



# 2025-2026 PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK

*UPDATED JULY 2025*

PALMER CATHOLIC ACADEMY  
4889 PALM VALLEY RD.  
PONTE VEDRA BEACH, FL 32082  
PHONE: 904-543-8515 FAX: 904-543-8750  
Website: [www.pcapvb.org](http://www.pcapvb.org)

**Pastor: Rev. Andy Blaszkowski**  
**Principal: Daniela DosSantos**  
**Assistant Principal: Fionnuala San Juan**

**PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK - Signature Page**

**Please print this signature page, initial each section, sign below and return this sheet to the school office via email ([palmercatholic@pcapyb.org](mailto:palmercatholic@pcapyb.org)) by Tuesday, August 12, 2025. Thank you!**

\_\_\_\_\_ I have read the 2025-2026 PCA PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK in its entirety. I agree to abide by and accept the rules, regulations, and responsibilities as set forth by this handbook including the *PCA Family Volunteer Point Policy* and exhibits.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that the Registration, Curriculum, Safety and Technology fees along with the first month's tuition payment are non-refundable and non-transferrable. I have also read and understood the withdrawal process.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have read and understand the school's Attendance Policy.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Internet Policy:** *As parent or legal guardian, I have read, understand and will abide by the Diocese of St. Augustine INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE AGREEMENT (found in the exhibits). I understand that this access is only for educational purposes. I also recognize that it is impossible for the school to restrict access to all controversial material, and I will not hold the Diocese of St. Augustine, the school or any employee responsible for materials acquired on the network. I hereby give permission to grant Internet access privileges to my child and certify that the information contained on this form is correct. **Parents should ensure that each student understands his/her obligations and attests to the following prior to signing: I (Student) further understand that any violation of the regulations above is unethical and may constitute a criminal offense. Should I commit any violation, my access privileges may be revoked, school disciplinary and/or appropriate legal action may be taken. Photos of students while at Palmer or in Palmer uniform, faculty member photos, or any school photos may NOT be placed on any type of internet site or social media.***

\_\_\_\_\_ **Standards of Ethical Conduct for Lay Employees & Covered Volunteers:** *I have read the Standards of Ethical Conduct (Exhibit). I agree that, if I do not understand something in these standards, or I am not sure if something in them applies to me, I will contact Palmer Catholic Academy staff or the chancellor of the Diocese of St. Augustine.*

\_\_\_\_\_ **Waiver:** *PCA reserves the right to amend the handbook at any time. The School Administration reserves the right to waive and/or deviate from any and all disciplinary regulations for just cause at his/her discretion.*

\_\_\_\_\_ **Child Photography Release:** *Without compensation, I hereby grant permission to the Catholic Diocese of St. Augustine and Palmer Catholic Academy to use and reproduce photographs taken of my child. These photographs may be used for news and editorial purposes in publications, electronic reproductions (websites), and/or brochures. In addition, I grant my permission to alter the same photos without restriction and to copyright the same. I hereby release the photographer, the journalists and the publications or media outlets they represent, as well as the parish/church/school involved, the Catholic Diocese of Saint Augustine and all their employees and agents, from all claims and liability relating to said photographs.*

**Parents check the appropriate boxes to allow FOR ADDITIONAL PERMISSIONS REGARDING CHILD PHOTOGRAPHY:**

**I DO GIVE PERMISSION** for my child/children to be included and/or participate in the school's social media (Facebook and Instagram) as stated above in the Child Photography Release **without their name.**

**I DO GIVE PERMISSION** for my child/children to be included and/or participate in the school's social media (Facebook and Instagram) as stated above in the Child Photography Release **with their first name.**

**I DO NOT GIVE PERMISSION** for my child/children to be included and/or participate in the school's social media (Facebook and Instagram).

**I DO GIVE PERMISSION** for my child/children to be included in class newsletters (sent to class families only) as stated above in the Child Photography Release.

**I DO GIVE PERMISSION** for my child/children to be included in the Blue Angel Weekly (sent to all PCA families and posted on the PCA website) as stated above in the Child Photography Release.

**I DO GIVE PERMISSION** for my child/children to be included in the parish bulletin as stated above in the Child Photography Release.

Parent's Name Printed \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's signature/acknowledgement of above: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_    Print Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_    Print Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_    Print Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

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# INTRODUCTION - PALMER CATHOLIC ACADEMY

## HISTORY

Palmer Catholic Academy opened its current facility in 1999 with double classes for Kindergarten through 3rd grades and individual classes for grades 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Linda M. Earp, who was the principal from the when the school opened through the 2023-2024 school year, began as the director of Little Stars Preschool in 1992, and with the request of pastor, Monsignor T. Leo Danaher, helped create Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic School in 1997 with one kindergarten class. Monsignor Danaher later renamed the school Palmer Catholic Academy of Our Lady Star of the Sea based on the generosity of parishioner, Mr. Val Palmer, and his donations of capital funds for the new school. Monsignor Daniel B. Logan became the pastor for the parish and school in 1999 upon Monsignor Danaher’s retirement.

In 2001, a new wing at Palmer was dedicated by Bishop Victor Galeone and Monsignor Logan that included a modern, fully equipped library, computer lab, music, art and TV productions rooms. In 2003, Palmer received its first accreditation status from the Florida Catholic Conference re-accredited in 2010. In 2005, Palmer received the prestigious National Blue Ribbon Award which designated the school as in the top 10% nationally and the first school in the Diocese of St. Augustine to receive the honor. In 2012, thanks to a strong, steady enrollment and the support from PCA parents and OLSS parishioners, the final phase of the school, which is a gymnasium and cafeteria complex, were completed.

On July 1, 2013, Monsignor Daniel B. Logan retired and, in appreciation for his work on the new Parish Community Center and Gymnasium, the School Board unanimously approved the renaming of the new building to the “Reverend Monsignor Daniel B. Logan Gymnasium and Community Center”. Monsignor Keith Brennan was named by Bishop Felipe J. Estevez as the new pastor for Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish. Daniela DosSantos was named the new principal for the 2024-2025 school year. Monsignor Brennan served 12 years as the pastor, and retired on June 30, 2025. Rev. Andy Blaszowski was named the new pastor of Our Lady Star of the Sea effective July 1, 2025.

Palmer Catholic Academy is accredited by the Florida Catholic Conference (FCC) and is a member of the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA).

School Information
<b>Address:</b> 4889 Palm Valley Road, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
<b>Telephone:</b> 904-543-8515
<b>Fax:</b> 904-543-8750
<b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www.pcapvb.org">www.pcapvb.org</a>
<b>Facebook:</b> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/p/Palmer-Catholic-Academy-100063710057326/">https://www.facebook.com/p/Palmer-Catholic-Academy-100063710057326/</a>
<b>Instagram:</b> <a href="https://www.instagram.com/palmer_catholic_academy/">https://www.instagram.com/palmer_catholic_academy/</a>
<b>School Colors:</b> Blue and White
<b>School Mascot:</b> Blue Angels

**School’s Right to Amend:** The Principal, Pastor, and/or the school retains the right to amend this handbook for just cause, and the parents will be promptly notified of changes by written notice.

## DIOCESE OF ST. AUGUSTINE - MISSION STATEMENT

We, the Catholic school community of the Diocese of Saint Augustine, are called to provide a Eucharist-centered educational environment committed to high academic standards, faith development, and service, thereby inspiring discipleship in all students.

## **PALMER CATHOLIC ACADEMY - MISSION STATEMENT**

Palmer Catholic Academy of Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church provides a Catholic and Christ-centered educational environment that inspires all students to reach their full spiritual and academic potential and become responsible, respectful, and reverent disciples of Christ.

## **PALMER CATHOLIC ACADEMY – BELIEF STATEMENTS**

Palmer Catholic Academy recognizes the history of education in the Diocese of St. Augustine and is committed to the following objectives:

1. We believe in providing a distinctive Christian environment that teaches Catholic values and traditions, promotes spiritual growth, and instills a lasting love for God.
2. We believe in creating awareness for the Church's three-fold mission of message, community, and service.
3. We believe in the importance in sharing with students, families, and the greater community a common faith in Jesus, which is sustained by the sacramental and prayer life of the church.
4. We believe in providing a learning environment, which incorporates stimulating, new teaching concepts within a structured and intimate classroom setting.
5. We believe in instilling self-discipline and responsibility in each student.
6. We believe in fostering an attitude of respect toward self, peers, and those in authority.
7. We believe in encouraging the achievement and development of self-worth according to individual, God-given abilities, and talent.
8. We believe in encouraging a loving family environment within the school community where learning is a successful and enjoyable experience.
9. We believe in providing a diverse curriculum to develop skills in religion, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, technology, and foreign language.
10. We believe in developing and teaching cultural enrichment through secondary language, music, art, special events, and field trips.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

### **The Pastor:**

The Pastor is the head of the parish school and all matters of an administrative nature are referred to him.

### **The Principal:**

The executive authority of the school is vested in the principal, in cooperation with the pastor and the School Board. The principal administers, supervises, and coordinates all activities in the school in accordance with the policies of the Department of Education of the Diocese of St. Augustine.

The duties are, but not limited to, the following:

1. Collaborate with the pastor in interviewing and hiring prospective teachers.
2. Direct the religious education of the students by choosing teachers of religion with great care and supervising the curriculum and classes.
3. Assign students to classes.
4. See that all school records are up to date and preserved.
5. Hold faculty meetings and in-service meetings at least once a month.
6. Interview parents, prospective students, and other visitors.
7. Establish and maintain good public relations.
8. Check and maintain lesson plans of the teachers.
9. Maintain school discipline.
10. Admit students to the school, issue transfers, and carry out suspensions – subject to the approval of the pastor.

### **The School Board:**

The School Board is an advisory board appointed by the pastor to advise and assist the pastor and principal in developing and executing school policy, financial planning, capital improvements, fundraising, etc.

### **Support Personnel:**

The school office staff handles communication, correspondence and bookkeeping at the direction of the principal. They also assist with ordering supplies, maintenance of student permanent records and files, registration of new students and forwarding of former student transcripts. The office staff also oversees the school health clinic. Finally, they assist students, faculty and parents with school-related information as needed.

## **ABSENCE OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS**

If, for any reason, another adult will be caring for your child(ren), an *Affidavit To Establish An In-Loco-Parentis Relationship* form must be completed. This form can be found on the PCA website (More>Forms/Info). This form must be signed and notarized. A notary is available at PCA.

## **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Personal pride and integrity are essential to Palmer Catholic Academy's dedication to academic excellence. Cheating violates God's Seventh Commandment and will result in a grade of "0." Parents/guardians will be notified immediately, and disciplinary action will be taken. Please read, "*Cheating and How to Avoid It*", found on the PCA website (More>Forms/Info). See also the section titled "Plagiarism".

## **ACCIDENT AND ILLNESS AT SCHOOL**

**All emergency contact information should be entering in FACTS. If a child becomes sick at school, parents are expected to pick them up as quickly as possible.** The following information should be provided in order for PCA personnel to contact authorized adults:

- Parents/guardians name and address
- Home, business, cellular phone numbers
- Names and phone numbers of 2 other persons who have agreed to assume responsibility when the parents are not available
- Name and phone number of family physician
- Information on allergies or pre-existing physical conditions that the school should be aware of

Palmer Catholic Academy provides secondary insurance to all families for any student that may sustain an injury at school.

## **ADMISSION POLICY AND REGISTRATION**

Prior to admission and acceptance to Palmer Catholic Academy, new students will be assessed so that the Administration can determine each student's level of competency in certain scholastic areas. An interview with parents may be required. Academic records are reviewed to determine whether the program at Palmer Catholic Academy will meet the educational needs of the student. An interview with the student may be part of the admissions process. Placement testing in key academic areas will be held for incoming students in Grades K-8.

All newly accepted students will be placed on a *minimum* probationary period of one school semester. Should an academic or disciplinary problem become evident during this period, or any other time

throughout the year, withdrawal procedures may be initiated. The decision rests with the Pastor and the Principal. **This probationary period is a time to work collaboratively with new families to address any concerns or challenges that may arise that impact the academic and/or disciplinary progress of the student. During the probationary period, we will closely monitor a new student's academic performance and behavior. Palmer Catholic Academy reserves the right to address any behaviors, conversations, or actions that are contrary to the teachings of the Catholic faith. Such behaviors, if not rectified, will result in de-enrollment from the school.**

Children entering Kindergarten must be 5 years old on or before September 1<sup>st</sup> ; children entering Grade 1 must be 6 years old on or before September 1<sup>st</sup> and must document completion of Kindergarten. (Florida Statute 232.01) Pre-Kindergarten 4 students must be 4 years old on or before September 1<sup>st</sup>.

Students transferring from other schools must have complete and up-to-date transcripts documenting all school years completed, standardized test results, health records, and, if applicable, IEP documentation, 504 plans and/or educational psychologist reports documentation. If the student was homeschooled, we need documentation that they have successfully completed the prior year and have been promoted to the next grade level.

Palmer Catholic Academy admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. Palmer Catholic Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs. Final acceptance for admission and re-admission rests with the principal and the pastor.

Each year students currently attending Palmer Catholic Academy are invited to register for the following school year. At this time, siblings of currently enrolled students may also register for the upcoming school year. Registration and re-enrollment of current students is contingent upon the student's family satisfying their current financial obligation and volunteer points obligations to the school, including up-to-date tuition and fees. Re-enrollment is further contingent upon the student meeting the academic and behavioral requirements for advancement to the next grade.

Registration priority will be given in the following sequence:

- Current students of the school/siblings of current students, with kindergarten preference for those attending Palmer Catholic Academy Preschool / students of school employees (*based on # of years as a parishioner*)
- Preferential option for Palmer Catholic Academy Preschool/JP II Early Learning Center Preschool
- Supporting parishioners\* of Our Lady Star of the Sea/St. John Paul II parish (*based on length of time as a parishioner*).
- Catholic families relocating to our parish from out-of-town continuing a Catholic education for their child(ren)
- Non-supporting parishioners of Our Lady Star of the Sea/St. John Paul II parish and non-parishioners

\*Supporting Parishioners are defined as those families who:

- ❖ Are registered Catholic parishioners of Our Lady Star of the Sea/St. John Paul II parish;
- ❖ Regularly attend Mass on weekends;
- ❖ Complete at least 20 points of volunteer work at the school/school-related parish activities during the school year;
- ❖ And, because the parishes support Palmer Catholic Academy, we ask that through the use of offertory envelopes, you contribute to the parish you belong to (OLSS/SJP II).

## **DIOCESAN EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY**

The Catholic School community in the Diocese of St. Augustine has a goal of helping all children reach their full potential intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. Individual schools establish admission policies that target students who are able to manage in a mainstream setting. Limited resources prevent accepting students who would require more than minor accommodations. All students are required to meet diocesan course objectives and function at grade level. Program modifications that require the students to complete less than the basic course are not allowed.

A parentally placed private school student with a disability does not have an individual right to receive some or all of the special education and related services that the student would receive if enrolled in a public school under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

## **ALLERGY POLICY**

For any classroom designated as an “allergy classroom” (students with allergies present) the following policy applies. Before any treats are distributed in the classroom or in the lunchroom, a list of the ingredients must be given to the teacher to ascertain if the snack is appropriate for all students. Note: All treats are required to be store bought (not homemade) and in the original container. No frosted treats are allowed (for example: no cupcakes). The names of students with allergies are kept confidential by the teachers and administration. Both PCA preschool classrooms are “peanut free”. Please see the Preschool Addendum for more information regarding the preschool classes.

## **ANGELS AFTER HOURS PROGRAM (AFTER SCHOOL CARE PROGRAM)**

Palmer Catholic Academy students may participate in the “Angels After Hours” after school program from 3:00 – 6:00 PM on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and from 1:30 to 6:00 PM on Wednesdays. Angels After Hours is an after-school care program, not a day care facility; therefore, it will be closed on holiday breaks, days when school is not in session, and on 12:30 early release days. Enrollment is limited to 20 students per staff member. Parents picking up students past 6:00 PM will be charged \$15.00 for every 15 minutes past 6:00 PM. All fees will be charged to the family FACTS account. Monthly fees do not carry over to the next month if days are not used. To obtain complete program information and the fee schedule please review the Angels After Hours Handbook on the PCA website (Parents>Forms/Info).

Angels After Hours exists to assist working parents who are unable to pick up their children at dismissal time. Please do not use Angels as a play date time for your children. School rules apply during Angel After Hours, and any student who does not follow the rules may be asked to leave the Angels After Hours program.

## **ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE**

Drop off for all students in grades PK-8 begins at 7:15 AM. VPK only students may also begin drop off at 7:15 AM. No child should be dropped off earlier than 7:15 AM unless attending tutoring or a school-sponsored function. Students arriving between 7:15 AM and 7:35 AM will be sent to the gym with a designated staff person, and will be sent to wait outside their classrooms at 7:35 AM. Classrooms will be open to students at 7:45 AM.

The tone to start the school day sounds at 8:00 AM, and K-8 students begin their day promptly at **8:00 AM. Students in grades 3-8 will begin first period promptly at 8:00 AM. Students should therefore arrive by 7:50 AM in order to unpack and get prepared for the day.**

All students are considered tardy if they are not in their seats by 8:00 AM. Parents must walk tardy students into the building and sign them in at the front desk. (See the section titled “Attendance Policy” for more information about the Tardy Policy”).

It is a strict school safety policy that parents may not park and walk their students into the school facility in the morning or walk in to pick up their children in the afternoon during carpool hours unless there are extenuating circumstances. Designated school personnel will meet students as they arrive and leave school each day.

Student departures on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday begin at 2:15 PM and are staggered based on grade level until 3:05 PM. Please note that PCA uses the PikMyKid app during afternoon dismissal. Use the app to make carpool changes and to announce the driver’s arrival to place the student/students in the dismissal que. For detailed information and instructions, visit <https://www.pcapvb.org/pikmykid>. If a carpool change needs to be made, it must be done so on PikMyKid by 1:30 PM. If a last- minute change needs to be done past the cutoff, please call the office at 904-543-8515. Students may only be picked up by a parent or authorized adult that has been delegated on PikMyKid. Adults must present a picture I.D. to the carpool attendant for them to authorize the pickup.

On Wednesdays, dismissal begins at 1:10 PM. On early release days, departure begins at 12:30 PM. Please make carpool changes on Wednesdays by 12:00 and early release days by 11:00.

Please note: Family pick-up time is based on the oldest child’s release time. Families should only come through the carpool line when it is their oldest child’s release time to avoid excess congestion.

In the afternoon, students not picked up by the end of carpool will be escorted to the after-school care program (Angels After Hours) and charged \$15.00 per child. The standard drop-in fee of \$35.00 per child will be assessed if students are not picked up within 10 minutes of being escorted to Angels. Charges will be applied to the family FACTS account. Parents must then pick up their students at the back of the school in cafeteria. Students staying after school for a school- sponsored activity are to be picked up no later than 10 minutes after the scheduled pickup time or the above policy applies.

### **RELEASE TIMES – Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday**

Family pick-up time is based on the oldest child’s pick-up time.

Preschool (VPK ONLY)	11:30 AM
Preschool (VPK + Enrichment)	2:15 PM - See Preschool Addendum for additional information.
Kindergarten – Grade 2	2:50 PM
Grades 3 - 5	2:55 PM
Grades 6 - 8	3: 05 PM

### **RELEASE TIMES – Wednesday**

Family pick-up time is based on the oldest child’s pick-up time.

