

Debra Bell
AIM ACADEMY

Aim Academy Handbook
AimAcademy.Online

2020-2021 School Year
Your Homeschool Success Story Starts Here
10th anniversary

March 1, 2020

Aim Academy Handbook

Whether you are a student, parent, or teacher at Aim Academy, we want you to have a great experience. Clear expectations, consistent communications, and a handy reference guide to the policies and practices we've developed over the years is one step in achieving that goal. Thank you for choosing Aim Academy. We want to be a part of your homeschool success story.

This handbook provides important information regarding Aim Academy policies and procedures. Please read this handbook carefully. We welcome your questions and comments. Please use our contact form:

<https://debrabell.com/contact/>

Mission Statement

Aim Academy provides introductory and college prep online classes that combine the flexibility of homeschooling with the best research-based practices for 21st century learning. Our aim is student success as measured by academic achievement and increase interest in each class's subject matter.

How We Execute Our Mission Statement:

- We create a warm, supportive, and systematic approach to learning that respects developmental differences in children.
- Kids learn best when the subject matter interests them and they feel confident to learn. We share responsibility with parents and students for developing students' interests and self-confidence in learning.
- Our **introductory** elementary and middle school classes focus on making learning fun and developing students' interests in different subjects.
- Our **college prep** middle school and high school classes prepare students to be college ready by the end of high school.
- Our middle school classes accommodate the differences among students at the beginning of adolescence, focus on deepening students' interests, and center on the fundamental skills and knowledge that gradually prepare them for more rigorous, high school studies.
- Our **college prep** high school classes focus on the fundamental knowledge that colleges expect students to master by the end of high school. While we do not want students to be challenged beyond their readiness, challenge is a critical part of deepening students' confidence in their ability to learn. Once students have reached adolescence, rigor is good—especially within the context of a positive and engaging learning experience.
- Our **introductory** high school classes presume students may not be collegebound or students may want to dedicate more concentrated time and effort to other areas. These classes help students fulfill graduation requirements but do not focus on preparing students to score high on equivalency exams (AP, CLEP), college entrance exams, or SAT subject area tests.
- All classes help students develop the soft skills and independent learning skills necessary to accomplish their goals after graduation. One significant way we do this is to offer minicourses taught by licensed counselor, Bonnie Gonzalez, which teach the soft skills associated with positive mental health, personal success, and overall well-being.

- All classes are open to a range of ages, so students can start at their levels of success.
- We keep our staff updated on the best practices for an online context and provide the technology to support student learning.

Aim Academy Course Content

- Overall, our goal is to provide developmentally appropriate, yet academically challenging course content and assignments that engage students and pique their interest in the subject matter.
- Middle school classes prepare students to succeed in Aim Academy high school classes. The recommended progression of coursework is noted in the course descriptions.
- Our college prep high school classes align with college entrance exams (ACT, SAT) and/or the relevant equivalency exams (AP, CLEP, SAT Subject Test) and position students to score high on these tests by the end of high school if they so choose.
- Even if students do not take these tests, many college placement exams are aligned with these exams, so mastering the content and skills incorporated in our classes is essential for collegebound students.
- More information about the content of these exams can be found here:
 - <https://www.act.org/>
 - <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat>
 - <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat-subject-tests>
 - <https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/home>
 - <https://clep.collegeboard.org/>
- We endorse these exams because they allow students to earn college credit for their high school work in the most economical way. Colleges do not charge students for the credits they earn through equivalence exam testing, whereas families incur a cost if students take a college course or ask the college to award credit based on the student's work through other methods.
- Aim Academy course content is nonsectarian, but sensitive to the concerns of conservative and Christian families.
- If explicit Christian content is incorporated in a course, this is noted in the course description. The symbol of a cross also appears in the image used for the class on our website.

Aim Academy Expectations for Our Online Culture

- Students show respect for the authority of the teacher and respect for each other, including those with whom they may not agree.
- Students demonstrate respect for themselves and for their parents by adhering to the highest standards of academic integrity in their class participation and course work.
- Teachers create a warm, nurturing, personable, and safe environment for all students.
- Teachers encourage full participation of every student and initiate involvement of the parent when a student is struggling or disengaged.

