

Middle School  
Handbook

2023-2024

# **Mission and Philosophy**

## **The Church of St. Joseph Mission Statement**

The Church of St. Joseph, a parish of the Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis, is a Catholic community of God's people, united in His Son, Jesus Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit.

We are called to proclaim the Gospel, offer worship to God, pray and celebrate the sacraments. We are committed to providing Catholic education and encouraging lifelong spiritual growth for each member of this parish community.

We acknowledge the dignity of all human life, and dedicate ourselves to aid and serve those in spiritual or material need.

## **School Mission Statement**

*Saint Joseph's Catholic School educates students through faith formation, academic excellence, and the development of virtue to be disciples of Christ.*

## **School Philosophy**

*We fulfill our mission by:*

- inspiring spiritual growth through classroom instruction, prayer, liturgy, devotions, sacraments, retreats and service.
- challenging students with a comprehensive curriculum enriched with fine arts and co-curricular activities meeting the needs of all learners.
- engaging students in an environment that allows them to develop virtue through shared responsibility, self-discipline, respect, honor and faith in Christ.

# Our Faithful Community

St. Joseph's Catholic School is committed to strong values, rigorous academics, faith formation, and service to others. We foster a commitment to faith, spirituality, and ministry and as such, St. Joseph's students will actively participate not only in a strong academic program, but also in a commitment to his or her faith.

Opportunities for participation in the Sacraments, Service, Faith Formation, and Leadership are offered to all students in grades 6-8.

## Mass

As a Catholic community of faith, St. Joseph's holds the celebration of the liturgy to be at the heart of our faith, and the primary place where we encounter God. Because it is central to fostering community, all students and teachers, regardless of religious tradition, must attend and actively participate in all school Masses.

Throughout the school year, students will be invited to participate in the planning of the liturgical celebration.

## Sacraments and Retreats

Throughout the academic year, opportunities to participate in the Catholic faith and its Sacraments will be made available to the students and staff. All students and teachers, regardless of religious tradition, must attend and actively participate.

## Service

All St. Joseph Middle School students will participate in service learning throughout the academic school year. Students will obtain a **minimum of 6 service hours per year**. Students will record their hours on documentation provided. A list of appropriate service hour activities include but are not limited to:

- Serving/ushering weekend Mass
- Babysitting for free (not for your own family)
- Mowing the lawn for a neighbor for free
- Shoveling snow for a neighbor for free
- Volunteering to work at a St. Joe's sporting event
- Helping someone clean for free
- Volunteering in the nursery/Sunday school
- Visiting the elderly in assisted living homes (not family)
- Cooking and delivering meals to those in need
- Feed my Starving Children

- Neighbors Inc. with your family
- Sharing and Caring Hands with your family

Activities that are done for payment are not considered eligible for service hours (ie. babysitting for pay, mowing the lawn for pay, etc.) In addition, participating in school-wide service activities may not be counted. This includes but is not limited to participating in fall food drive, serving at school Mass, attending Thrive/Revive/Net nights, attending and participating in Discipleship groups.

All service hours must be completed by the established deadline, and must be signed off on by a parent or supervising adult.

## **Houses**

The mission of the St. Joseph's Catholic School House System is to create a cohesive school community centered on four of the virtues of our patron: Fortitude, Charity, Joy, and Integrity. The purpose of each house will be to guide and support each student's academic, spiritual, social, and personal development during their time in middle school. While participating in the House System, students will mix with students at their grade level and other students in different grade levels, allowing friendships and interests to extend throughout our middle school.

Students will learn to work hard individually for the good of their house, along with working with the members of their assigned house. Our house system encourages teamwork, friendship, cooperation, and leadership. Once assigned a house, students will stay in that house for their middle school years.

## **Sacramental Buddies**

Students in 8th grade will partner with students in 2nd grade at various times throughout the school year for Mass, sacramental projects, or other activities. As the student leaders of our school, our 8th graders are tasked with setting an excellent example of what it means to be a faithful St. Joseph's student.

# Conduct and Behavior

St. Joseph middle school students are respectful, responsible, reverent, and build a safe environment through their actions and attitude.

