



# St. Croix Preparatory Academy

Frequently Asked Questions  
(FAQ)

2009-2010

# St. Croix Preparatory Academy

Academics, Character, Leadership

## **Q: What is the mission of St. Croix Preparatory Academy?**

St. Croix Preparatory Academy will develop each student's academic potential, personal character, and leadership qualities through an academically rigorous and content-rich educational program grounded in the classical tradition.

## **Q: What are the current objectives of St. Croix Preparatory Academy?**

St. Croix Preparatory Academy is a K-12 charter school that opened in the Stillwater area in the fall of 2004. The school opened with grades K-7. The projected enrollment of 120 students was surpassed by the 200 students that actually enrolled. During the 2008-2009 school year, St. Croix Prep served nearly 750 students in grades K-11; in 2009-2010 St. Croix Prep will serve nearly 900 students in grades K-12. St. Croix Preparatory Academy's educational philosophy is based on the classical methodology of Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric, an educational methodology proven to achieve outstanding academic results.

## **Q: What makes St. Croix Preparatory Academy unique?**

- St. Croix Preparatory Academy is the first public school in the eastern suburban area specifically dedicated to offering a demanding classical, liberal arts curriculum with an additional emphasis on development of each student's personal character and leadership qualities. St. Croix Preparatory Academy will provide a learning opportunity that, up until now, has only been available at select private schools.
- St. Croix Preparatory Academy is founded by parents, educators, and business people who want their child to receive an education that demands their best in behavior, attitude, and effort; and an education that challenges them to achieve their highest potential. They are creating a college prep educational program based on true inquiry, intellect, and character.
- St. Croix Preparatory Academy also focuses on developing character and leadership qualities, with the goal of creating not just smarter students, but

people who are prepared to lead abundant and responsible lives as contributing members of our society.

## **Q: What is the educational philosophy of St. Croix Preparatory Academy?**

St. Croix Preparatory Academy is based on a classical model of education. The classical approach to education focuses on providing children with the life long educational tools to learn and think for themselves. The classical tradition is grounded in the time-tested methodology of learning called the Trivium, which recognizes that critical learning skills must precede critical thinking skills.

### **The Trivium**

There are three phases in the Trivium methodology: Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric. Each stage of the Trivium corresponds to the general stages of a child's cognitive development as follows:

#### **Grammar** (Grades K-4)

The first phase of the Trivium is Grammar, which emphasizes the facts and rules of each subject that later learning is built upon. This stage focuses on the accumulation of knowledge and the rules related to each particular subject. This mirrors the stage of development where children love to mimic, recite, chant and memorize. The objective of this phase is to provide each child with a strong foundation of subject matter **KNOWLEDGE**.

Cognitive skills that are developed in the Grammar phase include:

defining	annotating	interpreting
describing	calculating	paraphrasing
identifying	changing	predicting
matching	converting	reviewing
memorizing	grouping	summarizing

#### **Logic** (Grades 5-8)

The second phase is Logic, which focuses on the students' ability to analyze and interact with the knowledge acquired in the Grammar stage. The Logic stage is the phase where understanding is grasped. This corresponds with

the child’s curiosity and desire to ask questions. The objective of the Logic phase is **UNDERSTANDING**.

Cognitive skills developed in the Logic phase include:

- |              |              |                 |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| applying     | discovering  | sorting         |
| adopting     | illustrating | analyzing       |
| collecting   | inferring    | comparing       |
| constructing | outlining    | diagramming     |
| contrasting  | selecting    | differentiating |

**Rhetoric**

(Grades 9-12)

The final phase, Rhetoric, trains the student how to express and discuss the subject. Rhetoric is the communication stage, where students defend and refute opinions based on their understanding and knowledge of subject matter. This fits nicely with the students’ affinity for contradiction and argumentation. The objective of the Rhetoric phase is **COMMUNICATING**.

