

MIDDLE SCHOOL COURSE CATALOG 2020-2021



Mission and Philosophy

The mission of St. Mark's Episcopal School is to provide an academically enriched program in a nurturing Christian environment.

St. Mark's Episcopal School's program of study is designed to provide a well-rounded experience that will help children grow intellectually, emotionally, socially, physically, and spiritually. We appreciate that children are unique individuals with differing needs and gifts that must be nurtured and developed. Helping children recognize their talents and abilities in order to experience success in academic and social situations is the key to healthy self-esteem.

At the core of St. Mark's curriculum is the individualized nature of each child's education. Our faculty strives to connect with students, know each child as a learner, and effectively partner with parents to best encourage and foster the strengths of our students.

St. Mark's believes in educating the whole child and aims not only to teach core academic subjects, but also to emphasize athletics, the arts, community service, character development, and spirituality. Christian education, chapel services, community outreach, and faculty advising guide our children to be conscientious and responsible citizens. In the spirit of Christ, all members of the St. Mark's community are expected to respect the dignity of fellow human beings.

The Middle School Experience

Our dynamic middle school program centers on a traditional core curriculum of mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies. Our faculty knows each child well and incorporates different methods of instruction and assessment to address diverse learners. Skills of critical thinking, analyzing text, research, and writing are prioritized. By collaborating across the disciplines, our Middle School faculty facilitates meaningful academic connections and models teamwork. Organizational skills and study habits are taught and modeled by all teachers to help our students transition to new levels of responsibility. Managing time, assignments, and goals are as much a part of our curriculum as the content itself. All middle-schoolers participate in exciting overnight field trips which are integrated with their course of study. Every aspect of the middle school experience is intentionally structured to provide students with confidence, values, habits, skills, and knowledge to succeed in high school and beyond.

Character Education

Building character is fundamental to who we are, and we are intentional in creating programs to support students throughout their adolescent development. At the beginning of each school year, students meet to discuss, understand, and sign the student-written honor code. Advisory groups are established and, while led by a teacher, allow for students to support one another through the transitions they face in the middle school years. All middle school students attend annual off-campus retreats which allow for students to bond with their grade-level peers as well as discuss pertinent issues pertaining to their age. Student-led middle school meetings go beyond daily announcements where there is discussion on making correct choices, applauding exemplary behavior, and improving the middle school experience. Speakers from our "Conversations on Character" program engage students in developing their own moral compass. Commitment to character education and leadership is one of the advantages of a small, independent, faith-based school dedicated to its mission.

Middle School Course Selections

Grade	Core Curriculum	Electives
6th	Full Year: English Writers' Workshop Math 6 or Pre-Algebra Earth Science World Geography Spanish or French Physical Education *Concert Band Semester: World Religions STEAM	Enrichment Rotation: Visual Art Acting 21st Century Computer Literacy Digital Photography *Student Selection: Vocal Ensemble Percussion Ensemble
7th	Full Year: English Pre-Algebra or Algebra I Honors Life Science Ancient Civilizations Spanish or French Physical Education Semester: Writers' Workshop Old and New Testament Quarter: Civics Marine Biology	Student Selection: Acting Musical Theater Vocal Ensemble Digital Photography Digital Art Visual Art STEAM Speech and Debate *Symphonic Band *Percussion Ensemble
8th	Full Year: English Writers' Workshop Foundations of Algebra, Algebra I, Algebra I Honors, or Geometry Honors Physical Science U.S. History Spanish or French Physical Education Semester: Ethics	Student Selection: Acting Musical Theater Vocal Ensemble Digital Photography Digital Art Visual Art Personal Fitness STEAM *Symphonic Band *Percussion Ensemble

Note: Minimum class size requirements must be met for electives to run, and elective selections vary in being full year or semester courses based on demand in our attempt to best meet each child's needs.

*Please note these courses have been suspended for the 2020-21 school year due to COVID-19.

Math

The primary goal of the mathematics program is to develop flexible, creative, and confident problem solvers that feel challenged at the appropriate cognitive level. The curriculum requires students to think logically, critically, and analytically. Teachers model resourceful and creative ways to approach unfamiliar problems so students become independent. Students learn to effectively communicate their problem solving steps as well as how to assess correctness and appropriateness of solutions. Students in both the honors and regular course of study have the opportunity to leave St. Mark's with high school mathematics credit.

The goals of the math program are to develop students who:

1. feel challenged at the appropriate mathematical and developmental level.
2. devise mathematical strategies for solving problems using concepts and procedures appropriately.
3. develop patience and persistence when solving problems.
4. use logic and mathematical reasoning to explain, justify, and predict solutions and algorithms.
5. communicate mathematics with appropriate symbols and language.
6. appreciate the usefulness of mathematics and recognize its relationship with other disciplines, as well as with everyday life.

Math 6 (Full Year)

Number fluency is emphasized in this foundational math course. Students continue to add, subtract, multiply, and divide whole numbers, decimals, and fractions with accuracy and relative speed. Other topics include integers, exponents, percent, ratios, proportions, and geometry. On-going practice of important mathematical concepts, skills, and algorithms, based in real world applications and hands on experiences, help students understand the computations and properties needed for Pre-Algebra. The program incorporates teacher-developed materials, activities supplied by the textbook, and technology to teach fundamental skills and to promote creative problem solving.

