



St. Augustine's

# **MIDDLE SCHOOL MANUAL**

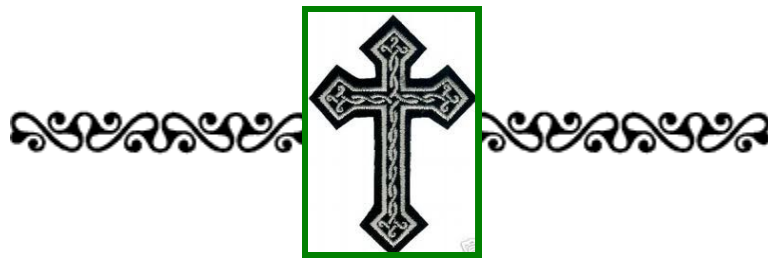
A guide to management and  
organizational skills for success!



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## Why St. Augustine Cathedral School?

*St. Augustine's goal is to help you get to Heaven.* It's just that simple. If we can't pray together, grow in faith together, and look to make the world a better place, then why are we here?

All middle school students will continue to have theology class. You will be encouraged to read and discuss the Bible, develop a more insightful prayer life, and gain a deeper knowledge of the Catholic faith (grow in faith, knowledge, and stewardship... where have you heard that before?)

Eighth grade students will also have Confirmation preparation as part of their theology experience.

Middle school students at St. Augustine are expected to set a good example for younger student by representing Christ in their behavior, actions, and presentation. It is the *St. A Way!*

Embedded in our religious instruction, as well as other core subjects, are the seven principles of Catholic Social Teachings:



1. Care for God's Creation
2. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable.
3. Life and Dignity of the Human Person
4. Call to Family, Community, and Participation
5. Rights and Responsibilities
6. Solidarity
7. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

Students will continue to learn and be expected to memorize the following: Ten Commandments, Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Cardinal Virtues, Seven Sacraments, Mysteries of the Rosary. They will also be expected to memorize various specific prayers at each grade level in the middle school: prayers that we use every day such as Our Father, Hail Mary, Apostles Creed, Beatitudes, Act of Contrition, Morning Offering, and Hail Holy Queen, and others.

# WELCOME

Congratulations! You've made it to middle school. You are growing up and moving up! You'll enjoy new activities and gain more independence than you did in elementary school.

## **What is so different about middle school?**

In middle school, students have several teachers, each with different homework and test schedules. Assignments must be turned in on time, free of spelling and punctuation errors. Expect to keep up with assignments and contribute to class discussion every day.

Middle school life consists of making choices. Lots and lots of choices.

Students in middle school are confronted with several choices of activities (school specific, CSGK sponsored, and non-school related extracurricular activities such as athletics, leadership council, Science Olympiad, music, band, and performing arts such as dance or acting). They have to balance family responsibilities and homework as well. Consider the value, and choose carefully. As much as some try, you can't do them all, so be selective.

You have choices in your relationships with your classmates. Choose to hang with people that bring you up, not take you down. If you are kind and positive, you will have a terrific middle school experience. Love one another as God loves you!

Choose to eliminate aggressive behavior (yes, it's a choice on your part.) Shut it down or report it. Remember you can't control the actions of others, but you can control your *reaction*. Sometimes you just need a thicker skin. Have you ever felt like a victim? Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." In other words, a bully is only a bully if you give them that power.

The bottom line is that you make your own reality. It's up to you to make you the best you can be. The only one who is responsible for your happiness is you. If things are not going the way you'd like, you can make changes. Eleanor Roosevelt also said, "In the long run, we shape our lives, and we shape ourselves. The choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility."

## **How do you balance it all?**

The good news is that as a middle school student, you have the opportunity to develop great management and organizational skills. These skills will take the stress out of academics and serve you well in your transition to Hackett and make your life *easier* now.

## **What are the skills necessary for success?**

Did you know that it is much harder and more stressful to be disorganized than it is to be organized? Right here in this manual, you will find organizational tools and tips that will help you be the best you can be. Take the time to read it and share it with your parents.

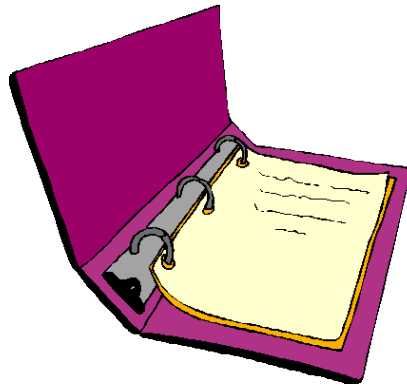
## **What else is in this manual?**

After the tools and tips, there is a section of policies that is unique to the middle school. For instance, there is information about Lunch-N-Learn, test taking tips, late and missing work policies, eligibility requirements, and much, much more.

# The TOOLS



# The Binder...



Are you tired of losing things? Did you leave your homework at home? Did you realize you left your homework in your locker and couldn't finish at home? Did you bring the wrong folder to class?

The journey to success begins with an organized binder. It saves time and keeps track of your schoolwork. A binder is like a compact file cabinet to carry and easily access handouts, notes, information, and homework. The goal is to find items and retrieve them quickly.

Here are the guidelines you should consider when purchasing a binder and accessories:

- three rings
- 1.5" or larger
- 3-hole plastic subject dividers with tabs
- 3-hole pocket folders or pocket inserts (one for each core: theology, math, science, language arts, social studies, and lastly, miscellaneous for any specials class) - plastic ones are better because they don't rip as easily.
- loose-leaf paper
- optional: plastic sheet protectors (use to store important handouts, class schedule, course syllabus, rubrics, examples of excellence, etc.)

Not to worry, your teacher will help you set it up and help you label everything.



**YOUR BACKPACK IS NOT A BINDER!**



**YOUR LOCKER IS NOT A BINDER!**



# The Planner...

Do you think you don't need one? Are they too much trouble and not worth the effort? Do you think *cool people* don't use one?