Preschool (VPK ONLY)	11:30 AM
Preschool (VPK + Enrichment)- Grade 2	1:10 PM - See Preschool Addendum for additional information.
Grades 3 - 5	1:20 PM
Grades 6 - 8	1:30 PM

## EARLY RELEASE DAYS

On school days designated for early release, student dismissal will begin at 12:30 PM. Early release days are counted as one of the Diocesan approved instructional days, so any student absent on an early release day will be considered a full day absence. ***On the days of a scheduled early release day, there will be no Angels After Hours.***

Early, staggered release times (family pick-up time is based on the oldest student's release time):

VPK only:	11:30 AM
PK + Enrichment:	12:30 PM
Kindergarten – Grade 2	12:30 PM
Grades 3-5	12:40 PM
Grades 6-8	12:50 PM

## ASSESSMENTS (QUIZZES AND TESTS)

Assessments are a necessary part of the evaluation process. In order for students to learn most effectively, the teacher needs to know each student's ability. Evaluation by testing should provide a valid measure of a student's work and progress. Evaluations other than quizzes and tests will also be used in determining the grade of a student. Students will be given adequate notice of upcoming assessments to ensure success.

Parents are encouraged to help their children develop good study habits including:

1. Discussing what was learned each day as a family
2. Reviewing notes each day in content area subjects
3. Making flashcards or Quizlets to practice key terms or concepts
4. Setting aside a place to study in the home that is free of distraction
5. Developing a study plan before tests to avoid cramming the night before

Study guides will be provided for tests ONLY. It is the student's responsibility to complete the study guide independently and then check their answers with the class during the class review. Study guides will provide students with the necessary topics, concepts, and skills that will be needed to be successful on the assessment; however, the study guide WILL NOT provide the exact questions. Students should have a good understanding of the material on the guide in order to apply the information to the questions asked on the assessment.

Assessments may include fill-in the blank, matching column, multiple choice and short answer questions. Middle School students may also be expected to complete essay questions as part of the assessments. Assessments will include higher order thinking questions in which students will need to apply their knowledge to respond to the question.

**PCA does not offer grade recovery.** That is, students may **not** retake an assessment to earn a higher grade. If a student does poorly on an assessment, the teacher will work with that student to remediate the areas that the student struggled with on the assessment. The student may be re-assessed on the concept to ensure understanding, but **the original grade on the assessment will stand.** Therefore, please be sure that your student is prepared for all assessments.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

**Please note: According to state scholarship guidelines, students who are receiving state scholarships risk losing their scholarship if they do not abide by the attendance and absence policies stated below.**

**Truancy and Impact on Student Performance:** The Diocese of St. Augustine requires a minimum attendance of 37 days per each 45-day grading period to qualify a student for a passing grade for that quarter. Both excused and unexcused absences are included. This requirement pertains to subject periods as well. Any student who has eight (8) or more unexcused absences per quarter in any one subject will be put on academic probation and a parent conference will be required to determine the student's academic standing.

**A student with 5 unexcused absences within a calendar month or 10 unexcused absences within a 90-calendar day period shall be referred to the principal for a conference to be held with the student, his or her parent(s) or legal guardian, and the school administration.**

According to Florida Statute 1003.24, all absences must be explained. Each parent of a child within the compulsory attendance age shall be responsible for such child's attendance as required by law. The absence of a child from school shall be prima facie evidence of a violation of the statute; however, no criminal prosecution shall be brought against a parent, guardian, or other person having control of the child until the provisions of s.1003.26 have been complied with. No parent or a child shall be held responsible for such child's non-attendance at school under any of the following conditions:

1. With permission – the absence was with permission of the principal of the school utilizing Preplanned Absence form, or
2. Without knowledge – the absence was without the parent's knowledge, consent, or connivance, in which case the child shall be dealt with as a dependent child; or
3. Financial inability – the parent was unable financially to provide necessary clothing for the child, which inability was reported in writing to the superintendent prior to the opening of school or immediately after the beginning of such inability; provided, that the validity of any claim for exemption under this subsection shall be determined by the superintendent subject to appeal to the school board; or
4. Sickness, injury, or other insurmountable condition – attendance was impracticable or inadvisable due to sickness or injury, attested to by a written statement of a licensed practicing physician, or was impracticable because of some other stated insurmountable condition as defined by regulations of the state board.

## ABSENCE POLICIES

The PCA Attendance Officer **must receive an email** (lkokos@pcapvb.org) from the parent/guardian by 8:00 AM **for each day a student is absent from school**. This policy is in place for the protection of all PCA students.

Students (K-8) arriving after 11:00 AM will be marked absent for the day.

See "Preschool Addendum" for preschool students.

**It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to contact the school if their child will be absent and to state the reason for the absence. Students returning to school from an absence are required to present a written explanatory excuse from their parent(s) or legal guardian stating the cause for the absence.**

**Failure to provide a note will result in an automatic unexcused absence.** A physician's note is needed when the student (1) has been absent for three or more consecutive days, (2) has had surgery, (3) is returning to school after hospitalization, (4) has been under a doctor's care for a significant illness, or (5) is returning to school after being excluded because of a communicable disease.

The school calendar provides for extended weekends throughout the school year. Parents are encouraged to schedule trips or family outings during these times to eliminate the need to interrupt a child's learning process. **Missed assignments are the student's responsibility.**

Students who are absent **due to illness** have one day for each day of absence to make up the missed assignments, quizzes or tests. Students and parents/guardians may obtain make-up work by referring to Microsoft Teams (grades 4-8) or emailing the homeroom teacher (PK-3). For students absent for one day, make up work will be completed when the student returns to the classroom.

**Students who are absent for trips/travel/sports tournaments/etc. must have all work completed and submitted on the day of their return. Any missed assignments need to be made up on the day of the return. Please see information below about PRE-PLANNED ABSENCES.**

The Principal can work with a student who requires a **prolonged absence** due to a documented medical issue by creating a Learning Plan which can include working from home and completing all classwork, homework, and assessments. Plans will be created on a case-by-case basis and will require signatures from parents, teachers, and administration.

## **EXCUSED ABSENCES**

Consistent attendance at school is critical to the educational success of students, therefore every effort should be made to ensure that students do not miss school unnecessarily.

Students must be in school unless the absence has been deemed an "excused absence." Excused absences include the following: (1) illness or injury of the student; (2) serious illness or death in the student's family; (3) scheduled doctor or dentist appointment; (4) special events such as family weddings, important public functions, etc., which require permission from the principal at least five days in advance; (5) required court appearance or supervised visitation; and (6) having or being suspected of having a communicable disease or infestation, including, but not limited to head lice, ringworm, impetigo, and scabies.

Note: Personal illness: students will not be allowed to attend school if they have any of the following symptoms:

- Fever over 100 degrees or lower temperature is accompanied with other symptoms
- Witnessed or reported vomiting / diarrhea
- Undiagnosed rash
- Sore throat with other symptoms
- Suspected conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Any symptom at the discretion of the school
- Persistent cough
- A communicable disease such as head lice\*, impetigo or ringworm.
- A positive COVID test

\*Head Lice/Nits: No child (ren) will be admitted to school with head lice or nits. They cannot return to

school until they are lice and nit free. They must be accompanied by a parent/guardian upon their return to school and immediately notify the principal or school health technician. The Diocese has a “NO-NIT” policy. If a teacher suspects that a student may have head lice/nits, the student will be sent to the health room.

Re-admittance for the following communicable disease will be:

- Strep throat: 48 hours after the start of oral antibiotics or 24 hours after an injection
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye): at least 24 hours after the start of medication and when there’s no longer any discharge present
- Vomiting or Diarrhea: at least 24 hours with no symptoms
- Chicken pox: all lesions are dry and crusted
- Lice and Scabies: Following medical treatment. See Diocesan “NO-NITS” policy above.
- Impetigo: (Blisters with honey colored crust) At least 24 hours after the start of the medication. If blister continues after the treatment begins, the child should be re-examined by a physician.
- Hepatitis: Doctor statement required for re-admittance.

**\*\*STUDENTS WILL NOT PERMITTED BACK TO SCHOOL UNLESS THEY HAVE BEEN FEVER FREE FOR 24 HOURS, WITHOUT THE USE OF FEVER-REDUCING MEDICINES.\*\***

### PRE-PLANNED ABSENCES (PK-8)

It is strongly encouraged that vacations be taken during holidays. If it is necessary for a student to have a pre-planned absence, **even if it is only one day**, the following procedure must be followed by the family **at least five days prior to the absence or the absence will be counted as unexcused.**

- Obtain and complete a Pre-Planned Absence form (found on the website or available in the front office).
- Obtain the signatures of all the student’s teachers and the principal on the form.
- Return all make-up work **on the day of return** to avoid receiving a zero grade.
- Make up all tests and quizzes at the discretion of teachers on the day of return.
- Preplanned Absence forms are sent home via the backpack once they have been approved. If the request is approved, **the student (and family) is responsible for obtaining all necessary work from all teachers the day before the absence is to begin.** PLEASE ALLOW THE TEACHER THE 5 DAYS TO PROVIDE THIS TO YOU. Teachers may disapprove a request if the student’s learning and grades are at risk; therefore, if the teacher does not excuse the absence, the principal cannot intervene.
- Please note that a pre-planned absence that is not approved by the teacher will be considered an unexcused absence.

### UNEXCUSED ABSENCES (PK-8)

Unexcused absences are unacceptable, and students will receive a zero on all missed work. Excessive absences impact the success of students; therefore, it is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that students attend school consistently. Family vacations should be scheduled to coincide with school holidays.

Unexcused absences include but are not limited to the following: (1) pleasure trips; (2) suspension from school; (3) truancy; (4) shadowing at a non-Catholic school; or (4) other avoidable absences that are not on the “excused absences” list. **Students with more than 8 unexcused absences in any given class within a quarter risk receiving a failing grade for that quarter.** The principal can waive this policy in extreme circumstances.

A student with 5 unexcused absences within a calendar month or 10 unexcused absences within a 90-calendar day period shall be referred to the principal for a conference to be held with the student, his or her parent(s) or legal guardian, and the school administration. *The student may be warned that continued excessive absences could result in dismissal from the school.*

## TARDY POLICY

Students in grades K-8 reporting to the classroom from 8:01 to 11:00 AM are considered tardy and must report to the school office before going to the classroom. Parents are required to walk tardy students into the building once carpool is over and check them in at the front office computer. No student will be permitted in the classroom after 8:00 AM without a parent checking them in the front office.

**Students receiving more than 5 tardies and/or early dismissals per quarter will be charged \$5.00 for each additional tardy/early dismissal unless a doctor's note is received. Charges will be applied to parents' FACTS account.** Parent conferences with administration may be scheduled for Middle School students after 6 tardy arrivals within one quarter.

## EARLY DISMISSALS

Students (K-8) who leave school before 11:30 AM are considered absent for the entire day. For early dismissals, do not park in front of the school's main entrance. A parent/guardian or other duly authorized adult must check the student out in the office. Any request for change in pick-up arrangements must be in writing, in a timely manner. **Students will only be called to the office via the intercom system when the parent/guardian has arrived. Please allow ample time for your student to pack up and be called to the office. Students (K-8) with more than 5 early dismissals (after 11:30 AM) and/or tardy notices per quarter will be charged \$5.00 for each additional occurrence unless a doctor's note is received.** Students may not leave school to obtain homework, lunch, etc.

Parents are required to send an email or written note giving permission for their student to leave early with another driver for any PCA sanctioned event. This change should also be designated in PikMyKid. Phone calls are not acceptable notification for this type of event. The driver must sign out each child in the carpool.

Groups of students may not be dismissed early unless the reason for the departure is a PCA sanctioned event.

## BIRTHDAYS

If parents would like for students to share a birthday treat with their classmates, they must make prior arrangements with the classroom teacher. Parents may send in treats (no frosting) that are prepackaged with the student in the morning. Treats will be shared with the students at lunchtime in the cafeteria. Parents should bring in enough treats for the whole grade since treats will be shared at lunch. No party favors, balloons, etc. may be used.

Invitations to birthday parties may not be distributed at school unless the child's entire homeroom is invited. Since all are included, no names may be put on the invitations. We realize that it is not always possible to include every classmate and suggest that you use the school directory on FACTS to obtain needed phone numbers or addresses when this is the case. The school wants to spare the feelings of those not included.

## CARPOOL

We ask for parent's cooperation in regulating the flow of traffic with policies created to protect students, carpool staff and drivers. It is imperative that parents and students adhere to carpool regulations. The school assumes a high degree of responsibility in securing the safe release of every single child in the school, while the carpool aides face stressful and sometimes unnecessarily difficult situations. The following procedures are to ensure the safety of the children as well as keep the flow of traffic moving during carpool.

Students will only be released to adults who are delegated through the PikMyKid app. When the authorized adult announces their arrival to the school parking lot, students are placed in queue. Their homeroom teachers will be monitoring the carpool dismissal screen through PikMyKid and will send them out to carpool at the appropriate time. Please make sure to make any carpool changes in the app 20 minutes prior to your child's dismissal. Please visit <http://www.pcapvb.org/pikmykid> for additional details and information. Unauthorized adults will be sent to the holding area until the parent can be reached for confirmation. This causes delays and congestion in carpool. Parents should also list all adults who are authorized to pick up their children through their Family Portal on RenWeb as back up. Login to the Family Portal > School > Web Forms > Family Demographic Form > Transportation Form and list each authorized adult

**There is only one carpool lane. Please do not use the "pond lane" for carpool.** This is to be used for emergencies only and for staff members needing to leave early.

- Follow the instructions of the carpool staff.
- Please have your carpool card easily visible, hanging from your rear-view mirror.
- Cell phone use is prohibited except when announcing your arrival to the school parking lot through the PikMyKid app. This includes all hands-free cell phones; it is too distracting and compromises the safety of the carpool aides and students.
- Always adhere to 5 mph in the parking lot.
- Cars should be in 'park' when stopping to drop-off and pick-up students. Trunks/rear cargo doors should not be opened during carpool. Parents may be asked to park if they need to load/unload.
- Only Middle School students are allowed in the front seat of cars due to air bag safety concerns.
- **If you arrive earlier than your oldest child's dismissal time, please circle around. Do not use the holding area.**
- **When exiting the parking lot at arrival or dismissal time, all cars are to make a right-hand turn onto CR 210. Do not make a U-turn in the adjacent neighborhoods.**
- Follow the instructions of the police officer if one is stationed at the school entrance/exit.
- If your car is not full, the staff will direct you to the "holding area" to avoid congestion.
- **Students may only enter or exit a car with the assistance of carpool staff. For your child's safety, do not let your child exit your vehicle without an adult's assistance.**
- There must be a seat belt available for every student leaving Palmer. Students will not be allowed to enter the car and the driver will be requested by the aide to park until arrangements can be made for another vehicle with enough seat belts.
- Students may only walk through the parking lot if escorted by an adult.
- Parents are required to go through the pick-up line and are to avoid waiting at the front door for children and carpoolers. This causes delays for others when parked cars need to back out and it also causes more disorder on the sidewalk. Your cooperation is a courtesy to those who have been waiting in the carpool line and is a courtesy to the aides as well.

## CHAPEL

The chapel located at the entrance of the school is open for use by our teachers, students, parents and staff. It may be reserved by classes for use during religious instruction or to familiarize the students with the church environment. Adoration will be held in the Chapel weekly for students, staff and volunteer-cleared parents. The Holy Eucharist is present in our chapel and should be respected at all times. The Catholic Church believes and teaches that the Eucharist is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which remains in the Tabernacle inside the chapel.

## CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

Any teacher/administrator or other personnel who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is an abused or neglected child is mandated to report such knowledge or suspicion to the proper authorities. See exhibit *Reporting Educator/Professional Misconduct*.

## CHILD PROTECTIVE INVESTIGATIONS

Florida law provides that any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is abused by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare must report such knowledge to the Department of Children and Families (DCF). The school will cooperate with all child protective investigations by DCF and the local law enforcement agency. Reports should be made to Florida's Department of Children and Families by calling the Abuse Hotline at: 1-800-96-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873).

Child protective investigations by DCF and local law enforcement agencies sometimes include interviews of students at school and may occur without advance notice. When it is reasonably possible, the school will request of the investigator that the school be allowed to notify the parents that their child has been asked to participate in a child protective investigation. The school may also request the presence of a school staff member during investigative interviews on school property. However, the school will follow the direction of the investigator with respect to these requests.

## CLASS PARTIES

Parties may be scheduled throughout the year for holidays and special occasions at the direction of the classroom teacher. The teacher determines the appropriate time, activities and refreshments desired. Snacks must be store bought and in the original container (frosted treats are not allowed). The type of snack and the ingredients must be prior approved by the classroom teacher to ensure students with allergies are safeguarded. Homeroom parents may assist in executing the teacher's plans. The school's policy states no soda or red/orange/blue colored drinks of any kind will be permitted at school. Only adults with volunteer clearance may attend class parties and special events in the classroom. No siblings should attend parties held in school. Photography is not permitted except at the discretion of the teacher or principal.

Parents must make arrangements with the teacher in advance to celebrate a child's birthday in school. The school is not permitted to distribute via classroom or email invitations to children's at-home parties unless the entire class is invited.

## CLASS ROSTERS

We recognize that parents may have thoughtful input regarding their child's classroom placement, including requests for specific teachers or peers. While we value and consider all reasonable and urgent requests, please understand that final class lists are determined through a collaborative and professional

process involving teacher insight, academic and social-emotional needs, gender balance, and overall class dynamics.

Due to the many factors involved, we are not able to guarantee that all requests can be accommodated. We appreciate your trust in our team to thoughtfully place each student in an environment where they can grow and succeed.

## CLUBS

Students are encouraged to participate in extracurricular clubs/activities to enhance their school experience. PCA has a number of clubs for students to join. Information regarding available clubs will be emailed to parents in the Fall. All clubs will have a small fee which will be deducted from FACTS accounts. Palmer Catholic Academy has the following policy regarding clubs:

- All clubs must be in accordance with the Diocese of St. Augustine School standards.
- The principal must approve all clubs.
- Teachers, staff members, or other qualified persons are permitted, upon approval of the pastor and principal, to sponsor a club.
- All students must arrive and depart on time.
- Siblings are NOT allowed to stay after school while waiting for students attending activities/clubs, they must be picked up at their regular dismissal time.

WIN Club is available in grades 1-5 by invitation only. During this time, teachers will work with students in small groups to enhance skills that may need improvement. Homework Club is available for grades 6–8, by invitation only. Homework club is strictly for help with homework and is not child-care. Students must sign up in advance for homework club.

## CODE OF CONDUCT

Please see the newly updated Student Code of Conduct, which is a separate document and can be found on the website under More → Forms/Info.

## COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SCHOOL AND PARENTS

Parents are asked to maintain a tone of mutual respect and professionalism when communicating with staff. Should communication become inappropriate or the partnership between home and school be compromised, administration may intervene through email or by requesting a conference to help resolve the matter constructively.

Our school maintains communication with parents and students in several ways.

