



MIDDLE SCHOOL HANDBOOK 2025-2026

The Mission of Annunciation Catholic School

Within our strong Catholic community,
we develop children to their fullest God-given potential
-spiritually, intellectually, morally, socially and physically

***PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK**

The purpose of this handbook is to outline policies, procedures, and information specific to the Middle School program. It does not cover all policies, procedures and information affecting middle school students. The complete Annunciation Catholic School Handbook should also be referred to by both parents and students.

Annunciation Middle School Staff

Mrs. Kelly Pope- 6th Grade Home Room Teacher

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Core curriculum for 6th, 7th, 8th Literature & English

Ms. Lynne O’Keeffe - 8th Grade Home Room/Dean of Students

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Core curriculum 7th, 8th grade Math

Mrs. Jennie Cullen - Co-Coordinator for 6-8 Resource Support

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Core curriculum for 6th, 7th, 8th Grade Religion & Social Studies

Mrs. Christina Shen- 7th Grade Home Room/Student Council Mentor

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Core curriculum for 6th, 7th, 8th grade Science

Mrs. Taryn Yaeger - STREAM Coordinator

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Specials

Mrs. Deborah Himmelein - Art

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Mrs. Liz Trayer- Music Education, private lessons

Email: ltrayer@acsphx.org

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School Office

Dr. Sharon Pristash, Principal: spristash@acsphx.org

Mr. Matt Raiff, Vice Principal: mraiff@acsphx.org

Mrs. Lynn Schwartz, Director of Operations and School Facilities: lschwartz@acsphx.org

Mrs. Maria Garcia, Front Office Admin: office@acsphx.org

Mr. Elijah Morford, IT Coordinator: emorford@acsphx.org

Resource Staff: Rachel Flemming, Chris Huebsch, Barb Ham, Alison Mohns, Jennifer Cullen

Nurses - Mrs. Joann Perraut and Mrs. Stephanie Raiff: nurse@acsphx.org

GENERAL INFORMATION

Extra-Curricular

There are several opportunities for extra-curricular activities in middle school. Participation in Annunciation's extra-curricular activities is a privilege, thus eligibility to participate is dependent upon academic performance and conduct. Students and parents will be provided information regarding extracurricular activities during the course of the school year.

Middle School Websites

General information: www.acsphx.org > classrooms > Middle school

Grading and assignment information: www.renweb.com then parent login

Math: www.bigideasmath.com

IXL math practice: <https://www.ixl.com/signin/annunciation>

Literature: <https://www.hmhco.com/ui/login>

Science: <http://hnhco.com>

English: www.membean.com

www.noredink.com

Social Studies: <https://nglsync.cengage.com/>

STUDENT CONDUCT AND POLICIES

Classroom Rules

The following rules apply to all middle school classes:

RULE #1: RESPECT YOURSELF, OTHERS AND YOUR SCHOOL

RULE #2: CONTRIBUTE TO THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

RULE #3: FOLLOW ALL SCHOOL PROCEDURES

Classroom Consequences for Misbehavior

The following consequences may be administered for misbehavior in any classroom:

Verbal warnings, email to parents, meeting with the Assistant Principal, immediate withdrawal from the classroom. Please read the all-school discipline policy in the Family Handbook for further details. Also, please note that each situation is unique and is handled with the discretion of the adult in charge with everyone's safety in mind.

Tardiness and Early Release

The school day begins at 8:00 AM in the homeroom. If a student walks in at 8:01 they are tardy. Multiple absences and tardies reflect poorly when applying to high school.

School Lockers, Desks, and other School Property

Although school lockers, desks, and other facilities and spaces may be temporarily assigned to individual students, they remain the property of the school at all times. The school has a reasonable and valid interest in ensuring that school property is properly maintained. For this reason, and in order to enforce school rules and maintain discipline, school officials may

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periodically inspect all, or a randomly selected number of, school lockers, desks, and other facilities and spaces owned by the school. A periodic inspection of a school locker, desk, or other facility or space owned by the school will be conducted only in the presence of the student whose locker is being inspected or in the presence of at least two staff members.

Staff members may ask a student to check students' backpacks, athletic bags, and pockets, within reason, at any time on campus.