Life is busy and getting busier all the time. Suppose on Wednesday, you have a math quiz over chapter 4. A teacher has assigned chapters 7 and 8 in your literature book and a summary is due on Thursday. Language arts has assigned vocabulary cards on Tuesday. Your science report is due Friday. The deadline to hand in the permission slip for the dance is Monday and the money is due too. You have a basketball practice everyday after school. Your dad's birthday is tomorrow and company is coming over. Don't forget the bar on your braces broke and you need to go in Tuesday morning for a repair.

Your parents have a calendar for your record things like appointments, schedules, and birthdays. It's a fact of life that people have to write things down in order to manage things.

If used correctly and consistently a planner is a valuable tool to help stay organized and manage your workload. Even if you think you don't need one, learning to use this tool will ensure the discipline later in your academic career particularly when things get even more demanding in high school (and *it will!*)

Do any of these symptoms sound familiar? These often occur when a planner is not used:

- late or missing assignments
- butterflies or anxiety about school or homework
- finishing assignments or studying for tests at the last minute
- forgetting homework changes
- disappointment from your teachers or parents
- disappointing grades



# The Study Buddy...

## Huh???

Even with the best laid plans, sometimes questions arise. Maybe you're confused about an assignment or project. Maybe you've been sick for a day or two. A reliable study buddy is yet another important tool for success.

Ask a classmate in each class to be your study buddy. Exchange phone numbers or email addresses and establish a phone call cut off time. Maybe your study buddy is in bed by 9 PM, and it is not a good idea to call at 9:15 PM!

Here are some guidelines for a study buddy:

- Keep the call about business. Don't waste time socializing.
- Be respectful of your study buddy's available time-don't call too early or too late.
- Before contacting your study buddy, try to solve the problem yourself. Check your notes, handouts, and the teacher's webpage. If you still can't figure it out, go ahead and contact him or her.
- Give your study buddy reliable information. If you don't know or you're not sure, say so!
- Don't rely too much on your study buddy.

## Studying with your Buddy

Working with another person can be helpful because you can share and exchange ideas and compare notes.

- Know what to study. Begin by reviewing the teacher's instructions about the test. What chapters will be covered? Will the test be multiple choice or essay? What are the big ideas of the material?
- Use your time wisely. Check notes, chapter headings, and study guides to keep you on target. Often too much time is spent on the first few items and then you run out of time.
- Share the load and work to get through the material.
- Keep the breaks short. Save the chillin' and the snackin' until the end!



# The Teacher...



Each middle school teacher is very busy but each one cares very much about your success. You may need to seek their assistance. It is important that you be prepared, persistent, and polite.

## **Be Prepared.**

Try to tackle your problem yourself before asking for help. Check your class handouts, notes, and webpage. Call your study buddy. If you've done your best and still can't solve the problem, ask away! Let your teacher know that you have tried to solve the problem yourself. Your maturity will be appreciated.

## **Be Persistent.**

With so many students and assignments to keep track of, middle school teachers have hundreds of things to manage. Ultimately, as you get older, it increasingly becomes your responsibility to get what you need from the teacher (a success skill needed in high school). Keep asking for help and a specific time to get the help, jot your teacher a note, send an email!

## **Be Polite.**

Listen in class. Sit up straight and keep your eyes on the speaker when he or she is talking. Get involved in the conversation and participate in class. That is the best way a teacher can get to know you. Remember your manners and thank someone when they help you. Take responsibility for yourself and your work. Mistakes happen - simply apologize, face the consequences, and move on!



# Your Workspace...

It is a well-known fact that a worker's productivity increases depending upon their surroundings. People are happier and work more efficiently when they have a space of their own to work in, which is organized and stocked with the supplies they need to get their work done. Your space affects the quality of your work and your ability to manage your time.

Make your space your own. Some people work best at the dining room table. Some like music playing, others find it distracting. Some work in their bedroom while others text and chat with their friends when left on their own. The bottom line is that you have to find what works for you. However, here are some suggestions that will help establish good habits:

- Find a place **away from distractions** like the television, phones, video games, and people talking.
- Access to a computer with a printer is important, but if the computer is a distraction for you, don't keep it at your workspace.
- A tabletop surface should be large enough to hold an open textbook and binder.
- Good lighting is important and a desktop lamp will be helpful.
- Use a straight-backed, comfortable chair.
- Have a dictionary, thesaurus, and grammar & punctuation guide handy.
- Have the proper supplies at hand such as pencils, pens, markers, ruler, index cards, pencil sharpener, etc.
- Keep a trash can close by so you can keep your desk top clean and clutter free.
- Use your binder to store papers, notes, and handouts you may need later.
- Make your workspace fun where you don't mind hanging out. Place photos of your buds, cool posters, stickers, decals, etc. nearby.
- Lastly, establish a **routine** for getting your work done. Maybe you hang

loose for a while after you get home and get down to business after dinner. Maybe you are better off getting your work done as soon as you get home and then you have the evening free. What doesn't work? Waiting until bedtime and then staying up too late, or planning to get up early and attack homework before you leave for school.



# The Rubric...

Middle school teachers use a rubric for written papers and projects. Rubrics provide directions how to succeed. Pay close attention! It will tell you exactly what you need to do to get a good grade on a project, paper, or assignment. Use it!

An example of a writing rubric might look similar to this:

	<b>4 Excelling</b>	<b>3 Achieving</b>	<b>2 Developing</b>	<b>1 Beginning</b>
<b>Content ideas</b> fully developed Main Concept Details Examples	You included many appropriate ideas and examples that do an exceptional job of communicating your understanding	Plenty of appropriate ideas used effectively.	You used ideas, details and examples. Now you need to be more selective of what you use.	Ideas, details, and examples don't quite help explain what you are trying to say.  You need more details and examples to express your ideas.
<b>Information/work is organized</b> Sequence Topic Sentence Details Examples Summary				
<b>Voice/Audience</b> Appropriate for purpose/reader				
<b>Word Choice/Clarity</b> Appropriate for content area or purpose				
<b>Sentence Fluency</b>				
<b>Mechanics/Conventions</b> Grammar Punctuation Spelling				

# Computers...

Computers are useful for fun and entertainment. Computers are also an important tool for success when used for research, to track news and events at school, and to type and store awesome papers and projects.