Cognitive skills developed in the Rhetoric phase include:

- |               |             |              |
|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| blending      | planning    | grading      |
| building      | predicting  | judging      |
| changing      | producing   | prioritizing |
| composing     | revising    | recommending |
| creating      | writing     | refereeing   |
| designing     | criticizing | rejecting    |
| formulating   | defending   | selecting    |
| hypothesizing | evaluating  | supporting   |

The result is that the teacher is “teaching with the grain.” This means students enjoy what they are doing and at the same time equip themselves with the cognitive skills that will benefit them for their entire lives.

<b>GRAMMAR</b>	<b>LOGIC</b>	<b>RHETORIC</b>
K/1 <sup>st</sup> 2 <sup>nd</sup> 3 <sup>rd</sup> 4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup> 6 <sup>th</sup> 7 <sup>th</sup> 8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup> 10 <sup>th</sup> 11 <sup>th</sup> 12 <sup>th</sup>
<b>KNOWLEDGE</b>	<b>UNDERSTANDING</b>	<b>COMMUNICATION</b>
Knowledge - Comprehension	Application -- Analysis	Synthesis -- Evaluation

**Q: How has St. Croix Prep performed on the state’s required tests (MCA II- Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment)?**

The test results of St. Croix Prep students yielded impressive results. During its first five years St. Croix Prep has consistently ranked as one of the top performing schools in the state of Minnesota. Results from the last four years, along with comparison to state averages, are noted below:

	<b>MN Average</b>	<b>St. Croix Prep</b>
<b>MATH</b>		
2008-2009	64%	<b>79%</b>
2007-2008	62%	<b>81%</b>
2006-2007	61%	<b>85%</b>
2005-2006	58%	<b>83%</b>
<b>READING</b>		
2008-2009	72%	<b>88%</b>
2007-2008	71%	<b>86%</b>
2006-2007	69%	<b>90%</b>
2005-2006	72%	<b>88%</b>

**Note:** The MCA II assessment was just implemented in 2004-2005. Previous to 2005, the MCA assessment was given. In our first year of operation, St. Croix Prep took the MCA test and proficiency percentages for math and reading were 93% and 89%, respectively. The MCA II test is far different from its predecessor so comparison is difficult.

**Q: Why is Latin taught?**

The study of Latin fosters decoding skills that provide students with a solid foundation for reading and writing. Latin enhances students’ vocabulary, increases their understanding of English grammar, improves reading and spelling, encourages precise communication, and becomes the cornerstone for the study of other languages.

**Q: What grades does St. Croix Preparatory Academy serve?**

St. Croix Preparatory Academy serves students in grades K-12. St. Croix Preparatory Academy opened in September 2004 with 200 students in grades K-7. During the 2008-2009 school year, St. Croix Prep served nearly 750 students in grades K-11; in 2009-2010 St. Croix Prep will serve nearly 900 students in grades K-12. Eventually St. Croix Prep will have three classes per grade and provide educational opportunities to over 1,000 students.

**Q: Describe Faculty and Staffing information.**

St. Croix Preparatory Academy currently employs nearly 90 personnel. Aside from over 60 licensed teachers, St. Croix Prep has five personnel in administration (Executive Director, School Directors (Lower, Middle, and Upper School), CFO, a Facilities Manager, an Activities Director, and three Office Managers); 20 personnel serving as Educational Assistants in Grades K-5 (thus reducing the student teacher ratio significantly); one program director (St. Croix Prep's before/after school program); and other personnel employed in support/custodial roles.

**Q: Describe St. Croix Prep's Governance Model.**

The St. Croix Preparatory Academy Board consists of nine voting members; three are faculty members and six are parents of St. Croix Prep students. These board members are the result of board elections which have been conducted in accordance with Minnesota charter school law. The Executive Director is an ex-officio member of the Board. An Advisory Board consists of the School Directors and the CFO. We believe this make up reflects the partnership necessary for the success of our school.

**Q: Does St. Croix Prep offer Full day or Half day Kindergarten?**

St. Croix Preparatory Academy offers both options. A family may make the choice that best fits with their goals and objectives. All state required instruction is conducted in the morning, while the afternoon consists of enrichment activities (music, Spanish, Art, library time, etc). A student may also begin attending only a half day and can then later migrate to a full day when it fits with the individual child's schedule and maturity. In addition, a family may choose to have their child attend full days on an intermittent schedule (like MWF). Our intent is to make this as flexible as possible. Currently about 80% of our Kindergarten students attend the full day program.