Students Use and Care of Textbooks and Property

Students are responsible for the proper care of all books, supplies, and furniture supplied by the school. Students who disfigure property, break chairs, or do other damage to school property or equipment will be required to pay for the damage or replace the item.

Personal Property

The school assumes no responsibility for any personal property that is brought to school. This includes, but is not limited to, phones, calculators, clothing, athletic and computer equipment, etc. Any theft, however, should be reported IMMEDIATELY to the principal's office.

Student Uniform Policy

See the [ACS Parent/Student Handbook](#) or the [school website](#) for the Uniform Policy.

Cellular Phones, Smart Watches, and Electronic Devices

Our personal electronic device policy reflects our commitment to creating an environment where students can develop to their fullest God given potential, spiritually, intellectually, morally, socially, and physically. Research shows that student use of cell phones in schools has negative effects on student performance and mental health. We strongly believe that cell phones distract students from classroom instruction, resulting in smaller learning gains and lower test scores. Increased cell phone use has led to higher levels of depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders in children.

The administration discourages students from bringing phones and personal devices to school, but we realize it is a necessity for some. Middle school students who bring a device to school will be required to keep it **powered off and secured in a locked cabinet** in the student's homeroom from arrival until dismissal. Elementary students must keep personal devices powered off and in their backpacks.

PERSONAL DEVICE DEFINED

Personal devices include, but are not limited to, the following: cell phones of any kind, Smartwatches, headphones or earbuds, personal (not school-issued) laptops, and any non-school issued personal technology.

PERSONAL DEVICE POLICY

Middle school students will keep their cell phones or devices in a locked cabinet in their homeroom or they may leave devices at home. Backpacks, lockers or pockets ARE NOT an

acceptable storage location. Random searches of student backpacks, lunchboxes, lockers, and pockets will be conducted (see the **Right to Search** policy in the school handbook).

FIELD TRIPS

Students are not allowed to take their phones or other devices on field trips. Parent drivers are required to enforce this rule in their car. Failure to comply with this rule will result in loss of chaperone/driver privileges for that parent for the remainder of the year. This applies to the children in the car with their parents.

DISCIPLINE

If a student violates this policy, a teacher or administrator shall take the following progressively serious disciplinary measures:

1st Offense: The phone/device will be confiscated, and a \$50 fine will be charged. The phone/device will need to be picked up at the school office by a parent.

2nd Offense: The phone/device will be confiscated, and another \$50 fine will be charged. The phone/device will need to be picked up at the school office by a parent.

The student will receive a one-day suspension.

3rd Offense: The phone/device will be confiscated, and a \$100 fine will be charged. The phone/device will need to be picked up at the school office by a parent.

The student will receive a three-day suspension. For the remainder of the school year, the student will not be allowed to bring his/her phone to school.

PARENT-SCHOOL AGREEMENT

A parent or legal guardian of each student will complete an [online form](#) indicating the following question:

___ *My child does not have a cell phone.*

___ *My child will not be bringing his/her phone to school this year.*

___ *My child might bring his/her phone to school occasionally. I understand it will remain in a locked box from 8:00-3:00. If my child breaks this rule, I understand and support the consequences listed in the Cell Phone and Personal Device Policy.*

___ *My child will be bringing his/her phone to school on a regular basis. I understand it will remain in a locked box from 8:00-3:00. If my child breaks this rule, I understand and support the consequences listed in the Cell Phone and Personal Device Policy.*

PARENT-CHILD COMMUNICATION

As always, parents of middle school and elementary school students may contact the school office via phone or email to get a message to a child. Likewise, if a student needs to contact a

parent, he/she may do so via the classroom or office phone with adult permission. Every classroom is equipped with a landline phone extension.

Students and parents **may not use email** to communicate during the school day. Students are allowed to use only their school issued email account during the school day, and only to communicate with members of the school network (faculty, staff, students).