## **Communications**

Email is a huge timesaver, especially if you're tempted to talk too long on the phone. Store the email addresses of your teachers, study buddies, and group project members.

## **Word Processing**

By middle school, you're probably typing at least 20 to 25 words per minute. Keep practicing your typing skills and soon you'll be completing essays and reports much faster. Get familiar with the features on your computer in order to format properly, use tools like spell check and thesaurus, and create tables or graphs for inserts. Save and print your own work at home!

## **TIP**

Expand your vocabulary by using the thesaurus function in Microsoft Word. Simply right click on the first letter of a word. Scroll down to "synonym" and various word choices will pop up. Click on one of the choices and it is automatically inserted into your sentence.



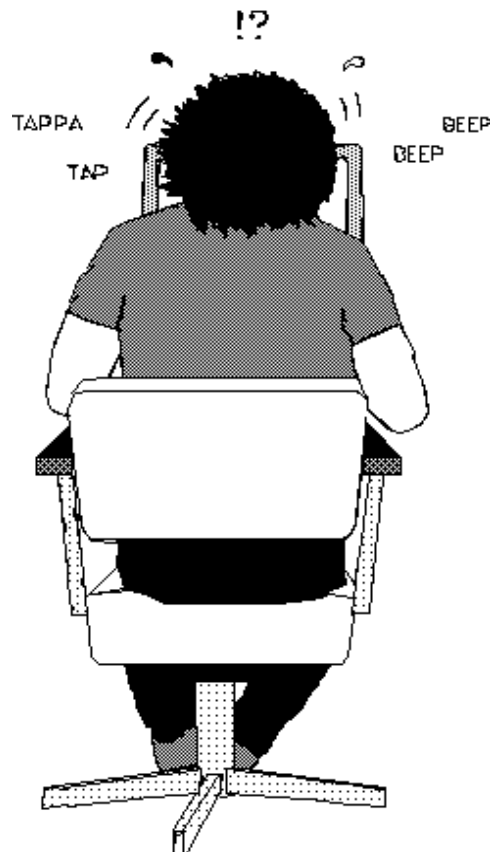
## Using Computers at School

Before using any computer at St. A., you'll be asked to complete an *acceptable use policy* contract with your CPU teacher. Just as every other year, the contract will walk you through guidelines on appropriate usage of all school's technology. After the document is signed by you and a parent, your privileges will be available to you, and your responsibilities will kick-in too.

## Submitting Your Documents to Your Teachers

*Print your paper at home* and be sure to save it. Be ready to turn it in when you arrive at class.

Remember, sometimes technology doesn't always go as planned. Occasionally, there may be an exception (yes, an *exception*) where you can't print the document at home. Always make a copy of the document on your flash-drive. Consider emailing a copy to your teacher. Then if your paper flies out the window of the bus, you spill your orange juice on it, or your printer runs out of ink, you won't be walking into class without a paper! Telling your teacher you couldn't turn it in when it is due isn't acceptable. Would an adult tell his or her supervisor that the work wasn't done on time for the meeting? No, of course not. Remember, getting work done and turned in on time is your job as a student.



# World Wide Web

## Internet

Here are some useful websites. Check them out and bookmark them (or add them to your list of favorites) so that you may access them easily next time.

General homework help	<a href="http://factmonster.com/homework">factmonster.com/homework</a> <a href="http://yahooligans.yahoo.com/school_bell/">yahooligans.yahoo.com/school_bell/</a> <a href="http://jishka.com">jishka.com</a> <a href="http://multcolib.org/homework">multcolib.org/homework</a> <a href="http://yahooligans.yahoo.com/reference">yahooligans.yahoo.com/reference</a>
Math	<b>Textbook site:</b> <a href="http://www.bigeideasmath.com">www.bigeideasmath.com</a> <a href="http://mathforum.org">mathforum.org</a> <a href="http://math.com">math.com</a> <a href="http://webmath.com">webmath.com</a>
Language arts	<b>Textbook site:</b> <a href="http://eolit.hr.w.com/hlla/">eolit.hr.w.com/hlla/</a> <a href="http://englishplus.com/grammar/">englishplus.com/grammar/</a> <a href="http://students.resa.net">students.resa.net</a> <a href="http://m-w.com">m-w.com</a> <a href="http://ipl.org/div/aplus">ipl.org/div/aplus</a>
Science	<b>Textbook site:</b> <a href="http://phschool.com">phschool.com</a> <a href="http://cotf.edu/ete/modules/msese/explorer.html">cotf.edu/ete/modules/msese/explorer.html</a> <a href="http://score.k12.ca.us">score.k12.ca.us</a> <a href="http://library.thinkquest.org/12413/index.html">library.thinkquest.org/12413/index.html</a> <a href="http://madsci.org">madsci.org</a>
Social studies	<b>Textbook site:</b> <a href="http://teachtci.com">teachtci.com</a> <a href="http://geocities.com">geocities.com</a> <a href="http://biography.com">biography.com</a> <a href="http://britannica.com">britannica.com</a> <a href="http://hyperhistory.com/online">hyperhistory.com/online</a>
Theology	<b>Textbook site:</b> <a href="http://faithfirst.com/students.html">faithfirst.com/students.html</a> <a href="http://catholiconline.org">catholiconline.org</a> <a href="http://dioceseofkalamazoo.org/">dioceseofkalamazoo.org/</a>





## Wikipedia

DO NOT use Wikipedia for research. It can be changed by any end-user and is therefore considered unreliable! There are so many reliable resources out there to use instead!

### How can you use Wikipedia effectively?

Wikipedia *can* be use as a launch-pad for further research. Maybe an article has a host of links in its list of references. Maybe an article has several key words or terms that spark your ideas. Do you see the difference?