Accommodating Special Needs and Special Circumstances

- At Aim Academy, we understand that students have individual differences. We strive to create learning environments that allow all students to succeed.
- **Parents are responsible to make teachers aware of a student's special needs or circumstances before registering for the class.**
- Teachers are free to accommodate students with special needs and to be flexible in modifying assignments upon request.
- Parents are requested to be respectful of the teacher's time limitations when requesting accommodations.

- If accommodating student or parent requests requires additional time from the teacher, appropriate compensation for the teacher should be arranged and handled through Aim Academy administration.

Class Size

- Aim Academy class limit is 21. Most have a limit of less than 21. This is noted on course descriptions.
- Teachers are free to set class size limits below Aim Academy class limit of 21.
- Parents will be notified if the class limit of 21 will be exceeded.
- Teachers are free to accept or decline students according to the criteria set out in their course descriptions.

Course Individuality

Teachers may develop and alter the structure of their courses to better meet the needs of the students and the course. This includes but is not limited to the grading scale, the timing of assignments and grading, live class participation, late assignments, and disciplinary action. During the first week of class, teachers will post information detailing any deviation from the standards and regulations in this handbook.

Student Responsibilities

Our aim is to create a warm, engaging, and nurturing environment for all students. We can't do this alone. Students contribute to the positive climate at Aim Academy in the following ways:

- Come to class prepared.
- Participate in class discussions.
- Take an interest in other classmates and affirm their contributions.
- Let teachers know when you enjoy an assignment or a class experience. In the same way positive feedback encourages you, it encourages your teachers. (Remember, teachers are people too.)
- Commit to the success of the class to make the class a positive experience for everyone.

Communications

Students are responsible for communicating promptly and regularly with teachers when they have questions, lack clarity about the requirements for assignments, struggle, need help, or have any concerns or observations that will contribute to their success or make the overall climate of the class more successful for all. Taking the initiative to communicate clearly and positively with a teacher (or any authority figure) is a life skill critical to students' future success.

Our Aim Academy teachers are quite talented and knowledgeable, but they still can't read minds. Speak up! Communicate. It will make most situations better.

We ask students to use only the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) email system to contact teachers. This provides a permanent record of interactions between students and teachers and is very helpful for parents and administrators when addressing problems and misunderstandings.

Academic Integrity

At Aim Academy, we strive to help students grow as independent learners and to take responsibility for their academic progress. Students and parents are expected to complete the Aim Academy orientation material before starting their first class at Aim. This orientation covers principles of academic integrity and plagiarism.

In addition, during the first week of class, teachers will review principles of academic integrity and make sure students know how to avoid plagiarism.

Excellent resources can be found at plagiarism.org. Please review the information found there.

Aim Academy students are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in their work. Academic honesty means doing the right thing, even when no one is looking. In Aim Academy classes, this means that students submit their own work, write their own papers, properly cite their resources, and follow the standards set by the teachers. (See Parent Responsibilities for our recommendation on parental assistance.)

During the first week of classes (after teachers review the definition of plagiarism and how to avoid it), middle school and high school students will be asked to sign the following honor code:

Because I want to be a person who maintains the highest standards of integrity and honorable character, and I want to be a member of the Aim Academy community, I make a personal commitment to uphold the following standards:

- *Strive for excellence as a student.*
- *Cooperate respectfully with those in authority.*
- *Care for and respect my classmates.*
- *Be truthful, trustworthy, and appropriate in my words and actions.*
- *Refrain from any form of cheating, including inappropriate parental involvement.*

By signing this document, I give my word of honor that I will respect the Aim Academy Student Honor Code. I will do all in my power to uphold Aim Academy's high standards.

Plagiarism Policy

Aim Academy prohibits all forms of plagiarism. Plagiarism is the act of presenting the ideas and statements of another as if they are one's own without crediting the original source. When students use someone else's words or ideas, they must credit the source by following the guidelines provided by the teacher at the beginning of the course.

At Aim Academy, we take responsibility for making sure students understand what constitutes plagiarism and teaching them how to properly credit their sources and avoid unintentional plagiarism.