Pre-Algebra 6 (Full Year)

The goal for students invited to take Pre-Algebra is to develop the necessary skills and academic habits that prepare them for the rigors of Algebra I Honors and Geometry Honors. Students build a strong foundation in basic algebraic principles and are challenged to apply them to real word situations. The program solidifies students' computational skills with integers, fractions, and decimals, while introducing variables, equation solving, and graphing. The teacher models basic algebraic principles to make increasingly more abstract problems approachable. An algebra readiness test helps determine the appropriate sequential course for the next year.

Pre-Algebra 7 (Full Year)

Pre-Algebra's primary purpose is to develop the necessary skills and academic habits to prepare students for high school algebra and geometry. Pre-Algebra solidifies students' computational skills with integers, fractions, and decimals, while introducing variables, equation solving, and graphing. The teacher models basic algebraic principles to make increasingly more abstract problems approachable. Students are challenged to apply concepts to real word situations through various projects throughout the school year. Students take an algebra readiness test in late spring to help determine their eighth grade math course.

Math

Algebra I Honors 7 (Full Year)

Students in this challenging, high-school credit mathematics course learn the mathematical language of algebra in the context of equations, graphs, and real world applications. The curricular content is comprehensive, and topics are explored in-depth. The teacher models resourcefulness and creativity in problem solving, so students can work independently and feel confident when approaching unfamiliar problems. Students are asked to communicate mathematically as they explain and justify algebraic procedures and processes. The course incorporates teacher-developed materials with a problem-rich textbook to teach fundamental skills, encourage creative problem solving, and prepare students for the more abstract ideas presented in higher level mathematics.

Foundations of Algebra 8 (Full Year)

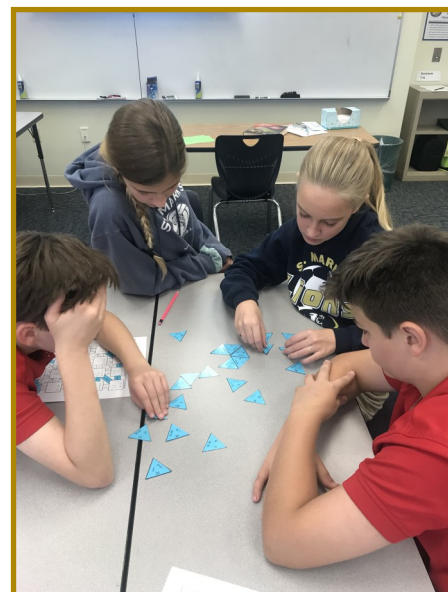
The pace and design of this course helps eighth graders feel successful in math and ready for Algebra I in high school. The course begins with a lengthy pre-algebra review. Although an Algebra I textbook is used, the instructor has flexibility to meet the learning needs of the students and pace lessons to fit the class's needs. Students study equations, inequalities, exponents, linear and parabolic functions, and graphs.

Algebra I 8 (Full Year)

This high-school credit course teaches the symbolic language of algebra within the context of real-life applications, graphs, and equations. The curriculum follows a traditional Algebra I course sequence through quadratic equations and functions. Other important topics include systems of equations, functions, inequalities, polynomials, exponents, factoring, the real number system, radicals, and algebraic fractions. In problem solving settings, students use logical reasoning to formulate a plan, then implement that plan clearly in a step-by-step manner. Lastly, students are asked to gauge the reasonableness of their answers.

Algebra I Honors 8 (Full Year)

Students demonstrating advanced skills and a strong problem solving aptitude in their seventh grade Pre-Algebra course are invited to take Algebra I Honors as eighth graders. Students in this challenging, high-school credit mathematics course learn the mathematical language of algebra in the context of equations, graphs, and real world applications. The curricular content is comprehensive, and topics are explored in-depth. The teacher models resourcefulness and creativity in problem solving, so students can work independently and feel confident when approaching unfamiliar problems. Students are asked to communicate mathematically as they explain and justify algebraic procedures and processes. The course incorporates teacher-developed materials with a problem-rich textbook to teach fundamental skills, encourage creative problem solving, and prepare students for the more abstract ideas presented in higher level mathematics.



Geometry Honors 8 (Full Year)

This honors, high-school credit course challenges students to reason logically and think abstractly. An emphasis is placed on geometric proofs, deductions, visualization, and drawing conclusions. Other topics include lines, planes, congruence, similarity, coordinate geometry, circles, polygons, surface area, volume, and triangle trigonometry. Postulates and theorems are applied to the many practical uses of geometry. The comprehensive curriculum explores topics extensively and requires a high level of thinking.

English

The English program aims to develop analytical readers, structured writers, confident speakers, and knowledgeable grammarians. To build their comprehension and interpretive skills, students study an array of literary genres from the classics and modern publications which align with their social studies curriculum.

At each grade level, students approach vocabulary through word study, which improves not only their vocabulary but their reading comprehension as well. Through examining Greek and Latin roots and further understanding the context of how words are used, students learn root families and unlock the meanings of unfamiliar words.

The goals of the English program are to develop students who:

1. read critically and are able to analyze several genres of literature.
2. examine the social and historical contexts of the characters within selected readings.
3. question text and write in response to selected readings.
4. broaden their vocabularies.
5. exercise the conventions of English grammar in their writing.
6. communicate effectively through the written and spoken word.

English 6 (Full Year)

In conjunction with their World Geography course, students read *A Long Walk to Water*, a story of hope and overcoming hardship in the Sudan, and *Elephant Run*, a journey through the jungles of Burma. Both novels provide a basis for surveying a geographic location's impact on the lives that people lead. Students solidify their ability to make inferences and predictions. In addition, students read a variety of timely essays, biographies, autobiographies, and newspaper selections to understand a multitude of text structures.

