



Wisdom and Virtue in Christ

**Ann Arbor Orthodox Classical Academy
2024-2025 School Year Report**

Respectfully Submitted on 02/14/2025 by: Irene Melabiotis (Interim Head of School)

We have had an intellectually-stimulating and spiritually-fulfilling last several months at Ann Arbor Orthodox Classical Academy. In August 2024, as soon as we received word that the school building was ready for us to furnish, we began the process of setting up the classrooms and offices. Many volunteers worked many hours to help make the school ready to welcome its students at the Academy's Open House on August 31/September 13, 2024—and we thank them all for their time and selfless efforts, as well as of those who were involved in the construction of the school building under the expert direction of Mr. Brendan Hayden!

At our Academy's Open House for Academy parents, there was excitement and a sense of wonder in the air. We were grateful to God for the opportunity to finally open our doors to our Academy families whose children are enrolled in our Full-Time or Part-Time programs! We began the school year with eight students; three full-time Kindergarten students and 5 part-time Microschooling students in Preschool-Junior Kindergarten (2 students), Kindergarten (1 student), and Second Grade (2 students). Our two-day Microschooling program, designed for homeschooling families, is offered on Wednesdays and Fridays.

The first day of classes began in earnest on Monday, September 16, 2024, with our three full-time Kindergarten students being taught by Miss Lydia Magyar, who is a parishioner of Holy Ascension in Albion, Michigan. She is a dedicated, faithful instructor of our Kindergarten students, and we are grateful to have her on the Academy team. On Wednesday, September 18th we, also, welcomed our Microschooling students for their first day of in-person classes. We have one Second Grade student who is enrolled in our Microschooling program, taught by Mrs. Irene Melabiotis, and another who is enrolled in the Second Grade Blended Learning program (which involves our On-Line program three days a week and our Microschooling program the other two days of the week). Our Second Grade On-Line Instructor, Mrs. Anna Ramirez, is an Orthodox Christian living in Texas, and she is an experienced, hard-working teacher dedicated to supporting the success of our students.

On September 18th we, also, welcomed our two students in the Preschool-Junior Kindergarten joint Microschooling class, which was taught by Dr. Makrina Sullivan from the beginning of the school year until the end of October 2024, after which she respectfully had to step down due to health issues. This class is now being taught by Matushka Kaity Bower with love, patience, and dedication, alongside her two faithful and enthusiastic Instructor Assistants, Miss Natasha Joyce and Mr. Vladimir Hill. The students in the class enjoy learning their numbers, alphabet sounds, alphabet

letters, as well as developing proper and accurate cutting skills, writing skills, gross- and fine-motor skills through various activities (such as through regularly preparing and baking treats for the Academy staff and students), and reading and discussing an expertly-currated selection of classic storybooks drawn from older and modern classics.

The read-aloud books are read with the instructor's guided discussions and, through them, students learn to think critically about the stories. The students in our Kindergarten and Second Grade classes learn to, also, identify rhyming words and literary devices (such as metaphor/simile, repetition, foreshadowing, personification), as well as making story predictions, and understanding new vocabulary through its contextual use. In mathematics, the students have developed various skills, with respect to the learning goals of their respective grade levels.

We continue to offer Catechism classes every Wednesday morning following Divine Liturgy or another church service. The class is open to all children ages two and older. On September 18th, we held our first Catechism class with 13 children (ages 2 to 7) in attendance alongside their parents. We begin every Catechism class with a communal lesson and, then, split into our respective grade-level classrooms for more focused instruction within each respective Curriculum (sourced from the Orthodox Christian Education Commission) with age-appropriate activities to engage each child in his or her lesson. The goal of the Catechism program is to establish a solid foundation for each child's understanding of basic Orthodox dogmas, as well as various concepts about God, His Church, and Christ's teachings. Following Catechism class, the children enjoy snack time together, as well as recess.

On Wednesday afternoons, our regular curricular programming takes place. At our Academy, we have adapted the curriculum offered by Memoria Press to meet the educational and spiritual needs of our students. It is quite possibly one of the best, all-encompassing classical Christian curricula available to private schools today. Fr. Gregory and I review all materials and adapt them, as needed, prior to delivering them to the students.

All the students meet near the end of the day for our music program, led by Mrs. Irene Melabiotis. This year, all of our students have been learning how to properly play hand bells and have, so far, displayed exemplary discipline, technique, and focus to learn to play five songs using these musical instruments. On Wednesday, December 18, 2024, we held our first-ever Christmas Program at the Academy, where the students had the chance to perform for their parents and loved ones a few Christmas songs, recite some Bible verses (which they regularly say and practice throughout the week), and play a couple of hand bell songs. The program was followed by a potluck luncheon while we enjoyed each other's company.

In addition to their academic goals, the students are given ample opportunities to practice good and proper manners in their interactions with their peers with the weekly 'Manner of the Week' (e.g., 'Smile.' 'Include others in conversations and activities.' 'Be patient.'). Our students, also, work daily to develop their skills of memorization (which assists them with not only developing their ability to grasp concepts of various difficulty, but, also, with developing their short and long-term memory). They do this through singing songs and saying poems, prayers, and Bible verses from memory. Over the past several months,

Our Academy family has, also, had the opportunity to enjoy several field trips together, such as to Plymouth Orchards and Cider Mill, a local fire station, and the Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum (to participate in a lab about magnets and explore the museum's offerings).

Over the past several months, all students have made great gains in developing their mathematics skills, as well as language skills (e.g., writing, vocabulary, spelling, phonics, and, in the case of our Second Grade students, their grammar, cursive writing, and independent reading skills). Glory Be to God for All Things! Overall, we are grateful to God that, so far, we have had an intellectually- and spiritually-fruitful academic year for both our Catechism students and those enrolled in our Full-Time and Homeschooling programs.

We look forward to continuing to work with parents to facilitate students' learning adventures for the remainder of the present school year. We thank the Parish Council members of St. Vladimir Orthodox Church and the entire St. Vladimir Orthodox Church community for their continued prayers and support of our Academy. We humbly ask for your continued support and prayers for our instructors and students to have a successful rest of the school year and that God grants us the opportunity to grow our enrollment to offer this exceptional education experience to more students whose families seek it for their children.

Our Academy families appreciate each of you very much and pray that God blesses each of you and your families abundantly for your support, love, prayers, and/or efforts!

With love in Christ,

Irene Melabiotis
Interim Head of School
Board of Directors, Vice-Chair
Ann Arbor Orthodox Classical Academy
9900 Jackson Road
Dexter, MI 48130