1. **Weekly Newsletters** – Teachers in grades PK-5 will send a weekly newsletter via email to update parents about learning in the classroom, important dates, upcoming assessments, and homework.
2. **The Blue Angel Weekly** – A weekly parent newsletter from administration will be sent via email to all families. Families are encouraged to read the information in the newsletter carefully to be sure they are up-to-date with all school events and activities.
3. **PCA Website (pcapvb.org)** – The PCA website contains a plethora of important information including the school calendar, copies of the Weekly Newsletter, and other important forms and information regarding the school and its events.
4. **FACTS/Family Portal** – For students in grades 3-8, grades, homework, and other important information can be found in FACTS/Family Portal. More information about FACTS/Family Portal can be found in the packet received during Meet and Greet.

5. **E-mail** – The school will send out important information to parents via email. Please ensure that the school has your updated email address to avoid missing this information. Please be sure to read each email carefully to avoid any issues.
6. **Communication Folders** – Each PCA student will bring a designated Communication Folder to and from school each day. This folder will contain homework assignments and all communication notes from the school and/or teachers. It is also the avenue for communication from the parents. All notes to the school and/or teachers should be placed in this folder daily. It is the students’ and parents’ responsibility to check this folder each and every day for important communication.
7. **Student Planners** – Students in grades 1-5 each receive a school-supplied planner at the beginning of the school year. Daily assignments and notes are made by the students in these planners and should be taken home each day.
8. **Parent-Teacher Conferences** – In addition to scheduled conference days, parents may arrange a conference with the teacher whenever it seems necessary. Please send a note, an email, or call ahead to arrange for an appointment. ***Teachers are available by appointment only and should never be called at home, nor should they be informally approached before school, during the school day, in the classrooms or hallways, etc.*** (Please see section titled *Parent-Teacher Conferences* for more information about conferences.)
9. Other forms of communication include social media (Facebook and Instagram), the parish bulletin, Meet and Greet, Open House, Town Hall meetings. (Please see section titled *Parent-Teacher Conferences* for more information about conferences.)

## CUMULATIVE RECORDS - STUDENTS

Cumulative records for each student are maintained in the school office. At the beginning of each school year, all necessary and required data is checked and corrections made to ensure compliance is maintained. When a PCA student transfers to another school, the records are only sent school to school by written request and only if all fees are current. Cumulative records of former students are kept on file by the school administration indefinitely.

## CURRICULUM

The objectives set forth by the Diocese of St. Augustine are the basis for our instruction. Textbooks and instructional programs are chosen to meet the students’ needs as determined by Diocese objectives. These objectives are updated and revised in accordance with sound educational and development research. Students also receive the following Enrichment classes: Art, Music, Spanish, Physical Education/Health, Media Applications (Tech Lab), and STREAM.

PCA will host an Open House in the Fall during which teachers will share relevant information regarding curriculum and learning for your child’s grade level. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend these meetings to learn more about the curriculum.

All Palmer Catholic Academy students participate in regular daily Catholic religious education classes using a religion curriculum approved by the Diocese of St. Augustine and attend weekly mass in the school gymnasium. Students will use a Catholic Bible during their Religion classes. In addition, all students will take part in a schoolwide retreat day, as well as other smaller retreat days throughout the school year. Students will also have lessons in the Circle of Grace, the Diocesan Safe Environment program. Additionally, Palmer Catholic Academy uses the Virtues in Practice Program. Students are introduced to a new virtue each month. Each month a Disciple of the Month will be chosen who exemplifies the virtue of the month.

The Diocese of St. Augustine also has a family life and morality curriculum entitled *Created for Greatness*. The program is based on the *Theology of the Body* program and designed by Ascension Press and is presented to our 7<sup>th</sup> graders. The program is offered by trained teachers during religion class for a period of several weeks. Materials are provided for parents to help you continue your child's education at home about the topics of love and sexuality, relationships, fairness and respect for life.

## DRILLS

In order to be prepared for emergencies PCA staff and students participate in fire, tornado, and safety drills throughout the school year. State Law requires that fire drills be held monthly. Tornado drills are held four times a year per Diocesan policy. School Safety Drills are also held twice a year per Diocesan policy.

## FIELD TRIPS (K-8)

Truly educational field trips are encouraged. Each grade's teachers will develop a list of designated field trips to be approved by the principal. **Please note: students who have accumulated 20 demerits or have been suspended for any reason, will NOT be permitted to attend field trips.**

Teachers will send a Diocesan field trip permission slip home for each student and a parent signature is required in order for a student to attend the trip. Any costs to attend the field trip will be processed through FACTS. Students not riding the bus back to school from a long-distance field trip (1.5 hours or further) must be signed out at the school office prior to leaving on the field trip and the necessary form provided to the teacher NO LATER THAN THE CLOSE OF DAY (3:30 PM) THE DAY PRIOR TO THE FIELD TRIP. FORMS WILL NOT BE SIGNED OR ACCEPTED THE DAY OF THE TRIP. **However, all students must ride the bus to the field trip from PCA with their class.** If a student does not go on a field trip, the child may remain at home that day and be counted as absent or attend another class during the field trip time. Students are to wear the mandatory school uniform unless this is not feasible due to the field trip content. In such cases, approval of the school principal is needed.

All parents wishing to chaperone a field trip must have volunteer clearance documents on file.

Teachers will organize the assignment and organization of chaperones for each field trip. If the number of chaperone volunteers exceeds the number required for the safety of the students, the decision of who will attend will be at the teacher's discretion and principal's approval. Siblings are never permitted to attend field trips. **To give all cleared parents the opportunity to attend field trips if they wish, chaperones will be chosen on a rotating basis. Please allow others to volunteer to chaperone if you have already chaperoned a trip during the school year.**

The number of chaperones per field trip will vary depending on the nature and location of the trip. In order to give all parents an opportunity to chaperone at least one field trip, and for the safety of students, only parents actually assigned to chaperone and who have volunteer clearance may accompany students on field trips. Chaperones are required to remain with students until the end of the field trip. Parents who are not assigned to chaperone may not attend the field trip. Chaperones must drive themselves unless special permission is received to ride a chartered bus.

Chaperones are required to attend a pre-field trip meeting to review responsibilities. The number of chaperones may be assigned as follows: Indoor field trips: 2-4 chaperones, outdoor field trips: 4-6

chaperones, and long-distance field trips: 6-8 chaperones. Chaperones may be more in number based on the needs of the students, the type of field trip, and the preference of the teacher in order to provide maximum safety for the students. Chaperones will receive 5 volunteer points towards their 20-volunteer point requirement ([see section on Volunteer Point Policy – Required for more information](#))

## **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

Palmer Catholic Academy is a participant in several state-sponsored scholarships: [Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities \(FES-UA\)](#), [Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options \(FES-EO\)](#), and the [Florida Tax-Credit Scholarship \(FTC\)](#). ALL STUDENTS IN GRADES K-8 ARE ELIGIBLE FOR A STATE SCHOLARSHIP. For more information on all three of these scholarships, please visit the Florida Department of Education School Choice website at <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/>.

Tuition assistance and/or special consideration due to financial needs are available to student families through the parish. You must first apply for a state scholarship before submitting through the FACTS GRANT and AID Application system. A letter of explanation of the family's specific financial needs and a copy of the most recently filed federal 1040 tax form must be submitted with the application to the principal and will remain confidential. This system is open each year in January for a limited timeframe.

The opportunity to request a payment plan for the curriculum and technology fees is also offered for families. A formal request completed on the "*Fee Payment Plan Application*" (available in the front office) must be submitted to the principal and pastor before such fees are due.

## **HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION**

Palmer Catholic Academy is committed to providing an environment that is free of discrimination and harassment. In keeping with this commitment, the school will not tolerate harassment or discrimination on the basis of a person's protected status, such as gender, color, race, ancestry, national origin, age, physical disability, mental condition, marital status, veteran status, citizenship status. All employees, faculty members and students are protected under this policy. In addition, this policy applies to all conduct occurring on school grounds, at assignments outside the school, or at school-sponsored events. All students are responsible for helping to assure that any harassment or discrimination is reported. If a student witnesses or learns of any conduct that violates this policy, the student must immediately report the incident to his/her principal. If, however, the principal is the individual who is believed to have engaged in the inappropriate conduct, the student should notify the Superintendent of Schools of the Diocese of St. Augustine. If an investigation reveals that inappropriate conduct has occurred, the school will take corrective action based on the circumstances.

## **HIGH SCHOOL RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the spring when 8<sup>th</sup> graders have determined which high schools they will be attending, high schools may provide recommendation forms for current teachers to complete. All recommendation forms must be given to homeroom teachers to be completed. The form will be forwarded to the principal for approval and then mailed directly to the applicable school. No completed forms will be given back to the students.

## HOME & SCHOOL ASSOCIATION (HSA)

The PCA Home & School Association (HSA) is a parent-run organization whose purpose and mission is to fundraise money to offset general expenses the school incurs throughout the school year. HSA also promotes community and goodwill for the families, students, teachers and staff of PCA. Every family is automatically a member of HSA and is encouraged to attend meetings. Many volunteer opportunities will be announced throughout the year to support HSA events and fundraisers. Please see the Volunteer Policy for additional details.

## HOMEWORK AND PROJECTS

Homework is necessary in order to practice and reinforce the skills taught in class. Reading and Math homework will be assigned daily. Homework may include independent reading and studying for assessments. Parents are encouraged to let students complete homework independently. If students are struggling with a concept on the homework assignment, parents should attach a note to the assignment so the teacher is made aware of the struggles and the concept can be reviewed in class. Students are given credit for completion of homework assignments as part of their overall report card grade.

Projects should be completed by students independently. Projects should be a way for students to show what they know. Projects that are not completed solely by the students will not be accepted.

All assignments are expected to be turned in by the due date. The following late work policy will be applied to all assignments:

1. Kindergarten – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade: Lateness is addressed on an individual basis. If a student is consistently late handing in assignments, appropriate consequences will be taken.
2. 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade: Students will lose 50% on assignments turned in one day late. After one day, assignments will receive a “0”.
3. Middle School (grades 6-8) – Students will be given a zero (0) if any homework assignment is not turned in at the beginning of class. Long term projects may be received by 3:00 PM on the day it was due but will receive 20% off.

## HONOR SOCIETIES

Palmer Catholic Academy is proud to participate in both The National Elementary Honor Society (NEHS) and The National Junior Honor Society (NJHS). In mid-January each year, students who meet the eligibility requirements for GPA and behavior will be invited to apply for membership in these honor societies. Invitations will be sent from the Honor Society sponsors.

Application for NJHS is open to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, and application for NEHS is open to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. The minimum qualifying GPA for application in either of the honor societies is 93.5% in core classes for the preceding 6 academic quarters. In addition, students must exhibit good conduct in everyday interactions with staff and students, and not have more than 6 demerits for the school year.

Once invited, it is the student’s responsibility to complete the application process in the designated time frame. **Late applications will not be accepted.** The application process consists of a student-written essay and an evaluation of student character, responsibility, service and leadership. Applications will be reviewed by a committee of staff members including Administration. Students who earn membership into these prestigious societies are inducted in February/March.

Students in NJHS or NEHS are expected to model excellent student behavior. **Students who exhibit behavior conflicting with those outlined in the Code of Conduct may be subject to probation or permanent loss of membership privileges.**

## IMMUNIZATION POLICY

As per the Florida Immunization Guidelines, students in grades PK-8 are required to have a physical exam from a licensed health care provider on file at the school. The exam will be documented on the Florida Dept. of Health Physical Exam Form 3040.

The Florida Certification of Immunization, **Form DH 680** must be used to document the immunizations required for entry and attendance in Florida schools for students PK-8. For students transferring to a Florida school, a comparable form from another state would also be acceptable for 30 days from the start of school if completed within 1 year. Students unable to receive one or more vaccines due to medical reasons should contact the Diocese of St. Augustine as the Diocesan policy requires all students be vaccinated. See exhibit *Immunization and Screening Policy for the Diocese of St. Augustine*

Form DH 680 is not available to the public and must be completed by a Florida physician or a Florida county health department and documented as follows:

Public/Non-public Preschool Entry (Age-appropriate doses as indicated)

- DTaP
- IPV
- MMR
- Varicella
- Hib
- Pneumococcal conjugate (PCV13)
- Hepatitis B (Hep B)

Public/Non-Public Schools K-12 (children entering, attending, or transferring to Florida schools):

Four or five doses of diphtheria-tetanus-acellular pertussis vaccine (DTaP)

Four or five doses of polio vaccine (IPV)

Two doses of measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine (MMR)

Two or three doses of hepatitis B vaccine (Hep B)

Two doses of varicella vaccine (kindergarten effective school year 2008/2009, then each year an additional grade)

Public/Non-Public Schools Seventh Grade:

Effective with the 2009-2010 school year, in addition to all other compulsory school immunizations, children entering, attending, or transferring to the seventh grade in Florida schools are required to complete one dose of tetanus-diphtheria-acellular pertussis vaccine (Tdap).

## INCLEMENT WEATHER – SCHOOL CLOSINGS

The Diocese of St. Augustine decides when our school needs to cancel classes due to inclement weather. School closings are based on the suitability of roads and the consideration of power and safety needs of all schools diocesan wide. *Palmer utilizes a parent broadcast notification service to deliver important messages relative to school closings due to weather. It is imperative that parents keep the school updated with correct emergency phone numbers. School closings can also be found on the diocesan website.*

The Diocese does not follow the county's lead in reopening. PCA will reopen when the school has sufficient staff, power, water, sewage, and the emergency or natural disaster has been rectified or cleaned up at the school's discretion.

## iPADS, CELL PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES

iPads are utilized as part of the instruction for students in all classes. They are not to be used for personal use or recreational purposes at any time during school. Students in grades 2-8 will each have their own iPad assigned to them. Grades 2-5 students will not bring the iPads home, while 6-8 grade students will.

For the purposes of student safety and academic security, it is school policy that no students shall bring to school electronic devices such as Apple watches, meta glasses, Nintendo Switch, Nintendo DS, laser pens, cameras, etc. unless for a specific purpose approved by the teacher and principal. No devices that can take pictures, record videos, connect to the internet, send messages, or uses Bluetooth enabled connections are allowed in school. Teachers are unable to take time to review the functions of all wearable devices. Therefore, this ban includes even the simplest “Fit Bit” style trackers and other wearable technologies (including but not limited to those listed above) as commercially available. Any staff member who finds a student with such a device shall confiscate the item and notify administration.

Middle School students who will be bringing a cell phone to school must complete a *Cell Phone Contract* (see exhibits) at the beginning of the school year. Middle School homeroom teachers will collect all (turned off) cell phones at the beginning of the school day, and they will be returned to students at afternoon carpool. (Please note, only Middle School students have the option of bringing a phone to school.)

If a student needs a cell phone for after school use, it must be turned into the homeroom teacher upon arrival at school in the morning. The student must have a Cell Phone Contract on file. If a student is seen with a cell phone during the course of the day, it will be confiscated, sent to administration and must be picked up at the end of the day by a parent or guardian. A second offense will warrant confiscation until the end of the school year.

Use of camera phones and filming by students is strictly prohibited and will be confiscated immediately and not returned. See Student Code of Conduct for disciplinary consequences.

### School Controlled iPads

Palmer Catholic Academy is dedicated to the appropriate use of student technology and following the stipulations of the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA), designed to protect minors from inappropriate internet content. Technology resources at Palmer Catholic Academy are provided for the purpose of supporting the school's goal in promoting educational excellence by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, research, creativity, communication, increased productivity, and mobile learning.

The primary mode for student instruction in the classroom will come from a traditional means of learning through text, teacher-led-instruction, and small group activity and projects. Use of these technologies is a privilege that carries responsibility and behavioral expectations consistent with all school/diocesan rules and policies including, but not limited to, those stated in this Handbook. It is understood that members of the PCA community will use technology devices and the school's network in a responsible, ethical, and legal manner at all times.

iPads are property of Palmer Catholic Academy and should be used only for educational purposes. While teachers always control content on the iPads while at school, students attempting to defeat the security system for non-educational purposes will incur disciplinary action. Palmer Catholic Academy retains sole right of possession of the iPad and related equipment.

- **Taking Care of the iPad:** Students are responsible for the general care of the iPads. If there is a problem with the iPad, the student should notify their homeroom teacher so that the equipment can be evaluated.
  - iPads must remain free of any writing, drawing, stickers, or labels
  - iPads must remain in their protective cases.
  - iPads must never be left where there is a possibility of theft.
- **Protective Cases:** The cases provided with the iPads have sufficient padding to protect the iPad from normal treatment and provide a suitable means for carrying the device within the school. The iPad screens can be damaged if subjected to rough treatment. The screens are particularly sensitive to damage from excessive pressure on the screen.
  - Do not lean on the top of the iPad.
  - Do not place anything near the iPad that could put pressure on the screen.
  - Only if directed, clean the screen with a soft, dry cloth or anti-static cloth; no cleaners of any type should be used.
  - Do not "bump" the iPad into walls, floors, etc. as that will eventually break the screen.
- **Passwords:** Students are assigned passwords for school accounts. This password is kept on record with the technology department and may not be changed without school permission. Passwords should not be shared or communicated to other students and doing so is a violation of policy
- **Screensavers/Backgrounds:** A standard screensaver and background will be preset on the iPad and may not be changed by the student without permission.
- **Photos/Sound/Music/Games:** Photo/Image storage on the iPad will be for school projects only. These should be saved to the student's One Drive. Students may not download or stream music from iTunes or any other music sharing site. Music is only allowed on the iPad if provided by the teacher for educational use. Internet games are not allowed on the iPads. All software/apps must be school provided. Sound must be muted at all times unless permission is obtained from the teacher for instructional purposes. Students should supply a simple set of ear buds for use with lessons that have sound.
- **School Management of Device:** Palmer Catholic Academy consistently synchronizes the iPads to the school server. Students may not attempt to synchronize iPads or add apps through a personal iTunes account. The software apps originally installed by the school must remain on the iPad in usable condition and be easily accessible at all times. The school runs multiple checks a day to ensure that students have not removed required apps and/or installed non-approved apps. Administration retains the right to physically assume control of a student iPad at any time.
- **Student e-Mail:** Students are provided school email addresses only for the purposes of communicating with their teachers and school controlled educational products such as Teams and IXL. Student emails are created by the school IT department. Students may not use their Palmer Catholic Academy email credentials for any personal internet services. Students may not log into personal accounts on any platform.
- **Cameras:** Camera access is turned on and off at the teacher's discretion for in-school use only. Students should only take pictures for academic purposes with teacher approval. Students should never photograph or record others without consent.
- **Procedures for re-loading software:** If technical difficulties occur or illegal software (non-approved installed Apps) is discovered, the iPad will be restored from backup. The school does not accept responsibility for the loss of any software or documents deleted due to a re-format and re-image. In this event, the student may lose the privilege of iPad use.
- **Damage and Repairs:** Students will be held responsible for any and all damage to iPads. School Administration will make the final decision in determining whether damage is considered accidental or not. Non-accidental damage may include, but is not limited to: abuse, neglect, misuse. Please see details in the iPad contract.

## LIBRARY POLICIES

The PCA Media Center serves Preschool through 8th grades and has a large number of circulating cataloged materials, including non-fiction, fiction, and easy readers. Items are checked out to students under the direction of classroom teachers. All items must be returned prior to the end of each semester. Parent FACTS accounts will be charged for the cost of any books not returned. Multiple notices will be sent to parents prior to assessment of replacement costs. *Report cards and transcripts will be held for any student with unpaid library fines.*

## LOCKERS/DESKS & INSPECTIONS AND SEARCHES OF PERSONAL EFFECTS

Each student in grades 4–8 is assigned a locker with a built-in combination lock. The homeroom teacher and the administration will keep each combination on file. Students are cautioned against sharing their combination with others. Any locker malfunction should be reported to the school office. Lockers should be kept locked at all times. Students are not permitted to change lockers without permission from their homeroom teacher and the principal.