Within their study of poetry, students each create a poetry book around a central theme in order to show their understanding of a number of poetic forms, including: narrative, lyric, concrete, haiku, cinquain, and limerick. Within each poem, students incorporate figurative language and sound devices.

To complement their literature study, students explore the parts of speech by diagramming sentences and understanding how different parts of speech are used within literature to create imagery and action.

English 7 (Full Year)

In seventh grade, students are expected to read for both comprehension and analysis. Students evaluate the author's voice, word choice, sentence structure, punctuation, and grammar usage in extended texts that align with World History. In addition, seventh graders assess the author's techniques in creating humor and developing suspense while reading a number of short stories, as well as the novel *The Adventure of Ulysses*. Examination of how text structures and an author's craft change from one genre to the next is accomplished when students read *Julius Caesar*. Analysis of style is extended through reading narrative, lyric, and epic poems, including selections of *Beowulf*.

English

In conjunction with science class, students write their science fair paper in English, going through the steps of scrutinizing sources for credibility, paraphrasing research, outlining background information, drawing connections between research and experimental results, writing the paper itself, and revising and editing multiple drafts.

Quarterly speeches sharpen public speaking skills. Students become comfortable integrating research and quotations within their speeches, as well as focusing on their projection and their body language during delivery.

By the end of seventh grade, students have mastered the identification and application of the parts of speech, how they relate to one another, and how words have various uses based on the context of a sentence.

English 8 (Full Year)

Writing in response to literature is a primary focus of the eighth grade English experience. With a concentration on American Literature to align with their American History course, students read fiction and nonfiction pieces from different time periods.

Students assess each author's use of non-fiction text structures, such as the inverted pyramid structure, while reading news articles, web articles, blogs, and editorials. In the analysis of fiction, an emphasis is placed on understanding the development of conflict and determining the reliability of the narrator. Highlighted reading selections include *A Separate Peace* and *Night*. Breaking away from American Literature, students deconstruct the difficult language of Shakespeare and Petrarch while learning to comprehend and to derive meaning from English and Italian sonnets.

Building on the grammatical foundation of the parts of speech, students examine sentence structure, sentence variation, and punctuation patterns through the use of phrases, independent clauses, and dependent clauses. Students refine their delivery during public speaking presentations that are now enhanced with visual aides.

In preparation for their class trip to Washington, D.C., students read a number of fiction and nonfiction selections in relation to World War II, 9/11, Martin Luther King, Jr., the Vietnam War, and the Holocaust.



Writing

Our workshop format writing courses develop authors who produce authentic, structured writing with a focus on ideas, organization, word choice, conventions, voice, and sentence fluency. Mini-lessons in a small group setting build strength in these specific skills. Consistent drafting, revising, conferencing, and editing encourage students to see writing as a continual process and to reflect upon their work. Teachers assess student work using common, holistic rubrics that view writing pieces in their entirety.

A respectful, supportive workshop climate cultivates students who feel safe taking the intellectual risks true learning requires. Rather than fearing mistakes, students learn to comb their writing for opportunities for improvement and to support one another in achieving that growth. Writers' Workshop prepares students to achieve success in writing across the curriculum and in future academic endeavors.

The goals of this program are to develop students who:

1. view writing as a process.
2. apply critical thinking skills when brainstorming topics, generating ideas, and conducting research.
3. organize their ideas before writing.
4. cite their sources using MLA format to strengthen their credibility as authors.
5. write in response to specific prompts for a variety of purposes and audiences
6. create a distinctive voice.
7. select sophisticated vocabulary to best convey meaning.
8. vary sentence structure and develop transitions to create flow.
9. exercise proper grammar mechanics.

Writers' Workshop 6 (3 Periods per Week—Full Year)

Sixth graders begin the year writing classification essays. The teacher models each step of the writing process in order to build students' confidence. As a precursor to research writing, students will then focus on writing from sources. Here, they will gather information and demonstrate their understanding of the content via their written product. Students also write in response to prose and literature, analyzing author's purpose, characterization, word choice, and theme.

For their research paper, students select and investigate an area of public concern. As researchers, students determine credible sources, paraphrase notes, organize details, cite sources, draft their papers, and revise from teacher comments. The final paper is later used to write a persuasive letter to an appropriate, authentic audience in order to address the area of concern.

Writers' Workshop 7 (4 Periods per Week—One Semester)

Using *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros as a mentor text, seventh graders begin the course by finding their voices and developing ownership of their work through writing an essay exploring the history and meaning behind their names. In addition, students submit daily skill-building activities, and teachers provide consistent feedback in the form of comments, individual conferences, and small group sessions.

The structure of cause-effect is the primary focus of expository writing. Topics relating to St. Mark's help students consider their current experiences. Whole-group read-alouds and written feedback take place in a responsive, reflective, and respectful environment. Students identify strengths and areas of improvement in peer essays and brainstorm ways to help one another progress as writers.

Writing

Students are introduced to sophisticated techniques essential to argumentative writing while narrative writing prepares students for their eventual college entrance essay experience, explaining a personal lesson learned.

As a capstone project to end the course, students compile a reflective portfolio of their favorite pieces to highlight the skills they've mastered and consider the skills they wish to continue to improve upon in eighth grade.

