

# St. Athanasius Academy

## Faculty Handbook

\*This is a living document and, as such, is regularly updated. Last edit: 6/22/21\*

***“Education is the appreciation of knowledge so that you can ask more questions” – Dr. Cyril Gary Jenkins***

### MISSION STATEMENT

St. Athanasius Academy (SAA) seeks to train the minds and develop the hearts of its students, so they will grow to glorify God in their families, parishes, and eventually, wherever they chose to work. SAA seeks to partner with parents, providing inspiration, as well as some structure, for their children. And yet, we acknowledge that, by God’s design, every parent is their child’s first, and most important, teacher. The online courses at St. Athanasius Academy provide gasoline for the homeschooling journey, but parents remain in the driver’s seat, providing their children with face-to-face direction and accountability.

### PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

In the opening stanzas of T.S. Eliot’s poem, *Choruses from the Rock*, he laments:

*Where is the Life we have lost in living?*

*Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?*

*Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?*

We live in the *information age*, and with an array of internet search engines at our fingertips, we may live with the illusion that any question can be easily answered. And yet, most of us know what it’s like to spend an evening conducting internet “research” only to come away feeling empty and discouraged. At St. Athanasius Academy, we endeavor to present information and cultivate skills in our students in a way that is life-giving, and prepares the minds and hearts of our students to serve them in a life with Christ. As faculty, the content in our course syllabi, the way that we conduct ourselves during our online classes, and even the way that we live our faith in our “personal” life provides the answer to these questions: it is Christ, and Christ in us, that is the fountain of life and wisdom. As faculty, we are the most important “book” that our students will read and study, and we pray that, therein, students will come to know Christ.

Philosophies regarding how to best educate students abound, and many of our faculty members have experience teaching and learning in schools that have a particular approach. Classical, constructivist, and behaviorist modes of education, among others, may all provide strategies

that teachers may find helpful. However, as a teacher at St. Athanasius Academy, we all agree that the growth of our students and families is more important than strict adherence to philosophy. St. Paisios of Mt. Athos encourages us to “be the bee,” to draw God’s grace from every situation we find ourselves in, and we can apply the same approach to our experience with various educational models. As Christian teachers, we seek to know, understand, and love the students and families who come to us. We seek God’s wisdom and discernment as we present information and develop the skills of our students and families, and we seek to do so in whatever way is most helpful for the particular group of students in front of us.

We think it’s important to be clear that St. Athanasius Academy is not a “Classical” school. Our faculty and students hail from a wide variety of educational backgrounds, many of which are not Classical, and we hope that all students feel welcome and able to engage at St. Athanasius regardless of their prior training or abilities. Like Classical schools, we DO endeavor to teach what is true, good, and beautiful. And yet, we remain open to teaching content and using methods that are both modern and compatible with our Orthodox Christian faith.

Furthermore, some of our students are not chrismated Orthodox Christians. Families from many backgrounds are drawn to SAA and may enroll. Be prepared to have students from a spectrum of religious backgrounds in your classroom. While we do not put any faith requirements on our students and their families, we do require all faculty to be Orthodox Christians in good standing.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**

**Fr. John Finley** holds a Master’s degree in Sacred Theology from St. Athanasius College. Fr. John is the dean of St. Athanasius Academy and College. He has been involved at the leadership level since the 1970s and has been instrumental in the development of the homeschool academy and undergraduate college program.

**Dcn. Adam Roberts** holds a Master’s degree in Pastoral Counseling from the University of Balamand, is the author of several books, director of multiple documentaries, and is the full-time Content Creator for the Antiochian Dept. of Missions and Evangelism. Dn. Adam is the assistant dean of St. Athanasius Academy and College and was the sole administrator of the academy from its inception until the hiring of a principal in 2021. Dn. Adam continues to be involved in the areas of advancement and development.

**Principal Brooke Chapman** holds a Master’s degree in English with a concentration in Children and Young Adult Literature from Kansas State University and a B.A. in English and Secondary Education from Lyon College. Since 2008, Mrs. Chapman has been teaching English, Composition, special topics in literature, French, and music at the private secondary and university levels. As principal, Mrs. Chapman oversees the well-being of the school as a whole. Her primary focus is to lead, encourage, communicate, and strengthen the St. Athanasius Academy families, faculty, and staff.

## **CLASSROOM POLICIES**

We want teachers at SAA to have the freedom they need to conduct their classes in a way that works for students and is familiar for them, but we also acknowledge that families will be more effective partnering with us and managing their childrens' school work if some of our policies are uniform.