## Plagiarism

Plagiarism is using someone else's words and ideas as your own. It is unethical. Be sure to take information from the internet and restate the information in your own words.

You should give credit to the website where you received the information. For instance, if you were researching the hazards of smoking and found some statistics about health risks, it is tempting to say something like the following:

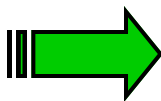
*Smoking decreases a person's life span by 13 to 14 years..*

Instead, remember that you are not an expert and it's okay to tell a reader where the information came from. Try something like this:

*According to the Lance Armstrong Foundation's website, smoking decreases a person's life span by 13 to 14 years.*

It makes sense, doesn't it?

Confusing? Not to worry. Your teacher will instruct you about citing research and how to use appropriate research when it is relevant for a paper!



Never cut-and-paste verbiage into your papers and turn it in as your work. Teachers are very familiar with middle school writing. They know what types of vocabulary and sentence structure are used. When work doesn't sound like your voice, guess what... they check it out. You'll end up with a zero on your assignment and suffer the embarrassment of a write up for academic cheating. Yuck!!!



Helpful  
Tips

## **Preparation**

Go to class prepared. It is your responsibility to bring the tools you will need for the day. Yes, expect to use your textbook each day. Yes, you will need pencils, pens, and loose-leaf paper (it isn't your neighbor's job to supply you with paper!) If a class uses a composition book, journal, or things like a protractor, you need to have those with you as well. Teachers will not excuse students to go to his or her locker to get the supplies once class has begun. If you are not prepared for class, expect consequences.

## **Note-taking**

Taking notes means to restate big ideas, supporting details, and key concepts from the text, a lecture, or a presentation in as few words as possible without losing meaning. It's okay to delete redundant information, abbreviate, use symbols, and write in fragments to get the ideas down. Remember, you are not rewriting the text - that has already been done by the author! For example, practice reading a paragraph and writing the big idea in 10 words or less. Can you do it? Yes, of course you can!

## **Studying Hints**

The following will help you be well prepared and ready for a test:

- Review your notes from that day's lesson each evening.
- Reread the chapter and take notes about the big ideas.
- Create flashcards on key vocabulary terms.
- Rewrite your notes. You'll retain 50% more each time you rewrite them.
- Read your notes and highlight information you need to revisit.
- Rewrite your highlights and continue the process over a couple of days.
- Visit the study guide or the rubric your teacher has provided.
- Have someone quiz you (maybe your study buddy over the phone!)
- Get a good nights sleep.

## Writing an Essay

Wouldn't it be wonderful if there was only one way to write a paper? Unfortunately, it depends on the type of paper you are writing as to its format. What are the requirements? Is it one paragraph or the standard five paragraph format? Is it formal? Does it need to be typed? May I use contractions? Do I need to spell out numbers?

The bottom line is that your teacher has provided a rubric and an example of excellence to use as a guide. Your teacher should post a copy of the rubric to his or her webpage. Use it!

Proofreading is a must! Your essay must be free of spelling and grammatical errors. To check for sentence construction, read your paper aloud. You will *hear* when something is cumbersome and incorrect.

Oh... did you check the rubric *again*? Did you address all of the items listed? Then you already know what to expect for a grade!

Check out pages 21, 22, and 23. You will find a model and writing sample of a five paragraph essay. Notice there are two different formats of the writing sample. Do you notice the difference? Both are perfectly acceptable styles and feel free to choose the method you prefer. Avoid blending the two styles: it is improper to skip a line between paragraphs AND indent the first line of the following paragraphs.



# **Five-Paragraph Essay Model**

**Essay Title (centered)  
By your name**

## **Paragraph 1: The Introduction**

- **Topic sentence (main idea)**
- **Example sentence #1 (subtopic)**
- **Example sentence #2 (subtopic)**
- **Example sentence #3 (subtopic)**
- **Concluding sentence that repeats the main idea**

## **Paragraph 2: Based on example sentence #1 in introduction**

- **Topic sentence for example #1 (from the introduction)**
- **3 examples sentences that prove your topic sentence**
- **Concluding sentence that repeats example #1**

## **Paragraph 3: Based on example sentence #2 in introduction**

- **Topic sentence example # 2 (from the introduction)**
- **3 examples that prove your topic sentence**
- **Concluding sentence that repeats example #2**

## **Paragraph 4: Based on example sentence #3 in introduction**

- **Topic sentence example #3 (from the introduction)**
- **3 examples that prove your topic sentence**
- **Concluding sentence that repeats example #3**

## **Paragraph 5: Conclusion**

- **Topic sentence (main idea)**
- **Example sentence #1 (subtopic)**
- **Example sentence #2 (subtopic)**
- **Example sentence #3 (subtopic)**
- **Concluding sentence that repeats the main idea**

**MLA Format (see page two for description)**

Jane Doe

Mrs. Jones

Language Arts

12 February 2012

**My Dog Romero**

My dog, Romeo, is the best pet anyone could have. He is beautiful and easy to care for. Playing with him is lots of fun. He always takes care of me. There isn't a better pet anywhere.

Romeo is a beautiful tricolor Sheltie and he is easy to care for. He is mostly black with white and a bit of brown. Caring for him is easy because I simply have to make sure he has fresh water and food every day. Once a week, I have to brush his coat to keep it from matting, but the brush must feel good because he never tries to squirm away. I exercise him by throwing his toys, and he keeps running after them. Romeo is a good pet because he is nice looking and doesn't require much care.

Romeo is lots of fun to play with. He loves to play catch. He follows me around the house with a toy and drops it on my foot hoping I will kick it. He can catch just about anything, but his favorite is chasing a Frisbee. I really have fun playing with Romeo.

Romeo takes care of me. He always follows me when I leave a room. When I am sitting on the couch, he plops down right beside me. When we are outside in the woods, he always makes sure that I keep up with the rest of the family. He always watches out for me.