Writers' Workshop 8 (3 Periods per Week—Full Year)

Veterans of the science fair, eighth graders begin Writers' Workshop by crafting their research papers. Academic journals, magazines, books, and the internet are utilized to select credible articles from which to base their research. Students then paraphrase and organize this research before drafting their papers. Both writing teachers and science teachers review student drafts to provide appropriate feedback from different fields prior to students submitting publishable work.

In preparation for writing argumentatively, students differentiate persuasive techniques from propaganda techniques in a group project where they develop their own advertising campaign around a fictionalized product. After designing a print ad, as well as writing and filming a commercial, students pitch their product to their fellow classmates. Students then select a side on an age-appropriate, controversial topic on which to write a persuasive essay. In order to develop a better understanding of voice and craft, they later use the same controversial topic to write a compare-contrast essay where they must remain neutral.

Expanding on their response to literature writing from English class, students write a full-length essay in response to a literary text. As experienced writers, eighth graders recognize and understand the six traits of writing, so for this assignment, students analyze one trait of Knowles's writing. As the culminating project of their eighth grade year, students write a multi-genre research paper on a topic of their choice.

Speech and Debate 7 (Semester)

Students will begin this introductory course to speech and debate by writing short speeches which they will deliver in front of their peers. Students will develop an awareness of how they can communicate effectively with an audience, both verbally and non-verbally, by watching and analyzing videos of speech competitions as well as participating in a variety of activities.

Impromptu speeches will teach children to quickly organize their thoughts and ideas into a cohesive manner preparing them to move into informative speeches that require thought, planning, and research. Building on those skills, students will learn the skills of argumentation for developing persuasive speeches, which will lead the ground work for both individual and team debates.



Science



The primary goal of the science curriculum is to help students become careful, open-minded observers, questioners, and interpreters of the world around them. Hands-on activities and lab experiments serve as practical applications of concepts taught in the earth, life, and physical science classrooms. Seventh and eighth grade students participate in the school's annual science fair with some students advancing to the Palm Beach County Science and Engineering Fair. Students use an interdisciplinary approach by conducting research and writing the background information in English or Writer's Workshop and engaging in the scientific process within science.

The goals of this program are to develop students who:

1. conduct themselves safely, efficiently, and with familiarity in a lab setting.
2. design experiments, maintain a lab notebook, and write clear, concise lab reports.
3. demonstrate an understanding of the variety of processes (physical, chemical, biological) that occur on our planet.
4. create and interpret graphs based on data.
5. gain knowledge to excel at the high school level in biology, chemistry, and physics.

Earth Science 6 (Full Year)

The sixth grade science experience capitalizes on students' natural interest and curiosity about the world in which they live. All activities are carefully constructed to give students opportunities to hypothesize, follow scientific procedure, make observations, draw conclusions, and reflect through writing. Interdisciplinary connections with their World Geography course enhance students' understanding of the oceans, weather, and the natural balance of the Earth and processes. Other topics explored both in and out of the lab include climate and geology. Inspired by the multi-media science exhibits on their Epcot Center class trip, sixth graders return to St. Mark's full of STEM related questions to answer through lab work and research writing. Sixth graders also act upon their science knowledge, specifically global warming and pollution, by organizing and managing the middle school recycling program.

Life Science 7 (Full Year)

The seventh grade science experience broadens students' understanding of the diversity and complexity of living things. Students come to appreciate the interconnectedness of life on Earth. Life Science reviews the scientific method, the metric system, and introduces new skills in microscopy and dissection. Life Science also features the following important topics: cells, genetics, simple and advanced organisms, biological processes, and the human body. Interactive labs afford students many opportunities; a few include studying biology at the cellular level, extracting fruit DNA, and dissecting an animal heart. Students maintain specific lab notes which ultimately translate into clear, concise lab reports.

Science

Transformed into scientists, seventh graders predict, test, observe, and analyze a topic of their choice for participation in their first St. Mark's Science Fair. A team of dedicated teachers supports this rigorous, rich, in-school research and writing experience. Their final products – a logbook, background research paper, lab report, and display board – help students defend their findings to professionals at the school's on-campus science fair.

Physical Science 8 (Full Year)

The eighth grade science curriculum reinforces the scientific method and prepares students for their high school chemistry and physics courses. Students explore the basic concepts of chemistry: atomic structure, states of matter, classification and properties of matter, the periodic table, chemical bonds, reading, writing, and balancing chemical equations. A STEM project, the culmination of their physical science unit, involves the science behind simple machines. As students collaborate to design, build, and race "mousetrap cars," they investigate the effects of friction, as well as Newton Laws of Motion, and explore the difference between potential and kinetic energy.

Veterans of the school science fair experience, eighth graders approach their carefully selected topic as thoughtful experiment designers, close observers, and smart analyzers. Throughout the year, students are encouraged to think critically and write clearly. The students are evaluated regularly through quizzes, tests, lab performance assessments, lab reports, projects, papers, and exams. Observation, lab work, and projects enhance the learning experience and help the students have a better understanding of the world around them.

Marine Biology 7 (Quarter)

Marine Biology is the study of the ocean and the organisms within it. Students learn to distinguish the abiotic and biotic features of the ocean culminating in a shark dissection at the end of the course. Experiential learning at Seacamp in the Florida Keys on the only living coral reef in America enriches seventh graders study of the ocean and the organisms within.



Social Studies

To prepare our students to thrive in what has become an increasingly global society, our social studies courses provide students with a foundational understanding of the geography, history, and political nature of both the United States and many other countries across the world. Recognizing man's triumphs and failures, students examine societies' constraints and freedoms, periods of war and peace, and, ultimately, the tragedy and greatness of the human experience.

