

**St. Matthew Catholic School, San Antonio, Texas
2017-2018 Student- Parent Handbook**

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CURRICULUM

The primary goal of the curriculum and instruction in the Archdiocese of San Antonio is to offer those learning experiences most conducive to providing students with the virtues, knowledge, understanding and skills necessary for each student's spiritual, intellectual, social, cultural and physical development in keeping with the stated philosophy of St. Matthew Catholic School.

“We teach knowledge and critical skills so that students can function fully as citizens within a changing technological and multicultural society.”

The curriculum of St. Matthew Catholic School incorporates our mission statement by:

- Integrating the living Gospel message
- Maximizing each child's potential
- Teaching the value of service

The Gospel message is ever-present in the minds of our faculty, teachers and students and the Word is incorporated daily as we start together with Morning Prayer and celebrate weekly at the school liturgy. This positive environment provides a focus on the student designed to maximize their academic potential. As a Catholic school, our students are taught the value of service. Service to those in our school, our parish, our community and our world is integrated throughout the curriculum in school-wide service projects and class-adopted projects. Some projects are continual while others are planned during special times, such as Advent and Lent. Service hours are a requirement for graduation from the middle school.

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Project Based Learning Through S.T.R.E.A.M.



St. Matthew Catholic School will provide STREAM-oriented curriculum units for all students in grades Pre-K through eighth. In these interactive and hands-on lessons, students will apply knowledge and skills to real-world situations. Students will communicate, collaborate, and strategize ways to solve a problem through a cross-curricular model.

Science: Students will begin their study with a Science related theme or topic of discussion.

Technology: Students will use technology to communicate results, compile data, analyze information and to document findings and information.

Religion: Religion will be infused across all subjects by finding a correlation between the topic/unit of discussion and our faith.

Engineering: Students will create, build, and/or design a product based on their research and findings.

Art: Students will use creative thinking skills to communicate and advance STEM in the real world by creating a product in any of the Fine Arts.

Math: Students will incorporate math concepts and skills in the learning process and/or in the creation of the final product.

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CORE CURRICULUM

RELIGION is the center of our curriculum. The aim of religious instruction is to teach the basic doctrines and traditions of our Catholic faith. This incorporates the value of life from conception to death, the value of the family and the value of the human community. The development of a life-long personal relationship with God is fostered through experiencing the depth and beauty of spiritual life within the St. Matthew Catholic Church Community. Students participate in liturgies, prayer services and the traditional activities and celebrations of the Liturgical Year. Formal instruction takes place in daily religion class. Students attend Mass weekly. The students (by class or grade level) prepare the liturgies for the all-school weekly Mass. The Sacrament of Penance is celebrated during the Advent and Lent seasons.

Students in second grade are prepared for the initial reception of the Sacraments of Penance and First Holy Communion. Older students who have not received these sacraments will also be prepared for those sacraments. Parents are expected to participate in this preparation and to attend special sacramental preparation meetings.

Middle School religion classes incorporate Theology of the Body curriculum.

There is a grade-appropriate retreat at each grade level.

THE GOSPEL VALUES are integrated throughout the curriculum.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Language Arts incorporates the components of reading, spelling, language structure, composition and penmanship at all grade levels. The main goal of the language arts program is to teach the child to think and read clearly, listen attentively and develop self-expression in both oral and written form.

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Reading is taught through a strong phonics approach, which leads to the further development of oral and comprehension skills. Reading exposes children to literature and fosters a lifelong interest in reading for pleasure.

Language Arts in fourth through eighth grade is taught through a holistic approach using Novel Studies. Teachers in fourth through eighth grade integrate and incorporate grammar, spelling, writing and critical thinking components of Language Arts instruction through the various genres of literature, including non-fiction and fiction classics. The novels are on the student iPads.

MobiMax, is a self-paced, computer-based program used to enhance reading skills.

MATHEMATICS is developmental and sequential. The students learn mathematical facts, operations, and algorithms appropriate to their grade level in accordance with Archdiocesan Standards and the Texas TEKS. St. Matthew uses the Pearson Math program. In the elementary grades, students use consumable math workbooks along with their iPads to access Math curriculum. In the grades 5 through 8 the Math curriculum is accessed online.

