

Mission Statement

All Saints Academy is a Catholic School inspired by the Holy Spirit and dedicated to teaching and living as Jesus did. Our mission is to serve and partner with our families, parishes, and communities as we focus on the spiritual, intellectual, moral, social, and physical development of our children.

Lower Campus at Diamond

2233 Diamond Avenue NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49505  
616.447.2997

Upper Campus at Four Mile

1110 Four Mile Road NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49525  
616.363.7725

Academic Calendar

November

**November 1**  
All Saints Day School Mass  
10:30 AM, St. Isidore

**November 3**  
No School  
Professional Development

**November 6**  
Picture Retake Day

**November 7-9**  
Conferences

November

**November 11**  
Eaglefest

**November 21**  
Pastries with Pals  
End of Trimester 1

**November 22 - 24**  
No School  
Thanksgiving Break

**November 23 - 24**  
No Child Care  
Thanksgiving Break

December

**December 18**  
ASA Christmas Concert  
6:30PM

**December 25 - January 5**  
Christmas Break

Save the Date

**Eaglefest**  
November 11  
St. Jude's  
Brophy Center



# Seasons of the Saints

Fall 2023





# From the (former) Principal

How do I summarize twelve years in just a paragraph or two?

First and foremost, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude for allowing me to be a part of such an amazing community. I have had the privilege of meeting so many wonderful people during my time at All Saints Academy. Maybe reflecting on our mission would be an appropriate place to start my last “From the Principal...” page of Seasons of the Saints. That mission is to serve and partner with our parishes, parents, and community as we form our students into saints.

At the parish level, I have had the unique experience of working alongside eight different pastors and a handful more of priests. Never once did I feel that these holy men were anything but all in on the school. This was such a blessing for me in my role, especially during those times when things seemed uncertain. Father George, who played, and continues to play, an especially important role as Canonical Administrator reminded me often, “God will always provide.” And provide He has. Our school continues to be strengthened both from the inside out through our staff and students and the outside in by the various stakeholders in our community. The partnership with our community, from our amazing board of directors to individuals or businesses who have provided financial support throughout the years, has allowed ASA to advance our mission to the fullest.

Our parents are simply the best. As I speak with people about my transition to West Catholic, I keep telling them, “I wish I was burned out or that I couldn’t take one more parent meeting. It would have made this so much easier!” The fact of the matter is that the parents of our community have been champions during my time as principal. No greater example of this was the way in which we navigated the pandemic *together*. I remember a specific moment in time as I sat in my home office during one of the first virtual parent town hall meetings. People certainly disagreed on the different approaches to fending off the virus, but it was done in a way that respected the differences in others. It was also clear that no matter the differences we all were working hard for the benefit of our most precious treasures, the students of All Saints Academy.

There are certain nuances that come with being an educator, especially at the elementary level. Like when you tell people you are going to school rather than going to work. Or when people ask you how many children you have and you reply with the number in your classroom (or school in my case) in addition to your own. You start to associate months with colors in your mind because the bulletin boards are always changing. October is orange, February is red, March is green, etc. etc. This happens because the school building goes from being simple bricks and mortar to a living and breathing entity brought to life by our dedicated staff members. Staff members who work tirelessly bringing the Gospel to our students. Staff members who transform students into saints while teaching them how to read, to add and subtract, to think critically and morally so they can make the world a better place. I couldn’t be more proud to send my own children to ASA knowing of the seventy plus people who are entrusted in their care.

While my gratitude extends to those in our parishes, to our parents, and to our broader community, I am most thankful for having the opportunity to lead a school full of students who brought me an immense amount of joy and inspiration for the past twelve years. There is nothing more fulfilling than seeing students succeed in ways they never thought possible. As parents, you know how fast this time goes. For the past few years at graduation, many of the students who came to the altar to receive their diplomas are ones who have been at All Saints Academy since preschool. Each and every one with their own experience and story. Tears on the first few days of school, coming into the office for ice packs, making their first basket in a game, finally

breaking through on an assessment for the grade they worked so hard to earn. Each and every one made in the image and likeness of God. Thank you for sharing your children with ASA. Thank you for making coming to school for the last 2,160 days some of the best of my professional career.

*Michael R. Debri*  
*Executive Director/Lower Campus*  
*Principal of ASA 2011-2023*



# Upper Campus Outdoor Changes

This year is “new” in many ways! The school year is up and running, and our core values of Faith, Learning, Loving and Serving continue to guide our actions and the direction of our school. Our teachers and staff continue to work tirelessly with your students in alignment with our core values, and we have made multiple enhancements to our school community which are enhancing the programming and mission of our school.

**Faith:** With the support of time and talent of the University of Notre Dame Club of Grand Rapids, we are installing an outdoor Stations of the Cross at the Upper Campus. This area is going to serve our student body as an outdoor prayer space and as a place to go to praise God in Nature. Classes will be welcome to use the space for prayer and reflection. This project serves as a much needed facelift to a very beautiful and peaceful place on campus.