The goals of the social studies program are to develop students who:

1. use their knowledge to play an active role within society.
2. read and analyze historical documents, charts, graphs, and maps.
3. draw connections between current events and historical events.
4. recognize the cause-effect relationships of political and economic systems on population and culture.
5. evaluate the impact of events on the social structures of their time.
6. understand the historical significance of climate, ecosystems, natural resources, and land use.
7. appreciate values and traditions of different cultures and recognize how these values and traditions developed.

World Geography 6 (Full Year)

The basis of this course is understanding and applying the five themes of geography: location, place, human environmental interaction, movement, and regions. Through the exploration of these themes, students gain a greater understanding of the location of settlements and areas of population growth. Understanding the religion, culture, customs, and languages of an area promotes acceptance and diversity.

Students also solidify their map skills when studying the world in spatial terms. This solidification includes using latitude and longitude coordinates to identify absolute locations, labeling and interpreting physical and political maps, and using thematic maps to compare regions across the world. Participating in the Cartographer's Challenge, students work in groups to develop a fictionalized continent. Based on the position of the continent on the globe, each group must then determine appropriate natural resources, population centers, climate, and landforms.

World Geography culminates with a class trip to Walt Disney's Epcot where students have the opportunity to be immersed in the various cultures that they have studied throughout the year. A teacher created photo scavenger hunt keeps students engaged and looking for the next cultural element at the various countries and performances.

Ancient Civilizations 7 (Full Year)

Ancient Civilization reviews primary historical events throughout the world, including the study of prehistoric times, ancient civilizations, the settling of Europe, the importance of the Church during the Middle Ages, and the rise of society during the Renaissance and Protestant Reformation.

Technology assists students' discovery of the roles that people in conquered territories played during the expansion of the Roman Empire. While studying Ancient Greece, students research the influence of Greek symbols on modern society. Class discussions enrich the connection between history and today. A choice in projects differentiates content for students when studying the Middle Ages, allowing students to select individual societal roles from which to provide a perspective, the audience to whom they'll present, and the format in which information will be conveyed.

Students read the Magna Carta, the Laws of the Twelve Tables, the Analects of Confucius, and the Poem of Mulan to practice analyzing primary historical documents. Students further investigate the foundation of each civilization's values and culture, as well as their connection to religion.

Social Studies

U.S. History 8 (Full Year)

The U.S. History course surveys the historical events in America from colonization through World War I. Emphasis is placed upon the causes and effects of major events in America, as well as the people who made these events happen.

Using online message boards, students write in response to a question posed by the teacher, as well as in response to their fellow classmates. Topics range from determining the strength of Northern and Southern industry leading up to the Civil War to the impacts of the Treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I.

Students work in conjunction with their English class to understand how history impacts literature. To further strengthen their analytical reading skills, students read a number of historical primary sources: the Magna Carta, the Mayflower Compact, the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, the Bill of Rights, the Monroe Doctrine, the Emancipation Proclamation, and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

The capstone event of the course is a privately guided tour of Washington, D.C., where students see artifacts from their units of study at places including the Smithsonian Museum of American History, the Capitol Building, Washington National Cathedral, and Arlington National Cemetery.

Civics 7 (Quarter)

The civics course provided at St. Mark's is a survey course that focuses on the structure and functionality of the various forms of government and how those governments interact with their citizens. Particular emphasis is placed upon the causes and effects of major events that fostered the growth of the American governmental system, including its colonial roots, transformation throughout American history, and current structure.

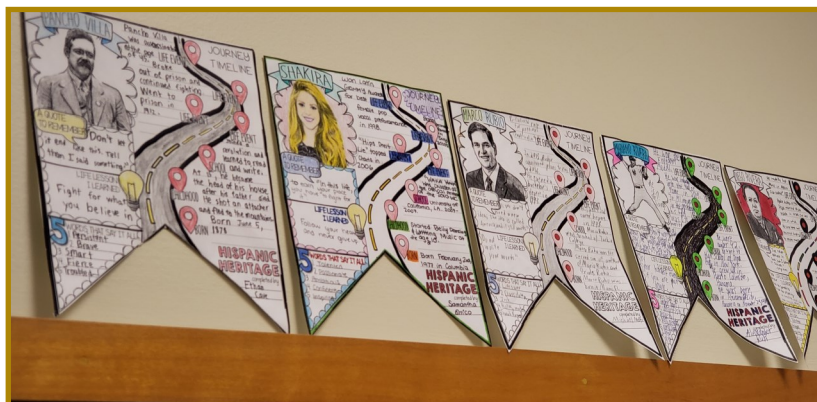


World Language

The aim of St. Mark's world language courses is to enable students to acquire proficiency in Spanish or French through a linguistic, communicative, and cultural approach to language learning. Emphasis is placed on the development of listening comprehension, interpretive reading, interpersonal communication, presentational speaking and writing, as well as applied grammar. Cross-cultural understanding and authentic language experiences are promoted throughout the program.

The goals of the world language program are to develop students who:

1. converse feelings, ideas, and opinions in Spanish or French.
2. comprehend spoken and written Spanish or French.
3. recognize patterns of language.
4. write utilizing proper grammatical structure in Spanish or French.
5. present information and ideas to an audience in Spanish or French.
6. understand and employ appropriate social interaction patterns from applicable cultures.
7. make connections between cultures.
8. communicate comfortably in Spanish or French.