If a teacher suspects that a student may have plagiarized (intentionally or unintentionally), the teacher will contact the parent in the **first instance** to solicit the parent's involvement and preferences for handling the situation. All incidents of this nature must be reported to the Aim Academy administration and documented.

Ongoing failure to comply with Aim Academy's plagiarism policy will result in disciplinary action that may include any of the following:

- A conference with student, parent, and teacher.
- Requiring the student to redo the assignment.
- A failing grade for the assignment.
- Other consequences determined by the teacher, including dismissal from the course.

Disciplinary action will depend on the severity of the plagiarism. In administering any disciplinary actions, our posture will be gracious and restorative—even while upholding a high standard for academic integrity.

Cheating Policy

We expect middle school and high school students to understand what constitutes cheating prior to their enrollment in Aim Academy classes. Teachers review types of cheating during the first week of class prior to asking students to sign the honor code.

Parents will be engaged immediately if a student is suspected of cheating. Flagrant cheating will result in a failing grade for the assignment and may also include dismissal from the course at Aim Academy's discretion.

(See Parent Responsibilities for our recommendation on parental assistance.)

Attendance Policy

- Students are strongly encouraged to attend live classes. Students who cannot regularly attend live classes should make the teacher aware of this prior to registering.
- There is no penalty for not attending the live classes if students view the recording.
- Students who miss class are expected to view the recording of the live class within a week of its posting on the class website. (Canvas's analytics enables teachers to confirm that a student has watched the full recording.)
- Students are expected to complete all class assignments by the due date.

Late Work Policy

- Teachers will post assignments at least 7 days prior to their due date.
- Students must complete all assignments by the due date, unless prior arrangements have been made with the teacher.
- Teachers may set their own late work policies. This will be in writing and reviewed with students at the beginning of the course.
- Students are responsible to communicate with the teacher if an assignment is going to be late.
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Working Ahead

- Teachers are not required to provide students with access to assignments more than 7 days prior to their due date. (Caveat: Our teachers understand that students need access to assignments that require a significant time commitment by a much earlier date.)
- Teachers are not required to accommodate requests for students to work ahead in a course. This usually requires extra time from our teachers. Teachers are free to accommodate these types of requests if they are able.

Student Academic Responsibility

Students' responsibilities include the following:

- Inform themselves of and abide by all Aim Academy standards as listed in this handbook.
- Maintain computer and equipment such that student can complete all required work.
- Submit all course work by the due dates posted by the teacher.
- Attend live classes or listen to the recording in a timely manner.
- Put forth a conscientious effort in all school assignments and live classes.
- Use respectful online behavior.
- Maintain good communication with teachers, which includes asking for help when needed.
- Use the Canvas communication system exclusively once class is in session.

Parent Responsibilities

Parents, we ask that you fulfill the following responsibilities to support your child(ren)'s success and ensure clear, consistent communication with Aim Academy faculty and administration:

- Inform yourself of the rules set forth in this handbook and review this handbook with your child(ren).
- Create a Parent Observer Account in Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) and use it to regularly monitor student work.
- Communicate with faculty via Canvas communication system exclusively throughout the school year.
- Maintain computer and equipment such that student can complete all required work.
- Ensure that student is registered in Canvas courses prior to the start of classes.
- Monitor to ensure that student completes required assignments and attends live classes.
- Provide appropriate assistance to your child(ren) when needed.
- Avoid assistance that violates the academic integrity policies for middle school and high school students. (Check with teachers for clarification if you are not sure.)
- Provide an appropriate work environment, including a quiet location in which to attend live classes.
- Support your child(ren)'s learning when needed, which may include reviewing and reinforcing instruction.
- As a professional courtesy, communicate first with the teacher(s) regarding any questions, concerns, or disagreements promptly. If questions, concerns, or disagreements are not resolved to your satisfaction, please do not hesitate to contact Aim Academy administration.

Methods of Communication

Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) is the primary communication tool for Aim Academy. We encourage parents, students, and teachers to use all its features to stay up to date with lessons, assignments, calendar, emails, and announcements.

Once class has begun, please contact teachers exclusively through Canvas so all parties have a record of communication. (In other words, please do not contact teachers through their private email addresses.)