Each student is responsible for keeping his or her locker clean and neat, inside and out (NO STICKERS INSIDE OR OUT). Lockers should not have inappropriate pictures, and nothing should be put on the outside of the lockers. **Locker decorations should be kept to a minimum. Excessive decorations do not allow for enough space for books and supplies and cause a distraction for students during locker breaks. Please limit decorations to basic items such as a locker shelf, magnetic mirror, magnetic whiteboard.**

The health, safety and welfare of students, faculty, administration, staff, and volunteer personnel are extremely important considerations for Palmer Catholic Academy. Accordingly, there will be occasions when a student's personal effects, desk, and/or locker will need to be examined to ensure that health, safety, and welfare are maintained.

The principal may direct non-discriminatory inspections of lockers, desks, backpacks, and personal effects of the entire school or recognizable segments of the school, such as a particular grade or grades. The primary purpose of such inspections is to ensure that contraband items and any items detrimental to health, safety and welfare are not on school premises.

Contraband is defined as items and materials that the student is prohibited to possess as a matter of Federal or State law, as well as any items and materials prohibited by school regulations such as medications, flammable liquids, firearms, knives, etc. Students will be subject to disciplinary action upon discovery of any contraband during an inspection.

Additionally, upon reasonable suspicion that a student or students have committed offenses of The Code of Conduct or have committed violations of Federal or State law, the Principal will direct a search of the personal effects, desk, or locker of the student(s) concerned.

## LOST AND FOUND

All articles of clothing, school supplies, and lunch boxes should be clearly marked with the student's name. Students are expected to be responsible for their own property and are expected to turn in any lost or misplaced items. The school is not responsible for lost articles. Lost articles may be claimed from the lost and found which is located in the designated cabinets in the lunchroom. Articles not claimed within a month or by the end of the school year will be donated to charity or the PCA uniform closet.

## LUNCH AND RECESS

Each Palmer family is required to cover 2 lunch and 2 recess duties (one lunch/recess duty in the fall and one lunch/recess duty in the spring) by signing up through “Volunteer Spot”. The link is posted on the PCA website under *Parents>Forms/Info*. **Lunch duty on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday is 10:45-1:00; recess duty is 10:15-12:45. On Wednesday, lunch duty is from 10:00 -12:55 and recess duty is 9:30 – 12:00.** Please be on time for your shift. There is no lunch or recess duty on early release days. Note: **A \$150 fee will be added to the FACTS account for any missed lunch/recess duty unless a substitute was found.** Please note – parents are responsible for finding their own lunch/recess subs if they cannot attend their duty.

***All students should have a water bottle at school every day. Parents will be notified should students repeatedly attend school without a water bottle. All water bottles must have a secure twist-on top and may not have an exposed straw. This is both for safety and to avoid spills. Water bottle capacity may not exceed 32 ounces; the school has refillable water bottle stations on site.***

## CATERED LUNCH PROGRAM

Catered lunch is available, please visit <https://www.pcapvb.org/lunch-program> for more information about the program. Lunch orders and cancellations are due by 5:00 PM for the next day.

## CAFETERIA RULES

Parent Volunteers are not permitted to distribute catered lunches to students. This is the staff’s responsibility. Students are required to bring their own lunches to school unless they have pre-ordered and purchased a hot meal. Any student without a lunch will be provided a healthy snack pack (“oops lunch”) and parents will be charged through their FACTS account. Lunches should be packed with items that are nutritious and easily accessible to the child. The following cafeteria rules should be observed by all students and will be enforced by the lunch supervisors:

1. As per St. Johns County Health Department, PCA is deemed a prepackaged facility. Birthday treats must be store bought and in the original container. Frosted treats are not permitted. Birthday treats may only be given at scheduled lunch times and must be approved by the classroom teacher to ensure students with food allergies are safeguarded. (See section titled “Allergy Policy” for more information.)
2. Students must bring their own utensils and water bottles.
3. **NO RED, ORANGE, OR BLUE DRINKS!** These drinks will be confiscated, and water will be provided.
4. No canned carbonated drinks or glass bottles are allowed. **No caffeinated drinks are allowed.**
5. Sharing of lunches is not allowed.
6. Inside voices are to be used at all times.
7. Students are to remain seated at all times unless permission is given to leave the table.
8. All garbage shall be put in the trashcans as they are brought to the tables at the end of lunchtime.
9. Show respect for lunchroom supervisors
10. Students should clean the table, bench and floor where they are seated.
11. At least one school staff member and one parent volunteer supervise the lunchroom and the recess area at all times.
12. Absolutely no siblings are permitted to accompany a parent at lunch or recess duty.
13. Electronic devices including cell phones must be turned off and not used while supervising children.
14. PCA is a no smoking campus.

## **RULES OF THE PLAYGROUND AREA**

1. Parent volunteers must turn off all electronic devices including cell phones while supervising at their assigned post position on the playground.
2. **Parent volunteers must be supervising students at all times during recess. Therefore, no laptops are permitted during recess duty.**
3. No student may be on the playground without adult supervision.
4. Only currently enrolled PCA students may utilize the playground during school hours.
5. No climbing up the slide.
6. No climbing on the roof of the fort apparatus.
7. Show respect for all staff, volunteers, and schoolmates.
8. Share the playground equipment with other students.
9. Students are not permitted to enter wooded areas of the field; therefore, parent volunteers will be requested to supervise these areas.

## **INDOOR RECESS**

When weather prevents outdoor recess, a schoolwide announcement will be made. Students will return to their classrooms after lunch and may have organized play at the teacher's discretion. Parent volunteers do not go to the classrooms for indoor recess.



## **Palmer Catholic Academy Lunch & Recess Volunteer Policy 2025/2026 School Year**

Each family is required to fulfill 2 lunch and 2 recess duties each school year: 1 Lunch & 1 Recess during the Fall semester AND 1 Lunch & 1 recess during the Spring semester. The sign up will be shared before the beginning of the school year. Please choose your dates according to your availability. You may have family members volunteer on your behalf as well (*if they are cleared by the diocese to volunteer: see below*)

The SignUp will lock 7 days prior to the volunteer date. You may make changes before the SignUp locks, but once it does lock, no changes can be made. If you are unable to fulfill your duty, you are required to find a substitute for your spot. Please alert Jennifer Peterson and she can provide a substitute list. She will also manually update the sign-up sheet with the substitute's name once secured. **If you are unable to find a substitute, a fee of \$150 will be charged to your FACTS account. You do not earn credit for a completed Lunch or Recess duty if you are charged this fee.**

When arriving at school to volunteer, please check in with the front office and sign-in first. Please wear your nametag where it is visible for staff and students to see. Volunteers are prohibited from using electronic devices while in the lunchroom or at recess.

**Recess Duty is from 10:15am - 12:45pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. 9:30-12:00 on Wednesdays..** You will be outdoors, so please plan accordingly (appropriate dress, SPF, hat, water etc.) You will be tasked with assisting the aides by bringing children to the restroom, clinic, and managing general playground activity. If recess is canceled due to weather, please still report to school to assist in the lunchroom. You will be credited with your 1 recess duty in this circumstance.

**Lunch Duty is from 10:45am - 1:00pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. 10:00-12:55 on Wednesdays.** You will be tasked with bringing children to the restroom, assisting with opening various food items, bringing children water and collecting trash. Between each lunch session, the cafeteria needs to be wiped down and swept. Gloves are required to be worn while distributing food, utensils and water. Gloves are also to be used for clean-up. Please check with aides as well to see what additional assistance they may need.

If you would like to volunteer for a date within the 7-day lock window and you see availability on the SignUp, please email Jennifer Peterson at [jpeterson@pcapvb.org](mailto:jpeterson@pcapvb.org) to see about volunteering on one of those days. If the SignUp is filled, you will not be able to volunteer on that date and must select a different future date.

If you complete your 4 required shifts, you are eligible to earn HSA volunteer points. **You will earn 5 points per shift over the required 4.** Please email [HSApalmer@gmail.com](mailto:HSApalmer@gmail.com) and [jpeterson@gmail.com](mailto:jpeterson@gmail.com) to confirm your 4 shifts and for HSA to track your additional points.

**If you have unfulfilled lunch or recess duties at the end of the school year, a fee of \$150 per shift will be charged via your FACTS account.**

**The only way to reduce or remove the obligation of lunch and recess duties is to participate in a family sponsorship (Gold or Platinum levels).**

*As a reminder, in order to volunteer at school, a person MUST BE CLEARED BY THE DIOCESE FIRST. This includes completing a Protecting God's Children class as well as getting fingerprinted. If you have questions about this process, please contact our Safe Environment Coordinator, Lynn Woyt at [lwoyt@pcapvb.org](mailto:lwoyt@pcapvb.org).*

## **MASS**

School Masses will be held on campus in the gymnasium. Masses are scheduled on Thursdays and Holy Days of Obligation. Masses are mandatory and part of the Religion grade. Parents who are volunteer-cleared are welcome to attend student Masses; however, parents are not permitted to sit with the students and will have a designated seating area. Food and drinks are not permitted in the gymnasium.

Students in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and up receive the Eucharist at the Children's Mass as long as the school has received a copy of the Catholic Baptism and First Eucharist certificates. 2<sup>nd</sup> graders will join in this celebration after receiving First Eucharist in the spring.

When the person in front of the student is receiving the Eucharist, the student should gently bow his or her head prior to him or her receiving the Eucharist, as a sign of reverence. Non-Catholic students process with their class, however, are asked to cross arms at the wrists and place arms across the center of the chest. The priest, deacon, or Eucharistic Minister will bless the child and they will proceed back to their pew to pray in silence. After receiving the Eucharist, it is time to pray and spend time with God. For younger students who will not receive the Eucharist, this is a good time to pray to God also. There should be no talking among students during Mass. PK and Kindergarten students will join the school Mass when we return from Christmas break, at the beginning of January.

If your child is in need of a low-gluten host, please notify the school.

## MEDICAL NEEDS/CRUTCHES & OTHER SUPPORTS

Parents should notify the school immediately about any medical needs their child may have.

Students coming to school with any type of support (crutches, arm braces, boots, wheelchairs, etc.) **will be required to provide a doctor's note to ensure that teachers and staff understand the nature of the injury.** Students who have any type of support will not be allowed to participate in physical education or recess until a doctor's note is received indicating otherwise.

## MEDICATIONS

All forms are located on the website under Parents>Forms/Info. It is mandatory that any student needing to receive medications during school hours have a *Medical Authorization Form* filled out including the physician's signature. **This applies to both prescribed and over-the-counter medications.** The medicines must only be received in the original container, which is clearly labeled with the child's name and the medication name, dose and frequency. **All medicines are kept in the school clinic.** Any medication received without the original container, proper labeling or completed forms will be the responsibility of the parent to administer in school. Any medicine or medical equipment necessary to leave on school property is the sole responsibility of the parent. Students are permitted to carry and self-administer inhalers once the *Parental Authorization for Student to Self-Medicate via Prescription Inhaler* form is received. Also available is the *Release and Waiver of Liability Regarding Children with Severe Medical Conditions* form for Epinephrine and other qualifying medical conditions. Students are never permitted to carry any type of medication at school other than inhalers (ex: medicinal creams, cough drops, etc.). At school year-end, medicines not picked up by parents will be discarded.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASS PLACEMENT

Student placement within Middle School Math and ELA classes is based on a combination of standardized test scores, report card grades, Universal Screening scores and teacher recommendations. **NO PARENT WAIVERS WILL BE ACCEPTED; STUDENTS WILL BE PLACED IN ELA and MATH CLASSES BASED ON THEIR PERFORMANCE DATA.** At the end of the first quarter, Administration and the Middle School team will review student data to determine if any students need to be placed differently. After this time, there will be no movement. For more information regarding Middle School, please see the exhibit titled, "*Middle School Expectations*".

**8<sup>th</sup> grade students have the opportunity to take Algebra 1/Algebra 1 Honors during their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year based on their performance data. These are high school level classes, and therefore, the final grade in this class will be part of the student's high school transcript if he/she attends a St. Johns County public high school.** It is important that students in these classes keep up with the content of the course and seek additional support if needed to ensure a strong grade for the high school transcript. These students will also have the opportunity to take the Algebra 1 EOC in the Spring. A passing score on this exam is needed in order to graduate a public high school. The EOC can be retaken if needed during high school.

## OUTREACH

At Palmer Catholic Academy, we are committed to living out our Catholic faith by serving others, especially those in need. As part of our mission, students learn about Catholic Social Teaching, which helps guide them in how to live with compassion, respect, and a commitment to justice—values that bring us closer to God and foster peace in our world. We emphasize that every person is created in the image of God and deserves love, dignity, and respect.

One of our meaningful outreach projects allows each grade level to sponsor a child of the same age who lives in an orphanage in Ethiopia. This orphanage was founded and is lovingly operated by a PCA alumna. Through this initiative, students will not only support the child financially but also have the opportunity to build a relationship through pen pal letters and virtual video calls throughout the school year.

To help support this effort, **each family is asked to contribute a one-time donation of \$30 per child.** This contribution—equal to just \$3.00 per month—provides a full year of housing, clothing, food, medical care, and education for the sponsored child. We encourage families to involve their children by having them "earn" the \$30 through simple chores or acts of service at home, helping to reinforce the values of generosity and responsibility.

The \$30 donation per child will be automatically deducted from your family's FACTS account on **August 22.** If you prefer not to participate in this outreach project, please notify us via email at [rdevenny@pcapvb.org](mailto:rdevenny@pcapvb.org) no later than **August 20.** Thank you for helping us put our faith into action and make a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

## PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences shall be conducted as necessary or as requested by the parent or teacher. It is only through the cooperation of home and school that the goals of our philosophy of education can be truly achieved.

Inquiries, problems, or questions dealing with individual students should be communicated to the teacher first. Parent or teacher requested conferences should be scheduled via writing or voice mail. All parent conferences must be scheduled. Please respect your child's privacy and the teacher's time, and do not stop a teacher in the hall or stop by their room to have an impromptu conference. Teachers have been directed to schedule a conference if such an incident occurs. Conferences are private meetings between parents and school officials; thus siblings may not attend conferences.

Teachers will document a summary of the meeting for the student's file with a parent signature. If further clarification is needed, then a conference with administration and the teacher may be scheduled.

Parents are asked to maintain a tone of mutual respect and professionalism when communicating with staff. Should communication become inappropriate or the partnership between home and school be compromised, administration may intervene through email or by requesting a conference to help resolve the matter constructively.

## PLAGIARISM

Any student who turns in plagiarized work may receive a "0". A handout referencing the issue of plagiarism will be given to students on the first day of school. This is to be kept and referred to throughout the school year. Palmer Catholic Academy upholds and enforces a no-tolerance policy regarding plagiarism. Submitting work generated completely through any AI sites is considered plagiarism and will be handled as such. Any NEHS or NJHS student or Student Council Representative or Officer will be placed on probation from their honor if plagiarism occurs. Students on PCA sports teams may be removed from the team if plagiarism occurs.

## PRAYER POLICIES

Morning prayers, the Pledge of Allegiance, and the Palmer Catholic Academy Mission Statement are said in common using the PA and/or video system in the school every morning. Prayers are recited before and after lunch, led by cafeteria staff/homeroom teacher or a selected student. As often as possible and as appropriate, religion is correlated with lessons presented so students will begin to realize that Sunday Mass is not the only time that is spent with God. The Act of Contrition will be said at close of the school day. All students are expected to stand and be respectful and reverent during the recitation of prayers, the Pledge, and the Mission Statement.

## REPORT CARDS

Report Cards will be emailed to parents at the end of each quarter. If the student has any outstanding fees (tuition, library, etc.) it is the school's policy to withhold the student's report card and block access to the Family Portal until financial obligations are met or arrangements are made. The parents are responsible for contacting the office to rectify the situation.

The grading scale for the report cards is as follows:

Grades PK-1	Grade 2	Grades 3-8
S = 80% - 100%	S+ = 95%-100%	A = 90-100.00
N = 60%- 79.99%	S = 85%-94%	B = 80-89.99
U = 0% – 59.99%	S- = 78%-84%	C = 70-79.99
	N = 63%-77%	D = 60-69.99
	U = 0%-62%	F = 50.00 – 59.99

## RETENTION

Retention of a student is a serious responsibility and warrants a careful and complete examination of a student's performance and achievement. Not every academic problem can be remedied by retention.

Student progression shall be based primarily on achievement of grade level skills. Other factors to be considered are mental and physical development, work and study habits, and maturation. Most students will be able to follow the school's regular program of sequential learning. However, testing, diagnosis and actual performance may indicate that some students cannot complete a year's work in that time; therefore, it may become necessary to retain a student an additional year in a particular grade. Should that be the case, school personnel should follow these criteria for retention:

- Kindergarten – Lack of readiness in reading, math, and communication skills.
- Grades 1 - 3 – Failure in Reading/Language Arts or Math
- Grades 4 - 8 – For promotion in Catholic school, passing grades must be achieved in all major subjects (religion, reading, language arts, math, social studies and science).

At the primary level, especially Kindergarten, special consideration in a decision to promote a student will be given to social, emotional and maturation levels. Consideration is also given to physical size and chronological age.

Although the principal consults with teachers and parents, the final responsibility for retaining a student rests with the principal.

Any failed subject must be made up in a summer program approved by the principal (i.e., summer school, 30 hours of tutoring with a certified teacher). A maximum of two subjects may be taken in a summer program. The principal reserves the right to retest any student who wishes to return the following year to determine grade placement. If one of the failed subjects is Religion, the student must

make up work if he/she wishes to return to school or to enroll in any other Catholic school in the diocese.

## ROOM PARENTS

Teachers should have at least one homeroom parent to assist in various activities at the teacher's direction. Homeroom parents should not have to coordinate or create activities but should be able to carry out guidelines set forth by the teacher. If you are interested in being a room parent, please indicate this on the HSA form in the packet you will receive at the beginning of the school year. Room parents will receive 10 volunteer points towards their 30-point required volunteer points.

## SACRAMENTS

All the documents of our Church stress the importance of parents as the first and best educators of their children in the faith. Through example, prayer and attendance at weekly Sunday celebrations of the liturgy, they model what being a Catholic means. Assisting parents in the faith formation and remote preparation for sacraments are the responsibility of the Catholic school or the parish religious education program.

The proper context for immediate preparation as well as celebration of Penance and Eucharist for the first time is the parish. Immediate preparation involves sacramental catechesis during parental meetings, family rituals, workshops and retreat times.

Sacrament prep for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist takes place in first and second grade. Students will receive First Reconciliation and First Eucharist in the second grade. Sacrament prep includes a Bishop-mandated Reconciliation retreat and Eucharist retreat, and Bishop-mandated parent/student Reconciliation and Eucharist meetings.

Students in seventh grade study pre-Confirmation. In the eighth grade, students continue to study and prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation which includes attending the Bishop-mandated retreat and the Bishop-mandated parent/student confirmation meetings. Candidates must also complete Community Service hours. See the Middle School Community Service hour requirements section of the handbook.

