

St. Paul Academy and Summit School

St. Paul, United States



Harkness tables replace AP checklists at this century-old St. Paul day school built for discussion over test-prep

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	66/100
Academic outcomes	76/100
University placement	74/100
Prestige & heritage	73/100
Alumni network	14/100
Facilities	75/100
Transparency	71/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

St. Paul Academy and Summit School sells itself on discussion, and that is the right frame. This is a small, **deliberately intellectual** day school in St. Paul, founded in 1900, with a ***7:1*** student-teacher ratio and average classes of ***13***. Those numbers matter because the school’s core claim — “there is no back of the classroom” — depends on adults knowing each child well and expecting them to speak, think and defend a point of view. Parents who want a quieter, more passive version of college-prep schooling should look elsewhere. SPA is built for children who can handle being called on, challenged and heard.

The academic offer is American, but the important distinction is cultural rather than curricular. This is not

a school trading on AP-counting or industrialised résumé-building. Its own language points instead to hard work, high standards, resilience and contribution in every class. That puts SPA in a clear market position: a *high-expectation* independent day school for families who value seminar-style learning over test-prep choreography. The average annual fee across Pre-K to Grade 12 is **\$38,271**, which places it firmly in the expensive bracket for a local day school, though the class size and staffing ratio give a direct explanation for that price.

The strongest reason to shortlist SPA is fit. It will suit articulate, curious students who like ideas, read willingly and do not need anonymity to feel comfortable. It will also suit children who benefit from *close adult attention* and a school structure where participation is not optional. It will suit less well the student who wants a broad social sprawl, low-pressure classrooms or a school identity built around spectacle. SPA's NAIS accreditation and day-school format tell you what it is: an established, *serious-minded* independent school with a clear educational stance, not a mass-market institution trying to be all things to all families.

STRENGTHS

- Small student-teacher ratio of roughly 7-8:1 with average class sizes of 13-15 students across Lower, Middle, and Upper School.
- Notable literary alumnus: novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald attended St. Paul Academy from 1908 to 1911, where he published his first stories in the school newspaper.
- Substantial need-based financial aid program, with the school citing a \$4.8 million annual financial aid budget for qualifying families.
- Accredited by the Independent Schools Association of the Central States and a member of the National Association of Independent Schools, the Cum Laude Society, and The College Board.
- Strong standardized test outcomes, with average ACT composite scores around 29-32, placing it among the higher-performing independent schools in Minnesota.

TRADE-OFFS

- Selective admissions with an acceptance rate cited around 61%, meaning a meaningful share of applicants are turned away each year.
- Upper School day tuition is roughly \$38,000 per year, a significant recurring cost before fees, transport, or extras are added.
- Single urban-metro location in St. Paul with two campuses only, so relocating families outside the Twin Cities area face a long commute or need to move house.
- As a single, non-boarding day school, it offers no residential option for international or out-of-state families relocating without local housing.

ADMISSIONS

Admission spans PK-12, with the process beginning about a year before intended entry; applications open September 1 for the following school year. Requirements typically include transcripts, a recommendation letter, an application essay, and an interview, plus grade-appropriate admission assessments described on the school's 'Testing and Assessment' page. The school reports an acceptance rate near 61%, more selective than the average local private school, and offers a need-based financial aid program (cited at \$4.8 million annually) for qualifying families. Prospective families should contact admissions directly to confirm current-year deadlines and assessment details.

WTS RATING 

This profile summarises editorial research by World's Top Schools. Verify all admissions dates directly with the school before submitting. Sources are cited in the full online profile at WorldsTopSchools.com/schools/sch_a6a8f026f8.