Please help your child learn how to properly communicate with an instructor via Canvas. Students should clearly state the reason for their messages in the subject line. Emails should be polite, clear, and complete. We understand emails can easily include grammatical and spelling errors—that's okay—emails are not graded! It is more important that students use appropriate language when addressing adults. Students should address teachers with the titles they request; for example, Mrs., Ms., Dr. (Use emojis, acronyms, and emoticons with caution. They do not always fit the tone of the message.)

Parental Assistance

Parents are encouraged to support students in their journey to independent learning. You know your child best, and you know how much assistance your child needs to be successful in a learning environment. At Aim Academy, we will come alongside you in that journey. Research shows students achieve full independence and responsibility for their learning when they have been supported and mentored by parents and teachers along the way (like a good coach). The road to independent learning is a gradual process for most students.

Contact the teacher if you have any questions or concerns about assisting your children. Here is a guiding principle:

In any Aim Academy course, parents are free to support students in any way a teacher might provide support.

Examples of appropriate assistance include the following:

- Clarifying the assignment.
- Brainstorming possible topics, responses, or projects before the student begins the assignment.
- Providing a critical review of a student's work prior to submission, along with recommendations for improvement.
- Reviewing material together prior to a quiz or test.
- Checking the work for grammatical or spelling errors prior to submission.

Aim Academy guidelines for acceptable parental collaboration (also applies to assistance from siblings and peers) are as follows:

- Parents are free to fully assist elementary and middle school students in completing assignments and assessments. Because these courses do not appear on Aim Academy transcripts, we believe parents are best situated to determine how much assistance is appropriate.
- Parents should not contribute to a student's submitted work in a credit-bearing high school course without first discussing the circumstances with the teacher (and possibly Aim Academy administration).

Examples of inappropriate assistance for a high school student include the following:

- Supplying answers to a graded quiz or test.
- Rewriting or revising a student's written work. (Copy editing is acceptable.)
- Contributing to the graded work on an assignment, essay, or project.

Please do not hesitate to contact the teacher if you are unsure whether your assistance undermines a student's academic integrity or not. When a parent and student collaborate on a project, the simplest way to be above reproach is to acknowledge the degree of parental assistance when submitting the assignment. This information also helps teachers understand better where the student is in his or her progress toward independence and proficiency.

Administrative Policies and Procedures

Technical Requirements

High speed, broadband Internet, sound card, and a microphone are necessary to participate in the live class sessions. Streaming video capabilities are necessary to watch recorded lectures. A quality headset is also recommended for live lectures (one with a USB connection is best). A scanner is recommended for most high school level classes as well as the ability to convert documents to a PDF format.

Assignments may be uploaded to Canvas in the following formats:

- PDF
- Microsoft Office applications (e.g., .doc, .docx, .ppt, .xlsx)
- Open Office applications
- Rich text (e.g. .rtf)

Students using a Mac must convert Notes or Pages to another accepted format.

Not all formats are accepted in all classes. Teachers will note what formats are acceptable for class work in their course syllabi.

Grading Scale

Aim Academy's grading scale is as follows:

- 90 - 100 A
- 80 - 89 B
- 70 - 79 C
- 60 – 69 D
- Below 60 Failing

Teachers may choose to base grades on submitted work alone, or on some combination of submitted work, class participation, and other factors. **Teachers may choose to use a different grading scale if they deem it to be appropriate in their classes.** In the first week of classes, teachers will post information which describe their grading policies.

Grade Reports

Student grades are visible to students and parents (through parent Observer accounts). Grade reports can be downloaded from Canvas at any time in the form of a PDF file. Once the course is closed, access to the gradebook is no longer possible. Teachers will notify parents before closing a course so parents can download grade reports for their permanent records.

Transcripts

Transcripts are currently available free of charge upon request. Please request a transcript through the contact form on our website. If a student drops or withdraws from a course, that course does not appear on the transcript.

Refund Policy

Registration (technology) fees are nonrefundable.

For classes paid in full before the start of the course, the following refund policies apply:

Please request a refund by e-mail via our website.

We will issue an 80% refund if you withdraw from the course prior to the third Monday of August. (This gives us time to add wait-listed students to classes that are closed.)