Please note: If a family is registered at a church other than Our Lady Star of the Sea, and wishes for their child to receive a sacrament at Our Lady Star of the Sea, they must obtain a letter from the pastor of their registered church, granted permission for the sacraments to be at OLSS.

Please consult the Diocese of Saint Augustine website for a more complete understanding of the Sacramental Guidelines ([www.DOSAFL.COM](http://www.DOSAFL.COM) under Parish Life/Sacramental Preparation) and the appendix document *Guidelines for Receiving Sacraments*". If you have any questions about sacraments or converting to Catholicism, please contact [lwoyt@pcapvb.org](mailto:lwoyt@pcapvb.org).

## SAFETY IN SAFE SPACES

Palmer Catholic Academy complies with the requirements of Florida Statute 553.865, the Safety in Private Spaces Act. Except where facilities are specifically designated as unisex, the school's bathroom and locker rooms/changing facilities are designated exclusively for use by biological females or biological males. Any student who willfully enters a school restroom or locker room/changing facility designated for the opposite sex and refuses to depart when asked to do so by any school personnel will be subject to disciplinary consequences as established by the school Principal (Level 3) unless a specific statutory exception applies.

## SAFETY PATROL

5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade students will be eligible to join the PCA Safety Patrol. The purpose of the Safety Patrol program is to create a safe environment for all Palmer students upon their arrival and departure of school each day. Patrol posts are located throughout the hallways to help monitor students in the mornings. Patrols are also responsible for raising and lowering the flags. Safety Patrol students also assist with walking Pre-K students to their classrooms during morning arrival.

### The following criteria are used for selecting the patrol squad:

- Student must maintain at least a “B” average throughout the year.
- Student must be available to arrive at school by 7:20 AM or remain at school until 3:10 PM at least one week each month.
- Safety Patrol members should be leadership role models in school. Therefore, students receiving conduct/behavior violations will be suspended from the Patrol. **Students who receive 6 or more demerits over the course of the school year will be removed from the Safety Patrol for the school year.**
- Each candidate must obtain two teacher recommendations to be considered for the Patrol.

## SERVICE HOURS – MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

As a Catholic School, PCA is committed to instilling and developing a habit of service in our students. We recommend doing service hours at the church, school, and in the community. Students should have hands-on experience helping someone. For example, at the Church, students could be a server or usher, help with set up, volunteer at vacation bible school, or help at the many other functions at Our Lady Star of the Sea. At school, students can act as ushers or lectors at school masses, assist with set up of mass, sing in the choir, or join safety patrol as well as many other opportunities in school. In the community, students can volunteer at nursing homes, Habitat for Humanity, Beam, or volunteer to assist at the many other opportunities in our city. While food drives and supply collections are important ways to help those in need, we want the student to give of their God given talents and have contact with people who can benefit from their service

Middle school students are required to complete community service hours as detailed below.

	For School	For Confirmation
6 <sup>th</sup> grade	10	5
7 <sup>th</sup> grade	10	10
8 <sup>th</sup> grade	10	15

Students must complete 10 hours of service each year to satisfy the school’s 30-hour Graduation requirement. In addition, each year students will also work on completing the parish’s 30-hour Sacrament of Confirmation service requirement beginning in 6<sup>th</sup> Grade and continuing through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The 30-hour Confirmation service hour requirement must be completed before the 8<sup>th</sup> grader attends the Confirmation Retreat usually in March. In summary, the school’s Graduation service requirement (30) plus the parish’s Confirmation service requirement (30) equal a total of 60 required service hours.

Service hours should be done every year. Each student must do the assigned number of service hours for their grade no matter how many extra hours they have accumulated in previous years. For example, every 7<sup>th</sup> grader must serve 10 hours for the Graduation requirement and another 10 for the Confirmation requirement even if they had 100 extra service hours in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. We want the student to include service as part of their yearly school plan.

Deadline for service hour turn-in is May 15<sup>th</sup> of each year.

## **SCHOOL COUNSELOR**

Palmer Catholic Academy has a School Counselor available to conference with and counsel students as needed. The Guidance Counselor will oversee the administration and evaluation of standardized tests, consult with teachers, assist in preparing 8<sup>th</sup> graders for high school and be available to counsel and test referred students in need of additional assistance.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA CONDUCT POLICY**

We recognize the importance of social media as a tool for communication and community building. However, we also understand that negative, derogatory, or inflammatory comments about the school, students, or staff on public social media platforms can harm the relationship and trust between the school and the parents, which is essential for student success as well as for the success of the collaborative parent/school partnership. Concerns and complaints should be made through appropriate channels mentioned under the Communication section above rather than on public social media platforms, even if these comments are made in private groups. In instances where negative remarks are made about the school, faculty, or staff on social media, school administration will request a meeting to collaboratively discuss concerns.

Should there be a recurrence of negative comments made about the school, students, or staff, the following measures will be taken including loss of volunteer privileges, limited communication from the school, and restricted access to school events. Fostering a positive and collaborative environment is critical to our school mission and to our parent/school partnership. Our goal is to create a respectful, supportive, and safe online environment for all Palmer Catholic Academy stakeholders. The school reserves the right to monitor social media activity related to the school and to take appropriate action should this policy be violated.

## **SPONSORSHIPS**

Local businesses can partner with Palmer Catholic Academy on 3 different levels. The Gold, Silver and Bronze sponsorships offer various advertising opportunities. Sponsorships will run the length of the school year and are offered on a first-come, first-serve basis as the advertising space is limited. For more information, please visit the home page of the PCA website.

PCA also offers the opportunity for family sponsorships. Information can be found on the school website.

## **SPORTS – RULES AND ELIGIBILITY**

If a student competes and is selected for a team, the student athlete must commit and adhere to the practices and games. A student who fails to participate in a scheduled game, if not authorized, will be unable to attend any other school sanctioned event held on that day.

The Catholic Grade School Sports Physical Participation Form (includes medical history, physician approved participation, and participation application) must be dated after June 1<sup>st</sup> of the current year and be kept on file at the school. Any student not allowed to play because of injury must have a “clear to play” report from the physician.

Academic Eligibility shall apply to all athletes of the Catholic Grade School Conference per the following Diocese of St. Augustine Catholic Grade School Conference By-Laws:

- A student is academically ineligible if he/she receives two (2) grades (or more) of 69 (D) or below in a major subject. If he/she receives any one (1) 59 (F) or below, that student is also academically

ineligible. The major subjects include: Social Studies, Math, Science, Religion, Reading/Literature, and English/Spelling. Principals reserve the right to make a policy with stricter guidelines to deal with this rule on the local level.

- Students' grades are evaluated at mid-quarter and at the end of the quarter for academic eligibility.
- If a student is academically ineligible, the length of the suspension is five (5) academic days for suspension at mid-quarter; ten (10) academic days for suspension at the end of the quarter. The suspension begins on the day following the mid-quarter and end of quarter. Eligibility may be regained following the five or ten (10) day suspension, if the grade(s) adhere to the rules of eligibility as stated above. Students must be academically eligible prior to tryouts according to existing criteria.
- Principals reserve the right to suspend a student from a team for unsatisfactory conduct.
- All students shall be given equal opportunities to try-out for all teams and eligibility rules shall apply when a student is part of the team.
- If a student is ineligible at his school and then transfers to another school, his ineligibility will be carried over to the next report card.
- The Pastor or Principal may at any time declare a student, by lack of school attendance or improper conduct, ineligible.

- Grading Policy- Diocese of St. Augustine:

100-90	A	Passing	1- Outstanding
89-80	B	Passing	2- Above Average
79-70	C	Passing	3- Average
69-60	D	Passing	4- Below Average
Below 60	F	Failure	5- Unsatisfactory

NOTE: Grade of "I" for "Incomplete" means failure unless completed in one week after evaluation report. In accordance with FHSAA rules, any student who repeats 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade and has played a school sanctioned sport, is ineligible to play that sport the year he/she is repeating.

## STANDARDIZED TESTS

Standardized testing for grades 2–8 will be in the Spring of each school year. The Diocese of St. Augustine uses the TerraNova Next and the Inview for standardized testing. The PSAT (Preliminary SAT) is administered to the 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the Spring. The ACRE (Assessment of Children Religious Education) is given to 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in the Spring. Faculty and administration study the results of this testing carefully and utilize the information for diagnostic and placement purposes. This process is done with the principal's review.

## STUDENT SUPPORT AND LEARNING RESOURCE TEAMS

The Student Support Team consisting of the Principal, Assistant Principal, Guidance Counselor and the Learning Resource Team assist teachers accordingly. The Student Support Team meets monthly, as the calendar permits, to review student assessment data and progress. The Team makes decision about next steps in student learning, and determines if any students may need more interventions. The Learning Resource Teachers support students with one-on-one instruction using specialized, research-based programs.

## SUMMER ASSIGNMENTS

In order to avoid the summer slide, at the end of each school year rising first grade through rising eighth grade students will have a summer reading assignment and a math assignment to complete over the summer. These assignments will be used as grades for the first quarter and are, therefore, mandatory. Summer assignments will be posted on the school website during the last week of school.

## TELEPHONE USE - STUDENTS

Students are only permitted to use the office phone in case of an emergency. Forgotten homework, athletic equipment, physical ed. uniform, etc. do not constitute emergencies. Arrangements for after-school visits with friends should be made at home and not at school.

## TEXTBOOKS

All hardback textbooks are to be covered at all times with paper covers. Contact paper and cloth covers are NOT acceptable since they do not protect the books. Please do not place tape directly on the book. Students will receive a warning and the appropriate grade level consequence if their book is not covered. Teachers will do regular book checks. \*\*\*If books are lost or damaged, parents will be responsible for the replacement cost or repair fee which will be charged to your FACTS account.\*\*\*

## TUITION AND FEES

Palmer Catholic Academy utilizes the FACTS Management program to handle the following fees: tuition, enrollment, curriculum, technology, safety, 8<sup>th</sup> grade fee, before and after school care, iPad replacement, sports & clubs, oops lunches, **Netsanet Orphanage sponsorship**, and field trips. **All families must create their FACTS account at the time of enrollment.** (Parents can also use this account to view student grades and progress for students in grades 3-8.)

Please see the below for current Tuition and Fees amounts. **The Registration, Curriculum, Safety and Technology fees are all annual non-refundable and non-transferrable fees. The first month's tuition is also non-refundable.** Tuition is paid either in 10 monthly installments, 2 semi-annual payments, or one payment in full. Payment Options: You may choose the 1<sup>st</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> of each month as your payment date; you select the date that works best for your family. Automatic payments can be made from a checking or savings account. The first tuition payment is due by June 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> and is non-refundable and non-transferrable. All other tuition payments are due the 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> day of each month, August through April. Tuition may be paid for the entire year through FACTS. **Students whose families are not current with their tuition and other school fees will not receive report cards or have access to the Parent Portal until the account is paid in full.**

**Scholarships are available for ALL students. Please see information on the Tuition and Fees Schedule below and in the section titled "Financial Assistance". Please note: For VPK plus Enrichment students – in order to qualify for the sibling rate, the sibling must be a student at Palmer Catholic Academy OR a full-time student at Palmer Catholic Academy Preschool (M-F 8:30-2:00/M-F 7:30-4:00).**

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade Families – 8<sup>th</sup> graders will NOT BE PERMITTED to participate in the graduation ceremony unless ALL fees, fines and tuition have been paid in full, and all textbooks and iPads and charging cords have been returned. In addition, they will not receive their diplomas and transcripts will not be released to high schools.**

FOR INFORMATION ON FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE/SCHOLARSHIP CONSIDERATION, PLEASE SEE THE SECTION TITLED "FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE".



## PALMER CATHOLIC ACADEMY

Palm Valley Campus

4889 Palm Valley Road

Pre-K through 8th Grade

2025-26 School Year

All fees are non-refundable and non-transferable.  
1st month tuition is non-refundable and non-transferable.



## PALMER CATHOLIC ACADEMY

Palm Valley Campus

4889 Palm Valley Road

Pre-K through 8th Grade

2025-26 School Year



### KINDERGARTEN – 8<sup>th</sup> GRADE

**Tuition: \$8,900 per student**

Note: This rate also applies to NON-VPK students.

NON-REFUNDABLE FEES		
Registration Fee	Current Families	\$230/student
	New Families	\$310/student
Curriculum Fee	K-8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	\$500/student
Technology Fee	K-5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	\$200/student
	6 <sup>th</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	\$400/student
Safety & Security Fee	K-8 Grade	\$175/family
	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Fee	\$150/student

### VPK ONLY (8:30-11:30)

**Tuition: No Charge**

**PRE-K 4/VPK PLUS ENRICHMENT (11:30-2:15)-**

**Tuition: \$5,225 per student**

NON-REFUNDABLE FEES		
Registration Fee	Current Families	\$230/student
	New Families	\$310/student
Safety & Security Fee	PK4 – 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	\$175/family

### SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE FOR ALL FAMILIES

**\*2023-24 Cost to Educate: \$11,080**

\*AS A PRIVATE CATHOLIC SCHOOL, PALMER CATHOLIC ACADEMY PROVIDES AN ESTABLISHED BLUE RIBBON, A+ ACCREDITED CURRICULUM AT A REDUCED TUITION RATE. OUR TUITION/FEES DO NOT COMPLETELY COVER ALL EXPENSES ASSOCIATED WITH EDUCATING A CHILD. WE RELY ON CONTINUED FUNDRAISING BY OUR HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATION TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL COVERAGE FOR EXPENSES.

PALMER CATHOLIC ACADEMY OF OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA CATHOLIC CHURCH PROVIDES A CATHOLIC AND CHRIST-CENTERED EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT THAT INSPIRES ALL STUDENTS TO REACH THEIR FULL SPIRITUAL AND ACADEMIC POTENTIAL AND BECOME RESPONSIBLE, RESPECTFUL, AND REVERENT DISCIPLES OF CHRIST.

### SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION

- Only **ONE** scholarship may be applied to a student's tuition
- If a family fails to meet eligibility qualifications at any time, the scholarship may be revoked.

### FLORIDA STATE SPONSORED SCHOLARSHIPS

Florida Tax Credit (FTC)  
Family Empowerment – Educational Opportunity (FES-OA)  
Family Empowerment – Unique Abilities (FES-UA)

Families must apply for these scholarships or renew existing scholarships through a Scholarship Funding Organization (Step Up for Students (SUFS) or AAA).

Families who are awarded any of these scholarships must provide the school with their award identification before it will be reflected in the FACTS Tuition Management System.

**As a reminder, Florida has universal eligibility for state-sponsored scholarships available to all families. All families are encouraged to apply.**

### OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA SCHOLARSHIP

**\$1,250 per student**

To be eligible for this scholarship you must have more than 1 child enrolled in Palmer Catholic Academy in grades Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade for the current school year. Please note that you are strongly encouraged to apply for a state-sponsored scholarship before applying for this scholarship.

### TUITION ASSISTANCE

Any family may apply for tuition assistance through FACTS Grant and Aid. Please note that you are strongly encouraged to apply for a state sponsored scholarship before applying for this scholarship.

PALMER CATHOLIC ACADEMY OF OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA CATHOLIC CHURCH PROVIDES A CATHOLIC AND CHRIST-CENTERED EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT THAT INSPIRES ALL STUDENTS TO REACH THEIR FULL SPIRITUAL AND ACADEMIC POTENTIAL AND BECOME RESPONSIBLE, RESPECTFUL, AND REVERENT DISCIPLES OF CHRIST.

# UNIFORM POLICY

PCA has a mandatory uniform and some optional uniform options. See photos and detailed information below for MANDATORY and OPTIONAL UNIFORM guidelines. Students are expected to follow the uniform policy. Please see the Code of Conduct for information about uniform violations and consequences.

**BOYS' UNIFORM  
PRE- K & KINDERGARTEN**

**MANDATORY UNIFORM**

**OPTIONAL UNIFORM ITEMS**

**BOYS' UNIFORM  
GRADES 1-8**

**MANDATORY UNIFORM**

**OPTIONAL UNIFORM**

BELTS CAN BE SOLID BLACK, NAVY OR BROWN

**Boys' Uniform Shoes - Grades 1-8**

Acceptable - dress shoes, loafers or Sperry-style shoes in SOLID black, brown, tan or navy

Not Acceptable - Hey Dudes or Vans style shoes in any color

**BOYS' AND GIRLS' PE UNIFORM  
GRADES 5-8**

**GIRLS' UNIFORM  
PRE-K AND KINDERGARTEN**

**MANDATORY UNIFORM**

OR

**OPTIONAL UNIFORM**

**GIRLS' UNIFORM  
GRADES 1-4**

**MANDATORY UNIFORM**

**OPTIONAL UNIFORM**

**GIRLS' UNIFORM  
GRADES 5-8**

**MANDATORY UNIFORM**

**OPTIONAL UNIFORM**

**Girls' Uniform Shoes - Grades 1-8**

Acceptable - dress, loafer, or Sperry-style shoes in SOLID black, navy, tan or brown OR saddle shoes in black/white or navy/white

Not Acceptable - Vans or Hey Dudes style shoes in any color

**SNEAKERS  
GRADES PK -K**

WITH MANDATORY UNIFORM  
SOLID WHITE, BLACK OR NAVY  
SMALL BRAND LOGO IN A COLOR IS ACCEPTABLE

WITH OPTIONAL UNIFORM

HIGH TOPS AND COLORED SNEAKERS ARE ALLOWED  
NO LIGHT UP SNEAKERS

**BOYS' AND GIRLS' SWEATERS AND SWEATSHIRTS**

CAN BE WORN WITH MANDATORY UNIFORM

\*\*PCA HOODIES AND CREW NECKS CANNOT BE WORN AT MASS

**SOCKS  
BOYS - GRADES PK-8**

ATHLETIC OR CREW SOCKS IN SOLID WHITE OR NAVY  
(SMALL BRAND LOGO IS ACCEPTABLE)

NO FOOTIES OR NO-SHOW SOCKS ALLOWED

**SOCKS  
GIRLS - GRADES PK-4**

ANKLE, KNEE OR CREW SOCKS IN WHITE OR NAVY  
(SMALL BRAND LOGO IS ACCEPTABLE)

NO FOOTIES OR NO-SHOW SOCKS ALLOWED

**SOCKS  
GIRLS - GRADES 5-8**

KNEE OR CREW SOCKS IN SOLID WHITE OR NAVY  
(SMALL BRAND LOGO IS ACCEPTABLE)

