

## **MSCA BYOD Student Device Guidance**

Mount Saint Charles Academy encourages families to provide students with devices that support learning both in and out of the classroom. We support a BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) model and recognize that families may choose to purchase new or repurpose existing laptops. Below are our updated recommendations and minimum requirements.

**Please note:** To ensure compatibility with our academic platforms—including Google Workspace, Blackbaud, Savvas, and other web-based tools—**Google Chrome is the only supported browser**. All student devices must have Chrome installed and regularly updated.

### **Grade-Level Recommendations**

- **Middle School (Grades 6–8):**  
A **Chromebook** is typically sufficient and cost-effective. It supports all core academic tools used in middle school.
- **High School (Grades 9–12):**  
Chromebooks are a reliable option for most high school coursework, especially for students working primarily within Google Workspace.

However, as academic needs expand in high school, particularly in research, writing, and elective areas, **Windows and macOS laptops are also appropriate choices**. These devices offer additional flexibility and may better support specific advanced tools or software required in upper-level courses.

Families are welcome to choose whichever option fits their student’s needs and learning style.

#### **Note on Tablets and iPads:**

Tablets and iPads (even with keyboards) are **not recommended as primary devices**. Many academic platforms and testing tools used at Mount are not fully compatible with mobile operating systems.

If you’re looking for more detailed information on **device specifications, supported software, and recommended management tools**, please continue to the next section.



## Device Specifications

### Option 1: Recommended Specifications for New Devices

For the best performance and long-term compatibility:

- **Operating System**
  - Windows 11 (preferred)
  - macOS 12 or later
  - ChromeOS (latest stable release)
- **Processor**
  - Windows: Intel Core i5 (11th gen or newer) or AMD Ryzen 5
  - macOS: Apple M1 or higher
  - Chromebook: Intel Celeron N4500 or better
- **Memory (RAM):** 8 GB or more
- **Storage:** SSD, 128 GB or more
- **Battery Life:** Minimum of 8 hours
- **Display:** 11-inch screen or larger, minimum resolution of 1366x768
- **Wi-Fi:** Dual-band (2.4 GHz and 5 GHz) support

### Option 2: Minimum Requirements for Older or Repurposed Devices

If you plan to reuse a device, it must meet the following minimum specs to ensure it can run the required educational tools:

- **Operating System**
  - Windows 10 (must be eligible for Windows 11 upgrade)
  - macOS 10.15 (Catalina) or later
  - ChromeOS device still receiving updates (*see note below*)
- **Processor**
  - Windows: Intel Core i5 (7th gen or newer)
  - macOS: MacBook Air/Pro (2015 or newer)
  - Chromebook: Any model **still supported** by Google updates ([click here to check](#))
- **Memory (RAM)**
  - Windows/macOS: 8 GB or more
  - Chromebook: 4 GB minimum
- **Storage:** SSD preferred, 64 GB or more
- **Battery Life:** At least 6 hours on a full charge
- **Wi-Fi:** Must support dual-band



## **Device Support & Protection**

Mount Saint Charles Academy provides basic **technical support for configuration and software-related issues**, such as accessing school platforms (e.g., Google Workspace, Blackbaud, or Wi-Fi connectivity). However, we **do not provide hardware repair or physically servicing** student-owned devices.

For families purchasing a new laptop or Chromebook, we strongly encourage adding **AppleCare** (for Apple devices) or a **third-party protection plan** (such as Best Buy's Geek Squad, SquareTrade, or the manufacturer's extended warranty). These plans can help cover accidental damage, hardware failures, or repair needs that may occur during the school year.

Having a support plan in place helps minimize downtime and ensures students can stay connected and productive in class.

## **Device Security & Antivirus Recommendations**

To protect student data and ensure a secure learning environment, we ask that all student devices, mainly Windows and macOS laptops, have up-to-date security measures.

### **Windows Devices**

- **Built-in Option (Recommended):**
  - [Windows Security \(Microsoft Defender\)](#) is included free with Windows 10 and 11 and offers excellent real-time protection when kept updated.
- **Optional Third-Party Tools** (especially for older machines):
  - [Bitdefender Free](#) or [Bitdefender Plus](#)
  - [Malwarebytes for Windows](#) (free for scans, or paid for real-time protection)
  - [Norton Antivirus](#)
  - [Sophos Home](#)

### **macOS Devices**

- macOS has built-in security features like Gatekeeper, XProtect, and MRT.
  - To enhance protection, consider:
    - [Malwarebytes for Mac](#) (free or premium)
- Keep the system updated via [System Preferences > Software Update](#)

### **Chromebooks**

- No antivirus software is needed. ChromeOS is highly secure by design.
- Just be sure the device is still supported with automatic security updates. [Check Chromebook Auto Update Expiration \(AUE\) Date](#)



## **Parent Management Tools for Student Devices**

Families play an essential role in helping students build healthy digital habits. We recommend using the following tools to **set boundaries**, **monitor use**, and **support academic focus** at home.

### **For Windows Devices**

- **Microsoft Family Safety** (Free with Microsoft Account)
  - Set screen time limits for apps and devices
  - Filter web content
  - Track device location
  - View weekly activity reports
  - Available on Windows and Android

### **For macOS Devices**

- **Built-in Parental Controls via Screen Time**
  - Go to **System Settings > Screen Time**
  - Limit app usage, set downtime schedules, and restrict adult content
  - Can be managed remotely via **Family Sharing**

### **For Chromebooks**

- **Google Family Link** (Free)
  - Manage screen time
  - Approve or block apps
  - View activity reports
  - Set device bedtime or lock times
  - Works best when the Chromebook is set up with a personal Gmail account, not a school-managed one.

*Note: Family Link \*\*cannot manage school-issued Google accounts (@mtstcharles.org)\*, but you can use it for personal/home devices.*

### **Configuration Tips**

- **Allow School Applications & Websites**
  - Check the Family Safety web filtering settings and ensure that educational websites are not being blocked.
  - Add the following school-approved applications and websites to the allowed list if they are being restricted:
    - **myMSC/portal:** <https://mountsaintcharles.myschoolapp.com>
    - **Library:** <https://guides.rilinkschools.org>
    - **Hilltopper:** <https://www.hill-topper.org>
    - **Tech Ticket:** <https://mountsaintcharleshelp.zendesk.com>
    - **Naviance:** <https://student.naviance.com>



- **Savvas:** <https://sso.rumba.pk12ls.com>
- **LearningAlly:** <http://learningally.org>
- **IXL:** <https://www.ixl.com>
- **Permit Downloads for Security Certificates:** Some school systems require security certificates to connect to Wi-Fi and access online resources securely. Allowing these downloads will help prevent connectivity issues..
- **Adjust Time Restrictions If Necessary:** If your child's device is set to restrict app usage during school hours, consider modifying the schedule to prevent interruptions to their learning.