## MLA Format

As you can see, Romeo is a great pet. I am proud of him and he doesn't require much care. Playing with him is always enjoyable. He watches over me and keeps me safe. Romeo is absolutely the best pet anyone could ever have!

MLA format:

Notice the heading and the order: student's name, then the teacher's name, the subject, and finally the date.

The title is centered. It is NOT **bolded**, underlined, or ALL CAPITALIZED, or **ALL OF THE ABOVE**. It's just plain text.

Each paragraph, including the introduction paragraph, needs to be indented.

The entire document is Times New Roman, 12 font, and double spaced.

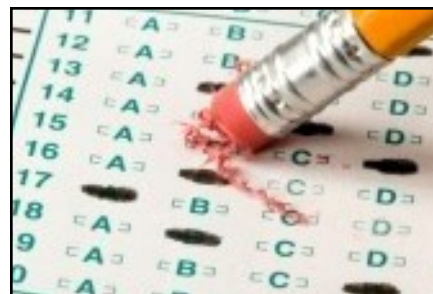
The ink should be black. It is colored in the example so that you can see the relationship with the graphic organizer.



**Modern Language Association**

## Test Taking Tips

The middle school has a couple of posters in the classrooms for multiple choice strategies. The first is called “E-I-O” - it’s kind of like Old MacDonald. It stands for eliminate incorrect options. When you read the question, cross out the choices you know are incorrect. Through the process of elimination, you’ll be able to narrow your choices.



Another strategy is what the teachers call “CRAC.” It stands for cover, respond, answer, and choose. Using this strategy, you simply place your hand over the answer choices before you read the question to yourself. After reading the question and without looking at the answers, mentally answer the question. Once you’ve done that, go ahead and look at the answer options. Which one matches your answer? Badda-boom, badda-bing!

There are other methods too:

1. If more than one answer is correct and “all of the above” is not an option, then look for the answer that has the biggest idea. For example, if the choices are (A) *snowy*, (B) *low temperatures*, (C) *little sunlight*, or (D) *winter months*, notice how answers A, B, and C all are components of the last choice, winter months, which is the correct answer.
2. Read through the entire test first. Then go back and answer the ones for which you are most confident and save the trickier ones for later.
3. Some questions may provide answers to other questions! You may pick up cues for answers from the first reading, or become more comfortable in the testing situation.
4. Review both questions and answers; it is possible you misread questions the first time.
5. Use the margin to explain why you chose the answer if the question does not seem clear or if the answer seems ambiguous.
6. Circle key words in difficult questions. This will force you to focus on the central point.
7. Avoid answer options that don’t fit grammatically. For example, if the question ends with the word “an,” you know the answer will begin with a vowel sound.
8. Avoid answer options that are totally unfamiliar to you. Trust your instinct.
9. If there is an “all of the above” option, but you are only sure that two answers are correct, that answer choice has a strong possibility that it is correct.
10. If two options are opposite each other, chances are one of them is correct.
11. If the question used a negative (which of these is NOT so-and-so), then create the statement in a positive equivalent and consider the choices.
12. If two answers seem correct, compare them for differences to find the best answer.
13. If you have absolutely no idea and have to guess, your best guess is “B” or “C.” Most tests are written to hide the correct response within the other responses.



## Take the *Grrrr* out of Group Work



“Last month, my social studies teacher assigned a group project. I was in a group with three other kids in my class. It turned out to be one of the most frustrating experiences of my life. We disagreed and argued about what our project should be and spun our wheels getting nothing done. I finally stepped in and did most of the work. Even though I worked the hardest, we all were given the same mediocre grade, and it wasn’t cool.”

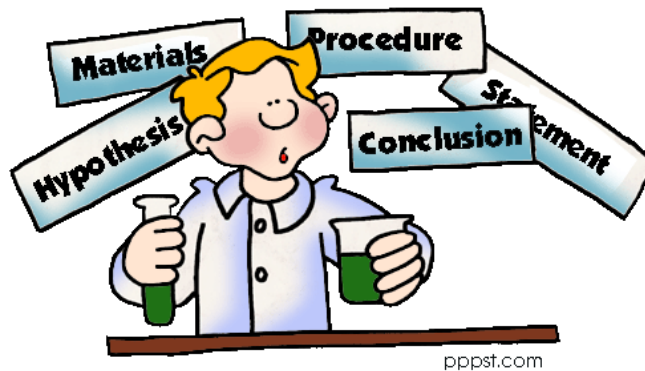
Sound familiar? Of course it does. There *are* ways to make a group project run smoothly. It takes, you guessed it, organization, cooperation, and respect of all members. Remember, the goal of group work is discuss possible alternative points of view or solutions to a problem; give students a chance to work on a project that is too large or complex for one person; bring other’s knowledge, experience, or skills to a project; and give students a chance to teach and learn from each other. Some students who are less likely to speak up in class may feel more comfortable in a small group. More students have a chance to participate and better prepare for class. Group work is also applicable to real-life work situations!

Here some suggestions for productive work groups:

- Exchange contact information with each other (phone numbers or emails and make sure each member has a copy).
- Review the project instructions together.
- Make a list of the jobs that need to be accomplished and have every member sign up for a job (perhaps something like project manager, prop manager, supply manager, script writer or summarizer, rubric evaluator, etc.) If more than one person wants the same job, agree to pull a name from a hat and stick to it!
- Brainstorm tasks and record your plans thoroughly. Everyone has a voice and needs to be heard.
- Allow the “majority rule” to settle differences.
- Now your group should have an idea of what your project or task will be. As long as everyone does his or her part, it will come together beautifully!
- Remember, your teacher is available to bounce ideas off of and will help steer you when you’re



# Long Term Project Planning



There are three distinct plans for tackling a long term project such as a book report, research paper, or science project! What will work for you so that you are not scurrying at the last minute to buy the supplies, write the paper, or build something? Your parents will appreciate it too! Your procrastination quickly becomes a family crisis!