### **Grading**

Parents and students may access grades via our learning platform, Edmodo, in the gradebook section. Please do not utilize any gradebook besides the one available on Edmodo. Final grades for classes will be posted no later than two weeks after the final class of the semester and/or year and can also be found on the Edmodo gradebook for each individual class. As faculty, please send a communication to your families when your final grades have been posted on Edmodo. St. Athanasius' faculty will provide an educated decision regarding each student's grade based on performance and growth in class. However, the ultimate grade assigned to each student at the homeschool level is dependent upon the family. Grades will *not* be housed by St. Athanasius Academy and we do not provide transcripts. If parents need any help in accessing grades or have any grade related issues, please have them contact the instructor.

### **Late Work**

Each SAA teacher is allowed to have their own policies regarding late work. While we do not have an official stance on late work as an academy, we highly encourage students to turn in work on time and to actively communicate with their instructors if work will be late. Both promptness and communication will teach our students to be responsible and dependable.

### **Attendance**

While SAA does not require teachers to keep track of attendance, we highly encourage it. The easiest way to do this is to post a "wellness check" on Edmodo each day and require the students to respond to it as an attendance check. Teachers may then keep track of their student attendance in their own files or simply keep the running record of wellness checks in their Edmodo feed as evidence. Keep in mind that a student's attendance may be beneficial if the need for a parent-teacher conference arises.

### **Teacher Absences**

Your students need your presence and thrive on stability within the classroom. Please try to avoid being absent as much as possible. Excess absences may have to result in disciplinary action. Absences are tough on everyone, but are often unavoidable. If you know that you cannot be present for a class, you need to contact the principal as soon as possible to arrange coverage for how the class will proceed in your absence. Unexpected absences due to illness need immediate attention. Please contact the principal and the administration as soon as you

know you will not be available. You may contact Brooke Chapman at (816) 898-4280 and Dn. Adam Roberts at (615) 971-0000. Call, do not text, email, or Slack, if at all possible. A Google drive document of faculty contacts will be available to all faculty members. In the event of a planned or unforeseen absence, please try to find your own replacement from this list. You must still contact the principal even if you have located a substitute teacher.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Edmodo

We use a platform called Edmodo for our school because it is very secure, it records and stores videos of classes for the long term, and the competitive pricing helps us to deliver courses at a rate that is actually affordable for your average homeschooling (probably single income) family.

Teachers who are new to SAA and unfamiliar with Edmodo should familiarize themselves with the system well in advance of their first class. Our annual teacher orientation on July 15th, 2021 will be the first and best way to gain familiarity with Edmodo. **For those who cannot make the teacher orientation, we ask that by Monday, August 23, 2021**, these teachers sign into the system and experiment with the following features:

- Starting Class with Zoom via Edmodo class page
- Sharing your screen
- Muting students (for those who unintentionally add distracting background noise)
- Uploading documents, links, and other resources
- Recording grades (for academic teachers only)

If you would like more training on these functions, please plan to attend an online faculty meeting on **July 15th, 2021 at 8pm EST**. The meeting will be recorded for those who cannot attend. Also, at this meeting, we will demonstrate some ways to effectively use technology in class.

### Slack

Slack is a vital application used by the academy for communication. You may use it on both desktop and mobile devices. Checking in on Slack for important communications is of the utmost importance for our success as an academy faculty. If you need assistance with Slack, please contact the Principal or Administrative Assistant. You may access Slack on the desktop here: [stathanasiusacademy.slack.com](https://stathanasiusacademy.slack.com)

### Teacher Evaluations

Teacher evaluations do not have to be feared! While nobody likes being “watched,” please look at our teacher evaluations as a chance for our faculty and staff to offer praise, encouragement, and techniques/tips for being the most effective teacher you can be! Teacher evaluations will happen once per semester. Teachers will be given a general time frame for when observations

may occur. These observations may either be live or viewed later by the administration. If teachers wish to have additional observations to assist in teaching techniques they need to contact the principal to schedule an observation. A brief recap of positives and areas to potential work on will be provided by the administration via email.

### **Planning for 2022 / 2023**

Not Returning Next Year? Hoping to teach a different course next time? Please let us know before Holy Week of each year so that we can plan accordingly.

### **Pay**

All positions are paid 75% of student tuition. Our classes have 5-10 students. We have two tuition tiers: \$196 and \$266. The higher tuition rate is for core subjects that meet twice a week. All other classes are \$196 for the year.

### **Examples in Compensation**

- 5 students at lower-tier tuition: \$735 for the year
- 10 students at the lower-tier tuition: \$1,470
- 5 students at the higher-tier tuition: \$997.50
- 10 students at the higher-tier tuition: \$1,996

You will be paid once per semester via a Deluxe Payment electronic check issued from SAA. This check may then be printed for free and deposited at your bank. You may choose to electronically deposit your issued check for a small fee. Checks will be issued after the deadline for students to withdraw from class has passed.

### **IMPORTANT DATES FOR 2021 - 2022**

Syllabi due for Review	<b>Before the end of March Each Year</b>
Revisions to Syllabi due	<b>Before the End of the School Year</b>
Syllabi Posted on Website	<b>Before the End of April Each year</b>