NO FOOTIES OR NO-SHOW SOCKS ALLOWED

## MANDATORY UNIFORM

**The mandatory uniform must be worn for all Masses, field trips and any day deemed a mandatory uniform day**

	<b>CLOTHING</b>	<b>SOCKS AND SHOES</b>	<b>HAIR &amp; ACCESSORIES</b>
	ID badges must be worn above the waist at all times, except on field trips. All shirts must be tucked in at all times. Skirt and jumper hemlines should reach the top of the knee.	<b>All shoelaces must be tied.</b> <b>The following shoes are NOT allowed:</b> boots, Hey Dude style shoes, Vans, Crocs, backless shoes, light-up shoes or sandals. Footies socks are also not allowed.	Hairstyles should reflect the professional appearance of the uniform.
<b>GIRLS PK &amp; K</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RC Uniform navy blue polo dress OR the PCA's plaid jumper with white Peter Pan collared blouse</li> <li>Navy bike shorts worn under the dress and jumper, but not showing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plain black, navy or white tennis shoes (soles must be white)</li> <li>Black, navy, brown or tan Mary Janes, oxfords and Sperry-type shoes (solid color, no design)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All hair accessories are to be in school colors (black, white, navy, or hunter green).</li> <li>Hair is to be worn in a neat manner, NO unnaturally <b>bleached</b>, dyed/dipped hair.</li> </ul>
<b>BOYS PK &amp; K</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RC Uniform navy trousers or shorts with black or navy belt</li> <li>Kindergarten boys – white Oxford shirt</li> <li>PK boys – navy or green PCA polo shirt OR white Oxford shirt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plain black, navy or white tennis shoes (soles must be white)</li> <li>Black, navy, brown or tan Oxfords and Sperry-type shoes (solid color, no design)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hair is to be no longer than the top of the collar in the back, not over the ear on sides, bangs no longer than eyebrows, no unnaturally dyed or <b>bleached</b> hair.</li> </ul>
<b>GIRLS GRADES 1-4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PCA plaid jumper (<b>hemline should hit the top of the knee – NO rolling</b>)</li> <li>White Peter Pan collared blouse</li> <li>Navy bike shorts worn under the jumper, but not showing.</li> <li>During cold weather, white or navy tights may be worn as well as PCA's navy V-neck sweater.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Black, navy, brown, or tan dress, loafer, or Sperry-type (solid with no design) shoes or saddle shoes (black &amp; white or navy &amp; white)</li> <li>Shoes should have no more than a 1-inch heel</li> <li>Socks should be white or navy, ankle or knee socks without a logo (must be solid, with no design).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All hair accessories are to be in school colors (black, white, navy, or hunter green).</li> <li>Hair is to be worn in a neat manner, NO unnaturally dyed/dipped or <b>bleached</b> hair.</li> <li>Jewelry - simple, religious necklace and/or bracelet, small earrings (may not be larger than ½ inch for dangles or ½ inch in diameter for hoops), a watch</li> </ul>
<b>BOYS GRADES 1-4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RC Uniform navy trousers with solid black, brown or navy belt</li> <li>White Oxford shirt</li> <li>During cold weather, PCA's navy V-neck sweater may be worn.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Black, navy, brown, or tan dress, loafer, or Sperry-type (solid with no design)</li> <li>Sport shoes of any style are not permitted</li> <li>Socks should be white or navy, crew or athletic socks without a logo (must be solid, with no design).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hair is to be no longer than the top of the collar in the back, not over the ear on sides, bangs no longer than eyebrows, no unnaturally dyed or <b>bleached</b> hair.</li> <li>Jewelry -simple, religious necklace and/or bracelet/band. Boys are not permitted to wear earrings.</li> </ul>
<b>GIRLS GRADES 5-8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PCA's plaid pleated skirt (<b>hemline should hit the top of the knee – NO rolling</b>)</li> <li>Navy bike shorts to be worn under the skirt but not showing</li> <li>White Oxford blouse</li> <li>During cold weather, navy tights may be worn as well as PCA's navy V-neck sweater.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Black, navy, brown, or tan dress, loafer, or Sperry-type (solid with no design) shoes or saddle shoes (black &amp; white or navy &amp; white)</li> <li>Shoes should have no more than a 1-inch heel</li> <li>Sport shoes of any style are not permitted</li> <li>Solid white or navy knee socks with no logo or design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All hair accessories are to be in school colors (black, white, navy, or hunter green).</li> <li>Hair is to be worn in a neat manner, NO unnaturally dyed/dipped or bleached hair.</li> <li>Jewelry - simple, religious necklace and/or bracelet, small earrings (may not be larger than ½ inch for dangles or ½ inch in diameter for hoops), a watch</li> </ul>
<b>BOYS GRADES 5-8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RC Uniform navy trousers with solid black, brown or navy belt</li> <li>White Oxford shirt</li> <li>During cold weather, PCA's navy V-neck sweater may be worn.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Black, navy, brown, or tan dress, loafer, or Sperry-type (solid with no design)</li> <li>Sport shoes of any style are not permitted</li> <li>Socks should be white or navy, crew or athletic socks without a logo (must be solid, with no design).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hair is to be no longer than the top of the collar in the back, not over the ear on sides, bangs no longer than eyebrows, no unnaturally dyed/dipped or bleached hair.</li> <li>Jewelry -simple, religious necklace and/or bracelet/band. Boys are not permitted to wear earrings.</li> </ul>

### MAKE-UP AND NAIL POLISH

\*\*\* Make-up **and false lashes** are not permitted except for clear lip gloss. Uniform violations will be issued for make-up.\*\*\*

\*\*\*Nail polish is not permitted except for clear nail polish.\*\*\*

\*\*\*Students will be sent to the clinic to remove nail polish. No gel polish, SNS or fake nails are permitted in school.\*\*\*

**\*\*Students are never permitted to write on their skin or clothing (their own or others).\*\***

**BADGES :** \*\*Each student will be provided with a badge at the beginning of the school year at no charge. If a badge is lost, there is a \$10.00 fee to replace it. For your convenience, the fee will be charged to your FACTS account.

### OPTIONAL UNIFORMS

Optional uniform choices are not to be worn for Mass or any other day designated as a mandatory uniform day but are allowed any other time on campus. The following are the optional uniform choices:

- PCA logo polo shirts in navy or green for girls and boys in all grades.
- Grade 1-2 students - Plain black, white or blue tennis shoes including high tops (soles must be non-skid) – no light-up sneakers
- Plaid skorts may be worn with the polo shirts for girls in grades PK-4. **Skorts and skirts may not be rolled at the waist. Hemlines must reach the top of the knee. Waistlines must fall on the student's waistline, and not below.**
- RC uniform navy walking shorts may be worn by boys in all grades. Shorts are not to be worn on cold, winter days.
- Navy blue fleece jackets and V-neck sweaters with Palmer logo (purchased from RC Uniforms), and Palmer sweatshirts (from CP&S) may be worn during cold weather. Sweatshirts and sweaters with other logos are not permitted. Plain white or navy sweater or cardigan may be worn if it has no logo or design. No other sweaters, sweatshirts, or hoodies are permitted.

**\*\*Please note that items bearing any logo representing Palmer Catholic Academy must only be affixed to PCA uniforms and school accessories by RC Uniforms. All school logos are owned by Our Lady Star of the Sea parish and Palmer Catholic Academy and no agent other than those under contract are lawfully permitted to use them for any purpose, unless by the written consent of the pastor and principal.**

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION UNIFORM

Grades PK – 4 do not have a PE uniform but should wear their sneakers to school on PE day. High tops are permitted for PE.

Grades 5 – 8 will wear PCA PE uniforms (see below) and sneakers to school on PE days. High tops are permitted on PE days. **PLEASE NOTE - PE SHORTS SHOULD NOT BE WORN TO SCHOOL ON MASS DAYS. On Mass days, students may wear their PE shirt with mandatory uniform bottoms.**

Girls will wear sneakers and their PCA PE shirt with their PCA PE shorts (EXCEPT ON MASS DAYS). If preferred, they can wear their shorts UNDER their skirt, and remove the skirt for PE class. (Note: girls may wear bike shorts under the PE shorts if they wish.)

Boys will wear sneakers and their PCA PE shirt with their PCA PE shorts (EXCEPT ON MASS DAYS).

### DRESS DOWN DAYS & DRESS UP DAYS (Non-Uniform Days)

The principal will designate certain days as dress down or dress up days. For dress down days, jeans are acceptable but **cannot** have any rips or tears. No hats (except on designated “hat days”) are to be worn to school. No tank top style tops are allowed. Hair, make-up and jewelry rules are as stated in the chart above. Students (boys and girls) may only wear shorts that are no more than 3 inches above the middle of the knee (Bermuda length or basketball/soccer style). Shoulders, midriffs, and backs must be covered (no cut-out style clothes) at all times. **Leggings are not allowed unless the shirt reaches the mid-thigh area.** Dresses and skirts that reach the top of the knee may be worn. All sandals must have backs and should not be more than 2-inches high for safety on the stairs. Crocs, flip-flops, slippers, slip-on, or backless shoes are never allowed. Pajama-style pants are not allowed. Clothing should not have any messages or words that would be considered inappropriate for a Catholic school.

\*\*Students in violation of the dress code will receive disciplinary action. Please refer to the Student Code of Conduct for details.

# VOLUNTEER POINTS POLICY FOR ALL FAMILIES – REQUIRED



## Palmer Catholic Academy HSA Volunteer Policy 2025-2026 School Year

Each family is required to provide **20 volunteer “points”** to the school during the 2025/2026 school year. All volunteer commitments are to be completed in a single school year (July - June) unless special accommodations have been arranged with the principal. Volunteer commitments performed at your parish that are not for school sponsored events **will not be counted**.

**4 LUNCH AND RECESS SHIFTS ARE REQUIRED PER FAMILY. THESE ARE IN ADDITION TO THE 20 HSA POINTS. YOU WILL BE CHARGED \$150 PER SHIFT FOR ANY LUNCH AND RECESS SHIFTS NOT COMPLETED.**  
(See “Lunch and Recess” section in the handbook for additional details.)

Various opportunities come with assigned point values. Volunteer commitments are to be performed by the students’ caregivers if they have completed the security clearance, NOT by the student. HSA will track your volunteer efforts through our SignUp account.

- Please see the below chart of volunteer points. New opportunities will always be assigned a point value! HSA will do our best to track these via SignUp as well. See HSA website and handbook for descriptions of roles.
- You must complete 4 lunch and recess duties during the year. If you do **MORE THAN 4**, you can earn **5 points per ADDITIONAL SHIFT**. HSA will confirm with the front office that you have done the required 4 shifts before being awarded additional points.
- For a cost of **\$1000, which increases to \$1250 if not paid by September 1st**, you are able to buy your 20 points. **This does NOT include your lunch and recess duties. If you pay to opt out of the 20 points, you will still need to complete lunch and recess duties or be charged for those duties.** Families choosing to opt-out are still REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE IN SOME CAPACITY FOR ONE OF OUR MAJOR FUNDRAISERS FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR and encouraged to volunteer at school as their schedules allow. This is separate from the new Family Partnership option.
- Other opportunities will be communicated throughout the school year and a point level will be assigned. All volunteer opportunities will be posted to the HSA SignUp Account. Please check regularly for new opportunities.
- **Siblings are not permitted at any time while parents are volunteering.**

20 Points	10 Points	5 Points	1 Point
HSA Executive Board	HSA Committee Member <i>(see list in previous category - must be present at meetings as needed)</i>	Extra Lunch/Recess Shifts (after 4 are completed)	Class Party Volunteer
HSA Committee Chairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angel Ball</li> <li>• Sponsorships</li> <li>• Fall Festival</li> <li>• Hospitality</li> <li>• Concessions Manager</li> <li>• 8th Grade Committee</li> <li>• Family Service Coordinators</li> </ul>	Spirit Rock Manager	End of Month Lounge Restock, Uniform Closet, and Lost & Found	Concessions Shift
Room Parent	8th Grade Committee Member	Field Trip Chaperone	Event Assistance Shift*
Social Committee Representative	Spiritwear Manager	New Family Mentor	Donate Angel Ball Item <i>(committee approved)</i>
Teacher Appreciation Representative		Field Day/Color Run Volunteer	Carline Duty
School Board Member		Manage Traveling Mary	Classroom Volunteer
Yearbook Coordinator		Musical Production Volunteer	Complete End of Year Parent Survey
Volunteer Coach of PCA Team <i>(must be approved by school administration and complete additional paperwork)</i>		Family Sponsorship (\$500+)	Various At-Home opportunities as needed by HSA
PCA Club Sponsor/Coordinator <i>(must be school approved)</i>		Event Assistance Shift*	

\*Points will be shared on the sign-up for the event and range between 1-5 points.

**A fine of \$50 per point will be assessed for any unfulfilled volunteer points.**

\*When a family has ONLY a VPK student:

-enrolled in VPK hours only - the family is not required to complete the 20 volunteer points but is encouraged to volunteer and support the school.

-enrolled in VPK plus enrichment – the family is required to complete the 20 volunteer points.

-enrolled in PK4 but not receiving VPK funding – the family is required to complete the 20 volunteer points.

It is the family's responsibility (not PCA staff) for logging off-site volunteer points which will be tracked by HSA on the Sign-Up account.

## VISITORS AND VOLUNTEERS

Visitors are not permitted in any classroom/lunchroom unless they have received volunteer clearance and have scheduled the visit with the classroom teacher. This includes field trips. The process to receive volunteer clearance includes fingerprinting and attending the *Protecting God's Children* class. For more information about volunteer clearance please visit our school website ([pcapvb.org](http://pcapvb.org)>More>Forms/Info).

It is the policy of Palmer Catholic Academy to welcome volunteers in our school and in our classrooms. Volunteer activities are essential to keeping tuition reasonable. However, it is important to know that any volunteer who may work with the students must receive official volunteer clearance through our parish and diocese. Official documentation of background screening and "Protecting God's Children" class must be on file in the school office for all volunteers. Volunteers can participate in many ways, including Homeroom Parent, Field Trips, Library Assistant, Teacher Helper, Fundraising Events, etc. ***Siblings are not permitted at any time while parents are volunteering. Parents are not permitted to take photos of other children at school unless they are on the yearbook committee, HSA publicity committee, or have permission from the principal.***

## WITHDRAWALS

Any student withdrawing from Palmer Catholic Academy must notify the school office in writing giving at least 30 days' notice. Written notification is also required when a student will not be returning for the next school year. Notice must be signed by a parent/guardian. If the school is notified in less than 30 days prior to a child's withdrawal, the next month's tuition payment will be due. All tuition and fees must be current and textbooks/library books along with all Palmer Catholic Academy property must be returned before report cards are issued and/or transcripts can be released. School transcripts are submitted to the forwarding school when a written request is received from the new school and all student tuition and fees are current. Please note that the registration, curriculum, safety, and technology fees and first month's tuition are non-refundable and non-transferable.

## CONCLUSION

Updates or additions to this handbook will be forwarded as needed. Please be sure to read and understand all policies as set forth in this handbook prior to signing the Handbook Acceptance Form. The principal and/or pastor have the right to change or amend policies in this handbook at any time.

## EXHIBITS

- PCA Addendum for Preschool Students
  - PCA Cell Phone Contract
  - Palmer Network Acceptable Use Policy
- Diocese of St. Augustine Network Acceptable Use Policy
  - Standards of Ethical Conduct
  - Reporting Educator/Professional Misconduct
  - IPAD User Agreement & Acceptable Use Policy
    - ChOICE Handbook
- Immunization and Screening Policy for the Diocese of St. Augustine

# PALMER CATHOLIC ACADEMY ADDENDUM FOR PRESCHOOL STUDENTS

## PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION:

In the preschool classrooms of Palmer Catholic Academy, our teachers and paraprofessionals encourage the natural curiosity of each child to learn about the world around them, in the light of our Catholic faith. Our staff develop the whole child, in a Catholic and Christ centered educational environment. Our students learn in a play-based environment, in which their academic and social growth is facilitated by our staff. The schedule of activities and hands-on, active learning experiences facilitate the growth of children throughout their school day. Our teachers plan a wide variety of learning experiences for the children, encouraging them to explore and problem solve in a safe, nurturing and faith-based environment.

## NO TOUCH POLICY

For the dignity and safety of your child, PCA faculty cannot assist your child in wiping/cleansing when they use the toilet or if they soil their clothing with urine or feces. If this should occur the office will contact the parent(s) to come and pick up their child. If the parent(s) cannot be reached the office will proceed in calling the emergency contacts.

Palmer Catholic Academy recognizes that in the development of young children “bathroom” accidents may occur. If a child needs assistance in wiping, the teacher/assistant will offer the child a “flushable wipe”.

## ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

All children enrolling in Palmer Catholic Academy’s Four-year-old classes must be the required age by September 1<sup>st</sup>. Children must be familiar with public bathroom type facilities and completely toilet trained, and Pull-ups are not acceptable.

Your child is toilet trained when (without any reminders) can walk independently to the toilet, pull down his/her pants, urinate or pass bowel movements, wipe/cleanse him/herself without assistance and pull up his/her pants. Your child is not fully toilet trained if he/she has four or more accidents within a four-week period. At that time, the parents will meet with the Director and other alternatives will be decided upon.

Our preschool follows the basic administrative policies as provided by the Diocese of St. Augustine.

## ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL OF STUDENTS/CARPOOL LINE PROCEDURES

Please also see the handbook section on Arrival and Dismissal if your preschooler has older siblings.

The following procedures will assist you in the drop off and pick up of your student:

### Morning Drop Off:

- Carpool line. Please pull forward to the STOP sign in front of the school. Put your car in the park and wait for a staff member to assist your children out of the car.  
Drop off begins at 7:15 am..
- **Students enrolled in VPK Only hours can also arrive as early as 7:15 am.**
- Dismissal for VPK ONLY students is at 11:30. Please park along the curb and a staff member will walk your child to their car at dismissal time.
- Dismissal for VPK Plus Enrichment students begins at 2:15. Please arrive promptly for the dismissal time of the oldest sibling. Students who have not been picked up by the end of carpool will be walked to Angels After Hours and charged a fee. See Handbook for fees.
- If your preschool student is your ONLY student at PCA, please arrive for carpool/d dismissal promptly at 2:10. Your child will be walked to meet you in the carline at 2:15pm. Once your child is safely buckled into their car seat, please exit the parking lot IMMEDIATELY. We have a large number of families coming through carpool line following the 2:15 dismissal. We want to ensure that dismissal moves as efficiently as possible. We appreciate your cooperation.

### AT NO TIME ARE CHILDREN ALLOWED TO BE UNACCOMPANIED ON THE SIDEWALK AREAS OR ANYWHERE ON THE PARKING LOT WITHOUT AN ADULT PRESENT AND HOLDING THEIR HAND

- If you have older children attending PCA, your preschool student will be dismissed at the Release time for the oldest sibling. A staff member will walk your child to your vehicle.
- On Early release days, pick-up is at 12:00pm unless there is an older sibling (older sibling pick-up time applies). On these early release days, parents may enter the carpool line.
- Parents are to stay in the car and pull into the carpool line.
  1. Families will receive a carpool card with the student's name. Additional carpool cards are available upon request.
  2. Carpool changes require written or verbal parental consent.
  3. The carpool card should be placed on the dashboard.
  4. Follow the procedures on the back of the carpool card.
  5. Please pull forward to the STOP sign in front of the school. Put your car in park and wait for a staff member to escort your child to the car.
  6. After your child is safely in the car, please pull forward to the "holding area" and buckle your child into their car seat in order to prevent a backup.

### EARLY/LATE PICK UP (Please See Handbook)

## DISCIPLINE POLICY

The manner in which a teacher handles a discipline situation will depend on the child and the individual occurrence. The management technique could involve any of the following:

1. Provide ample activities to keep the child involved.
2. Discussion with the child and give gentle explanations and reminders.
3. Positive reinforcement and encouragement.
4. Give caring time.
5. Redirect the child.
6. Provide a quiet time. (This is a short time where the child is given time in the classroom to collect
7. him/herself until they are ready to be a part of the group activities again.)
8. Discuss the situation with the parents and set up a plan of action.
9. If all the above steps are unsuccessful or repetitive, the child may be dismissed with the principal and pastor's approval.

*Discipline will never include any of the following:*

1. Physical punishment.
2. Taking away or threatening to take away snacks, play, recess and/or resource class.
3. Making any child feel that they are "bad."