## **Plan 1: Split and Tackle**

1. carefully review the project directions or rubric
2. split the project into several smaller projects or tasks
3. count how many days until the project is due and divide it up accordingly
4. write each task in your planner
5. tackle one or more tasks each day as part of your normal homework routine until your project is finished
6. pay attention and reread the rubric to guide your project

## **Plan 2: Chunk and Block**

1. carefully review the project directions or rubric
2. organize the project into chunks of work that can logically be completed at the same time, such as research at the library on many issues
3. block enough time in your planner after school or on weekends
4. work on the chunks until each chunk is complete
5. assemble the chunks into a finished project

## **Plan 3: Wait until the last minute**

1. frantically look for your project explanation packet
2. search the internet for ideas
3. drag your parents to the 24-hour superstore to buy the necessary supplies
4. cry and carry on until your sympathetic parents help you finish or do it for you
5. seriously, this is not an option for middle school!

# Mental Checklist

One of the best habits you can develop to help you manage and organize is to slow down and *think*. You can do it anytime and anywhere - you only need what you already have... your head!

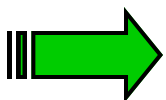
It's easy to fall victim to expecting others (teachers and parents) to think for us. We rely on others to keep track of our responsibilities and sometimes blame others when mistakes happen or we forget things.

Do any of these sound like you?

- Unless Mom reminded me, I would forget my lunch or leave a textbook on the table. Last month, I lost my binder with all my papers.
- I left my backpack in the car. I'm sure that when Dad notices, he'll leave work and bring it to me.
- My teacher has reminded me for three consecutive days to bring my permission slip. Oh no! The field trip is today and I forgot to get it signed. Oh well, I guess the office will have to call my parents so I can go.

If this sounds like you, stop taking a ride on somebody else's brain train and think for yourself! Here's how to create your very own *mental checklist*, or a "thinking survey" of the day ahead.

1. Do it at the same time and the same place every morning before leaving for school. Some do their mental checklist while brushing their teeth. Some while eating breakfast. Some while packing their backpack.
2. When you reach that "same time and same place" in the morning, clear your mind. Focus on the day ahead of you.
3. Ask yourself the same questions every morning:
  - Is my homework in my binder?
  - Is my binder in my backpack?
  - Have I packed everything I need for the day such as lunch, planner, gym shoes, and etcetera?
  - Do I have any special responsibilities for today such as permission slips, library books, basketball practice, and etcetera?
4. If you have forgotten something, take care of it right away before you forget again!



If you continue to struggle, make a poster to hang in your "same time and same place" spot.

# MISCELLANEOUS



# CHAMPS

In the fall of 2013, St. Augustine staff took on a new approach to classroom routines: CHAMPS. It is an acronym that spells out the expectations of the class period at any particular time; a poster is in each classroom throughout the school—even kindergarten! You will know at a glance what is expected for the period. For example, “C” represents *conversation* among students. Is silence, whispering, or outdoor voices permitted? “H” stands for *help*. Should you raise your hand, ask a neighbor, or refer to available reference materials? CHAMPS continues with *activity (A)*, *movement (M)*, and *participation (P)*. Confused? Not to worry... your teacher will detail the entire program with you.

## Honor Roll

Outstanding Citizenship	Honor Roll	High Honor Roll
All “V’s”	<u>Standards Based and Traditional Report Cards:</u> All percentages in classes at 80% and above	<u>Standards Based and Traditional Report Cards:</u> All percentages in classes at 90% and above

## Homework Policy

The purpose of homework is to increase and measure understanding, or in other words, master the material. Expect to review the day’s lesson, increase understanding, and prepare for future lessons. Homework is due at the beginning of class. Each teacher has a policy for homework procedures.

## Late or Missing Work

Work must be done. It’s just that simple. When work is done carelessly, incomplete, or not done at all, a homework slip will be issued to you and your parents, and Lunch-n-Learn is required for you to complete it. *It is up to you to turn your work in to the appropriate teacher* - your teacher will not ask for it. Late work will be docked 10% for each day that it is late.

## Missed School

Each student is responsible for his/her missing work and for checking in with each teacher regarding that work. If you miss a day of school, there a couple of ways to check what you missed. The best way is to check with your *study buddy!* You can also check your teachers webpage for the work done that day. Remember that teachers do not post work daily, but study buddies have been present at school and can give you the information you need.

*If you are sick the day before a test, be ready for the test on the day it is scheduled. Even though you missed a day, the test was planned well in advance and you should be ready.*



The purpose of Lunch-N-Learn is considerable. It is in place for you as another tool to help with your success.

1. It is an opportunity to take make-up tests and quizzes after an absence so that you don't use class-time and miss additional instruction.
2. It is a time to get homework done in the event that you have an extra-curricular activity that interferes with your homework schedule.
3. It is a time to get extra help from a middle school teacher.
4. It is time to concentrate on a subject in which you are struggling. A failing grade could require LNL until the grade is above failing.
5. It is *mandatory* for any student who didn't complete their assignment(s) by the time they arrive to class. The procedure is as follows:
  - \* You will be asked to complete a communication form.
  - \* The last copy of the form is turned in to your teacher in lieu of the assignment.
  - \* Have your parents sign the top copy that evening and turn it in to your homeroom teacher.
  - \* The last copy which you turned in to your teacher will end up in the LNL folder and will be stapled to your assignment when it is completed and turned in. That means you will attend LNL until the assignment is turned in.
  - \* Every fifth mandatory LNL session for a missing assignment will require an after school homework detention. The standard three week clean-slate rule will not apply.
6. Be sure to bring all the tools/materials needed to complete the assignment! The LNL teacher will not necessarily have paper, pencils, calculators, etc.
7. Lastly, LNL can be used as a consequence when the loss of your recess *privi-*

## Grading Scale

A	93-100%	C	73-76%
A-	90-92%	C-	70-72%
B+	87-89%	D+	67-69%
B	83-86%	D	63-66%
B-	80-82%	D-	60-62%
C+	77-79%	F	≤ 59%

## Retesting

If you do poorly on a test, the retake policy is limited in middle school. You have two days from the time the test is returned to you to request a retest from your teacher. See the chart below.