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

- News story on CBS:
<https://youtu.be/eeYGeT0mIDc?si=zp21bpPEExAQYcKB>
- Digital Distractions: The Case for Phone-Free Schools
<https://www.youtube.com/live/5BTg5sl0iO0?t=1s>
- Article in Atlantic:
https://www.aderbabel.com/p/phone-free-schools?r=182klo&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=email
- Wall Street Journal Article:
<https://www.wsj.com/articles/can-we-save-our-children-from-smartphones-03eaf449>
- Books:
 - *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt
 - *Glow Kids: How Screen Addiction is Hijacking Our Kids and How to Break the Trance* by Nicholas Kardaras PhD.
 - *Digital Madness: How Social Media is Driving Our Mental Health Crisis and How to Restore our Sanity* by Nicholas Kardaras PhD.
 - *The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in its Proper Place* by Andy Crouch
 - *Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked* by Adam Alter.

Interferences in School

Students may not possess water guns, toys, lasers and other similar items on school grounds or at school activities. These types of items will be taken away from the students. Fidgets are not allowed on campus unless the staff has granted approval.

Medications

Regardless of age, students are not allowed to self-medicate, even for minor ailments. All medications must be administered through the school office. For more information about medication procedures see the complete *Annunciation Catholic School Handbook*.

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

Core Curriculum

The Core Curriculum consists of Religion, Math, Science, English, Literature, and Social Studies. Courses are based on the Curricular Guidelines for the Diocese of Phoenix, which can be found on the school website under the Academics tab. Technology standards are integrated across the curriculum and embedded in every class. Only grades earned in the Core Curriculum subjects are used to determine GPA for honors/merit awards.

Physical Education

Students are separated by grade level for PE class, which meets twice a week. If a child is unable to participate in Physical Education for a medical or health reason, a note from the parent or doctor should be sent to the PE instructor.

On Monday and Thursday, students are to come to school in their PE uniform. Appropriate clothes for P.E. include: athletic shoes, ACS athletic shorts and the ACS PE shirt. During colder months, ACS sweatpants or blue or black full-length leggings may be worn underneath the regulation shorts. PE uniforms are purchased through the uniform vendor. The used uniform closet at school sometimes has PE items available.

The PE grade is based on participation, preparedness, sportsmanship, conduct and effort. If a student does not have a PE uniform for class, the student will not be able to participate and results in a deduction of points.

Music Education

Research has found that learning music facilitates learning in other subjects and enhances skills that children inevitably use in other areas. Music helps to develop spatial intelligence -- particularly spatial-temporal skills -- which allows students to visualize how elements fit together, which is required in solving math problems. Music education is also found to support language development as music supports the development of the left side of the brain, which also processes language.

For that reason, music education is a required component of the middle school curriculum. Students are separated by grade level for music class, which meets once a week. Students are given ample opportunities to perform both vocally and on instruments. The music grade is based on participation, preparedness, willingness to perform, conduct and effort.

Art Education

Numerous studies over the past decade have demonstrated the amazing benefits of such an integral education facet. Students who don't have access to art classes may not only miss out on a key creative outlet, but might also face greater difficulty mastering core subjects, higher dropout rates, and more disciplinary problems. For that reason, art education is a required component in the middle school curriculum.

Students are separated by grade level for art class, which meets once a week. Students are given ample opportunities to display their visual art and enter art competitions. The art grade is based on participation, preparedness, proper use of materials, conduct and effort.

Technology

Students may use only the device assigned to them by the school. Students may not touch or use a personal or school assigned device that belongs to another student.. Closing someone else's Chromebook is unacceptable. Please see the Acceptable Use Policy regarding the use of technology and the consequences.

Grading

Students receive progress reports in the form of report cards at the end of each trimester. **All grade books are online and available for parents anytime at reweb.com.** Please email the class teacher for any questions pertaining to online grades. All teachers recommend students keep any graded work until the next report card in case of input errors in online gradebook. If you or your child believe a grade was incorrectly recorded, contact the teacher directly.

Homework

Teachers assign homework, extra class activities or assignments as necessary. Homework is an opportunity for students to practice skills and activities, to share and discuss ideas, to review materials, to become acquainted with resources, to organize thoughts, to prepare for classroom activities or to make up for incomplete class work. Students are expected to complete homework on time.

Homework is an integral part of the learning process, as it encourages students to begin accepting responsibility for managing time and quality of work. Parents/Guardians should encourage their children to develop good study skills while doing their homework.

Assigned homework for middle school students should not exceed 1 ½ hours per night.

