teaching for ten years at St. Thomas Aquinas Tutorial and continues to hone her skills by participating in various learning

opportunities. She loves the freedom of Catholic liberal education and the honor it pays to God's creation by respecting each student's mind, body, and soul.

Rina enjoys volunteering as a Master Gardener in the county, hiking and walking with her family, reading, working on art projects, trying new recipes, and playing in her garden. You might also see her and her husband riding their tandem bike on the B&A trail! Her family enjoys traveling, especially to the beautiful U.S. national parks.

She looks forward to working together with DMA parents to help their children grow in faith, virtue, and wisdom.

Liz Chapman- 1st grade Humanities Tutor

Liz Chapman did not take a traditional path to becoming a teacher. Graduating from Gordon College with a double major in Political Science and Journalism she made her way to Washington, DC after graduation and started working for Senator Santorum (R-PA). Her husband, Tim Chapman, also worked on Capitol Hill. Starting out answering phones, giving tours, and talking with constituents she loved the fast paced atmosphere of Capitol Hill. Liz soon became personal writer and speech writer for the Senator. After several years with the Senator she was ready for a change and moved to K St. and worked for Williams and Jensen, PLLC handling events, political fundraisers, and working with clients on ethics. During this time, Liz was also starting a family. After finding out she was pregnant with her third child, Liz decided to stop working and stay at home. She quickly found that she loved being home with her children and started homeschooling. She spent all of her free time researching curriculum, different educational methods, and the best books to read. At this point, she started tutoring at a local classical conversations community on Capitol Hill. She taught 4 to 6 year olds in science, history, math, art, music, latin, and grammar. Her children loved the repetition and recitation of the classical method when paired with reading rich classics.

At the same time, Tim and Liz were also looking for a church home on Capitol Hill and while Liz was raised Presbyterian and Tim was raised Anglican they fell in love with St. Peters on Capitol Hill. In 2012, they converted to the Catholic faith. This further enriched their homeschooling as they began living through the liturgical year together as a family. In 2017, after outgrowing their townhouse on Capitol Hill due to the birth of a fourth child, they moved to Davidsonville, MD. Last June a friend mentioned Divine

Mercy Academy and after touring they were sold. Liz was also looking to dive more into teaching and didn't hesitate when they offered her a job as first grade teacher. She truly loves being a teacher and opening up her student's eyes to the joys of the classics, grammar, Latin, math, history, and science and her faith is constantly deepening as she learns from her students and their families.

Kari Zylka - Teaching Assistant - First through third grade

Ms. Zylka graduated from Harvard University with a degree in Government. After three years in Law School, she felt called to education and received a Certification for Teaching from the College of St. Elizabeth. She has previously taught at Hillcrest School in New Jersey, Sunshine Preschool in New Jersey, and worked in the After School program at St. Mary's in Annapolis.

Lisa Dvorak- 2nd grade Humanities Tutor

Lisa Dvorak earned her undergraduate degree with a dual major in English and history from St. Mary's College of Maryland and a graduate degree in teaching from Johns Hopkins University. She has also completed coursework in gifted and talented education and is currently in level one Catechesis of the Good Shepherd training. Prior to having children, she taught in Catholic, public, and independent schools and was most recently an English Department Chair. She is also experienced in teaching classes for standardized test preparation. While homeschooling her children, she enjoyed teaching in homeschool tutorials and tutoring children of a variety of ages in a variety of subjects. Lisa and her husband have five children, four of whom will attend Divine Mercy Academy. She and her family live in Baltimore City and attend Mount Calvary Catholic Church, where she volunteers in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd atrium.

Megan McHale - Kindergarten Tutor

Megan McHale grew up in Pittsburgh, PA and holds a master's degree in Special Education from Duquesne University. After moving to Maryland in 2005, she spent four years as a Special Education teacher in Howard County, instructing elementary school children with various disabilities and supporting their needs in general education classrooms. Megan and her husband have four boys. She homeschooled for eight years, has taught classes for several Catholic homeschool cooperatives, and is a Level 1 catechist in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program. In all settings, she seeks to motivate and engage her students in learning new skills by drawing upon their individual strengths and interests. In addition to her background in education, Megan also has a great love for the arts. She studied ballet from the age of 10 through college and still relishes the thrill of stepping inside a theater to attend a musical or dance performance. She is excited to join everyone at Divine Mercy Academy in the pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty!

Katherine (Katie) Butrim- Teaching Assistant- Kindergarten

Katie Butrim has enjoyed working with children as a teacher's assistant since 2016. She loves to work in the younger grades, mostly kindergarten through third grade. Katie loves her faith and believes strongly in Divine Mercy Academy's motto of "Making Saints". She deeply believes that forming close bonds with young children is the best way to set an example for them of the amazing things Jesus can do in their lives. New to DMA in 2022, Katie looks forward to new friendships with the staff and students, and the family atmosphere found at the school.

Acknowledgment Page

I have read and agreed to the guidelines in the Parent/Student Handbook.

Parent Signature

Student Signature

Date _____

**Please sign this handbook acknowledgement form and return it to the Divine Mercy Academy office.
Retain the handbook at home for your reference throughout the year.**