## Respectful

- Students will display truthfulness, kindness and empathy toward others.
- Students respect authority (teachers and guests) and honor individual class expectations by listening, using appropriate language, promptly following directions, and respecting property.
- Students will remain on task and allow others to do the same.
- Students will not chew gum or eat in class.

## Responsible

- Students are prompt (on time) and prepared for class, with necessary supplies, including completed work that is neat, and of high quality.
- Students fully participate in every class, every day.
- Students will display positive and productive character traits including doing their best, being honest, and seeking/providing forgiveness.

## Reverent

- Students realize that all is a gift from God.
- Students will respect St. Joseph property and others personal property. This includes, but is not limited to: the building, playground, classrooms, classroom equipment, macbooks and technology, lockers, textbooks, supplies, desks, chairs, etc.
- Students will keep hands and body free of writing and designs.
- Students will not smoke, use tobacco, or vaping materials. Drugs and alcohol are not permitted.

## Safe

- Students will not gamble or trade property, regardless of value.
- Students show fortitude by reporting bullying, harassment, suspicious activity, weapons, drug, tobacco, and alcohol use immediately to a trusted adult at home and at school.
- Students will attempt to solve issues appropriately with their words and then reach out to an adult if things do not improve.
- Students will not use profanity, or disrespectful language at any time. This includes but is not limited to threats, swearing, symbols, and gestures.
- Students will not participate in any form of bullying or harassment. This includes but is not limited to: using threatening or intimidating language, teasing, name-calling, spreading rumors, ostracizing or socially excluding others, breaking

up friendships, physical acts and gestures of violence including hitting, kicking, tripping, theft, damage of property, and cyber-bullying.

- Students will not access or use personal electronic devices at any time during the school day. This includes: cell phones, iPads, iWatches, e-readers, etc. All personal devices must be powered off and must remain in the student's locker for the entire day. St. Joseph's is not responsible for personal devices that are lost, stolen, or damaged.
- Students will not be allowed to access social media platforms during the school day.
- Additionally, students are to follow the Student-Parent Handbook policies regarding social media.
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## **Consequences:**

At St. Joseph's, we believe in the formation of the whole student, in affirming virtue and correcting vice. Discipline is assigned to students to enhance the learning environment and ultimately support the conversion of heart, igniting a desire to act differently in future circumstances. Consequences of poor action may result in any of the following:

- A consequence according to the teacher's classroom policy
- Detention
- Written assignment
- Seat assignment change
- Individual meeting with principal, teacher, and parents
- Principal or counselor referral
- Loss of recess
- Re-do assignment or grade
- Replacement of property/Fines
- Loss of privileges
- Behavioral probation
- Academic probation
- Suspension
- Expulsion

# Academics

## Grading

Grading of students is based on their performance on assignments, tests, quizzes, projects, presentations, and classroom participation.

The grading categories are as follows: Summative Assessments (60%), Formative Assessments (30%), and Homework (10%).

St. Joseph Catholic school uses the following grading scale for students in grades 6-8:

<b>A = 95+</b>	<b>B+ = 87-89</b>	<b>C+ = 77-79</b>	<b>D+ = 67-69</b>
<b>A- = 90-94</b>	<b>B = 83-86</b>	<b>C = 73-76</b>	<b>D = 63-66</b>
	<b>B- = 80-82</b>	<b>C- = 70-72</b>	<b>D- = 60-62</b>
	<b>I = Incomplete</b>	<b>NG = Not Graded</b>	<b>F = 59 or below</b>

Students may be placed on academic probation after midterm if their grades are at a D level. If this happens, parents will be notified and actions including in-person meetings, or Performance Improvement Plans may be needed to address the problem. The student will need to improve to be removed from academic probation or they may be referred for SPED services or tutoring at the parents expense.

Students who receive an F grade in a course two trimesters in a particular standard may be required to complete an academic proficiency plan or attend an approved summer program to demonstrate proficiency. The failed grade would remain on the student's report card.