## ALLERGIES & SNACKS

At the discretion of our administration, our preschool classrooms may be required to be "NUT FREE" environments. This may include but is not limited to, whole nuts, peanut butter, almond butter, hazelnut butter and walnut butter. If you choose to use an alternate spread such as Sun Butter or Soy Butter, please send in a copy of the label identifying this product(s) since they have the scent of peanuts and may be mistaken for an actual peanut butter product. Our administration may prohibit products that state 'may have traces of nuts' or 'made in a facility that may have traces of nuts', if a child in the classroom has a life-threatening allergy to those foods.

No hard candy, popcorn, caramel corn, are permitted as these are significant choking hazards for young children.

Please read food product labels carefully. Please ensure that your child's teacher and the school office are made aware of your child's allergies.

Special birthday snacks may be organized through the classroom teacher and brought to the school for your child's birthday celebration. **Birthday snack suggestions are cookies, mini brownie bites, a cookie cake, mini muffins. NO FROSTED CUPAKES. Balloons, party favors, treat bags cannot not be sent to school.** Please inform your child's teacher that you would like to bring in a birthday snack. The teachers plan their classroom schedules in advance and this notice will assist in making your child's birthday special. All food items must be purchased from a restaurant or grocery store in prepackaged, sealed containers.

### VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN (VPK) PROGRAM

The Voluntary Prekindergarten program is funded by the State of Florida. The following procedures are required for the VPK Program, as per the State of Florida:

- Student must be four years old by September 1st
- Family must be residents of Florida
- Family must attend enrollment sessions at designated locations to receive Voluntary Pre-kindergarten Education Program Child Eligibility Enrollment Certificate or they can register for certificate online. Go to <https://familyservices.floridaearlylearning.com/> for instructions.
- Family must provide a copy of proof of Florida residency (driver's license) and child's birth certificate at enrollment session
- PCA must receive the certificate naming Palmer Catholic Academy as provider.

### ATTENDANCE POLICY

- Parents must sign the Parental Choice certificate at the end of the month, verifying their child's attendance record. The director will notify parents each month when the signature is due. If you authorize someone to sign on your behalf, this authorization must be sent via email to the director. It is very important that the form is completed fully and accurately. **PCA staff are not permitted to complete any section of the form on your behalf.**
- Adhering to PCA time of arrival and dismissal will help maintain consistency and assist in your child's overall learning experience. Inform school office personnel via written documentation, phone call/voice mail or email if your child will not be attending school.
- Office personnel will call families to verify an absence if written documentation, phone call/voice message or email was not received.

All Tuition and fee schedules are on the [pcapvb.org](http://pcapvb.org) website.

### **Four-year-old Prekindergarten Classes- Child must be four years old on September 1<sup>st</sup>**

For additional information, policies and updates please refer to the frequently asked questions on <https://familyservices.floridaearlylearning.com/> and *click on Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)*.

# PALMER CATHOLIC ACADEMY CELL PHONE CONTRACT

**\*\*REQUIRED FOR ANY MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT WHO WILL HAVE A CELL PHONE ON CAMPUS AT ANY TIME\*\***

This contract concerns the possession and use of cellular telephones by students (middle school only) on the campus of Palmer Catholic Academy. Cell phone rules and regulations are outlined in the Parent/Student Handbook. Signing this contract is an acknowledgement that both parent and child have read and understood the policy and agree to abide by it. All student cell phones that will be brought to school at any time must be registered with the front office through this form. If a student is found in possession of a cell phone without this completed cell phone contract, his/her cell phone will be confiscated and brought to the principal. This applies to instructional hours as well as after school activities, sports, and events. If the phone is confiscated a second time, the student's cell phone privileges will be revoked for the remainder of the school year. Parents and students must sign and agree to the contract below.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Homeroom: \_\_\_\_\_

## STUDENT CONTRACT

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that possessing a cell phone on campus is a privilege, not a right, and that permission may be revoked at any time if school policies are violated. I have read the Parent/Student Handbook policy regarding cell phones and agree to its provisions. Additionally, I acknowledge that the school and its staff are not responsible for the loss, theft, or damage to my cell phone and furthermore will not dedicate its resources to investigating loss, theft or damage.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## PARENT CONTRACT

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to allow my child to possess a cell phone on the Palmer Catholic Academy campus. I acknowledge that the school and its staff are not responsible for loss, theft, damage to the cell phone and furthermore will not dedicate its resources to investigating loss, theft, or damage. I have read the Parent/Student Handbook policy regarding cell phones and agree to its provisions. If my child's phone is confiscated due to policy violation, I acknowledge that I must come to the school to retrieve it at the convenience of the school staff.

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## STUDENT CELL PHONE INFORMATION

Cell Phone Manufacturer: \_\_\_\_\_

Model: \_\_\_\_\_

Color: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone number (include area code): \_\_\_\_\_

# PALMER CATHOLIC ACADEMY NETWORK ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

***Parent/Guardian signature from page 2 of the Handbook is acceptance of the Network Policies and should ensure that the student understands his/her obligations prior to signing.***

- The school's Technology Coordinator and each classroom teacher have read the DIOCESE OF ST. AUGUSTINE NETWORK ACCEPTABLE POLICY and agree to review this agreement and network etiquette with students at the beginning of the school year and then periodically throughout the year. Students will be monitored in a diligent and responsible manner. Since students may also use the network for individual work or in the context of other classes, each of them will be held responsible.
- Each student's parent or legal guardian of this(these) student(s), have read the DIOCESE OF ST. AUGUSTINE NETWORK ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY in the Student Handbook and understand that this access is only for educational purposes. Parents/guardians recognize that it is impossible for the school to restrict access to all controversial materials and will not hold the Diocese of St. Augustine, the school or any employee responsible for materials acquired on the network. Parents/guardians hereby give permission to grant Internet access privileges to their child(ren) and certify that the information contained on this form is correct.
- Users may not post on personal Internet (ex: Facebook, Twitter, Myspace) sites to which they have access away from school grounds, any pictures or inappropriate text comments that reflect a negative image of the school or school personnel, other student, races, and/or ethnicities.

## **NETWORK ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY (updated 04/11/2008)**

### **For All Parishes, Schools and Entities of the Diocese of Saint Augustine**

#### 5.0 Policy

##### 5.1 General Use and Ownership

- ❖ Authorized users should be aware that the data they create on systems remains the property of the Diocesan entity. Because of the need to protect the network, management cannot guarantee the confidentiality of information stored on any network device belonging to a Diocesan entity.
- ❖ Authorized users are responsible for exercising good judgment regarding the use of network/computer systems. Authorized users should be guided by diocesan policies on personal use, and if there is any uncertainty, authorized users should consult teacher or authorized staff.
- ❖ Authorized personnel, acting on behalf of the Diocese of Saint Augustine, may monitor equipment, systems and network traffic at any time. The Diocese of Saint Augustine maintains the right to monitor all network/computer activity derived from or utilized through its resources, whether it is online, downloaded or through printed material.
- ❖ The Diocese of Saint Augustine, through its entities, reserves the right to audit networks and systems on a periodic basis to ensure compliance with this policy.
- ❖ All data and files on network/computer systems are the property of the Diocese of Saint Augustine.

## 5.2 Security and Proprietary Information

- The user interface for information contained on Internet/Intranet/Extranet-related systems should be classified as either confidential or not confidential, as defined by school confidentiality guidelines. Staff and students should take all necessary steps to prevent unauthorized access to this information.
- Temporary passwords used by students, volunteers or temporary/contractual personnel may be known by the supervisor and other appropriate authorities.

## 5.3 Unacceptable Use

- A database of subscribers for parish or other diocesan entities can be a useful tool for the distribution of important messages/information, calendar of events, or other data. The marketplace is full of companies that offer such database opportunities. This type of database can compromise a person's identity and/or place an individual in danger, if the database is misused, compromised or shared indiscreetly. No Diocesan entity should create or subscribe to a vehicle by which subscribers, other than authorized personnel such as employees, priests, deacons, religious or those designated at the discretion of the pastor or head of the Diocesan entity, are given email addresses to communicate with other subscribers. This does not apply to instructional technology or methodology which includes approved subscriber access for a specific instructional purpose and is monitored for this purpose. This instructional technology should not offer chat or chat rooms separate from the monitored purpose. In addition, the application should NOT:
  - Allow blogs
  - Require or request photos of subscribers
  - Ask for age or gender of subscribers
  - Display subscriber email addresses
  - Allow subscribers access to other subscriber information
- ❖ The following activities are, in general, prohibited.
  - Under no circumstances is an authorized user allowed to engage in any activity that is illegal under local, state, federal or international law while utilizing the Diocesan entity-owned resources.
  - Authorized users are prohibited from attempting to circumvent or subvert any system's security measures. Authorized users are prohibited from using any computer program or device to intercept or decode passwords or similar access control information.
  - When an authorized user becomes "unauthorized" by virtue of employment, dismissal, graduation, retirement, etc., or if the authorized user is assigned a new position and/or responsibilities within the diocesan system, his/her access authorization will automatically be reviewed with the appropriate individual to determine whether continued access is warranted. This person may not use facilities, accounts, access codes, privileges or information for which he/she has not been authorized.
  - System and Network Activities: The following activities are strictly prohibited, with no exceptions:
    - Violations of the rights of any person or company protected by copyright, trade secret, patent or other intellectual property, or similar laws or regulations, including, but not limited to, the installation or distribution of "pirated" or other software products that are not appropriately licensed for use by the Diocesan entity.
    - Unauthorized copying of copyrighted material including, but not limited to, digitization and distribution of photographs from magazines, books or other

copyrighted sources, copyrighted music, and the installation of any copyrighted software for which the Diocesan entity or the end user does not have an active license is strictly prohibited. Public disclosure of information about programs (e.g. source code) without the owner's authorization is prohibited.

- Exporting software, technical information, encryption software or technology, in violation of international or regional export control laws, is illegal. The appropriate management should be consulted prior to export of any material that is in question.
- Introduction of malicious programs into the network or server (e.g., viruses, worms, Trojan horses, email bombs, etc.).
- The installation or use of Instant Messaging is prohibited.
- Using a diocesan computing asset to access inappropriate or offensive material or to engage in the procuring or transmitting of material that violates Diocesan anti-harassment or hostile environment policies.
- Making fraudulent offers of products, items or services originating from any Diocesan entity account.
- Making statements about warranty, expressly or implied, unless it is a part of normal job duties.
- Effecting security breaches or disruptions of network communication. Security breaches include, but are not limited to, accessing data of which the authorized user is not an intended recipient or logging into a server or account that the authorized user is not expressly authorized to access, unless these duties are within the scope of regular duties. For purposes of this section, 'disruption' includes, but is not limited to, creating or propagating viruses, hacking, network sniffing, spamming, pinged floods, packet spoofing, password grabbing, disk scavenging, denial of service and forged routing information for malicious purposes.
- Port scanning or security scanning is expressly prohibited unless prior notification is made to the Diocese of Saint Augustine.
- Executing any form of network monitoring which will intercept data not intended for the authorized user's host, unless this activity is a part of the authorized user's normal job duty.
- Circumventing user authentication or security of any host, network or account.
- Using any program/script/command, or sending messages of any kind, with the intent to interfere with, or disable, a user's terminal session, via any means, locally or via the Internet/Intranet/Extranet.

**Posting photos, digital video, and other personal information of children and diocesan personnel, without authorization, to Internet sites is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, activities that are conducted on personal computer equipment off-site and after working hours.**

# DIOCESE OF SAINT AUGUSTINE STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR LAY EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

## Introduction

The term “church worker” includes clergy, religious, lay ministers and employees, and volunteers in diocesan or parish ministries or programs.

## Applicability

The following ethical standards apply to church workers in the Diocese of St. Augustine. These ethical standards are not intended to inhibit any church workers in carrying out their ministry or jobs, or to limit their accessibility to the faithful. Accordingly, ***these standards are to be interpreted broadly, and with the understanding that they will require adaptation to various and changing circumstances.*** These ethical standards presuppose the existence of other laws, policies and procedures, both civil and canonical. Actions already condemned by the law or moral teachings of the Church, or by civil law are rarely repeated in these ethical standards except when deemed necessary to emphasize their significance or seriousness.

The primary purpose of these ethical standards is to serve as a guide for more effective ministry and job performance for those to whom they are applicable. Ultimately, these ethical standards are intended to assist us all in the living out of our diocesan mission statement as we, “strive to know, love and serve God in our world through the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of the Father and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

**-Standards of Conduct Regarding Counseling Activities** (*Applies to those involved in counseling activities of any kind*)

*When clergy, religious, spiritual directors and church workers are involved in counseling activities, they are in a professional relationship with the persons they counsel – as such, they should always be aware that they have considerable personal power because of their ministerial role. Accordingly, they should be particularly aware of the need for healthy physical, emotional, sexual, intellectual and spiritual boundaries. The pastoral and spiritual well-being of those counseled should always be the focus of the relationship.*

Any church workers engaged in counseling on behalf of a parish or diocesan ministry, and spiritual directors should be mindful of their level of training and competence and should so advise those who seek their counsel. They should make appropriate referrals to other professionals when this would be in the best interest of the person seeking counseling.

Counseling by all except spiritual directors should be short-term in nature. If additional counseling appears to be needed after about three counseling sessions, the person counseled should normally be referred to an appropriately qualified professional.

*“For lack of guidance a people falls; security lies in many counselors.” Proverbs 11:14*

However, this ethical standard is not meant to preclude longer periods of counseling within the context of specific programs with established goals and objectives such as, for example, marriage preparation or Project Rachel post-abortion counseling.

Any church workers engaged in counseling on behalf of a parish or diocesan ministry, and spiritual directors should give careful consideration to the possible consequences of entering into a counseling relationship with a person with whom there is a pre-existing business, professional or social relationship. Pre-existing relationships can blur the appropriate boundaries necessary for a counselor-counselee relationship and can impair the judgment of the counselor or spiritual director. Where this situation is unavoidable, counselors and spiritual director should even more diligently establish and maintain appropriate boundaries.

Counseling and spiritual direction sessions should never be audio taped or videotaped.

Any church workers engaged in counseling on behalf of a parish or diocesan ministry, and spiritual directors should studiously avoid any inappropriate sexual innuendo in the content of counseling or direction. This is especially so when the subject matter of the counseling or spiritual direction involves some aspect of human sexuality. Any church workers engaged in counseling on behalf of a parish or diocesan ministry, and spiritual directors assume complete responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear and appropriate boundaries in all counseling-related relationships. If a person being counseled, by word or actions, indicates an unwillingness or inability to abide by appropriate boundaries, it is the responsibility of the counselor or spiritual director to immediately terminate counseling and, if warranted, refer the person being counseled to another professional.

Physical contact beyond a handshake between a church worker engaged in counseling on behalf of a parish or diocesan ministry, or spiritual director and one being counseled can be misconstrued and should be avoided unless the counselor or spiritual director is certain that the contact is appropriate under the circumstances.

Counseling and spiritual direction sessions should always be conducted at appropriate places and times.

– Whenever possible, counseling sessions should be held during regular business hours established by the parish or ministry, and in an office setting. Further, offices in which counseling takes place should be designed to include a window in the door or wall, made of glass or similar material, through which human forms are distinctly visible. Where no such counseling setting is currently available steps should be taken at the earliest possible time to modify existing counseling facilities.

-Sessions should never be conducted in the private living quarters of either the priest, deacon, religious, church worker engaged in counseling on behalf of a parish or diocesan ministry, or spiritual director or the person being counseled.

– Sessions should not be conducted at places or times which could cause confusion or generate ambiguity about the nature of the relationship either in the mind of the church worker engaged in counseling on behalf of a parish or diocesan ministry, spiritual director, the person being counseled, or the church community.

Any church workers engaged in counseling on behalf of a parish or diocesan ministry, or spiritual directors should be careful to observe the ethical standards of any professional associations to which they may be required to belong, to the extent that those ethical standards do not contravene divine law or the moral teachings of the Church.

### **Standards of Conduct in Financial Matters and Regarding Church Property**

Church workers should be good stewards of any church property or goods over which they exercise supervision. They should treat such property with the care, concern, and respect with which they would treat their own private property.

Church workers should avoid commingling their own private funds with church funds, and they should never expend church funds for private or non-church purposes. There should always be a direct and articulable church-related purpose for the expenditure of church funds.

Church workers should never appropriate church property or resources to their own private or non-church uses, or allow others to do so. Occasionally, however, it may be appropriate to allow the use of church property or resources for a civic or social event. This should only be done with the specific approval of the pastor or church official responsible for the property or resources.

### **Standards of Conduct in Dealing with Minors and Vulnerable Adults**

*Church workers have a moral and ethical obligation to use good judgment in dealing with minors and vulnerable adults. Good judgment in this context means that church workers will avoid any actions which violate personal integrity or abuse the trust bestowed upon them as a result of their positions. It means that the physical and emotional safety and security of minors and vulnerable adults will always be given paramount consideration in church programs and ministries. It means that church workers will always strive to avoid even the appearance of impropriety in such matters.*

*“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” James 1:27*

*Definition of a vulnerable adult: A vulnerable adult is a person 18 years or older whose ability to engage in the normal activities of daily living, or to care for him/herself is impaired because of mental, emotional, physical or developmental causes, or from the infirmities of old age. Florida Statutes, Sec. 415.102*

Church workers should avoid physical contact with minors and vulnerable adults beyond what is required by the circumstances. When circumstances do call for physical contact that contact should never go beyond hugs, handshakes or hand-holding.

Any physical contact with minors or vulnerable adults should only occur in circumstances that are in plain view of others, for example, in the same room, from a distance or by way of window or glass opening.

The emotional comfort of the minor or vulnerable adult, rather than the church worker’s habits or modes of expression, should always be the primary consideration when engaging in any physical contact.

Church workers should be conscious of **their** vulnerability when working alone with minors or vulnerable adults. Accordingly, a team approach to ministries and programs involving these persons is always preferable to the extent possible.

The use of any alcohol or tobacco products by church workers while actively engaged in youth ministry or activity with minors or vulnerable adults is unethical conduct in this diocese.

It is always unethical and usually illegal for church workers to provide, or to knowingly tolerate the provision of, alcohol or tobacco products to minors or vulnerable adults.

Overnight accommodations in rectories or convents should never be provided for minors or vulnerable adults who are unaccompanied by parents or legal guardians, or who are not closely related by blood or marriage to the priest or religious occupants of the rectory or convent.

Church workers should never go on diocesan or parish sponsored outings or overnight trips without chaperones for minors or vulnerable adults other than their own children, or those who are closely related to them. Additionally, it is inappropriate for an adult to share a bed with a minor or vulnerable adult during any church-sponsored travel or outings.

It is unethical, immoral and potentially illegal for a church worker to show sexually explicit materials of any kind or type, under any circumstances, to minors or vulnerable adults.

It is unethical, immoral and potentially illegal for church workers to discuss sexual experiences, engage in sexual innuendo, or tell sexually oriented jokes with or to minors or vulnerable adults.

It is unethical and immoral for church workers to use sexually explicit language or “curse” words in the presence or hearing of minors or vulnerable adults.

This ethical standard is not meant to prohibit any diocesan or parish authorized educational programs which include discussions of sexuality in the context of catechetical instruction or education in Christian morality.

