



## ST. GABRIEL'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

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### ENGAGING MINDS. INSPIRING VIRTUE.

### WHAT IS AN INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC SCHOOL?

The following “Frequently-Asked Questions” are intended to clarify how St. Gabriel’s, is both an independent and Catholic school and uniquely different from other educational options.

#### **What distinguishes St. Gabriel’s as a private or independent school from public institutions?**

- Selective admissions criteria
- An extraordinary faculty
- Academically challenging 21st century curriculum competencies and skills
- High academic standards and expectations for students behavior and work
- Responsive management structure with simple lines of authority and easy access to all
- Well-rounded curricular and co-curricular programs, including the arts
- Small grade-level environments and low student-teacher ratios allowing for increased individual attention
- Parent partnership and involvement
- Learning is valued by students; it’s cool to be smart
- Complete control of educational mission and programs
- Freedom to act decisively and quickly when needed
- Education of the whole child: virtue and manners matter
- First-class facilities
- Innovative and differentiated school program
- A safe and healthy environment
- Receives no public funding

#### **What are the differences between a private or independent school and a public school?**

Since St. Gabriel’s does not receive public funding it is independent from public education mandates and regulations, school boards, unions and state agencies. This means that St. Gabriel’s has the authority to determine, implement, and evaluate the entire educational program for the school and make all personnel decisions and desired changes.

The leadership at St. Gabriel’s is provided by an appointed Head of School and a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees who are invited to serve, and are not elected by the residents of a public school district. The school’s mission, educational principles, and practices, not popular opinion or majority vote, dictate the school’s direction and programs.

#### **What are the differences between an independent Catholic School (St. Gabriel’s) and a Diocesan or Parish School?**

Diocesan or parish schools are church-affiliated which means they receive and are dependent upon financial support from a local church and/or a Diocese. As an independent Catholic school, St. Gabriel’s is financially independent of the Diocese of Austin. And, because we are not affiliated with a particular Catholic parish, we are not part of a parish’s operating budget.

Also, while parishes or churches must distribute their resources among several ministries because they have multiple priorities and obligations, including a school, St. Gabriel’s can focus solely on the educational and spiritual development of its students. This singular commitment is reflected in the quality of the faculty, facilities, extensive educational and spiritual programs and opportunities available to St. Gabriel’s students.



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### WHAT IS AN INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC SCHOOL? (CONTINUED)

Finally, though financially independent of a local church and the Catholic Diocese, St. Gabriel's Catholic School operates under the auspices of the Bishop and receives accreditation from the Texas Catholic Conference Education Department (TCCED) which assure that it maintains a clear and strong Catholic identity. And though St. Gabriel's does not have a church on the school property, it does have a chapel with a Eucharistic presence open throughout the school day for all members of the community. In addition, St. Gabriel's is fully accredited by the Independent School Association of the Southwest (ISAS).

#### **Why is St. Gabriel's tuition higher than that of a Catholic parish school?**

While Diocesan or parish schools subsidize the cost of tuition with monies received from the church collections and the Diocese, St. Gabriel's must set the tuition closer to the actual cost of educating each child.

#### **Does St. Gabriel's welcome non-Catholic students?**

Yes, all faiths are welcome at St. Gabriel's! In fact, 27% of the students at St. Gabriel's are not Catholic. As a Catholic school we are a community of openness and inclusivity. Indeed, the root of the word "Catholic" (katho likos) means "universal" or "embracing all." As Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J. observes: "To be truly Catholic, in the literal sense of the word, is to be universal and open to all truth and goodness from whatever source it may come."

When students and families from diverse backgrounds join our school community, they add richness and depth to our journey. As we open our minds, hearts, and spirits to others we grow in our understanding of ourselves and one another. In this movement out of our personal experiences, we begin to appreciate the rich and varied gifts present not only in our school community, but also in the larger world outside of St. Gabriel's. At the same time, we ask that all parents and students support the mission of St. Gabriel's and appropriately participate in our Catholic traditions regardless of their particular faiths.

#### **Why would a non-Catholic family choose an independent Catholic school like St. Gabriel's?**

Families who choose a private, Catholic education seek an academic community with a commitment to excellence, service and a spiritual and moral center. Catholic, private schools have served American families since the 17th century often preceding the first public educational institutions. Competition between public and private schools has strengthened both, while guaranteeing that families have a meaningful alternative for their children's education.

The specific reasons for a non-Catholic family to select St. Gabriel's, in particular, for their child's education are: (1) The extraordinary faculty (2) The academic advantage and commitment to excellence in all areas of school life (3) The programmatic emphasis on virtues, service and leadership (4) The freedom to express and discuss religion and values (5) The innovative and differentiating school programs and opportunities (6) The strong focus on preparing world-ready citizen leaders.

#### **How is the quality of St. Gabriel's evaluated?**

Two accrediting bodies evaluate the school's mission, identity, instructional programs and practices: the Texas Catholic Conference Education Department (TCCED) ([www.txcatholic.org](http://www.txcatholic.org)) and the Independent School Association of the Southwest (ISAS) ([www.isasw.org](http://www.isasw.org)). St. Gabriel's has received full accreditation from both agencies.