Grade	Retake allowed	Mandatory study session with the teacher
6	1 per quarter per subject	yes
7	1 per semester (2 quarters) per subject	yes
8	none	no

## Make-up Tests and Quizzes

If you are absent on the day of a test or quiz, expect to make it up the day you return. If your science test is Wednesday and you are absent, be ready to take it on Thursday. So that you won't continue to miss instruction while taking the test or quiz, plan on taking it during Lunch-n-Learn.



## School Cancellations

If school is cancelled on a day a project, paper, or test is scheduled, expect that it will be due on the next day back to school. If you have a test on Tuesday but there is a snow-day, the test will be on Wednesday instead.

## Online Learning Days

In the event of a snow day, your teachers will post an online learning lesson for you to do in the comfort of your home. These lessons may or may not be graded; it is up to the discretion of the teacher. However, if it is to be graded and you do not have access to the internet at home, please let your teacher know. He or she will find a school computer for you to use.

\*\*\*After six snow days in an academic year, online learning activities become mandatory in order to minimize disruption of the learning process.

# Extra Curricular Activities



Most students participate in an activity beyond the school hours of 8:00 AM to 2:45 PM. It may or may not be affiliated with St. A, but in any case, time must be balanced between the activity and your schoolwork.

Whether your activity is Destination Imagination, Science Olympiad, Irish basketball, travel soccer, or scouts (and the options far exceed those choices), you'll have to keep practices and game days in mind when you determine your homework or study time.

**Words of wisdom:** *Schoolwork is your job and responsibility as a student, and it must come first.*

**More words of wisdom:** *Telling your teacher that you do not have your homework done because you had soccer practice last night is NOT an excuse! Regardless of your schedule, your work is due when it is assigned - have it ready when class starts!*

## General Information

In order to participate in any St. A affiliated activity, according to the handbook: "Students in grades 7 and 8 are eligible to participate in athletics. All middle school grades are eligible to participate in programs such as DI and Science Olympiad. The goals in the programs include the development of a positive attitude, teamwork, sportsmanship, leadership, confidence, effort, and team spirit."



## **Eligibility**

Again, according to the handbook:

“Students are expected to show commitment to their schoolwork when participating in any extra-curricular activity. In order to maintain eligibility, students must maintain a 70% weighted average in grades and may not fall below 60% in *any* class. Failing below these requirements will result in ineligibility for one week. Students will be required to attend all contests during the period of ineligibility, and participation in practice will be determined on a case-by-case basis.”

“Students are also expected to display exemplary behavior in the school setting. Students will not be eligible for the next contest if they receive any behavior related detentions. Students who are issued an ISS or OSS on a day of practice may not participate that day, as well as the next competition following the suspension.”

## **What does this all mean?**

In order to play, your work must not suffer. It is a *privilege* to play not a right. As your educators, if you show you handle the workload well and your behavior is appropriate, you will participate fully! That is a piece of our IRISH PRIDE!

## **Spectator Agreement**

Students are invited and encouraged to attend the sporting contests of their schoolmates. Since most of these events occur after school (3:45 or 4 PM), many students simply stay after school to be here for home games. Any student who is staying to watch a game or match will report to After School Care (minimal fees apply) until the game begins. An “ASC” supervisor will escort you to the Crowley Center. Students are NOT allowed to be in the Crowley Center unsupervised before or after events. Parents will provide supervision during games. If students fail to follow the rules of good sportsmanship and good behavior during the game, they will be asked to leave the game. Continued misbehavior will result in a student being excluded from attending games.

## **One more thing...**

Both the eligibility policy and the spectator agreement require a signed agreement by both the student and a parent or legal guardian. Both forms are included in the packet you received the first few days of school.

## **Sports physicals**

In order to satisfy sanction requirements with the Michigan High School Athletic Association, sports physicals must be dated after April 15th of the current school year or you must have another. If you have any questions, see the athletic director!

# Uniform Policy

*(see the complete uniform policy in the appendix at the back of this booklet)*

Whenever a situation arises and you're not sure whether it complies with the St. Augustine uniform code, keep the *intent* of the uniform in mind: your attire should not draw attention to you. If it does, choose

**Top 10 uniform violations:**  
something else!

#10 - short skirts

#9 - brightly colored shoes

#8 - make-up

#7 - sparkly hair ties/barrettes

#6 - nail polish (fingers and/or toes!)

#5 - tattooed or  
worn out

#4 -

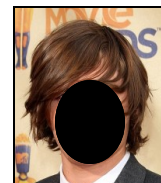
**And the number one uniform violation:**

tered or  
clothing  
bracelets

and necklaces

#3 - no-show socks

#2 - untucked shirts (hanging out below the hoodies!)



Hair!

## Uniform Holidays



The buzz word for uniform holidays is **modesty, modesty, modesty!**

*Loosely* fit clothing (avoid skinny jeans.)

Tees with appropriate screen prints.

# Making Right Choices

To do, or not to do? That is the question.

You have a free will, given to you by God. You can simply and personally choose to do this, do that, or do something totally different. No pressure here. Just learn to make good choices!

Does it seem that as you get older, you have to make more and more choices: basketball or hockey, football or soccer, dance or the civic theater. Remember the time when you had to choose between going to a friend's party or going to a family event? Have you been forced to choose between two or more classmates you would like as friends? Do you see others struggle with making choices with friends or activities? That's okay, but by choosing carefully, you can always make the outcome positive.

Your middle school experience will be greatly affected by the small choices you make. And, now that you are older, the choices you make often have much larger consequences. **ONLY YOU CAN CONTROL HOW YOU EXPERIENCE MIDDLE SCHOOL. IT'S THE CHOICES YOU MAKE AND THE ATTITUDE YOU HAVE THAT MAKE MIDDLE SCHOOL FUN OR TORTURE.**

It's pretty clear from all of the data on how schools handle bullying that it doesn't matter how many rules the school has or how well they enforce the rules. Bullying begins and ends with each student's choice to stop it. You need to know how to make good choices and how you are a part of stopping bullying.