**Q: Does St. Croix Prep charge a fee for their full day Kindergarten enrichment program?**

In accordance with Minnesota law, the afternoon program is technically called an "enrichment" program. St. Croix Prep does charge a fee for its half day enrichment program. Current fees are \$2,200 for the entire year.

**Q: Does St. Croix Prep offer a before and after school program?**

Discovery Harbor is St. Croix Prep's before and after school program. In the morning, Discovery Harbor is open from approximately 6:30 am until the first class period; in the afternoon, Discovery Harbor is open from the end of the school day (approximately 4:00pm) until 6:00 pm. The cost is \$10 per session and family discounts are available.

### **Q: Where is St. Croix Preparatory Academy located?**

St. Croix Preparatory Academy is located at 4260 Stagecoach Trail North, Stillwater, MN.

### **Q: Which curriculum will St. Croix Preparatory Academy use?**

St. Croix Preparatory Academy uses the Core Knowledge Sequence developed by E. D. Hirsch for grades K-5. The Core Sequence is a challenging and proven curriculum being used with positive results in over 1500 schools across the country. To learn more about the Core Knowledge, visit [www.coreknowledge.org](http://www.coreknowledge.org).

St. Croix Preparatory Academy uses a classical, liberal arts curriculum for grades 6-12, modeled after many of the best performing secondary schools in the country (e.g., Tempe Preparatory Academy in Arizona, Ridgeview Classical Academy in Colorado, etc.) It combines formal classes, a classical framework, and Socratic seminars to draw out each student's inner curiosity and passion. It also asks all students to aim for their highest good in everything they try, and to aspire to mirror the efforts and achievements of outstanding historical personalities. In this environment, high achievement by students will be valued, encouraged, and rewarded.

### **Q: What kinds of classes will be offered?**

Students will study core academics at every grade level, including History & Geography, English/Literature, Math, and Science. In addition, depending on the grade level, students will also receive instruction in Music, Band, Orchestra, Choir, Physical Education, Spanish, Latin and Art.

### **Q: What are class sizes?**

Grades K-4 will have between 25-28 students per class. In addition, Grades K-4 will also have an Educational Assistant in the classroom to address their classroom needs. Grades 5-12 will have between 26-30 students per class. This class size does not apply to the English and Math classes. Due to the ability

grouping and utilization of faculty, typical class sizes in these subject areas often varies between 10 and 18 students.

### **Q: What kind of mechanisms are in place for parent feedback?**

We have put the following strategies in place to improve and increase parent involvement:

#### **A. Parent Agreement**

We ask that parents sign a parental agreement which emphasizes that they are integral contributors to the achievement of St. Croix Prep's mission and goals. It asks that parents:

- Support their child's education
- Attend Parent/Teacher conferences
- Communicate when they have questions about the school or their child's progress
- Make best efforts to volunteer between 20 and 40 hours a year
- Support the mission of St. Croix Prep, along with the core virtues of respect, honesty, compassion and service.

Signing the parent agreement is not mandatory; nor is volunteer service hours mandatory. It is simply our way to involve parents and reassure them they are a vital part of St. Croix Prep's success.

#### **B. Parent Participation in Classroom**

Parents are welcome in the classrooms of St. Croix Prep. Regular volunteer opportunities are available in Lower School, grades K-4. In the Middle School, grades 5-8, we have assigned Classroom Parents, who assist Teachers with a variety of projects, tasks, and events.

#### **C. Regular Parent Communication**

St. Croix Prep sends out weekly communication to parents via email. This communication informs parents of school events, testing schedules, recent publicity, school holidays, program changes, etc. In addition, St. Croix Prep utilizes a student information system which allows parents to check their child's homework assignments and grades.

