

DIVINE MERCY ACADEMY

NIKOLE LAUBHAM
PRINCIPAL

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August 15, 2025

Dear Divine Mercy Academy Families,

I pray this letter finds you well as we prepare to begin another blessed school year together. Before sharing some exciting updates, I want to personally thank you for the prayers, compassion, and support you have shown me over the summer. The sudden passing of my mother at the end of the last school year was a deeply difficult time, and your kindness has truly been a source of comfort. Along with grieving, I have been navigating the responsibilities that come with such a loss, and I am profoundly grateful for the strength our DMA family has provided.

I am thrilled to share the many exciting updates and improvements we have made over the summer. We have been working diligently to enhance our academic programs, strengthen our faith formation, and create even more opportunities for student growth and engagement. I am confident that these changes will allow us to offer our students the very best experience in learning, faith, and community life this year.

Faculty & Staff Updates

We have some exciting changes to our faculty and staff for the 2025–2026 school year:

- **Ms. Bandurski** will return to PreK3 on Tuesdays and Thursdays while continuing to teach physical education and health. She will be implementing a new, well-rounded gym program designed to engage and challenge our students.
- **Ms. DeFrancesco** will be the fourth grade homeroom teacher, partnering with **Mrs. Rettig**. Ms. DeFrancesco will teach fourth and fifth grade math, science, and social studies, while Mrs. Rettig will continue to teach ELA and religion to both grades.



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- **Ms. Speranza** joins us as sixth grade homeroom teacher and middle school math teacher. A recent graduate of Washington & Jefferson College, she holds an elementary education certification and is currently completing her mid-level mathematics certification. With a strong focus in mathematics, she has worked with both elementary students and high school ESL students, where she focused on differentiation and making math accessible for all learners. She will also be working closely with teachers from Oakland Catholic and Central Catholic High Schools' math departments to ensure our eighth graders are well-prepared for their freshman year, no matter where they decide to continue their education. Ms. Speranza's Catholic school background, enthusiasm, and dedication to student success will be a true blessing to DMA.
- **Mrs. Fisher** will continue as our PreK assistant while also offering middle school math enrichment.
- **Mrs. Genton** will serve as seventh grade homeroom teacher, teaching all middle school history and religion classes.
- **Mrs. Weaver** will be returning as our eighth grade homeroom teacher, teaching all middle school literature and ELA, with a more novel-based literature program this year.
- **Mrs. Cocchi** will join us each afternoon as our middle school science teacher. She holds a high school chemistry certification, taught for four years at the high school level, and spent seven years as a Program Presenter at the Carnegie Science Center. She brings a wealth of experience and passion for science, and she will introduce exciting new changes to our science programs and fair.



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- **Mrs. Vita** will be our new music teacher, with many years of experience in the Diocese. She will teach general music to PreK–8, recorders to grades 3–4, and will reintroduce both our DMA band and drama program.
- Grades K–8 will each have one homeroom. Seventh grade will be split for math and history, while eighth grade will be split for math and ELA.
- **Mrs. Seech, Ms. Rossetti, Mrs. Guerriero, Ms. McCarthy, Mrs. Rathjen, Mrs. Benaquista, Mrs. Marrone, and Mrs. Iorio** will remain in their same teaching roles as last year.

Exciting Announcements

- **Free Lunch & Breakfast:** All K–8 students will now receive free lunch and breakfast this year. Details will be shared soon.
- **Kindergarten “Badging System”:** Kindergarten will no longer use report cards, joining PreK3 and PreK4 in using a new system that recognizes individual development and keeps families updated on progress throughout the year.
- **Faith Life Enhancements:** This year we will launch our “**Saints in Action**” program, focusing on two saints and their virtues each month. We will also deepen our devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, with all students participating in **Eucharistic Adoration** at least once a month.
- **Curriculum Updates:** Following last year’s math curriculum update from the Diocese, we now have new ELA and science curricula as well.



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- **Technology Upgrades:** Five new Smart Boards will be installed in the coming weeks.
- **Partnerships:** We will continue working with the Monroeville Rotary through EarlyAct, collaborate again with the Monroeville Parks and Recreation Department for new afterschool programs, and launch a new **Robotics Club** for grades 5–8 in partnership with Gateway High School's robotics team.

Back-to-School Nights

We are excited to welcome families to our **Back-to-School Nights**! For grades K–8, this event will take place on **Tuesday, August 19th, from 6:00–8:00 PM**, and for our Preschool students, on **Monday, August 25th, from 6:00–7:00 PM**. This is a wonderful opportunity to meet your child's new teachers, connect with classmates, and, if you wish, bring in school supplies. We look forward to seeing you there and sharing in the excitement of the new school year!

Finally, I want to thank our **PTG Board** and the many parents and teachers who have been hard at work this summer planning engaging and meaningful events for our school. Your dedication to DMA is an inspiration.

As we step into this new school year, let us keep our eyes fixed on our mission—to provide an excellent Catholic education that forms disciples of Christ. Together, we will grow in knowledge, faith, and service, confident in the truth that we are “**Saints in the Making.**” What sets us apart from other schools is the heart of everything we do—our faith and our relationship with Jesus Christ—which shapes not only what our students learn, but who they become. I look forward to walking this journey with you and your children.

May God bless our DMA family and the year ahead.

In Christ,
Nikole Laubham
Principal