Spanish

Spanish 6 (Full Year)

Sixth grade Spanish encompasses the first half of a traditional Spanish I curriculum, building on the foundational concepts of Spanish from the students' lower school experience. Throughout the year, the children learn the vocabulary to express likes and dislikes, discuss activities, describe characteristics of items, and order at restaurants. Interactive projects, such as developing a restaurant menu with cultural items, are incorporated to develop a better appreciation for the culture and language. Most importantly, the children learn how to apply this vocabulary within proper grammatical structure when both speaking and writing.

Spanish 7 (Full Year)

Having completed the first half of Spanish I in sixth grade, seventh grade students complete their Spanish I course. While the children continue to learn new vocabulary to create more enriching conversations, more sophisticated Spanish grammar is introduced. Children begin to understand how to use direct and indirect pronouns, correctly conjugate stem-changing verbs, and correctly phrase verbs in present progressive and preterite tenses. Culture is incorporated through listening to and discussing music, understanding cultural customs, and learning information about various Spanish-speaking countries.

Spanish 8 (Full Year)

The focus of this honors high school credit course is solidifying Spanish I skills and beginning Spanish II skills. Having mastered the basic declarative and interrogative sentence structures, the students expand to developing commands. Understanding verb tenses is strengthened with an introduction to preterit tense with reflexive pronouns, as well as the past perfect tense.

World Language

French

French 6 (Full Year)

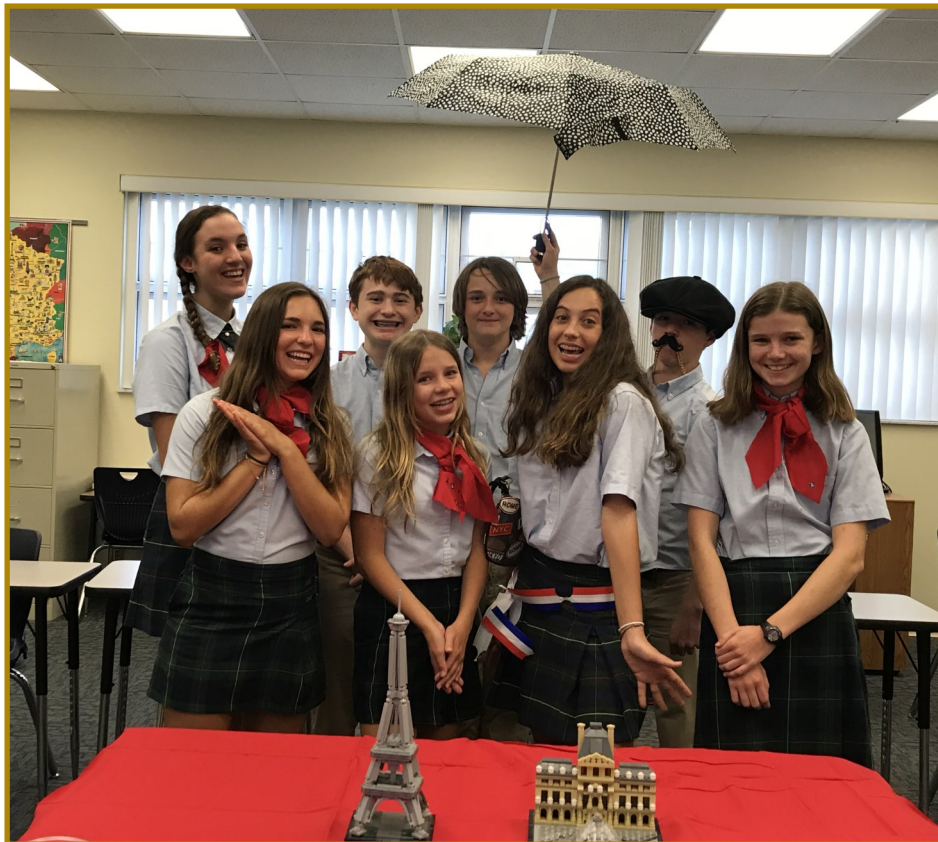
Since the majority of students entering French 6 do not have a background in the language, French 6 begins with the foundational concepts of greetings, introductions, dates, months, and seasons. As students develop confidence in these introductory skills, they begin a traditional French I curriculum. In learning about French culture, children learn to speak formally and informally about restaurants and cafes, people and places, as well as family and home in grammatically correct sentence patterns. Further grammatical concepts of definite and indefinite articles, irregular and -er verbs, and possessive adjectives also play a role in written and spoken language acquisition.

French 7 (Full Year)

Building on their French I exposure, students continue to gain proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking. New vocabulary is continually introduced along with an understanding of French culture. Regional foods, open air markets, shopping, clothing, and transportation are all a part of the classroom experience. While students continue to build on their sentence formation, they also build on verb conjugation and the selection of vocabulary based on the context.

French 8 (Full Year)

Students in this honors high school credit course complete French I curriculum and begin introductory skills for French II. In addition to continually expanding their vocabulary, the children begin reading and interpreting French literature, as well as making historical and cultural connections. A greater emphasis is placed on correct pronunciation to strength communication.



Religious Studies

The aim of the Religious Studies program is to equip students to think independently on matters of faith. The curriculum is designed to honor and respect the dignity of every person, regardless of his or her faith tradition. Students will participate in discussions on topics, including the examination of major religions and ethical systems. Weekly memory verses, chapel service, and Eucharist service allow for students to relate the Bible to their personal lives.