We will issue a 70% refund if you withdraw from the course prior to Week 7. (Second week of October)

No refunds are issued after Oct. 2, 2020.

For mini-courses and one semester courses: 80% refund if you withdraw prior to first week of the course. 70% refund if you withdraw prior to 3rd week of the course. No refunds issued after 1st Monday of Week 3.

For students on a payment plan, the following refund policies apply:

Please request a refund by e-mail via our website.

We will issue a refund, less 20% of full scheduled payment, if you withdraw prior to the last Monday of August. (For example, if full payment would have been \$600, we will return what you have paid, less \$120).

We will issue a refund, less 30% of full scheduled payment, if you withdraw prior to Week 7. (Second week of October)

The same policies apply to mini-courses and semester courses if you withdraw prior to the 3rd week of the course. No refunds after the 1st Monday of Week 3.

Credit Option:

You can elect to receive 90% credit for the amount paid, excluding technology fee, toward a future course at Aim Academy. This credit option is available up to the deadlines for 70% refund (prior to week 7 of full year course; prior to week 3 of semester/minicourses.)

Grievance Procedures/Appeals

If a student or parent wishes to make a formal complaint, the following procedure should be followed:

- First, contact the teacher and try to resolve the grievance informally.
- If this doesn't work, please submit a written grievance report to Debra Bell. This may be submitted via email to dbell@debrabell.com. The written report should contain the following:
 - A description of the grievance.
 - A summary of steps that have been taken to resolve the problem.
 - The names of the person(s) thought to be responsible for the problem.
 - Other facts pertinent to the grievance.

You will receive a response to your grievance within 48 business hours, either from Debra Bell or her representative.

For your convenience, the answers found on the Aim Academy FAQs page from our website have been reproduced here:

Aim Academy FAQs

When does registration open for the following school year?

March 1 is registration day — a preview of our schedule and course line up is generally available in February. Sign up for our e-mail list to stay abreast of developments.

Are teachers your employees?

Yes, they are. Here's why you should care. . .

A few years ago, the IRS ruled against an online provider of homeschool classes, finding that their teachers should be classified as employees, not independent contractors. The resulting fines and back taxes assessed forced that provider out of business. Most distressing, they could not refund the families who had paid for classes that disappeared overnight, leaving these folks scrambling midyear to find replacement classes they had to pay for again.

The day after this event became public, I hired Carol Topp (<http://homeschoolcpa.com/>) to conduct a thorough review of Aim Academy's employment practices. I have always used a knowledgeable accountant, but I wanted someone with experience with the IRS in this area, and Carol has that.

When she sent me her review letter, I immediately implemented her recommendation that I make Aim Academy teachers employees—even though this was a costly pivot. I do not want to risk the fines/back taxes and the disruption this would cause to the families who trust us to be above reproach and sustainable.

While it is more expensive for me to employ our instructors, it is the right thing to do. This change provides better protection for them and their families (they have unemployment insurance and workers' compensation). It is also better for our families — you do not have to worry about the financial solvency of Aim Academy. We aren't going anywhere. We aspire to serve you and your children for years to come.

(HSLDA also hired employment attorneys to review the situation, and they came back with the same recommendation—online teachers should be employees not independent contractors, if paid directly by the organization.)

Do you charge a registration fee?

Yes. We charge \$24 per order to help cover administration, record-keeping, and technology. The fee is the same no matter how many classes you register for per order. This fee is called a technology fee on your order.

What is included in the cost?

Aim tuition covers student and parent access to the course website and access to the live class sessions (one student only). Live sessions are provided at least three out of four weeks of the month. When a live session is not provided, teachers provide a recorded lecture. Any modification of this provision will be clearly noted in the sign-up materials.

What is not included in the cost?

The cost of the course does not include the required texts, unless noted in the course description. Teachers have selected texts that are appropriate for the course and, as a secondary priority, those that are easily available to be purchased in used condition.

How often are live classes held?

Unless otherwise noted, instructors provide a live class at least three out of four weeks in a given month. If a live class is not provided, a recorded lecture will be offered. However unexpected interruptions or illness may prevent an instructor from providing a live or recorded class. A make-up session will be offered for more than two canceled classes for a full year course.

