

With increasing frequency, parents educating at home contact our admissions office years before their sons are ready to enter high school with a single question. “What must my son know and be able to do in order to ready for St. Michael’s Prep?” Our current faculty and families answer the question with a list of ten things which will optimize every young man’s success. It is important to note that this list represents our ideally-prepared freshman student. Given a boy’s own disposition and his opportunities for learning, the reality may be different.

Optimizing Success: Skills for Every Incoming Freshman

Academic Habits and Formation

1. **In gathering information, an incoming freshman will be able to:**
 - A. Take basic notes from reading and/or class presentations;
 - B. Accurately copy information (from the board, math problem, phone message);
 - C. Use notes for homework and study for exams;
 - D. Memorize poems, vocabulary, definitions, or formulas;
 - E. Use basic reference books such as atlas, dictionary, thesaurus, encyclopedia, etc.;
 - F. Use classroom tools readily: ruler, graduated cylinders, scientific calculator, internet search engines, word processing program; and
 - G. Ask questions about what he is unclear.

2. **In showing understanding, an incoming freshman will be able to:**
 - A. Comprehend material read;
 - B. Recall, summarize, and interpret written works into own words;
 - C. Understand graphs, tables, charts, maps and work with the information they present;
 - D. Assemble information from differing sources;
 - E. Distinguish cause, effect, sequence, and correlation in [historical] events; and
 - F. Evaluate facts, opinions, and inferences.

3. **In being organized, an incoming freshman will be able to:**
 - A. Bring all necessary materials to class;
 - B. Maintain an agenda/calendar to track daily and long-term assignments;
 - C. Follow [multi-stepped] directions with attention to the phases and the details;
 - D. Complete tasks on time;
 - E. Work independently; and
 - F. Use class/study time to his advantage.

4. **In expressing himself, an incoming freshman will be able to**
 - A. Read aloud, using punctuation and inflection to convey the author’s meaning;
 - B. Express ideas orally and in writing, using complete thoughts and sentences;
 - C. Write cursive in a legible manner;
 - D. Show a high comfort level with taking standardized testing (fill-in-the-bubble tests); and
 - E. Be proficient with 10-finger touch keyboarding.

5. **In manifesting emotional maturity, an incoming freshman will be able to:**
 - A. Accept responsibility and show age-appropriate follow-through.
 - B. Work with teachers/peers to master learning;
 - C. Accept correction with equanimity;

- D. Show respect by how he dresses, speaks, and interacts in a situation;
- E. Know the differences between activity appropriate for playground and inside; and
- F. Work well with others (demonstrated, for instance, by membership in a club/team/troop for one or more seasons/years).

Specific Knowledge in Subject Areas

- 1. In demonstrating competence in English, it is essential that an incoming freshman be able to:**
 - A. Demonstrate an eighth-grade level reading, comprehension, and vocabulary skills;
 - B. Write in complete sentences and shape them into a well-organized paragraph;
 - C. Do a basic outline (from a famous speech or from a history text, for example);
 - D. Use grammar properly at the 8th grade level; and
 - E. Diagram simple and compound sentences.

- 2. In demonstrating competence in Mathematics, it is essential that an incoming freshman be able to:**
 - A. Add, subtract, multiply, and divide whole numbers (including zero), decimals, and fractions and be proficient at changing from one to another;
 - B. Use the order of operations (PEMDAS);
 - C. Write story problems out as solvable equations;
 - D. Recognize simple geometric shapes and know how to find perimeters, areas, and volume; and
 - E. Work with the X-Y coordinate plane and plot points when coordinates are given.

- 3. In demonstrating competence in Physical Sciences, it is essential that an incoming freshman be able to:**
 - A. Plan, conduct, and document a scientific investigation to test a hypothesis;
 - B. Use metric units and proper scientific notation;
 - C. Explain the structure of the atom;
 - D. Read and use the periodic table; and
 - E. Solve problems involving time, speed, distance, length, area and volume.

- 4. In demonstrating competence in History and Culture, it is desirable that an incoming freshman be able to:**
 - A. Explain why it is important to know about the Greek city-states (especially Athens);
 - B. Identify those aspects of the Roman Empire which are important to the civilization which developed in Europe;
 - C. Explain the life and teachings of Jesus as described in the New Testament, and the contribution of St. Peter and St. Paul to the spread of Christianity;
 - D. Explain the sources for historical continuity in Western Civilization; and
 - E. Describe why the teachings of the Catholic Church are important for an individual, his family, and society.

- 5. In demonstrating competence in knowledge of Language and Fine Arts, it is desirable that an incoming freshman be able to:**
 - A. Recall from memory common Greek and Latin roots;
 - B. Recall basic Greek and Roman mythology;
 - C. Explain how a particular historic age expresses itself in art and music;
 - D. Use vocabulary correctly to describe what a particular piece of art or music expresses;

- E. Recognize well-known pieces of Western Music; and
- F. Have a family background where instrumental and/or vocal music is valued.

Resources for Building Competencies

Berquist, Laura. *Designing Your Own Classical Curriculum: A Guide to Catholic Home Education*. 3rd ed. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998.

Clark, Mary Kay. *Catholic Home Schooling: A Handbook for Parents*. Rev. ed. Rockford: Tan Books & Publishers, 1998.

Wise Bauer, Susan and Jessie Wise. *The Well-Trained Mind: A Guide to Classical Education at Home, Revised and Updated Edition*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004.

Standardized Testing

California Achievement Test (CAT-E) Available for Grades K-12. Seton Testing Services toll-free 1-800-542-1066 for further information.

Catholic High School Entrance Exam. Various publishers. Available both online and bookstores.

The Entrance Test of St. Michael's Preparatory School is offered twice a year [January and May]. Some families chose to have their sons take this test as a practice a year or more before they plan to apply to the school.