## Grade Reports

Mid-trimester grade reports and End of Trimester Grade Reports will be available for students and parents to view via EDUCATE. A reminder notification will be sent home to all families. It is the responsibility of the students and parents to view grade reports when issued.

## Parent-Teacher Communication and Conferences

Middle school students are strongly encouraged to attend conferences with their parents as they begin to navigate ownership of their learning and behavior. At times the school may require the student to attend.

Teachers and the principal will respond to emails or phone calls within 24 hours if possible (weekends and breaks not included). If there is an emergency or urgent matter, a phone call to the office would be best.

## Homework

Homework is expected to be completed at home. If work is not completed and turned in when it is due, teachers may provide students with an opportunity to complete it at recess time, but the work will still be considered late and graded accordingly.

Homework will not be assigned over holiday breaks. However, students behind in their regular work will be expected to catch up over the break and parents will be notified.

Teachers may assign reading or other assignments over the summer to help students retain learning and/or prepare for the next grade level.

## Late Work

Late homework and other formative assessments will be accepted only as long as the duration of the unit of study. If homework is late, students can only earn up to 75% of the points awarded for that particular assignment.

For late summative assessments, such as quizzes, tests, portfolios, or larger projects, students can only earn up to 75% of the points awarded for that particular assessment.

## Late Work and Absences

It is the student's responsibility to see the teacher and follow through on completing work on time. For each day a student is absent, he or she is allowed **the same number of days to make arrangements to complete tasks that were assigned during the absence**. For example, if a student misses three days of school, he or she has three days to make up for his or her missing work, beginning the date of his or her return. If the student does not make up his or her work according to the awarded days per absence, the late work policy will take effect.

## Retake Policy

At St. Joseph Catholic School, it is not unusual for students to be challenged in their classes. The transition to middle school, the rigor of courses, increased reading, longer written assignments, the need for daily study and review, and the need for students to have the ability to take ownership of their learning all contribute to a challenging academic environment.

In order to address these challenges, students are expected to:

1. Take the initiative to see his or her teacher if he or she is having trouble understanding the material or not doing well on written assignments, tests, and quizzes,
2. Follow his or her teacher's advice regarding home study, attendance in class, and preparation for tests and quizzes,



3. Check his or her personal organization, attention in class, attendance, and time spent on homework and studying, and
4. Be ready for class and turn his or her work in on time.

Students in grades 6-8 are permitted ONE retake per class, per trimester, and at the teacher's discretion. The retake must be taken within 5 calendar days of the original test being returned to the student. Teachers may require students to meet to show they are ready before they are allowed to retake. Sessions will be scheduled at the teacher's convenience.

## **Extra Credit**

Students will not be given extra credit to help improve grades. Extra credit causes grade inflation and does not allow us to see a student's true abilities or where further focus may be needed.

## **Corrections**

Students are allowed to make corrections on tests or quizzes, but it will not be calculated into the original grade. For the purpose of learning the material for the next quiz, or test, it is advisable for students to work with teachers on learning the material they initially missed.

## **Academic Honesty**

At St. Joseph Catholic School, each student should have respect for him or herself, for others, and for the institution. He or she should act with integrity in all domains of activity and with personal honor in all matters. Instances of cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, or other forms of academic dishonesty violate the principles of integrity, demonstrate a lack of respect for the school and for oneself, and are a serious breach of our values.

Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to:

1. Copying, sharing written homework, or use of a teachers' edition when the expectation is that each student is to do the work by him/herself.
2. Cheating: being in possession of a "cheat sheet," paper or electronic, using a "cheat sheet," looking at another student's answers or asking another student for answers on homework, quizzes, or tests.
3. Sharing quiz or test questions with other students who have not yet taken the quiz/test.
4. Plagiarism: submitting material that in part or whole is not one's own work without stating the source;
5. Using materials that are intended to circumvent assignments in literature, such as Cliff Notes, Spark Notes, digital resources such as AI or ChatGPT, and other materials used to replace an honest effort to gain knowledge;
6. Falsifying lab data;
7. Forging a signature;

8. Buying and selling assignments;
9. Using online translators in World Language courses without express permission of the teacher;
10. Unauthorized use of information stored in a calculator such as formulas;
11. Use of information stored in a cell phone, iPad, Macbook, or other electronic device;
12. Using a cell phone, iPad, Macbook, or other electronic device to take a picture of a test or quiz; and
13. Lying to a teacher or administrator about work.