### **Standards of Conduct in the Maintenance of a Proper Work Place and Ministry Environment**

*Church workers should ensure that a professional work environment exists in the church community – an environment that is free from physical or psychological intimidation or harassment. Harassment denigrates another’s personal dignity, can violate one’s privacy, and detracts from the mission of the parish or diocesan agency.*

A hostile work and ministry environment can arise from a broad range of physical or verbal behaviors, including, but not limited to:

- physical or emotional abuse,
- racial insults or innuendo,
- derogatory ethnic slurs or comments,
- the telling of sexually oriented jokes,
- unwelcome sexual advances or touching, or
- the display of lewd or offensive materials.

Such a hostile work environment can arise from a single **serious** incident, or from a pattern of behavior which has the effect of creating a hostile or intimidating environment. The conduct described above is unethical and unacceptable for any church worker.

Sexual harassment is particularly offensive and unacceptable in a work or ministry environment.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, unwelcome requests for sexual favors, or any other unwelcome physical or verbal conduct of a sexual nature. It includes making unwelcome statements (written or oral) of a sexual nature to a person, or in a person’s presence.

Sexual harassment occurs when the victim of such conduct feels offended, humiliated or intimidated, **and** a reasonable person having access to all relevant information would also regard the conduct as sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is unethical, immoral and potentially illegal misconduct.

### **Standards of Conduct Regarding Parish and Diocesan Records and Information**

*Appropriate confidentiality should be maintained in creating, storing, accessing and disposing of parish and diocesan records.*

Sacramental records should generally be regarded as confidential and should only be made available to the persons referenced therein, or to other church workers with an official need to know.

When compiling and publishing parochial or diocesan statistical information from sacramental records, great care should be taken to preserve the anonymity and privacy of individuals.

Information regarding adoption and legitimacy contained in sacramental records should always remain confidential. The procedures for registering the baptism of adopted children, or issuing baptismal certificates for them, promulgated by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (now the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) on October 20, 2000 should be carefully observed. These may be obtained from the chancellor's office.

Only those church workers specifically authorized to access sacramental records should handle requests for access to them or for certificates.

Mailing lists of registered parishioners should never be sold or given to other agencies.

Parish, school and diocesan financial records, including records of donations and contributions, are to be treated as confidential, except as required for diocesan reporting and accountability purposes, and except as access is required by governmental agencies.

Records of individual contributions to a parish, the diocese, or to a ministry of the parish or diocese should be regarded as confidential and should be maintained in strict confidence unless disclosure is required by law, or unless disclosure of such information is requested or authorized by the donor.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

*Conflicts of interest can have a significant negative impact upon the effectiveness of the ministry and the church worker. Church workers should avoid situations that might lead to a conflict of interest. Additionally, even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call into question the integrity of the church worker.*

Church workers should disclose all relevant factors that potentially could create a conflict of interest.

Church workers should inform all parties when a real or potential conflict of interest arises. Resolution of conflict of interest situations should protect the person receiving ministerial services.

Church workers should not take advantage of anyone to whom they are providing services in order to further their personal or business interests, or the interests of close members of their families.

*“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel... Thus says the Lord God: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who have been pasturing themselves! Should not shepherds, rather, pasture sheep? You have fed off their milk, worn their wool, and slaughtered the fatlings, but the sheep you have not pastured.” Ezekiel 34:2-3*

When pastoral counseling or spiritual direction are provided to two or more people who have a relationship with each other, the church worker should:

- clarify with all parties the nature of each relationship;
- consider any possible conflicts of interest;
- take appropriate action to eliminate the conflict, and
- obtain from all parties written consent to continue counseling or spiritual direction.

Conflicts of interest may also arise when a church worker’s independent judgment is impaired by prior dealings, by becoming personally involved in a given circumstance, or by becoming an advocate for one person against another. In such situations the church worker should advise the persons concerned that he or she can no longer provide services or counseling. Referral to another church worker or spiritual director is normally appropriate in such cases.

# REPORTING EDUCATOR/PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT

“All employees and agents of a public school district, charter school or private school have an obligation and legal responsibility to report misconduct by instructional personnel and school administrators which affect the health, safety or welfare of a student. If someone tells you about misconduct, be a LEADER: LISTEN, EVALUATE, ACT IMMEDIATELY, DOCUMENT, ENCOURAGE, REPORT.” *Florida statutes 1006.061/Florida Department of Education*

Palmer Catholic Academy will treat all allegations of sexual misconduct seriously and deal with them in a prompt, confidential and thorough manner.

-Allegations and complaints can be made by contacting:

**Daniela DosSantos, Principal**

**Fionnuala San Juan, Assistant Principal**

(904)543-8515

**Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator:** (904) 262-3200, ext. 129

-Allegations may also be reported directly to:

**Department of Children and Families:**

1-800-96Abuse

1-800-962-2873

<http://www.myflfamilies.com/>

-In Emergency situations call 911

**STOP! KEEP OFF! CHILD ABUSE**  
**Look for the signs** Dial 1-800-96-ABUSE

**Signs of Physical Abuse**  
The child may have unexplained:  
- bruises, welts, cuts or other injuries  
- broken bones  
- burns  
A child experiencing physical abuse may:  
- seem withdrawn or depressed  
- seem afraid to go home or may run away  
- shy away from physical contact  
- be aggressive  
- wear inappropriate clothing to hide injuries

**Signs of Sexual Abuse**  
The child may have:  
- torn, stained or bloody underwear  
- trouble walking or sitting  
- pain or itching in genital area  
- a sexually transmitted disease  
A child experiencing sexual abuse may:  
- have unusual knowledge of sex or act seductively  
- fear a particular person  
- seem withdrawn or depressed  
- gain or lose weight suddenly  
- shy away from physical contact  
- run away from home

**Signs of Neglect**  
The child may have:  
- unattended medical needs  
- little or no supervision at home  
- poor hygiene  
- appear underweight  
A child experiencing neglect may:  
- be frequently tired or hungry  
- steal food  
- appear overly needy for adult attention

**Look for the Patterns**  
Serious abuse usually involves a combination of factors. While a single sign may not be significant, a pattern of physical or behavioral signs is a serious indicator and should be reported.  
If a child tells YOU about abuse:  
**Be a good listener.** Show that you understand and believe what the child tells you. Encourage, but don't pressure him/her to talk. Ask open ended questions.  
**Be supportive.** Tell the child he/she did the right thing by coming to you. Stress that he/she is not to blame. Let the child know that you want to help.  
**Don't overreact.** This can frighten the child or prevent him/her from telling you more. Do not talk negatively about the suspected abuser in front of the child.  
**Document and report it.** Document your conversation as soon as you can. If possible, write down the child's exact words.  
**Don't delay.** Never assume someone else will report the abuse. The sooner it's reported, the sooner the child and their family can be helped.

**WHO MUST REPORT ABUSE?**  
Doctors      Police Officers  
Nurses      Child Care Workers  
Social Workers      Any Witnesses  
Any/All School Personnel

Call or Report it online at: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse/report/>

# ChOICE HANDBOOK

## **(Challenge, Organize, Imagine, Create, Enrich)**

ChOICE will take place once a week per grade during the school day from 2:15-3:15 PM.

### **GOAL OF PROGRAM**

To provide enrichment for high-achieving students through higher-order and critical thinking activities and robust challenges

### **CRITERIA**

The following criteria are used to select students to be a part of the ChOICE program:

1. TerraNova test scores at least in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile (in Reading, Math, and Science, specifically)
2. Classroom performance, attitude, effort, and behavior
3. Teacher recommendation
4. IQ testing results from a private certified Educational Psychologist

In addition, the student must possess the following traits as evidenced in day-to-day classroom interactions:

1. Intrinsic motivation to learn
2. Strong work ethic
3. Ability to attack challenges and persevere in problem solving
4. Well-developed ability to think abstractly, conceptualize and synthesize information
5. Creativeness and inventiveness

**NOTE: The ChOICE selection process will take place each year. If a student is in ChOICE one year, it does not necessarily mean he/she will be invited to participate in the program the following year.**

### **CURRICULUM**

The curriculum for ChOICE will consist of higher order, critical thinking activities and will vary depending on the needs and interests of the students. Some examples of programs/activities that may be included are: Sunshine Math, Picture Perfect Science, AIMS, STREAM-based activities

## **PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS**

**ChOICE students will be re-evaluated at the end of each quarter to determine their continued participation in the program.** To remain in the ChOICE program, students must:

1. Be role models of behavior both in their classrooms and during ChOICE sessions
2. **Actively participate** in ChOICE session discussions and activities
3. Maintain report card grades of a B+ or higher in all subjects
4. Complete any independent assignments/readings that are assigned
5. Keep up with any classwork/lessons that may be missed when attending ChOICE sessions

**NOTE: If a student is asked to leave ChOICE during the school year, he/she will not be permitted to return that year.**

## **FAQ's**

### **Will my child have extra homework if he/she participates in ChOICE?**

There may be assignments, projects and/or readings that the students will be expected to complete outside of the ChOICE sessions. Students who do not complete these assignments will not be invited to continue in the program.

### **My child was in ChOICE last year but was not invited this year. Why is that?**

Each year student data and performance is reviewed. Your child may not have performed as well on the TerraNova tests or perhaps failed to meet the other criteria listed above. If you think there was an error, please contact the school.

## **Immunization and Screening Policy for the Diocese of St. Augustine**

Title XLVIII, Chapter 1003.22 (1) of Florida Statutes states that every school, public or private, shall require each student entitled to admission for the first time in a Florida school to "present a certification of a school-entry medical examination performed within one year prior to enrollment in school." Consequently, in the future, out of state students enrolling in our school must present the above-mentioned certification.

Title XLVIII, Chapter 1003.22 (2) through (4) of Florida Statutes states that "The Department of Health, after consultation with the Department of Education, shall adopt rules governing the immunization of children against, the testing for, and the control of preventable communicable diseases...Immunizations shall be required for poliomyelitis, diphtheria, rubeola, rubella, pertussis, mumps, tetanus, and other communicable diseases as determined by rules of the Department of Health. The manner and frequency of administration of the immunization or testing shall conform to recognized standards of medical practice. The Department of Health shall supervise and secure the enforcement of the required immunization." The section goes on to direct that; "...prior to admittance to or attendance in a public or private school, grades kindergarten through 12, or any other initial entrance into a Florida public or private school, each child present or have on file with the school a certification of immunization for the prevention of those communicable diseases for which immunization is required by the Department of Health and further shall provide for appropriate screening of its students for scoliosis at the proper age. Such certification shall be made on forms approved and provided by the Department of Health and shall become a part of each student's permanent record, to be transferred when the student transfers, is promoted, or changes schools."

### **Immunization Requirements**

The Florida Department of Health Immunization Section sets forth the following as requirements for school entry:

Prior to entry, attendance, or transfer to preschools, schools (kindergarten through 12th grade), each child shall have on file a Florida Certification of Immunization, DH680 (sample included at end of this policy), documenting the following:

#### **Public/Non-Public Schools K-12:**

- Four or five doses of diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis vaccine (Seventh Grade: In addition to all other compulsory school immunizations, children entering, attending, or transferring to the seventh grade in Florida schools are required to complete one dose of tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis vaccine [Tdap])
- Three, four or five doses of polio vaccine
- Two doses of measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine
- Two or three doses of hepatitis B vaccine
- Two doses of varicella vaccine

Public/Non-Public Pre-K (age-appropriate doses as indicated):

- Diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis vaccine
- Polio vaccine • Measles vaccine
- Mumps vaccine
- Rubella vaccine
- Hepatitis B vaccine
- Varicella vaccine
- Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) vaccine

## Exemptions from Immunization Requirements

There are generally recognized to be three types of exemptions sought from the schools' immunization policy—*religious*, *conscience*, and *medical*.

- *Religious exemptions*: There is nothing in Catholic moral teachings which would hold that the use of vaccines is immoral and sinful. Accepting the opinion of the much-respected *National Catholic Bioethics Center*, the Bishops of Florida take the position that, “Catholic schools or a Catholic diocese cannot grant an exemption from vaccination on religious grounds since the Catholic Church does not teach that the use of vaccinations...is intrinsically evil.” Accordingly, requests for exemptions based on religious beliefs will not be considered in any Catholic schools of this diocese.

Note: Some are concerned about vaccines derived from fetal cell lines. There are indeed a number of vaccines that are made from the cells of one or more aborted fetuses (for instance, rubella [German measles], varicella [chickenpox], and hepatitis A). But, it is important to note that it has been almost 40-years since those original cell lines were obtained, and since that time the cell lines have grown independently and, therefore, the descendent cells used in vaccines today are not the cells of the aborted child. In fact, one cannot accurately say that the vaccines developed and used today contain any of the cells from the original abortion. A statement from the Pontifical Academy for Life issued in 2005 holds that one may use these products, despite their distant association with abortion, at least until such time as new vaccines become available. They point out that, besides the risk to themselves, children who have not been immunized pose a potential threat in the schools to other children, teachers, parents, and other visitors (particularly in the case of German measles and congenital rubella syndrome, and contact, even brief, with pregnant women). Therefore, one is morally free to use the vaccine regardless of its historical association with abortion.

- *Conscience exemptions*: As discussed above, the risk to public health in our Catholic schools has been determined to be too grave to allow exemptions from immunizations on the basis of conscience, or even for parents who erroneously believe that it would be sinful to have their children immunized. Social teachings of the Catholic Church are firm and consistent on the “common good” as the principle guide to reason in this regard. In justice, we consider and sometimes place the needs of others above our own. It is in that spirit that the Catholic Church recognizes a parent’s right to decide what is in the best interest of their child, so long as the effects of that decision only impacts them or their child. It is clearly a different matter when the

consequence of that decision potentially puts others at risk. The good of respecting the conscience of parents of a single child is outweighed by the harm which could come to many as a result of an exemption on the basis of conscience. Accordingly, requests for exemptions based on conscience will not be considered in any Catholic schools of this diocese.

• **Medical exemptions:** Medical exemptions will be considered, but only if a determination can be made by diocesan officials that, based on medical evidence, admission of the child without a vaccination would not constitute a health risk to the school community under the circumstances. If such a determination cannot be made, a medical exemption will not be granted. This exemption is reserved to Diocesan officials and is not to be granted at the parish or school administrative level.

In coming to such a decision, Diocesan officials, working with the Florida Department of Health Immunization Section and other medical experts (e.g., pediatricians and immunologists), will need to be convinced that immunization/boosters are unnecessary because the child *already possesses sufficient immunity (antibody levels)*.

To credibly establish sufficient immunity, parents have several options:

o **Begin the *Catch-Up Schedule* of immunization as defined by the Center for Disease Control (CDC).** Before beginning classes, the child must have received the first dose of all required vaccines and provide a Florida Form DH680 as evidence of that fact. To remain enrolled, the child must receive all remaining vaccinations as per the *Catch-Up Schedule* timeline and provide updated DH680s as evidence of that fact. It is preferred that the data be entered into the online statewide immunization registry—*Florida SHOTS*. As long as the child remains on this schedule, the Florida Department of Health and CDC have determined that sufficient immunity will exist.

o **Immunity due to *prior disease exposure*.** Some children have already had diseases for which we immunize. When exposed in this way, a healthy child's own body will develop immunity to the disease. If that is the case, the parents must provide official medical records documenting that history of prior illness/exposure to one of the communicable diseases and this will be acceptable for that specific disease. Mere assertion by the parent that the child had a disease is not sufficient. If medical documentation is not available or prior history is questionable, the child may either be immunized (*this is always preferred*; read above) or the parent may pay to obtain serologic evidence (read below).

o **Serologic evidence of immunity.** In certain situations, serologic testing for immunity (i.e., titer testing) is acceptable as evidence of a child's immunity. Titers are only valid and

accepted for the following diseases and then only if the specific form of the test is conducted:

- ♣ **Measles:** Rubeola antibody IgG
- ♣ **Mumps:** Mumps antibody IgG
- ♣ **Rubella:** Rubella antibody IgG
- ♣ **Hepatitis B:** Hepatitis B surface antibody (HBsAb) titer (must be a quantitative test that is >10mg/dl)
- ♣ **Varicella:** Varicella antibody IgG (this test is most effective to immunity derived from natural exposure and may not detect vaccine-induced antibody)

Titers will not be accepted as a replacement for: DTap-Tdap, Meningococcal, Polio, Pneumococcal, or Hepatitis A. This is because immunities for Tetanus and Pertussis wane over time and there are no acceptable immunity tests for the others. (Note: Titer/skin tests only reveal the current level of immunity. Exemptions granted on this basis are only good for the immediate school year and must be requested and reapproved prior to each school year.)

If a parent refuses to cooperate in having their child immunized, obtaining the serologic testing, or providing medical evidence of prior exposure/immunity; the medical exemption request will be presumed to have been withdrawn and the child will not be admitted to the school.

# Florida Certification of Immunization (Form DH680)



## FLORIDA CERTIFICATION OF IMMUNIZATION

Legal Authority: Sections 1003.22, 402.305, 402.313, Florida Statutes; Rule 64D-3.046, Florida Administrative Code

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	MI	DOB (MM/DD/YYYY)
PARENT OR GUARDIAN	CHILD'S SS# (Optional)	STATE IMMUNIZATION ID#	

**Directions:**

- Enter all appropriate doses and dates below.
- Sign and date appropriate certificate (A, B, or C) on form.
- For additional information: See *Immunization Guidelines—Florida Schools, Childcare Facilities and Family Daycare Homes* for information and instructions on form completion and immunization requirements. Guidelines are available at: [www.immunizeflorida.org/schoolguide.pdf](http://www.immunizeflorida.org/schoolguide.pdf).

VACCINE	DOE CODE	Dose 1 MM/DD/YYYY	Dose 2 MM/DD/YYYY	Dose 3 MM/DD/YYYY	Dose 4 MM/DD/YYYY	Dose 5 MM/DD/YYYY
DTaP/DTP	A	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
DT	B	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tdap	P	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Td	Q	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Polio	D	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Hib	E	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
MMR (Combined) (Separate)	F	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	G, H	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	I	Measles (dose 1)	Measles (dose 2)	Mumps (dose 1)	Mumps (dose 2)	_____
		Rubella (dose 1)	Rubella (dose 2)	_____	_____	_____
Hepatitis B	J	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Varicella	K	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Varicella Disease	L	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
		Year	_____	_____	_____	_____
PneumoConjugate	N	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Select appropriate box(es)  
Certificate of Immunization for K-12

**Part A-Complete**

- DOE Code 1: Check box if immunizations are complete for kindergarten entry
- DOE Code 6: Check box if immunizations are complete for 7th grade

I have reviewed the records available, and to the best of my knowledge, the above named child has adequately been immunized for school attendance, as documented above.

**Temporary Medical Exemption**      Expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part B-Temporary**

- DOE Code 2 (For children in daycare, family daycare homes, preschool, kindergarten and grades 1 through 12 who are incomplete for immunizations in Part A) Invalid without expiration date.

I certify that the above named child has received the immunizations documented above and has commenced a schedule to complete the required immunization. Additional immunizations are not medically indicated at this time.

**Permanent Medical Exemption**

**Part C-Permanent**

(For medically contraindicated immunizations, list each vaccine and state valid clinical reasoning or evidence for exemption.)

- DOE Code 3

I certify the physical condition of this child is such that immunizations as indicated in Part C above are medically contraindicated.

Physician or Clinic Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Physician or  
Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Issued by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_