



Wisdom and Virtue in Christ

**Ann Arbor Orthodox Classical Academy
2025-2026 School Year Report**

Respectfully Submitted on January 20/February 2, 2026 by: Irene Melabiotis (Interim Head of School)

We are grateful to God to have been given the privilege, for a second year, to offer the children in our community access to the exceptional teaching and learning happening inside our very own Ann Arbor Orthodox Classical Academy (A2OCA). With minimum enrollment, we are able to offer full-time learning programs from Kindergarten to Third Grade. We, also, offer various part-time (homeschooling) learning programs to meet the education needs of the families in our community. Currently A2OCA is the only Orthodox day school in Michigan, and we pray that many more will follow suit to offer children in their communities an education that glorifies our Triune God!

On Friday, August 30/September 12, 2025, we welcomed (or welcomed back) Academy parents and their children to our Academy for an Open House event. This event provided parents and their children the opportunity to reacquaint themselves with their classmates and teachers after the summer break and gave them a chance to visit their classrooms before the official start of the school year on September 2/15, 2025. Currently, we have thirteen (13) students enrolled in our Academy, which is an increase from eight (8) students the previous school year: four (4) full-time First Grade students (taught by Mrs. Veronica Palazzolo) and nine (9) students in our various Homeschooling programs. These Homeschooling programs include Pre-K/Jr. Kindergarten Microschooling class (six students; taught by Matushka Kaity and Instructor Assistant Miss Natasha Joyce), Kindergarten Microschooling (one student; taught by Mrs. Irene Melabiotis), Kindergarten On-Line (one student; taught by Mrs. Anna Ramirez), and Third Grade On-Line (one student; taught by Mrs. Anna Ramirez). On Wednesday mornings, we have the privilege of welcoming another six (6) students to our Catechism program, which is tuition-free and offers children age-appropriate instruction that deepens their understanding of the Orthodox Christian faith.

On Sunday, September 1/14, 2025, the school year prayerfully began with Divine Liturgy to celebrate the start of the ecclesiastical new year. The service was followed by a blessing service inside our school building for the start of the school year, which was attended by Academy staff, parents, students, friends, and supporters. The first day of classes began in earnest on Monday, September 2/15, 2025, with our four (4) full-time First Grade students and our one (1) Third Grade On-Line student. The First Grade class was taught by Miss Lydia Magyar (a parishioner of Holy Ascension in Albion, Michigan) until her resignation in late October due to personal reasons. After a brief hiring process, Mrs. Veronica Palazzolo (a parishioner of St. Vladimir Orthodox Church) was offered the position of First Grade Instructor. She is a faithful instructor who is patient and dedicated to the learning of our students. Her love in Christ, care, and diligence toward offering her students exceptional learning experiences are apparent, and we are grateful for the opportunity to work together with Mrs. Palazzolo, as fellow co-workers in Christ, for the Glory of God!

On Wednesday, September 4/17, 2025, we, also, welcomed our Microschooling students for their first day of in-person classes. The joint Pre-K/Jr. Kindergarten Microschooling class is taught by Matushka Kaity Bower, alongside the support of her Instructor Assistant Miss Natasha Joyce. Their love in Christ, care, diligence, as well as faithfulness and dedication have enriched the learning of their Pre-K and Jr. Kindergarten students. Their students have thus far enjoyed and continue to enjoy learning their numbers, letter writing, and letter sounds, as well as engaging in various crafts and activities to develop proper and accurate cutting skills, writing skills, and gross- and fine-motor skills.

They, also, enjoy reading and discussing an expertly-curated 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 to Third Grade classes learn to, also, identify rhyming words and literary devices (such as metaphor/simile, repetition, foreshadowing, personification, onomatopoeia), as well as making story predictions and understanding new vocabulary through its contextual use. In mathematics, the students have developed and strengthened various numeracy skills with respect to the learning goals of their respective grade levels.

Our Catechism classes are held every Wednesday morning following Divine Liturgy (or, in lieu of Divine Liturgy, Midnight Office). Catechism class is open to all children ages two and older. We begin every Catechism class with a communal lesson and, then, students split into their respective grade-level classrooms for more focused instruction and age-appropriate engaging activities, as per their individual Catechism curriculum. 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. In the middle of the last school year, we started offering a gardening workshop series after snack time, which was led by a parent of one of our Pre-K students and expert gardener, Mrs. Marie Hayden. The workshop series is meant to help students become familiar with various topics related to naturally growing plants that God has given to nourish us (such as vermicomposting, seed starting, sprouts, cover crops, and winterizing). Developing these skills in our students is intended to support their sense of responsibility, their appreciation of the virtues of patience and hard work, and their development of important life skills such as learning to grow their own food and fostering healthy eating habits.

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. Having worked with Memoria Press for the last three-and-a-half school years, I humbly believe that 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 the Instructors delivering them to the students.

All Academy students learn 'American Sign Language' (ASL) in twice-weekly classes taught by Matushka Kaity Bower, who is well-versed in this language. Learning ASL not only supports early language development in children and provides them with enhanced cognitive skills, but it, also, gives them the skills to communicate with the Deaf and hard of hearing community. Thanks to the expert instruction of Matushka Kaity, our Academy students have made great strides in growing their ASL skills to communicate with each other. During our twice-weekly 'Instrumental Music' program (led by Mrs. Irene Melabiotis), our students learn how to play hand bells and, in doing so, develop exemplary discipline, technique, and focus. Additionally, students develop strong musicality during their weekly

‘Music and Movement’ lessons led by Miss Elizabeth Low (a fellow STV parishioner and Doctoral student in Piano Performance and Pedagogy at the University of Michigan). Through these classes, students, also, develop a kinesthetic understanding of various musical concepts (such as rhythm, structure, and expression), which leads to their deeper connection to music and musical learning.

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., ‘Listen carefully when others speak.’ ‘Look for opportunities to learn from others.’ ‘Clean up after yourself.’). Our students, also, work daily to develop their memorization skills (which assists them with not only developing their ability to grasp concepts of varying difficulty, but, also, to develop their short and long-term memory which is essential for developing strong written and oral communication skills). They do this through singing songs and saying poems, as well as memorizing prayers and Bible verses, and doing recitations several times a week.

On Wednesday, December 4/17, 2025, we held our second Annual Christmas Program at the Academy, where the students had the chance to sing for their parents and loved ones a few Christmas songs, as well as recite some Bible verses (which they regularly say and practice throughout the week), and play a few Christmas songs with their hand bells. The program was followed by a potluck luncheon while we enjoyed each other’s company.

Over the past several months, all students have made great gains in developing their language and numeracy skills. Our sole Third Grade student is in his second year of Latin learning and is making excellent progress in his acquisition of Latin vocabulary and in understanding Latin grammar. We are grateful to God that we have had an intellectually- and spiritually-fruitful academic year so far, and, with God’s mercy, enlightenment, and guidance, we look forward to continuing to work with Instructors and our students’ parents to facilitate their children’s learning toward achieving their learning goals for 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, also, thank our Academy supporters, parents, volunteers, and donors who, with their donation of time, treasures, and/or talents, have played a direct role to make our Academy the spiritually-nourishing and intellectually-stimulating school that we strive for it to be—all for the Glory of God. We humbly ask for your continued support and prayers for our Academy instructors, students, and families to have a successful and enjoyable rest of the school year. May God grant us the opportunity to grow our enrollment next year to welcome more children and their families to our Academy family!

Our Academy families appreciate all Academy supporters. We pray that God blesses each of you and your families abundantly for your support, love, prayers, and/or efforts. Glory Be to God for All Things!

With love in Christ,

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