When a violation occurs, the teacher will confront the student(s), confiscate the assignment, paper, electronic device, quiz, or test, report the incident to the Middle School Director, and will notify parents via phone or in a face-to-face meeting. If necessary, students will also meet with the Middle School Director, as well as the middle school counselor. Students will receive a zero (0) for the work. Students can earn up to 50% of their grade by redoing the assignment correctly.

Consequences for second offenses and beyond will incur a meeting with parents, a suspension, or an expulsion.

## **Lockers and Privacy**

Lockers are assigned to all students grades 6-8. It is the student's responsibility to keep his or her locker clean, and free from questionable/inappropriate decorations or pictures. Students may not at any time switch lockers or use vacant lockers without permission. Additionally, students are not allowed to bring personal locks from home and use them on school lockers.

Students are welcome guests at St. Joseph's and have no expectation of privacy while on school property or in their use of school-owned or school-provided resources. The school reserves the right to interview any student and search his or her personal belongings including lockers, backpacks, bags, desks, etc. in accordance with Minnesota Statutes as outlined in the full handbook.

## Extracurriculars and Athletics

At St. Joseph Catholic school, we believe that children are *students first, athletes second*.

Students are welcome to participate in enrichment and sports programs if they maintain passing grades at midterm and end of trimester, and maintain positive behavior expectations. Students will follow rules and expectations of the school and volunteers managing the additional programming and sports programs. All equipment will be used properly.

Students who are sick or suspended are not allowed to participate in practice or games on days they miss school.

Students who serve a suspension (in or out of school) may result in automatic dismissal from participation in sports or extracurricular activities for the remainder of the season.

# Dress Code and Personal Appearance

St. Joseph's school uniforms are to be worn and in compliance each day, unless a no uniform or spirit wear day has been announced by the school administration. All uniform pieces must be in good condition, free from stains, holes, and properly fit the student. To ensure uniformity, all uniform items (except pants) should be purchased at Donald's Uniform Store.

**Reminder for all students/parents:** All uniform shirts must be embroidered with the St. Joseph's School logo. All uniform items (pants, shorts, jumpers, skirts, blouses, shirts, sweaters, sweatshirts, etc.) should be neat, free of logos, clean, and fit properly. Belts should be worn with all pants and shorts.

## GIRLS

### BOTTOMS:

Skirts (6-8): Navy blue #1039 or #1954 (only). Hem length must be no shorter than 2 inches above the knee.

Pants (6-8): Navy blue, twill. Fitted and comfort options available. Worn with black or brown belt.

Shorts (6-8): Navy blue, twill. Walking short/Bermuda length. Available in flat and pleated front. Worn with black or brown belt. May be worn April 1 - October 31 (weather permitting)

Leggings or modesty shorts (6-8): Navy blue. REQUIRED TO BE WORN under a jumper or skirt.

Socks (6-8): White or navy blue knee-highs or anklets (must be minimum of 4 inches above ankle). No-show or low, golf socks should also be white or navy blue.

### TOPS:

Blouse (6-8): White oxford with logo or knit/performance fabric option. Available in short and long sleeves. Available in fitted or regular fit. Shirts must be tucked into the waistband.

## BOYS

### BOTTOMS:

Pants (6-8): Navy blue, twill. Available in flat front and pleated. Worn with black or brown belt.

Shorts (6-8): Navy blue, twill. Walking short/Bermuda length. Available in flat and pleated front. Worn with black or brown belt. May be worn April 1 - October 31 (weather permitting).

Socks (6-8): White or navy blue crew socks (must be minimum of 4 inches above ankle). No-show or low, golf socks must be white or navy blue.

#### TOPS:

Polo shirt (6-8): White with collar and logo. Available in short and long sleeves. Knit and performance fabric options available. Shirts must be tucked into the waistband.