You've already read how you must choose to:

- write down assignments as they are given
- do your homework on time
- keep organized
- manage your time
- seek help from teachers and classmates

Now, think about choosing ...

- to befriend to someone who was just called a sissy
- to report students who rolled their eyes at a student who often gives strange responses in class
- to NOT laugh when a student is made the target of a joke
- to NOT engage in abusive talk about others online
- to seek friends who don't mistreat you
- to befriend classmates who don't talk about other people's faults
- to say something genuine and nice to a classmate who needs a boost
- to support those who are truly kind, not those who are pretentious (those who pretend to be kind)

Just stop, and think clearly before you choose.

# Cyber Bullying and Social Networking

The newest and most difficult bullying to manage is on the internet.

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background.

Do you have a facebook profile? Do you Skype? Do you send text messages on your phone?

Although most postings are not intended to hurt anyone, it is difficult to understand anything other than the actual meaning of the written words. Think about the many ways something as simple as “ur so stupid!” could be interpreted. Even if the person it was written to understands it to be silly and funny, others who see it may not. It may evoke gossip about the two of you being in a fight. It can lead to more drama and hurt. Be careful.

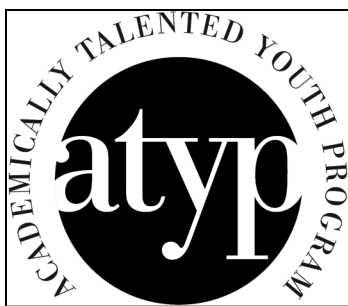
Teachers don’t go searching the social network looking for postings in poor taste, but if such things are reported and affect the school environment, the school must address it with appropriate consequences. Mean teasing, profanity, false representation, gossiping, etc., must be treated just like other aggressive behavior (any look, gesture, or action that hurts or *could hurt* anyone's feelings, person, or property.) Each student has signed an *Acceptable Use of Technology* form which is filed at the school. The signature indicates that students will follow school policy as well as Michigan and federal laws related to use of technology. These laws are binding.

Things posted on the internet may be long lasting and not easily undone.

If you post pictures of your friends on your profile, make sure you have permission from their parents.

Remember not to list personal information in your profile so that others can find you. Do you list your phone number? Do your pictures show you in your St. A hoodie? What about your athletic uniform like Westwood Little League? These simple, overlooked things can make it easy for strangers to find you.





## **ATYP (for math or language arts)**

### **What is ATYP?**

According to Western's website:

“ATYP is the Academically Talented Youth Program at Western Michigan University's Lee Honors College. The program is designed to meet the needs of motivated middle and high school students who are searching for a challenging, fast-paced, and above-grade level curriculum. Through personalized and intense instruction and rigorous course-work, students are ready for AP (Advanced Placement) content and examinations after two or three years of ATYP classes. ATYP strives to teach students based upon their intellectual capacity, not their year in school. In the fall of each year, middle school counselors are asked to identify students in their schools who might qualify for the challenging ATYP program.”

### **How do you qualify?**

Again, according to their website, “students must score at least 90% on a standardized achievement test or have been recommended by a teacher or counselor to qualify for participation in the Northwestern University Midwest Academic Talent Search (NUMATS). Students take the SAT or ACT exam and have a qualifying score (see <http://www.wmich.edu/honors/atyp/index.html> for an explanation of qualifying scores.)

### **How does ATYP fit with my middle school classes?**

If accepted and you choose to enroll in the ATYP math or language arts, you will have some class time to work on your ATYP assignments. However, there are some regular, in-class assignments that you will be expected to complete along with the rest of the class.



If you choose to enroll, keep in mind that you earned ATYP because of your accelerated skills and your maturity, ability to work independently, and dedication to your studies. Tomfoolery or disruptions during the St. A's class-time will not be tolerated.

## **Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center (KAMSC)**

The Kalamazoo Area Mathematics & Science Center is a regional enrichment center serving the counties of Kalamazoo and St. Joseph. They offer enriched, accelerated courses serving academically talented students of the area. High school math and science courses are taken at the center in lieu of courses at Hackett. All other courses, such as social studies and language arts, are still taken at Hackett. Students actually attend two high schools!

Approximately 3,000 information packets will be sent sometime in November to eighth grade students within the district. The packet contains information inviting eighth grade students and their families to a meeting for an evening at KAMSC to discuss what the program is all about.

Interested students must go through a process to apply and must be accepted to attend. First you'll register sometime in December to take a qualifying exam in January. After approximately two weeks, candidates will receive their scores in the mail. Those qualifying will be invited to complete the application. The application process is explained at a meeting in early February and a packet must be completed by the end of the month. Applicants will be required to ask their teachers for letters of recommendation as well.

After the application deadline has past, a review panel made up of volunteers from the community will meet in March to review applications and select approximately 75 to 80 applicants. Letters (of either invitation or denial) are mailed out in April to all applicants.

It's tough to be accepted. It's rigorous, but it's distinguished.

### **But I'm not in 8<sup>th</sup> grade yet!**

If you know your goal is to attend KAMSC, don't wait until 8<sup>th</sup> grade to produce high quality work. The desire to do your best and the motivation to learn must be demonstrated throughout your middle school career. You must exhibit the ability to produce high quality work independently and manage an accelerated workload. You should go above and beyond the minimum requirements with your assignments. You must demonstrate the love of learning to your teachers.

Many St. Augustine students have attended KAMSC and have been very successful. Some may be available to answer your questions - just let a middle school teacher know and they will help you contact him or her.

### **Not interested?**

Not to worry. Hackett Catholic Central has an outstanding track of courses for college preparation and readiness. Hackett graduates attend some of the best universities in the country!

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