Mathletics and MobiMax are self-paced, computer-based programs used to enhance math skills.

SCIENCE provides the student with an awareness of the physical world, knowledge of the life forms that share our planet and knowledge of the earth. St. Matthew uses the Pearson Science program. It is an on-line based science program. The program incorporates “Hands On” science which makes the content relevant to the students and makes abstract concepts concrete.

Labs are an integral part of the middle school science program. Middle school students will study and use the scientific method in science lab experiments and manipulate data in computer lab activities.

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SOCIAL STUDIES

The study of social studies develops the responsibilities of citizenship within the family, church, school, community, country, and the world. It is taught at all grade levels with an emphasis on Texas History and Government in grades four and seven, world cultures and governments in grade six, and United States History and United States Government in grades five and eight.

Seventh and eighth grade students participate in Project Based Learning through participation in the National History Day Contest as part of their History curriculum.

CO-CURRICULUM

SPANISH is the foreign language offered to students at St. Matthew. The course of study includes vocabulary and grammar using the spoken language. Students investigate the various cultural traditions in which Spanish is spoken enriching their understanding and appreciation of the language, and of our local culture.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION promotes physical growth and development as well as the mental, emotional and social well-being of each child. Physical development, coordination and basic skills are taught with an emphasis on good sportsmanship. A parent/guardian must send a note to the school nurse if his/her child is unable to participate in physical education.

COMPUTER LITERACY is offered in grades second through sixth and is a required course seventh and eighth grade. The course of study incorporates word processing, keyboarding and spreadsheet proficiency. Students will learn the nature and history of the Internet, as well as, the mechanics and effective use of the Internet.

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FINE ARTS nurture an understanding and an appreciation of creative self-expression.

- **Art** is a weekly part of the curriculum in Pre-K through fifth grade. It is offered as a middle school elective.
- **Music** is a weekly part of the curriculum in Pre-K through fifth grade. Seventh and Eighth grade students may choose the Hand Bell Choir as an elective.

HONORS COURSES

Honors courses are offered for middle school students at St. Matthew Catholic School. The faculty recommends students for placement into honors classes. These recommendations are based on an annual review of each student's grades (an A in the regular class), standardized test scores (IOWA Assessment and STAR), and student attitudes and behaviors.

The student decides whether to accept the recommendation into a particular class. The Course Card, signed by both the student and the parent/guardian, acknowledges the student's commitment to the program and explains the evaluation and re-evaluation procedures.

Honors Courses offered for the school year 2017- 2018

Math and Language Arts

6th Grade-Math 6H

7th Grade-Math 7H and Language Arts 7H

8th Grade-Math 8H and Language Arts 8H

SERVICE HOURS

Service hours are a requirement of the religion curriculum in Grades 6, 7 and 8. The service hours are required over the course of the school year.

- 6th grade students are required to perform 6 hours of service
- 7th grade students are required to perform 12 hours of service
- 8th grade students are required to perform 26 hours of service

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Students who perform activities for the parish, school or local community without compensation can receive service hours for the work done.

Household chores are not considered service hours.

Service hours awarded over the summer break can be applied to the service requirement.

An explanation of the service requirements, and a full discussion of the activities that can be performed for service credit, will take place in religion class.

INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY

St. Matthew Catholic School supplements instruction with technology at all grade levels. Students in Grade 4 through Grade 8 are issued a school iPad, which prepared for the specific grade level. The iPad is used for homework/ research/ study. Most textbooks are accessed online or loaded onto the iPad.

The PreK-4 and Kindergarten classes share a grade-level set of iPads.

Grades 1, 2 and 3 have a class set of iPads in their classrooms.

TEXTBOOKS

Proper care of each textbook is the responsibility of the student. The parent/guardian must pay for all books that are damaged. Hardback textbooks must be covered at all times.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Attendance policies, regarding tardy arrivals for class and absences, will follow the **Archdiocesan policy #3101**. Ordinarily, a student may not receive credit for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. Students are to attend school unless there are valid reasons for absence provided in writing by the parent/guardian. Local school policy will determine when being tardy or other absences are to be excused. Valid reasons, such as sickness, are considered excused.