### **Q: Does St. Croix Prep offer extra-curricular activities?**

St. Croix Preparatory Academy encourages students to participate in extra-curricular activities and will work with parents, staff and outside organizations to develop a wide variety of opportunities for students to develop their talents and interests outside of the regular school day. St. Croix Prep currently offers Music, Band, Orchestra, Choir, Latin, Art, Spanish, Physical Education, Drama, and Speech as a part of its normal class schedule. There are also opportunities for

Yearbook, Student Council, National Honor Society, Speech, One Act Play, National Junior Classical League, National Art Honor Society, and a variety of club activities (e.g., Ski Club, Chess Club, Basketball, Soccer, and Archery). In addition, St. Croix Prep is currently developing an athletic program to compete in the Minnesota State High School League. Initial sports to be developed include football, soccer, volleyball, cross country, basketball, archery, and track.

**Q: Is bus transportation provided?**

Stillwater School District (ISD 834) currently provides bus transportation to all of the students who reside within the school district (ISD 834) boundaries.

**Q: What are the current school day hours?**

Our school day starts at approximately 9:15 am and ends at 3:45 pm.

**Q: Are there tuition costs?**

No. As a public charter school, St Croix Preparatory Academy receives state funding for its operations.

**Q: What is a charter school?**

A charter school is a tuition-free independent public school of choice, with the ability to select its own board, staff and curriculum. Charter schools are usually small learning communities with a particular curricular focus. In addition, charter schools must go through a rigorous state application process, as well as obtain an authorizer who will be directly involved in monitoring the school's academic results and fiscal accountability.

**Q: Describe current successes of St. Croix Preparatory Academy?**

The first five years at St. Croix Preparatory Academy had many program successes.

**A. Enrollment**

Enrollment is one of the keys to viability in the first year of a charter school's operations. St. Croix Prep's full enrollment and waiting list ensured that classes operated at capacity. Very few students leave St. Croix Prep. When they do, the available spots are quickly filled.

**B. Parent Involvement/Satisfaction**

St. Croix Prep has experienced significant parental involvement from pre-opening to the final days of the fifth year of classes. Their satisfaction (94%) was noted in the surveys we conducted as well as in the number of students who return to St. Croix Prep the following year.

**C. Test Results**

The test results of St. Croix Prep students yielded impressive results. During its first five years St. Croix Prep has consistently ranked as one of the top performing schools in the state of Minnesota.

**D. Finances**

In our first years of operations St. Croix Prep has maintained a fund balance equal to approximately 10% of its budget.

**Q: How will the Academy differ from a more traditional public school?**

- A. St. Croix Preparatory Academy will purposefully set high expectations for all students, staff and parents. The school will place more emphasis on character development, respect, self-organization, responsibility, self-discipline and leadership than a traditional public school.
- B. With a small enrollment, all students will receive personalized attention, permitting a low student/teacher ratio and membership in a mutually supportive community of learners.
- C. A streamlined and accessible administration will allow St. Croix Preparatory Academy apportion a higher percentage of public funds directly to teaching and the classroom. This will also facilitate our commitment to continual improvement by enabling staff to refine practices and innovate quickly based on student achievement results.
- D. St. Croix Preparatory Academy will have the freedom to adopt the best practices utilized anywhere in the nation, rather than being required to follow the standardized curricular approach of a larger school district.
- E. St. Croix Preparatory Academy believes that quality learning begins with quality teachers and is committed to hiring educators with a passion for teaching and professional growth. Teachers and administrators will be accountable and rewarded for results. St. Croix Preparatory Academy's school board will ensure that staff is provided with the resources, training and responsibility to be successful in meeting the needs of every student.

**Q: Who can I contact for more information?**

For more information please contact the following:

Grades: Kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

Janelle Davis, Office Manager  
4260 Stagecoach Trail North  
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Phone: 651-395-5920  
Email: [jdavis@stcroixprep.org](mailto:jdavis@stcroixprep.org)

Grades: 5<sup>th</sup> Grade through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

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Grades: 9<sup>th</sup> Grade through 12<sup>th</sup> Grade

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**Authorizer Information:**

St. Croix Preparatory Academy is authorized by Friends of Education, EX0-01-A, 200 East Lake Street, Wayzata, MN 55391.