



## MIDDLE SCHOOL, GRADES 6 - 8

### CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

The St. Mark's Middle School program focuses on the traditional core subjects of English, mathematics, science, and social studies/history while offering additional enriching courses in foreign language, band, technology, physical education, and religious studies. The program provides each student with a comprehensive and challenging curriculum that reflects current research. The instructional process enables students to develop critical thinking skills and a love of learning through multi-sensory activities.

#### English

The English program encourages students at every grade level to develop their communication skills to the fullest extent possible through instruction in grammar, vocabulary, writing, and literature.

**Grammar** - The grammar component is comprehensive in scope, focusing on grammar, usage, mechanics, composition, and resources. Students learn to recognize all parts of speech through diagramming, reinforcement exercises, and writing activities. The application of grammar is integrated into the writing component of English and other subject area classes.

**Vocabulary** - The vocabulary component provides a format for vocabulary improvement and development of critical thinking skills through exercises reinforcing spelling, comprehension, and application of word usage.

**Writing** - In the writing component, students receive opportunities to practice descriptive, narrative, expository, persuasive, creative, research, and response to literature writing formats. A variety of original works in both prose and poetry are produced during English and writing wheel classes. An online writing assessment tool is used to provide immediate feedback and scoring on student essays.

**Literature** - The goal of the literature component is to produce successful readers who can decode all types of words, read with fluency and expression, have

well-developed vocabularies, and possess a variety of comprehension strategies. A variety of literature selections appropriate to the interests and experiences of the middle school student are explored through works of fiction and non-fiction in formats that include short stories, essays, plays, and poetry.

#### Mathematics

Through the math program, students are provided with a sequential set of course work to prepare them for a variety of high school entrance requirements. The knowledge and skills taught enable them to use math effectively in the future, both academically and in everyday life. Opportunities are provided for critical thinking and problem solving either in individual or group work. Hands-on activities, games, scientific and graphing calculators, and computer software enhance the program.

A diverse program providing many instructional levels has been designed to meet the requirements of all local private and public high schools.

The sixth grade course offerings are as follows:

- **Level 6 Mathematics** - This course includes working with whole numbers, integers, decimals, exponents, percentages, and fractions.
- **Pre-Algebra** - Students are introduced to algebra and geometry while solidifying arithmetic concepts, data analysis and probability.

The seventh grade course offerings are as follows:

- **Pre-Algebra**
- **Algebra I Honors** - This high school credit course provides a rigorous, in-depth study of algebra, emphasizing deductive reasoning skills as a foundation for more advanced mathematics courses. Proficient use of the graphing calculator is developed.

The eighth grade course offerings are as follows:

- **Algebra I and Algebra I Honors**
- **Geometry Honors** - In this high school credit course,

students study geometric relationships and deductive strategies used in solving real-world mathematical problems.

- **Algebra Prep** - The algebra prep program is designed to provide students with the foundation needed for the Algebra I course that will be taken in high school.

#### 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. The middle school curriculum focuses on earth science in sixth grade, life science in seventh, and physical science in eighth, and incorporates content from other subject areas. Students engage in hands-on activities and experiments in the science lab weekly to reinforce concepts taught in the classrooms. In addition, there are science related field trips at each grade level, and seventh and eighth grade students participate in the school's annual science fair and the Palm Beach County Science and Engineering Fair.

#### Social Studies/History

The social studies/history curriculum assists students in developing the knowledge, skills, and civic values needed to actively participate in the world today.

In order to achieve this goal, the sixth grade curriculum begins with the study of geography through various cultures around the world.

The seventh grade curriculum on world history takes a look at man's earliest ancestors and the beginnings of civilization. The study progresses through ancient civilizations to an overview of the twentieth century and problems that face mankind today.

The eighth grade curriculum focuses on the historical events that occurred in America during the period from the Age of Discovery to the twentieth century. Emphasis is placed on the cause and effect of major events that developed in America.

## Foreign Language

**Spanish/French** – The sixth grade program stresses written and oral communication by reinforcing common vocabulary, grammar, and regular practice in conversational Spanish/French. The students are exposed to the customs and traditions of the different Latin cultures and they participate in group work, oral presentations, and research projects. The seventh grade course is a continuation of the sixth grade course. Students acquire a more advanced vocabulary and have more frequent opportunities to polish their communication skills. The **Spanish I** or **French I** course for eighth grade students offers high school credit and continues the development of communication skills and cross-cultural understanding. The focus is on reading, writing, listening, and speaking with reinforcement of the fundamentals of grammar and culture. The students will participate in a variety of cultural activities throughout the course of the year.

## Band

**Beginning Band** for sixth grade students introduces wind, brass, and percussion instruments. The students learn the fundamentals of their instruments and group performance through classes three times each week, required at-home practice, and concert performances. Seventh grade students participate in **Symphonic Band** which exposes students to a variety of music literature and more advanced compositions based on a higher level of ability. The class meets three times a week and the students are required to complete a minimum of at-home practice hours and participate in one concert per semester. The challenging **Woodwind Ensemble** for eighth grade students matches the ability level of the student musicians to the curriculum. They practice, learn, and perform a variety of musical selections including classical, jazz, and modern compositions from many well-known composers. The class meets three times a week and

the students are required to complete a minimum of at-home practice hours and participate in one concert per semester. Seventh and eighth grade students may be eligible to represent the school by participating in the Florida Music Association Festival and solo/ensemble competitions.

## Physical Education

Courses for each grade level offer instruction in a variety of sports and recreational activities that build skills and promote cooperative social interaction and teamwork. The class meets twice weekly and focuses on age-appropriate exercise.

## Wheel Classes

In addition to the core classes, the middle school curriculum includes the following rotating semester or quarter wheel classes: advanced topics in mathematics, marine science, contemporary history and economics, and writing workshop. Classes in religious studies, computer (advanced Microsoft Office, web design, video production, and graphic design), art, and vocal ensemble are also part of the wheel classes.

## Technology

The availability and effective use of technology at St. Mark's creates a challenging, supportive educational environment that promotes higher levels of achievement for students. Technology is integrated across the curriculum through the use of wireless laptop computers and the online research database, *EBSCO*.

## Religious Studies

Religious studies courses in the middle school are a component of the wheel classes. The program consists of a semester of instruction in the following areas:

- Sixth grade—World Religions
- Seventh grade—Old Testament
- Eighth grade—New Testament

## Chapel and Eucharist

Character education and Christian principles are the focus of the middle school chapel held each Tuesday. A school wide Eucharist service is held every Friday.

## Field Trips

Field trips are scheduled throughout the year by the classroom teachers to enhance the curriculum of a particular grade level. Activities include visits to local government agencies, museums, art galleries, concerts, plays, and environmental areas. The cost of all trips is included in tuition.

## Class Trips

Middle school students participate in annual class trips that are enhancements to the social studies or science curriculums at each grade level:

- Sixth grade – Millennium Cultures program at Epcot in Orlando
- Seventh grade – Seacamp at Newfound Harbor Marine Institute in Big Pine Key
- Eighth grade – Washington, D.C.

Parents are advised of the cost of these trips in advance.