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Invalid reasons, such as extra vacation days, are considered unexcused.

In all cases, students are responsible for all work missed and are subject to the local school policies (or discretionary authority of the principal) for determination of whether absences are excessive and to determine what consequences will be enforced. An excused absence does not mean a student will not be marked absent. **A student not physically present at a school, excused or unexcused, is marked absent.**

MAKE-UP WORK

Each Student has the responsibility to make up work and/or tests that are missed due to the absence.

Students will be allowed a reasonable amount of time to make up the work and the due dates are to be coordinated with each teacher during the first day back.

If an assignment, a long-term project or a test was assigned, prior to the absence, it will be due as scheduled or the first day back. Exceptions to be approved by the teacher.

Assignments may be requested from the front office or the classroom teacher(s) on the second day the student is absent. Assignments may be picked up in the front office at the end of the school day. E-mail communication may also be used to gather homework information when a student is absent.

Assignments for excused absences for two or less days may be requested from the teacher when the student returns to school. This should include a meeting with the Art, Computer and Spanish teacher for first through fifth grade students.

The student must take the initiative to meet with the teachers and schedule a time to make up the work.

A student who misses school for reasons other than illness must be prepared to return to school and make up the work and/or tests missed.

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TARDY

Prompt arrival at school is expected of all students. A student who is not in his or her seat at 8:00 a.m. is tardy. All reasonable attempts must be made to arrive on time. Many factors can cause students to arrive late for school, most are beyond the control of the student creating a situation in which usual discipline methods may seem unfair. Each student is granted 15 no fault tardy arrivals per school year. A reason for being tardy is not required; however, a tardy slip must be secured from the office.

- After 10 tardy arrivals, a letter will be sent home to notify the family that they are near the limit for the year.
- On the 16th tardy and with each subsequent tardy up to the 20th tardy a \$5.00 charge will be assessed each time a student is late.
- Beginning with the 21st tardy and with each tardy thereafter, a \$10.00 charge will be added to the monthly tuition.
- Tardy arrivals will be reported on the student's report card.

TRUANCY

A student who is absent from school without the consent of his/her parent is truant. Truant behavior is unexcused. A parent or guardian must accompany the student before being re-admitted to school.

RELEASING STUDENTS DURING SCHOOL HOURS

A student may be released from school during school hours into the custody only of those persons listed on the student's emergency information card. Identification of the person to whom the student is released will be verified.

Parents or guardians must be notified by telephone to make suitable arrangements when it is necessary to send a student home because of illness or other reason. Documentation of this notification must be made.

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Students will not be released from school, sent on errands off the school grounds or sent home for books, homework, etc. without being accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Students may only be released through the school office.

APPOINTMENTS

Medical and dental appointments should be made outside of the school hours. If this is not possible, a parent or guardian must send a note to the teacher on the morning of the appointment stating the time the student will be picked up. A parent/guardian must sign the student out from the school office. No parent/guardian may go directly to the classroom to pick up his/her child. The student will be notified to come to the office. A student will not be released from school during school hours into the custody of any person other than those listed on the emergency information card for the student. Identification of the person to whom the student is released must be verified.

RELEASE OF STUDENTS TO POLICE

The following procedures will be observed when students are released to police:

1. Ask for identification to verify that the person is a police officer. The officer is not required to present a warrant to speak with a student, but will be required to wait until parents are notified and given reasonable time to come to St. Matthew Catholic School.
2. Contact and ask the parents or guardian to come to the school to be present with the student during the interview. If a parent or guardian cannot come to school, the principal or his/her designee will sit in for the interview in *loco parentis*.
3. A warrant for arrest must be presented by a police officer before removing the student from the school. If the student has been involved in some suspected illegal activity immediately prior to the police arrival on campus, or while the police officer is present, the principal must contact the parent or guardian to come to the school. If the parent or

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4. guardian cannot come, the principal or designee must accompany the student to the police station.
5. Contact the superintendent immediately if a student is arrested.