The time slot doesn't work for us. Must students attend the live classes?

Students do not have to attend the live class. Live classes are recorded. Attendance is optional. Listening to the recording is required.

What is the schedule for the school year?

Full year and semester long courses begin the last week of August. Classes end between the last week of April and the second week of May. Classes meet at least 32 weeks. Classes that prepare students for end of the year AP or CLEP exams typically meet 34 weeks.

Parents receive a welcome letter and introductory materials from each teacher by mid-August. The recommended schedule for 2020–2021 school year is as follows: (Teachers are free to modify their schedules so please refer to the course syllabus you receive for each class or check with the teacher in advance.)

School Calendar 2020–2021

- Start of the school year: August 24, 2020
- Thanksgiving Holiday: Week of November 23
- Winter Break: December 21–January 3
- Spring Break: March 8–March 12, 2021
- Last week of class: Last week of April or second week of May. See short course descriptions for details.

Mini-course Schedule 2020-2021

- Late Spring: April 13–May 29, 2020
- Summer I: May 11–June 26, 2020
- Summer II: July 6–August 21, 2020
- Fall Mini-Courses: August 24–October 9, 2020
- Winter Session: January 4–February 19, 2021

What are college entrance exams?

The SAT and the ACT are college entrance exams. Students should take these during their junior and senior years of high school to demonstrate their college readiness. These exams measure student's skill levels in critical reading, mathematics, and writing. Our current classes are designed to help students improve the critical reading, vocabulary, writing skills, and core knowledge tested by these exams.

What are equivalency exams?

Equivalency exams (also known as credit-by-exam) test a student's knowledge and skill in a college level subject area. Students who score well on these exams may be awarded either credit or advanced placement at the university or college where they matriculate. The AP and CLEP exams are the most frequently accepted equivalency exams. Each individual college or university determines which equivalency exams they will accept and the credit or advanced placement they will award.

What is the difference between earning credit and advanced placement for these exams?

If a college awards credit for a CLEP or AP exam score, then the student does not have to take the class the exam replaces. The student also earns the credits the college would have awarded a student who successfully completed that course (without having to pay the college for those credits). This is the best policy, as it saves you money and advances the student towards a degree.

If a college awards advanced placement, then the student is only exempt from taking the class the exam replaces. The student does not earn credit toward a degree, but the student may instead take more advanced coursework in its place. This can be advantageous because it allows the student to earn advanced standing at the college or university on an accelerated timeline (which will have its own set of privileges.) For example, a student who receives advanced placement in French because of AP or CLEP exam scores may be able to take

graduate level classes which count concurrently toward an undergraduate and graduate level degree. Again, these decisions are made exclusively at the discretion of each individual college or university.

Colleges and universities typically publish their policies for awarding AP/CLEP and other equivalency exam credit on their websites.

What type of student is best suited for these classes?

We believe these classes are best suited for any college bound student. The skills and content we cover focus on those that lay the groundwork for success on CLEP and AP equivalency exams by the end of high school. These exams, in turn, are designed to reflect the current skills and content commonly taught at the college level. The College Board routinely surveys colleges and universities to ensure that these exams are aligned with current course requirements. All types of colleges are included in their survey; e.g. Catholic, Christian, private, and public. If the colleges and universities you are considering for your child accept CLEP and AP credits, then that means that these exams are aligned with their course content. Beyond preparing students for these equivalency exams, our classes prepare students in an incremental and supportive way for the rigors and expectations of future college-level work.

How much do these classes cost?

The cost of each full year course varies depending upon the qualifications and experience of the instructor, as well as, the time required to grade assignments and provide quality feedback to the student. These range from \$499-\$750 a class. All One semester classes cost \$299. Minicourses are \$225. Other than books (and most can be purchased used), there are no additional fees for these classes.

Are course texts included in the cost?

Unless otherwise stated in the course description, course materials are an additional cost. However, most classes use textbooks that are widely available used, and teachers only change the required texts for a course when necessary so you will be able to resell or reuse the materials with other children.

My child has never taken an online class before. How will we know what to do?