**Learning:** Under the leadership of Michael Debri and with the hard work and expertise of Jenny LaPonsie, All Saints Academy has long been a leader for the diocese in the ministry of inclusive education. We have continued our journey to support all learners with the purchase of Learning Ally reading software, home to a library of 80,000 audiobooks, which supports teachers in helping our students to comprehend the text.

At All Saints Academy, we believe that “Creativity and Innovation Promote Success.” In that vein, we have added a SMART Lab to the Upper Campus! The SMART lab is home to our new STEAM class taught by Ms. Marlene Wiser. STEAM class combines science, technology, engineering, art, and math into a hands-on, interactive curriculum that allows for students to engage in learning in unique and interesting ways.

**Loving & Serving:** The money raised at Eaglefest 2022 has been put to good use! First, we spruced up the baseball diamond at St. Jude and won our 1st championship on the field last spring. This summer, we added a brand new playground area adjacent to the right field fence which has been wonderful for both the school and the parish community. Later this year, we plan to add a gaga pit and have hopes to add a swingset in the spring/summer of 2024.

As we continue to grow and develop our programming, we are reminded that we are truly blessed to be partnering with you in “Forming Saints to Serve All.” We thank you for your continued prayers and support!





# Back to School Carnival Was Fun For All!

Written by Tara Truszkowski,  
Home & School Co-President

The Home & School Association at ASA is entrusted with fostering & promoting the ASA community. It is a parent-led organization that focuses on building a strong community by involving parents in events throughout the year that are open to all ASA parents and students. All parents of ASA students from toddler through 8th grade are welcome and encouraged to take an active role in the group.



On Saturday, September 16th the All Saints Academy Community celebrated the start of the year with our Back to School Carnival. This was the 3rd year of the carnival and it was a HUGE success! It was so fun to see so many families enjoying the day and playing games. Whether they were dancing through the Candy Walk, testing their luck on one of the many games, or taking their best shot at one of the teachers in the Splash Tower, everyone had a blast, and we couldn't have asked for a more perfect day. Eddie the Eagle even made a guest appearance!



A special shoutout and thank you to all of our volunteers. We could not have done it without your help and truly appreciate all of you. Thank you Mrs. Zimelis, Señora Zarzecki, Miss Ojenus, and Mr. Kress for your bravery and dedication to your students! We hope it wasn't too cold! We look forward to next year!



# Why Music?

Written by Lauren Duflo, Upper  
Campus Music & Band Teacher

Students at All Saints Academy attend two music classes each week. They have Liturgical Music with Mrs. Clark one day a week, and Kindergarten through 6th grade have Music with Mrs. Byerly or Mrs. Duflo one day a week. Additionally students in grades 5 through 8 participate in band either three or four days a week.



Hello ASA Families! As our Upper Campus Band Director and Music Teacher, I am excited to share a few reasons why I believe music classes are an essential part of a student's education. Not only do they provide an opportunity for students to express themselves creatively, they also offer benefits that can positively impact their academic and personal lives.

Research has shown that involvement in music classes help to develop a student's cognitive abilities. For example, studies show that learning music can improve memory, language, and reasoning skills. Playing an instrument also requires a great deal of focus and concentration, which can help improve attention span and ability to multitask. This has led researchers to find correlation between musically involved people and higher IQ scores.

Music classes can also help to improve a student's social skills. Playing in a ensemble requires teamwork and communication, which fosters new interpersonal skills. There is often a sense of community and belonging in ensembles, which can be especially important for students who may feel isolated or disconnected from their peers. Performing arts classes are very popular with students who are not interested in athletics but still want to feel a sense of involvement and something to take pride in.



In addition to cognitive and social benefits, music and band classes can also provide students with a sense of accomplishment and higher self-esteem. Learning to play an instrument requires dedication and persistence, but the sense of achievement that comes with mastering a piece of music or performing in front of an audience can be incredibly rewarding.

Thankfully, our students at ASA have many opportunities to be involved in our rich music community. I hope to foster within our students a love of music and the arts that can last a lifetime.



# Not Afraid to Take the Shot: Catch Up with Two ASA Alumni Entrepreneurs

“For me, it all started with hosting wine nights and making charcuterie boards for friends and family.” **Taylor Wilson** (ASA 2014) has always had the desire to own her own business and enjoy the flexibility that brings. It began pretty simply.

“I was getting so much positive feedback and praise for my boards that I started creating them to give as gifts to coworkers, bosses, and relatives. After some time, I had all the encouragement I needed to just go for it and register my business, Social Bites, to become my own LCC. Even though I’m only 28, I feel like I have had so many ideas fail, but this one has shown a constant growth of success. I truly believe God has blessed this for me and am so grateful.”