However, a student who does not complete class work during the allotted class time, or who has several missing homework assignments to make up, may find that he/she is spending more than 1 ½ hours on work at home. If a parent thinks his/her child is spending an unusual amount of time on homework each night, the parent should contact the teacher(s) to find out the reason.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Procedures to Follow When a Student is Absent

If a student is going to be absent, parents should call the office (480-361-8234) or email the office (office@acsphx.org) prior to 8:20 AM.

Procedures for Leaving School Prior to 3:00 PM

1. A parent or guardian should notify the school office in advance of the pick up time.
2. A parent or guardian must sign out the student at the front desk, and the student will be sent to the office.
3. Students are responsible for following the missing classwork and late work policies.
4. **Please note that attendance will be taken in each class and the make up work policy will be in effect for any class missed.**

Student Regulations

Class attendance is mandatory. Unauthorized absence from classes or other designated areas will not be permitted without disciplinary action. The principal will make the final determination on all unauthorized absences.

Annunciation Middle School Late Work Policy

Assignments turned in one day late will receive a 20% deduction of the assignment's total points. Work turned in 2 or more days late will result in a 50% deduction.

Absences/Make-Up Work

A. Unanticipated absence is an absence that cannot be anticipated by a student or parent. Some examples are illness, death in family, serious illness, or emergency situation.

1. When an absence occurs, all schoolwork missed is the student's responsibility to collect the day they return. The students are allotted one school day to make up work per day absent. The late work policy will be in effect if make-up work is not completed in the allotted days.
 - a. For example, if a student is absent on Tuesday and returns on Wednesday, his/her absent work is due on Thursday.
 - b. If a student is absent on Monday and Tuesday and returns on Wednesday, then all absent work is due on Friday.
 - c. **If the student is present the day an assignment was given, but absent the day the assignment is due, the student is responsible for turning it in on the first day he/she returns to class.**
2. In case of an absence of more than five (5) days, students must make arrangements with each teacher to complete assignments.

B. Anticipated absence is an absence that a student and a parent know in advance will occur. These absences include medical appointments, court appointments, vacations, family trips, etc.

When students anticipate an absence, arrangements to make up school work must follow the Absent/Make-Up Work Policy above. **Teachers are unable to give work ahead of time due to the fact that plans may change. It is highly recommended that you check FACTS online for lesson plans.**

C. For unusual circumstances or absences not included above, please contact the homeroom teacher to discuss a plan.

Academic Dishonesty

Students are expected to do their own schoolwork. Cheating by looking at another student's schoolwork, copying another student's work, using unapproved resources, allowing or encouraging a classmate to copy your work, or similar cheating is not tolerated.

Students caught cheating will receive an automatic referral to the Dean of Students. The assignment will be recorded as a zero.

Plagiarism

Definition: Plagiarism is the passing off of the thoughts or works of another as one's own. Plagiarism involves giving the impression that a person has thought, written or produced something that has, in fact, been borrowed from another. There are two basic forms of plagiarism:

1. Using someone else's work as your own, without citing the source. This includes direct copying, rephrasing, and summarizing, as well as taking someone else's idea and putting it in different words.
2. Not indicating directly quoted passages or ideas even while citing the work as a general

source.

Penalties: Each case shall be treated individually. Minor first infringements may be corrected by counseling or by the imposition of a penalty, as appropriate. Depending on the circumstances, the penalty imposed may include a warning, resubmission, loss of marks, failure on a particular task or in a subject, or a charge of misconduct to be dealt with by the principal/Dean of Students. Where a penalty is imposed, the parents/guardian will be notified and a written note will be placed in the student's file. Before imposing a penalty for plagiarism, the student's file should be checked to determine whether the offense is a first or subsequent offense. For a subsequent offense, the penalty will be more severe.

Mass/Adoration/Rosary/Community Prayer Behavior

We expect piety and reverence during all religious experiences. This also includes choir behavior, altar serving, Mass readers, etc.

**RECEIPT AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE
2025-2026 MIDDLE SCHOOL HANDBOOK**

I have received and read a copy of the Annunciation Middle School Handbook.

Signature of parent(s)/guardian(s)

Signature of student _____

Date _____

*** Please remove this page and return it to school within one week of receiving it.
Thank you!*