The goals of the Religious Studies program are to develop students who:

1. develop an understanding and acceptance of all faith traditions.
2. maintain the ability to better communicate their understanding of the Bible.
3. understand how to make ethical decisions based on their own values.
4. communicate their religious beliefs and opinions in a respectful manner.

World Religions 6 (Semester)

World Religions introduces students to the five primary world religions: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Students explore the origins of the religions, their founders, their sacred texts and writings, their central beliefs, their styles of worship, their special celebrations, and their symbols and practices. Students engage in finding the commonalities of these different religions in order to develop an understanding that we are all children of God. Ultimately, students foster a greater understanding and acceptance of what it means to live in a multi-cultural society.

Old and New Testament 7 (Semester)

This course offers a survey of the Old and New Testament. While the teachings focus on the stories' messages and their personal application to the students' lives, students academically discuss the historical context of the stories themselves, as well as their continuing cultural influence. In finding the common thread of these stories, the children are taught to make connections and learn more about themselves in the process.

Ethics 8 (Semester)

The focus of this course is helping students gain a greater understanding of their own moral compass. Unpacking a broad concept such as ethics begins in learning different frameworks for ethical decision making and applying those frameworks to hypothetical situations, events in history, and current events. As the capstone activity, students develop a personal code of ethics to help guide themselves in difficult situations as they move beyond St. Mark's into a more adult world.



Fine Arts

St. Mark's seeks to ensure all children learn the value of their innate talents. Through electives in digital art, visual art, band, vocal, and drama, students learn to express their creativity. By experiencing theory and history from various composition, students gain a new understanding of school, culture, and the world. Studying the fine arts cultivates values of respect, cooperation, dedication, effort, fellowship, and leadership.

The goals of the fine arts program are to develop students who:

1. appreciate the arts.
2. value a variety of forms for self-expression.
3. recognize their individual talents.
4. expose themselves to new mediums.
5. produce quality work.



Digital Arts

Digital Photography 6 (Quarter)

Introductory in nature, the sixth grade digital photography course is for the beginning photographer. Students begin with learning to control the different parts of a point and shoot camera in order to best compose a digital image. Students learn to adjust the ISO, shutter speed, and aperture setting to correctly focus and compose a photograph with a clear subject. Data transfer and digital organization are also a focus.

Digital Photography 7 and 8 (Semester)

Building on the fundamentals of their sixth grade photography classes, students begin the course reviewing photographs from collections of professional works of well-known historic and contemporary artists, such as Annie Leibovitz, Martin Parr, Cindy Sherman, Steve McCurry, and Sophie Calle. Through this review of model work, students learn the aspects of the art of photography: settings, composition, lighting, portraiture, landscape, and concept. Application of these concepts begin to appear incrementally in the students' own original photographic work.

Digital Art 7 and 8 (Semester)

Students who elect to take digital art become familiar with iPad digital art programs and the most popular Adobe Creative Suite programs, specifically Photoshop and Illustrator, through exposure to both creative concepts as well as practical techniques. Through their study of Photoshop, students adjust, compose, and manipulate photographs to be used as an artistic composition, on a website, or as supplemental imagery to another project. Students also learn Illustrator's unique abilities to adjust text and render vector images for the most crisp and usable illustrations and typography. Student learn to paint and create digitally through iPads to produce print media, such as stickers, and digitally shared imagery.

Fine Arts

Performing Arts

Concert Band 6 (Full Year)

In their second year of playing an instrument at St. Mark's, sixth grade students continue to improve the range and quality of play, as well as their ability to read music, on their individually fitted instruments. Students refine their playing and performance of middle school literature. Working in small groups and as a collective band, the director builds the ensemble as a cohesive whole, able to perform with skill and etiquette. As important as the playing itself, the children develop a fundamental understanding of music theory and history.

Symphonic Band 7 and 8 (Full Year)

The symphonic band continues to build on the previous years of theory and history, along with scales and other skills that will help prepare them for band on a high school level. In addition to their performances in the winter and spring concerts, students have the opportunity to be involved with All State Band, All District Honor Band, Solo and Ensemble MPA, Concert MPA, and the Diocesan Festival.



Percussion Ensemble 6, 7, and 8 (Full Year)

This rhythmically challenging course affords students the opportunity to play one of hundreds of percussion instruments. Student learn to combine the traditional structure of playing written music with the flexibility of improvisation when fitting. This ensemble plays various styles of music: swing, jazz, blues, ballads, and modern rock.

Acting 6 (Quarter)

Sixth grade acting is structured around the skills of improvisational theater. Students learn the fundamentals of storytelling, comedic and dramatic structure, character development, and scene building through listening.



Fine Arts

Acting 7 (Full Year)

Seventh grade acting begins at students' comfort levels with improvisational theater. As students gain confidence, a greater emphasis is placed on proper breathing, projection, and pronunciation in preparation for a live show. Students begin to work on scene study, which involves creating a character based on script analysis.



Acting 8 (Full Year)

Eighth grade students often begin acting with a high level of comfort. In building on the skills they've previously learned, students expand on scene study in developing an understanding of what it means to create a truthful character. Eighth grade students participate in both the fall and spring shows and take on greater responsibility for the production of each show. Students gain a background in stage management, lighting, sound, prop construction, and costume organization.