HOMEWORK POLICY

Homework assignments serve to review and reinforce that which has been presented in class. Homework gives parents/guardians an opportunity to observe their child's progress as well as any problem areas that might require immediate consultation with the teacher. Parents/guardians should offer their child positive encouragement, thus aiding in the development of good work habits, independence and a sense of responsibility. If a student has an unexcused absence, he/she may not be able to make up the work for that day.

Written homework is not the only kind of homework. Students are encouraged to read or drill in areas of weakness even when no formal homework has been assigned. In an effort to foster family activities, homework is normally not assigned over the weekend. There will be times, however, when completed homework will be expected after a weekend. Long-term projects (History Fair, book reports, etc.) are examples of assignments that could involve weekend homework. These are the St. Matthew Catholic School guidelines regarding the total length of homework assignments each night:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 st – 3 rd | 15 – 45 minutes |
| 4 th – 5 th | 45 - 60 minutes |
| 6 th – 8 th | 1 – 2 hours |

LUNCH STUDY HALL

Lunch study hall is mandated for those middle school students who have not completed their homework assignments and have come to class unprepared. Teachers may request that students use that time to make up work due to absences.

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ACADEMIC HONESTY

St. Matthew Catholic School Cardinal rule # 6: BE HONEST

St. Matthew Catholic School expects honesty in every aspect of school life. Academic dishonesty involves presenting work that is not yours or helping others to do the same.

These are some examples of cheating or dishonesty:

- Copying someone else's homework or class work
- Giving homework or class work to someone to be copied
- Plagiarizing – claiming as your own another person's work ideas, or words (as in using a quotation without citing the source)
- Using notes (“a cheat sheet”, writing on your hand, etc.)
- Giving or receiving help on a test by-
 - ✓ Talking
 - ✓ Showing work to another person during a test
 - ✓ Talking about the test to someone who has not yet taken the test
 - ✓ E-mailing, photographing, text messaging or *any* form or electronically communicating information about the test to someone who has not yet taken the test

COLLABORATIVE ASSIGNMENTS

Learning to work with others is an important component of academics. There are many occasions when students will be working in pairs or groups on specific assignments and projects. These activities will be clearly stated as collaborative or group activities and these do not fall under the umbrella of cheating.

Students will sometimes need the help of a parent, sibling or peer with homework and long-term assignments. These are open to discussion and to demonstration for the purposes of comprehension. Assignments which are handed to the teacher for a grade should ultimately be the work of the student.

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GRADING SYSTEM

REPORT CARDS

Report Cards will be issued electronically four times per school year. Hard copies can be requested through the school office. No report card is issued to a family who is delinquent in their tuition payments.

All tuition and fees are to be current in order for a report card to be issued. Parents/guardians are encouraged to keep in close communication with their child's teacher during the school year. Conferences can be arranged through communication with the office, with the school counselor or with the child's teacher.

- Progress reports are sent at the midway point of each grading period.
- Parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled during the first grading period.
- An electronic copy of the report card will be sent home at the end of each quarter.
 - A hard copy of the report card, signed by the principal and indicating promotion status, is placed in the student's permanent record folder. A hard copy of the report card can be requested through the school office.

Parents are encouraged to follow student progress and grades through regular visits to their online, RenWeb school accounts.

GRADING SYSTEM/HONOR ROLL

GRADING SYSTEM

ARCHDIOCESAN ACADEMIC GRADING SYSTEM GUIDELINES:

Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten and First Grade

E-Excellent Progress

V-Very Good Progress

G-Good Progress

L-Limited Progress

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Second Grade through Eighth Grade

94-100- Exceptionally High Achievement

85-93- High Achievement

75-84- Average Achievement

70-74- Low Achievement

0-69- Failure to Master Material

Pre-Kindergarten through 5th Grade: Interpretation of Mastery in Standard Skills

+ - Skill Mastery Exceeds Expectations

✓ - Skill Mastery Meets Expectations

--- Skill Mastery is Below Expectations

CONDUCT GRADE

St. Matthew follows the Archdiocesan guidelines in its Conduct Grading System. The following indicators show the progress in Christian Growth, Work Study Skills, Conduct and the academic development in P.E., Art, Music, Technology and Handwriting.

