



## St Raphael School Elementary Program Redesign Notes

Over the last year, we have taken some time to reevaluate and reconsider what we offer for elementary students in our Liberal Arts courses, Levels 1, 2, and 3. We've listened to teacher and parent feedback, and we have likewise learned a lot from the experience we have gained since St. Raphael School began offering online courses in 2013. We are excited to share our newly redesigned program for young students as we believe it will enable us to offer the same richness of a liberal arts education more efficiently and effectively.

Our K-12 Liberal Arts core program is designed to develop independent and engaged learners by fostering their interactions with literature, the natural world, and the liturgical rhythms and traditions of the Orthodox faith. Our offerings for elementary students integrate all of these in a way that supports homeschooling families as they endeavor to create a home environment that nurtures a love of learning.

We have found that the greatest benefit of our elementary courses is the way that they help to build community among homeschooling families and to provide support, resources, and venues for collaboration. As we have continued to evaluate the best use of technology in our modern world, we have found that our online class time is best used for community building and sharing. Homeschooling families do so much learning at home; what is often missing is a place to present work and share ideas. This is where the St Raphael School Elementary Program comes in. We are a place to spark interest, share ideas, and collaborate with other students and families.

Building on this foundation of a rich curriculum and a collaborative learning community, *a key focus of our new program will be substantial parent support and mentoring.* At each level, there will be a time set aside for instructors to meet with parents to explain the intent of our curriculum and share ideas and encouragement for learning at home. Ongoing support and connection opportunities throughout the week will be provided through our Schoology learning management platform.

The Liberal Arts curriculum is not designed to be "complete" homeschool curriculum. We assume that families will be using additional resources at home for math, handwriting, phonics, spelling, and grammar; our instructors are equipped to provide guidance and recommendations in these areas. The added level of parent involvement and communication in this new course design will help ensure that the course strikes the right balance of structure and flexibility.

As we strive to provide an appropriate amount of screen time for each age group, we have designed a new live class session format for our elementary courses, reducing the time the youngest students spend in live sessions. All three levels will be offered at the same price (\$595), as we believe that all of them will offer a similar value to families, although in different ways; as the students get older, the amount of direct instruction to the students will increase and the level of parent support will naturally decrease in similar proportion. The chart below summarizes what each course offers.

	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>
<b>Student online class</b>	One hour per week with parent present	Two hours per week	Three hours per week
<b>Parent mentoring</b>	Second half of the weekly meeting	Parents attend second hour each week; parent mentoring in second half of meeting	One class per month is a parent meeting with instructor
<b>Additional materials</b>	Monthly curriculum provided for weekly reading and activities to be completed at home with students – early writing activities, art projects, recipes, prompts for discussion, and more. Activities are shared in the weekly meeting.	Monthly curriculum provided for weekly reading and activities to be completed at home, including writing assignments. First hour each week is also devoted to building writing and reading skills together. Activities will be shared during class time.	Daily reading assignments, weekly writing assignments, and a monthly creative project to accompany each larger reading. Students collaborate in class and build skills for discussion, debate, writing, and creativity.

We have integrated our Christian studies in our Liberal Arts curriculum. Just as our spiritual lives are integrated throughout our daily, weekly, and annual rhythms, we want our class time and curriculum to reflect this same rhythm. Our online classes always begin and end with prayer. Throughout the year, each class reads from scripture, saints’ lives or moral tales, and learns various hymns of the Orthodox Church. We take time to note the passing of the seasons of the Church year and how these seasons coincide with the natural world. We reflect on how our Orthodox worldview interacts with literature that we encounter. Students in Level 3 have an opportunity to enroll in an additional optional catechism class if they desire which will focus on developing deeper knowledge of the Bible with Presb. Maria Koulianos.

Our two elementary Liberal Arts instructors, Dr. Erin Moulton (Levels 1, 2, and 3) and Presb. Kellie Tandilyan (Level 3), both have remarkable talent as teachers, and they both have deep experience homeschooling their own children (read more about them below). We believe parents and students alike will benefit from their wisdom, enthusiasm, and wealth of experience.

Again, we believe our families will be pleased with our updated and fresh approach to our elementary program. As you have questions or concerns, please do reach out and share them! We are so grateful to all of our many families who have provided support, feedback, and encouragement.

Yours in Christ,



Principal  
St. Raphael School



**Erin Moulton (Liberal Arts Levels 1, 2, and 3)** has a deep love for education and has been teaching in some capacity for over two decades. She holds a PhD in Slavic linguistics from the University of Kansas and has also studied at Washington University in Saint Louis, Missouri, and in Saint Petersburg, Russia. In the past, she served as an instructor of Russian language, literature, and culture at University of Kansas. She works professionally as an editor and project manager in the field of international compliance and serves as youth communications liaison for the

Orthodox Church in America Diocese of the Midwest and as board president of the Orthodox Christian Translation Society.

Erin and her husband, Christian, are parishioners at Holy Trinity Church in Overland Park, Kansas, where she teaches church school and assists in creating a multiyear cycle of curriculum for the parish. Erin Moulton has taught literature, language, and Orthodox Christian studies to all ages, from preschool to adult. She has homeschooled her own children for fourteen years. She is delighted for this new opportunity to create community among homeschooling families, both teaching students and providing support for parents and families. e-mail: moultonstraphael@gmail.com



**Presvytera Kellie Tandilyan (Liberal Arts Level 3)** graduated from a Classical Christian high school in rural Montana before beginning her studies at Hillsdale College in Classical Languages and Literature. While there she was received into the Orthodox Church which led her to continue her studies at Hellenic College in Brookline, MA where she met and married a handsome seminarian from Armenia. She went on to receive her master's degree in Education from the Waldorf Teacher training program at Antioch University with a thesis entitled "Making Space for the Sacred: The Creative Arts and the Spiritual Development of

Children". Presvytera recently also completed the Master of Divinity degree at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology.

A veteran homeschooling mom of three, she has been teaching in and out of the classroom for over twenty years. Presvytera Kellie and Father Anthony live in Wilmington, MA and serve the Dormition of the Virgin Mary parish in Somerville. When not teaching, Presvytera enjoys making music with her children, gardening, hiking and keeping company with their 11 chickens. kelliet.srs@gmail.com



**Presbyteria Maria Koulianos (NEW Catechism Level 3)** has been an educator for over 20 years, loving every minute, with vast experiences in both public and private schools as a classroom teacher, a developer and implementer of learning programs for students, and an area administrator. She earned her Bachelor of Science in education from Indiana University with certifications in elementary education, 7/8 non-departmental, language arts 1–9, and computer education K–12. She holds a Master of Divinity and a Master of Theology from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts, where she wrote her

thesis, "The Annunciation of the Theotokos from a Liturgical Perspective." Presbyteria Maria and her husband, Father Dionysios, live in the greater Springfield area, where he is the Dean of Saint George Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Springfield, Massachusetts. She hopes to inspire her students to love literature and become lifelong learners. E-mail: mkoulianos.raphaelschool@gmail.com