Musical Theater 7 and 8 (Full Year)

Each year, the course begins with further understanding the history and evolution of musical theatre. Students apply and build on this knowledge, learning about acting improvisation and technique, blocking, choreography, singing, song analysis, and scene study. The classroom experience is differentiated for students allowing some to participate further in production elements, including costume design and stage make-up, based on where their talents lie. Ultimately, the seventh and eighth grade classes collaborate on a full musical theatre performance in the spring.

Vocal Ensemble 6, 7, and 8 (Full Year)

The vocal ensemble meets at all individual grade levels and as a collective group to sing a variety of musical selections. Vocal instruction focuses on technique, breathing, sight reading, and articulation. Songs are included from a number of musical genres, including sacred and contemporary works, and are often selected in conjunction with the winter and spring concerts.



Fine Arts

Visual Art

Visual Art 6 (Quarter)

Sixth grade visual art is a survey course that introduces students to varying techniques and mediums within the studio art realm. Exposure to a variety of decades and artists allows students to develop a strong composition through the elements of arts and principle of design concepts. Each student has the opportunity to submit a final product of work to the Winter or Spring Art Exhibition.

Visual Art 7 (Full Year)

Building on the fundamentals of their sixth grade visual art course, students begin the course learning to study art as the 'Renaissance Masters' once did through drawing from life. Application of these concepts evolve into the students creating their own original body of work through a variety of two-dimensional and three-dimensional mediums. Each student has the opportunity to submit a final product of work to the Winter and Spring Art Exhibition.

Visual Art 8 (Full Year)

The eighth grade visual art curriculum reinforces both the technical and historical components of the realm of art. The course prepares students for their high school studio art and art history classes. Students gain a background in clay, oil pastels, acrylic paint, charcoal, pen & ink, stop-motion, block printing, and screen printing. Similar to studio art, the art history component surveys the creation of prehistoric art to contemporary art. Eighth grade students participate in both the winter and spring art exhibitions.



Innovation & Technology

The innovation program, housed primarily in our new state-of-the-art STEM SmartLab, aims to create an environment where students take charge of their learning and where the teacher's primary role is that of a facilitator. Working in collaborative groups, students will learn educational concepts surrounding computer programming, robotics, game design, architecture, alternative energy, simulations, and design and building. Through work in these collaborative groups, students will also develop fundamentals of communication, flexibility, productivity, and social skills. Our primary goal is for them to develop the skills to be resilient through failure and the elation that is only felt from solving a problem on your own.

The goals of the innovation program are to develop students who:

1. collaborate with others.
2. think critically.
3. solve problems using a variety of resources.
4. reflect on their process and performance for personal growth and greater conceptual understanding.
5. use time productively.



21st Century Computer Literacy 6 (Quarter)

Much of technology comes naturally to digital natives, and they still require direct instruction on how to expand their knowledge and use of a variety of computer programs. This course provides skills in Google applications which students will apply throughout their middle school courses.

Organizing folders and files, collaborating with others in shared documents, creating data tables and graphs, altering page layouts, and using MLA citation to document sources are all important foundational skills that students will learn for a successful middle school experience.

STEAM 6 (Semester)

All sixth grade students are enrolled in one semester of STEAM. Students will engage in projects in three clustered areas: programming, design, and exploration. In the programming cluster, students will build on their lower school coding experience through the use of Scratch and other programming resources. They will learn basic coding skills and programming languages to program games, circuits, and robotics. The design cluster is when students ideas come to life. Using a variety of resources student will be sketching, building and creating. In the exploration cluster, students will work with simulations and alternative energy activities.



STEAM 7 and 8 (Semester)

Students in seventh and eighth grades have the opportunity to elect to take STEAM as their half-year elective. Students will continue to work in the three clustered areas of programming, design, and exploration. As students move from sixth to seventh grade and later seventh to eighth grade, students will have the flexibility to select projects that meet their interest. This may be a project which they tried in a previous year and wish to revisit to try a new approach given their reflections or it may be a project that's entirely new.

Physical Education

Physical education is focused on teaching children how to live an active and healthy lifestyle. Emphasis is placed on each child putting forth his or her own best effort to strengthen endurance, enhance flexibility, and develop muscular strength. Personal improvement, rather than peer competition, is stressed and applauded. Most importantly, we want our children to understand the value of teamwork and how to win and lose with grace.

The goals of the physical education program are to develop students who:

1. display sportsmanship in all circumstances.
2. work for the common good rather than personal advantage.
3. enjoy a number of different physical activities.
4. apply rules, skills, and strategies to a number of sports and activities.
5. live active and healthy lifestyles.

Physical Education 6, 7, and 8 (Full Year)

P.E. is a flexible class designed to meet students at their individual performance levels. Students learn to assess their own fitness levels and to develop goals for improvement. The children are often organized into small groups, both mixed gender and single gender, to explore a wide variety of activities. Sports and activities change from year to year, but some include: flag football, soccer, basketball, volleyball, gator ball, softball, track and field, team handball, speedmitten, floor hockey, bocce ball, ultimate Frisbee, lacrosse, and badminton.

In addition to the physical component of P.E. a number of health topics are also discussed to promote active and healthy lifestyles. Nutrition, sleep, endurance, strength, and flexibility are all discussed and part of the students designing their own individual health program.

Personal Fitness 8 (Semester)

The personal fitness elective is designed to inspire and educate students about fitness and wellness. Each class consists of a physical workout and a discussion relating to health and body conditioning topics. Students explore different forms of exercise including kickboxing, TRX suspension training, and yoga.



Notes



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