**SWEATERS (K-8):** Navy with logo. V-neck, vest and cardigan options available. Pullovers (K-8): Navy with logo. Sweatshirt and ½ zip pullover options available in light- and heavy-weight

**SHOES (K-8):** There is no official uniform shoe, but shoes must be neat. Laced and Velcro shoes are allowed. Sandals, clogs, open-toe/heel, and Crocs are not allowed. Separate athletic shoes required for physical education classes, but encouraged for daily wear.

**HAIR & HATS (K-8):** Hair must be neat and clean. Students may not wear scarves, face/body paint, glitter, unusual hair dyes, or hairstyles that are distracting. Students may not wear ball caps and similar items in school unless there is a special dress up event that allows hats to be worn.

**MAKEUP & JEWELRY (K-8):** Makeup is not permitted to be worn by K - 5 students. Students in grades 6 - 8 may wear minimal makeup. Make up may not be inappropriate or excessive. School Administration has final discretion on the appropriateness of makeup worn by students. Any day, students are welcomed to wear jewelry as long as it is not distracting or excessive.

## Spirit Wear Days

Designated spirit days happen approximately once per month, in which students may wear their school uniform or an alternate spirit wear uniform. Spirit wear uniforms are as follows:

#### BOTTOMS:

Pants: Jeans, sweat pants, and loose-fitting athletic pants may be worn in place of uniform pants or skirts. All pants worn should be modest, without rips or tears. Leggings and yoga pants may not be worn.

Shorts: Shorts may be worn from April 1- October 31, weather permitting. Shorts worn on spirit days must be loose fitting, at least 5 inches inseam, and must have a length of mid-thigh.

#### TOPS:

Shirts: Students may wear spirit shirts that are branded for St. Joseph's School. Students may wear short-sleeved or long-sleeved shirts. Shirts may not be halter-tops, crop-tops, tight fitting, show cleavage, stomach, or lower back.

## **Out of Uniform Days**

The same policies apply for skirt and dress length for out of uniform days that apply for uniform pieces. Modesty shorts must be worn under skirts and dresses. Shorts must have an inseam measurement of a minimum of 5 inches.

Students will come to school on out of uniform days dressed in neat, modest and appropriate attire. Clothing must be in good condition and reflect Catholic values with respect to physical fit and modesty. This includes:

- No ripped or torn clothing (even if it is the style), or clothing that displays weapons, alcohol/tobacco/drugs or inappropriate language, pictures or messages, or political statements.
- A shirt must be worn over or under all tank tops and spaghetti strap items. This applies to both boys and girls. Shirts may not be halter-tops, tight fitting, show cleavage, stomach, or lower back.
- Shorts worn on out of uniform days must be loose fitting, at least 5 inches inseam, and must have a length of mid-thigh.
- Pajama bottoms & low riders may not be worn on out of uniform days. Loose fitting joggers may be worn.
- Students may not display undergarments.
- Students who do not adhere to the dress code will remain in the office until their parents can be reached and bring suitable clothing that they can change into. Any day, students are welcomed to wear jewelry as long as it is not distracting or excessive.

# Technology

St. Joseph's School (SJS) provides technology to middle school students in its efforts to stimulate creativity and innovation; encourage communication and collaboration; promote research and information fluency; support critical thinking, problem solving and decision making; and to teach the responsible, appropriate and effective use of technology.

## Laptop Use and Care

The laptop is the property of SJS and is loaned to you for educational purposes only. In order to have use of the laptop, you must understand and accept the following responsibilities:

- Students will read and abide by the provisions of the Middle School Laptop Student Agreement. Students will discuss all of this document with their parents/guardians.
- Students will plug my laptop in each time they return it to the charging station to ensure it has a full battery for when they need it.
- Students will take responsibility for the care of his or her assigned laptop. These guidelines will help keep the laptop from being damaged. Students will:
  - always pick the laptop up by supporting the keyboard
  - always keep the laptop in its hardshell case
  - outside of the classroom, always carry the laptop in its protective sleeve
  - not slam or forcefully push on the laptop's lid
  - not set objects on top of the laptop
  - not eat or drink while using the laptop
  - not place anything (such as pencils and paper) between the keyboard and screen
  - always place the laptop completely on the table when in use
- Students will not deface or decorate the laptop, its hardshell case, or protective sleeve.
- Students will not use or damage another student's laptop.
- Students will not lend their assigned laptop to others.
- Students understand the laptop is for school related educational use only.
- Students will not leave the laptop unattended.
- Students will only use the laptop when in a classroom supervised by an SJS teacher. Students will not use the laptop in the lunchroom, playground, gymnasium, or locker

room.