We've got you covered. Our teachers understand that they are acclimating students to online learning as well as to the challenges of college prep work. They are coached to help all students get comfortable with an online environment during the first few weeks. Additionally, we are all using CANVAS Learning Management System and Zoom as a video-conferencing tool, so you can expect a quicker adjustment with each of our classes you enroll in.

What is the class format?

- Students and parents have access to all class materials via the class website, built with Instructure's CANVAS learning management system (LMS). Separate invitations to both student and parent will be e-mailed the week the course begins. It is important that each student and each parent accept their invitations and set up their individual accounts for signing into the class website. After the start of the class, all communications with the teacher should take place within CANVAS so a permanent record of teacher/student and teacher/parent interactions is created.
- The class syllabus will be available at the start of the course; this may be updated or modified as needed by the teacher, though these are kept to a minimum. Students always have at least seven days to complete an

assignment. Students and teacher will be able to discuss the material via a class discussion forum which is private. Parents also have full access to the class website and discussion forums.

- Instructors regularly use the Zoom conferencing tool to offer a live discussion or chat with students. Students receive an e-mail link to the live discussion prior to the start of class. The first time a student uses the Zoom conferencing tool, a small file will be downloaded to the student's computer that will allow the student to enter the classroom.
- The time slot for the live sessions is predetermined and posted on the Aim Academy website. Students are not required to attend a live session, though most do if their schedule permits. While attendance at live sessions is not required, students are required to listen to the recorded lesson as soon as possible to stay caught up with the course information.
- Students will also have access to recorded lectures made by the instructor. These will also include media; such as, PowerPoint presentations, whiteboard demonstrations or video.
- Students and parents will be able to track student progress through an online grade book. Access for parents is provided through a Observer account in Canvas, which is uniquely linked to their students' grades and site-based analytics.
- CANVAS also provides analytics, which allows teachers and parents to see their students' activity and progress in the course.

What kind of technology is required?

High speed, broadband Internet, sound card and a microphone are necessary to participate in the optional live class sessions. Streaming video capabilities are necessary to watch recorded lectures. A quality headset is also recommended for live lectures (one with a USB connection is best). A scanner is recommended for most high school level classes as well as the ability to convert documents to a PDF format.

What should we do about technical issues?

The teacher or Aim administrator will be able to guide you through any technical issues concerning Canvas LMS. Zoom provides 24/7 live support for technical difficulties. A phone number for contacting support will be included in the e-mail link to all live sessions. Technical difficulties not related to CANVAS or Zoom will be the responsibility of the parent.

What are the differences among introductory, pre-AP and AP courses?

Introductory level – foundational middle school or high school course. The first in the recommended sequence of courses in that subject area.

Pre-AP – equivalent to a college prep high school level class. The difference is a pre-AP level class introduces the core content and critical skills that are focused on in-depth in the subsequent AP class in that subject area.

AP – equivalent to a college level class at a selective university. These courses are more rigorous than a similar course at a community college. This is the reason doing well in an AP course and on the AP exam helps students win merit scholarship. It demonstrates they can excel in advanced level work. It also illustrates why we are offering graduated levels — to help students be ready to do their best in an AP class.

What kind of time commitment is necessary?

The time commitment increases with the difficulty of the subject matter, and it will vary from student to student. In general, the time commitment is affected by the student's reading level. If the student is already reading beyond grade level, he or she will move through the material more quickly. If the student is weak in critical reading skills, then more time will be needed.

All of our classes focus on developing a student's critical reading and comprehension skills — as this is a key component of all the exams we are prepping for. What follows is a general rule of thumb for each level:

Middle school – 3-4 hrs. a week

Introductory – 4-6 hrs. a week

Pre-AP – 5-7 hrs. a week

AP – 8-10 hrs. a week

What kind of software is required?

Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat are recommended but not required. A scanner is necessary for math and science classes, or a quality camera phone, to send in student's written work.

Are classes taught from a Christian worldview?

Our classes are not explicitly Christian (**unless otherwise noted**), though we are careful to choose materials that respect the concerns of religious and conservative families. Teachers are free to express their faith and their opinions in the classes they teach. We also respect the rights of students to express their faith and opinions in class and in assignments (when relevant to the class discussion and assignment.) However, the unique purpose of Aim Academy courses is to prepare our students for college level entrance exams and CLEP and AP exams by the end of high school. This is our focus, and students from all faith backgrounds or none at all are welcomed in our classes. Teachers are also responsible for creating a class culture where students from all backgrounds feel comfortable, respected, heard, and valued.