O Outstanding

S Satisfactory

I Improvement Needed

U Unsatisfactory

HONOR ROLL

Students in fourth through eighth grade are eligible for honor roll each nine-week grading period. Honor Roll is awarded in two categories Honors and High Honors. The following criteria must be met for honor roll awards:

HIGH HONORS

4th – 8th-

94-100 in all subjects

S or above in conduct for all subjects

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The student's conduct grade will be assigned based on the following:

O (Outstanding) - no Disciplinary Notices (DN), or detentions in the discipline folder

S (Satisfaction) - no more than 1 detention

I (Improvement needed) - 2 detentions

U (Unacceptable) - 3 detentions or a suspension during the nine weeks

HONORS

4th – 8th-

85-100 in all subjects

S or above in conduct for all subjects

The student's conduct grade is assigned as stated above.

PROMOTION POLICY

There are no social promotions in Archdiocesan schools. Students are promoted to the next grade level based on their academic achievement. The following are the specific regulations for promotion for the various grade levels:

Kindergarten – Sufficient progress in reading and mathematics must be demonstrated in order for a student to be promoted.

1st Grade. A student must have at least a “G” final average in Reading and Mathematics in order to be promoted to the next grade.

Grades 2-5. A student must have at least a “70” final average in Religion, English, Reading, Mathematics and an overall 70 average. A student who fails Reading and Mathematics is not promoted.

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Grades 6-8. A student must have at least a “70” average in all core subjects: Religion, English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. A student who fails more than two (2) core subjects will not be promoted. Archdiocesan summer school is available, in some cases, for students who fail one or two core curriculum subjects.

The administration reserves the right to refuse re-admission to any student who has failed any grade for the year. Proof of completion of summer school will be required for re-admission to St. Matthew Catholic School.

CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled after progress reports are issued during the first quarter. Parent-teacher conferences may be requested at any time during the school year. The phone number for the school secretary is 478-5044. All faculty members can be accessed through the school secretary. Teachers can also be contacted via email and through their school phone extension.

A parent wishing to discuss a concern (academic or behavioral) will first address the teacher or teachers concerned. A parent may request a conference with an administrator if questions or concerns remain.

ARCHDIOCESAN TESTING PROGRAM AND STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES

Each school shall test according to the guidelines established by and available from the Catholic Schools Office. The Archdiocesan Testing Program includes standardized tests of general achievement and scholastic ability. This balance should provide local schools and the system with

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sufficient data for making realistic decisions about the future goals of the system, its individual schools and individual students.

St. Matthew Catholic School subscribes to The Archdiocesan Testing Program and expands the scope of that testing. St. Matthew students will participate in the following:

- All students in grades K- 8 take the complete battery of the Iowa Assessment tests assigned to the appropriate grade level and according to the schedule set up each year by the Archdiocesan School Office.
- Students in grades 2 and 6 take the Cognitive Abilities Test™ (CogAT®).
- Students in grade 5 and 8 take the ACRE test for religion assessment.
- Students in Grade 8 take the PSAT test.

REPORTING IOWA TEST SCORES

IOWA scores will be sent home as soon as available. A report concerning the IOWA scores of the students will be given to the School Council at the first meeting possible after the scores are received.

STUDENT ACADEMIC SUPPORT

A teacher may refer a student to the Academic Interventionalist. After a screening/evaluation process the student may be eligible to receive academic support services. The student's progress will be monitored through assessments in the classroom, evaluation by the interventionalist, and scores on the Renaissance Star tests and the IOWA assessment instrument. Students needing additional academic support may be referred to outside tutoring options or recommended for outside academic testing.

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THE DYSLEXIA INTERVENTION PROGRAM

St. Matthew Catholic School offers Dyslexia Intervention for students exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia that go beyond the scope of standard academic support in the classroom or through the academic interventionist. Referrals for screening originate with the school. After completion of the screening process for Dyslexia, the school will determine qualification for placement into the Dyslexia Intervention Program.