Taylor with one of her charcuterie boards

She admits it is scary to legally start her own business and invest time and money without having the guarantee of continued success. Social Bites is currently a side business for Taylor; she graduated from Aquinas College with a Child Life Specialist degree. Her goal is to make Social Bites her only source of income. For Taylor

it’s more than just a way to make money. “I love the feeling of escape I get during the process of the creation of the boards. I turn on a good playlist and get to enjoy some me time.” Ordering from Taylor is easy. She’ll customize boards for any event and offers pickup or delivery.

“Right now, I have both Instagram and Facebook. You can find me on either and message me. Or, search “socialbitesgr”!

**Michaela Cosgrove** (ASA 2012) began her business, Brush & Bark LLC, a bit unexpectedly. Having just graduated from Centre College with a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies, she found herself in a global pandemic.

“It was a very uncertain and unprecedented time. The pandemic kept many of us inside our homes with very little face-to-face interaction with people. A fellow Catholic Central alum and I decided it might be fun to get a booth at our local farmers market to give us something to keep busy with and get outside. We had always enjoyed painting and had a love of animals and nature. We decided to focus on Michigan wildlife to get us started, and we spent the summer creating new paintings and trying out new product ideas. After a few months at the farmers market, we realized that lots of people were just as excited about wildlife and artwork as we were. We started selling more and more and getting requests for new things all the time. As the world began to open back up for business, we continued making and selling our art on the side. Three years later, we are still creating new art and expanding our business!”

Michaela finds a special sense of purpose in creating something that people relate to and enjoy. She and her partner wanted Brush & Bark to not only

be about the art they were making but also about raising awareness for the incredible natural world we live in. While it started as a simple way to keep busy during a scary time in their lives, it quickly became a way to give a spotlight to local wildlife especially species that aren’t depicted in paintings very often.



Michaela with a display of her work

“I am proud of how far we have come. We had no idea Brush & Bark would become what it is today. We still laugh at how empty our booth was on our first day at the farmers market compared to what it looks like now. In addition to working on new art almost constantly, we have had to learn about what it takes to own a business. Between managing our social media pages, keeping up with inventory and supplies, and filing our own taxes, there has been a lot to learn!”

Their products are for sale on their website: [www.brushandbark.com](http://www.brushandbark.com). You can also follow them on social media (Instagram: [brush\\_and\\_bark](https://www.instagram.com/brush_and_bark) & Facebook: [brushandbarkshop](https://www.facebook.com/brushandbarkshop)) to see their in-person market schedule. You can also email at [hello@brushandbark.com](mailto:hello@brushandbark.com).

# Are you ready for the bus?

Written by Father Christopher Epplett,  
Parish Administrator at St. Alphonsus



When I was in grade school, I remember how difficult it was to wake up in the morning. I’m certain many of our students can relate, and many parents find it difficult to motivate their children from time to time.

Waking up, getting ready, getting to the bus stop on time. It didn’t help that I was at the first bus stop. The advantage was having all that time on the bus to wake up before arriving at my school, St. Mary in Spring Lake. Perhaps what made it more and more difficult to reach the bus stop on time was the days getting shorter and shorter, as we are experiencing right now.

When it’s dark outside at the bus stop and temperatures get colder and colder, so too increases the difficulty and motivation to get ready for school—not to mention the amount of time to put on layers. It’s part of most people’s experience of growing up.

Ultimately, it is a stark reminder of how easy it is to slip into comforts, to not stay motivated, and, in doing so, limit our potential. As we ourselves make this transition now, I invite students and parents to consider the power and virtue of doing these things out of a sense of duty and responsibility. We grow in virtue when we persevere in difficult things. If you’re anything like me, you later become grateful for all the times you said yes in the face of the temptation to give up or become lazy.

This is my encouragement for our students as we now turn toward shorter days and colder temperatures. However, this is also related to our spiritual lives. It’s easy to pray when we really need something from God. It’s almost too easy to offer up a prayer requesting something, but how often do we pray otherwise?

God wants so much more. He wants our hearts to be in prayer when things are good and, perhaps most especially, when it seems like God is distant. In moments where we think all that is around us is darkness and coldness, God waits for us. In a certain regard, He is like the bus that picks us up at that bus stop. He takes us out of the dark, cold place and puts us in a warmer place where we begin to move in a direction. Our hearts move toward a place of loving and knowing God more and showing this love to others.

When we wait for God, he is prepared to answer. When everything seems pointless or routine, He was already waiting for us, longing for our hearts to open to Him in earnest and honest prayer.

Practically speaking, what does this look like? Simply, it is speaking to God and opening our hearts to hear the whispering voice of the Lord of heaven and earth who loves us into being. Yes, we should pray the Our Father or other memorized prayers, but we also should be praying with other words — the ones that flow from our inner being, our hearts. We should tell God about our struggles, our sorrows, our dreams, our motivations, and so much more.

God wants to hear from us. He doesn’t want to arrive at the bus stop that is our hearts and find us absent or unresponsive. He wants to find us ready and waiting to hear His voice, receive His love, and trust in Him.