When are assignments due?

Students always have seven days or more to complete and submit an assignment. The assignment due date is published on the class assignment page and class calendar. Most teachers require assignments to be submitted the same day of the week every week. Students have ample time to complete more substantial assignments; such as, papers and projects.

How is homework submitted?

Students can submit assignments directly through CANVAS by uploading an attachment as an .rtf, .doc, .docx, or pdf. (MAC users must convert to one of these extensions). Alternatively, students can type or copy and paste their assignments directly into a text box provided on the assignment page in CANVAS. Many quizzes and tests are built directly into CANVAS. Students will know their results on these assignments immediately, insofar as they are able to be graded automatically

How soon will homework be graded?

It is our intention to return assignments to students, with appropriate feedback, within seven days. In the event this is not possible; the teacher will notify the class or individual students in advance. More demanding

or time-consuming assignments, such as research papers or projects, may require more than seven days. Again, the teacher will set the expectation for when big projects will be graded in advance.

How much feedback will my student receive?

Specific, targeted feedback will be provided for all written work, including lab reports. It is our goal to prepare your student for future CLEP, AP or SAT subject tests, and timely, individualized feedback is a key component of the preparations. We are proud of the quality and quantity of individualized feedback Aim provides and we highlight this as a distinct characteristic of our classes which sets us apart from other options. However, it is not common to comment on ALL aspects of a student's work – frequently teachers are focused on particular skills and those skills will be the only ones evaluated in a student's work, particularly during the first semester of a course.

A commenting tool provided by CANVAS is used by many teachers. These comments are sometimes not visible when using certain browsers. Please contact the teacher if your child does not have any feedback on a written assignment. It is highly likely the comments are just not visible to you and a simple adjustment is all that is necessary.

Do teachers accept late work?

I (Debra Bell) encourage teachers to set a strict late work policy for these reasons:

I want teachers to have time to provide the timely feedback that sets Aim classes apart from other options. Late work detracts from that time.

Grading late work takes a lot of extra time—it's much faster to grade ALL student work for any given assignment in one sitting.

From my thirty years of teaching I've found that once a teacher starts accepting late work, many more students start turning in late work and the problems created snowball.

Students are better served by setting reasonable expectations for turning work in on time. This is an important college-ready skill for students to develop.

Aim Academy teachers are not required to accept late work. With that said, teachers are free to set their individual class policies, and you will find that ALL Aim teachers have policies in place to accommodate illness, family emergencies and infrequent requests for an extension.

What should my student expect the first week of class?

During the first week of class teachers will orient students to CANVAS, course technologies and class policies. Some teachers do a "soft" start to allow for families who are still on vacation and to make sure everyone has time to get acclimated to an online environment

We are going to be out-of-town, can my student complete assignments in advance?

It is at the teacher's discretion to provide assignments in advance to accommodate a student's schedule. In general, this practice is discouraged because course assignments are aligned with course lectures (and teachers will not be able to provide these in advance.)

In the event that a teacher does allow a student access to course modules and assignments early, the teacher will not be able to grade this work in advance.

Is creative writing an elective or can it be used for a high school English credit?

Our creative writing course also includes literature and enough formal writing instruction to fulfill an English credit for high school, without adding any other coursework to your schedule. It can be used as a pre-AP English literature course if desired.

Are parents expected to do any grading?

Not typically. Parents will be asked to proctor exams, but they will be scored at our end.

In some classes, students may be asked to self-check routine assignments and report their scores. We use this method when self-checking their work helps students to learn. Teachers may also use teaching assistants to check homework and enter grades.

Do you plan to offer additional classes?

Yes, our plan is to offer a complete line-up of middle school and high school level classes that cover essential college prep material and prepare students in an incremental and targeted way for equivalency exams and college entrance exams. We will add classes as the right teachers are identified. We believe the teacher is the critical component that will make or break the success of the course and your satisfaction with what we offer. We want your experience with our online classes to be consistent and overwhelmingly positive.