- Students will only use the laptop in a location that is free from food, liquid, and debris that could damage his or her laptop and which provides a flat surface on which to operate it.
- Students will follow classroom expectations for laptop use including:
  - muting all sounds on laptop
  - keeping it closed until the teacher says to open
  - turning in assignments as directed and explained by my teachers
  - closing out all tabs from previous classes
  - using earbuds that are attached by cords to the device as directed by teachers
- Students will not share documents (school-related or personal) with other students, except as directed by the teacher(s).
- Students will only have one desktop on his or her computer.
- Students will not change the configuration of his or her laptop, including the network and security settings.
- Students will not delete the browser history, cache, or cookies, except as directed by the teacher(s).
- Students will not install or remove hardware, software, apps, or add-ons except as directed by the teacher(s).
- Students will not attempt to remove asset or identification tags on the laptop's hardware or software.
- Students will not use or attempt to use another student's or teacher's subscriptions, logins, files, or personal information.
- Students will not intentionally create or spread a computer virus.
- Students will make the school owned device immediately available for inspection by an SJS administrator, teacher, or staff member upon request. Students will understand that their laptop and its contents are the property of SJS. Students further understand that they will be held responsible for accessing inappropriate websites or other inappropriate content on their laptop.
- Students understand that the laptop, screen and its contents can be viewed by SJS staff when they are signed on to the SJS network.
- Students understand that they may only access and use the SJS network at school and



may not use a personal device as a hotspot to access other internet sites.

## **Misuse of Laptop**

Students understand that if they do not follow the expectations stated in the Middle School Handbook and Parent/Student Handbook, he or she may lose the privilege to use their laptop. A list of misuse infractions includes but is not limited to:

- I leave the laptop unattended or in a locker.
- I mistreat my laptop or another student's laptop.
- I use the laptop in class without teacher permission.
- I use a laptop in a manner other than directed.
- I fail to plug my laptop into the charging cart; the battery is dead.
- I download unauthorized programs or apps.
- Other incidents of misuse as determined by the teacher.

## **Digital Citizenship and Safety**

- Students will use technology in a meaningful, safe, and responsible way for school-related purposes. Students will not use my laptop in such a way that would be disrespectful or disrupt the activities of other users, or is in conflict with the mission of the school.
- Students will follow the guidelines for good digital citizenship that they have learned at school.
- Students understand that SJS retains the right to determine when the laptop use/care/or conduct is inappropriate.
- Students will abide by copyright laws. They will not access, download, or upload material that is contrary to the values of SJS.
- Students will use technology in accordance with the laws of the United States and the State of Minnesota, never taking part in the following:
  - Criminal acts – These include, but are not limited to, “hacking” or attempting to access computer systems without authorization, harassing email, cyberbullying, cyberstalking, child pornography, vandalism, and/or unauthorized tampering with computer systems.
  - Libel laws - Publicly defaming people through the published material on the Internet, email, etc.
  - Copyright violations - Copying, selling or distributing copyrighted material

without the express written permission of the author or publisher (users should assume that all materials available on the Internet are protected by copyright), engaging in plagiarism (using other's words or ideas as your own).

## **Damage**

- Students will store all my documents in my school account in Google Drive so they will be backed up in case the computer malfunctions. SJS will not retain copies of individual student documents or files except in the case of needed evidence for misuse or other violations.
- Students will not attempt to repair the laptop. They must immediately report all damage and other problems to his or her supervising teacher.
- Students understand that they as well as their parents will be responsible for the cost of repairs or replacement of the laptop.