



# SAINT DOMINIC ACADEMY

*Empowering Women for Leadership Since 1878*

## **Saint Dominic Academy Course of Study Grades Seven and Eight**

### **LANGUAGE ARTS**

The SDA English Department provides a thorough language arts experience to all students emphasizing reading, writing, vocabulary, critical analysis, and public speaking.

Middle School students at SDA learn research, MLA (Modern Language Association) writing style, and critical thinking which will prepare them to engage as articulate, thoughtful participants in high school, college, and beyond. Empathy is fostered through reading and discussing diverse experiences which are both fictional (including international literature) and nonfiction (news articles, opinions, science and psychology journals, and persuasive oratory). Proper sentence structure and grammar will be practiced as students explore a variety of genres ranging from Shakespearean scene study to presentations grounded in the importance of “STEAM” subjects.

The year begins with a focus on reading comprehension strategies, understanding literary terms, and how to participate in a class discussion as a community of learners and listeners. As the year progresses, students are challenged to hone their abstract thinking skills, by making inferences, deciphering the difference between connotation and annotation, and exploring the effects of figurative language in a literary work.

Instruction on the writing process—including brainstorming, outlining, editing, and revising—is embedded throughout the curriculum. Students learn how to create a debatable thesis statement, write clearly, and support their claims.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Students in the Middle School will be placed in either Pre-Algebra or Algebra 1 based on their previous courses, grades earned, and a placement test. Foundational skills are strengthened through conceptual understanding, computational thinking, and higher order reasoning.

#### ***Pre-Algebra***

Pre-Algebra is a two-semester course designed to prepare students for achievement in Algebra I and higher-level math courses. Basic math skills are reviewed and reinforced, algebraic concepts are introduced and problem solving and critical thinking skills are emphasized. With the introduction of variables, expressions, equations and mathematical properties, students develop the skills necessary to progress into first year algebra. Course goals will be to prepare the student to enter into the college prep algebra sequence. Developing organizational skills in areas such as note taking, test taking, and neatness is essential.

## **Algebra 1**

Algebra 1 is a compilation and execution of all math skills learned from elementary school through Pre-Algebra. Therefore, proficiency in all prerequisite skills is essential to further study Algebra 1. Course topics will include Linear and Non-linear functions, Systems of Linear and Non-Linear Inequalities, Exponential Functions, Polynomials, and Quadratic Equations.

## **RELIGION**

The Middle School religion program alternates yearly with its focus. The courses provide students with an overview of the teachings of the Catholic Faith based on the *Catechism of the Catholic Faith* and the *Catechetical Curriculum Guide from the Archdiocese of Newark*. The students will have the opportunity to accept the challenges to love Jesus through prayer, Days of Reflection, Service Program and the Sacraments.

Students learn the basic precepts of the Church as taught in the Apostle's Creed and will come to know Jesus through the Blessed Trinity, the Sacraments, and the scripture of the Catholic Church. An emphasis will be placed on the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes. In the Human Life component, students will come to understand that their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

The alternating course introduces students to the marks of the Catholic Church, Modern Ecumenical Councils, the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, Mark, and John and the Liturgy. The students identify the moral struggle of a New Age and a call to Catholic Social Justice as preached in the Gospel of the life of Jesus. Students are led to understand the works of the Holy Spirit, the Prayer of the Church, and Salvation History. In the Human Life component, students will come to realize that God has placed in their hearts the natural desire for happiness. Students will be guided in their understanding of informed conscience and free will which allow them to follow the right path and make correct choices in keeping with the teachings of Jesus and the Catholic Church.

## **SOCIAL STUDIES**

At the Middle School level students will study U.S. History beginning with the Indigenous peoples of North America and moving as far into modern times as possible. This course focuses on understanding the relationships that the citizens of the United States have developed within their own borders as well as with the rest of the world. Topics covered include the interactions between the Indigenous peoples and European colonists, the establishment of the colonies in North America, reasons for the Revolution and the colonists' desire for independence, the debate over slavery, the Civil War and Reconstruction, Progressives and their fight for equality and protection for all, the World Wars, and the Civil Rights movement. The goal is to give the students a broad understanding of the United States and critical topics in its young, dynamic history.

## **SCIENCE: STEM**

From 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students learn Automation and Robotics, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students are learning Design and Modeling. At the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> marking period, the focus is on getting an overview of the physical world and teaching

tools and concepts to think clearly about matter, atoms, molecules, chemical reactions, motion, force, momentum, work, and machines.

### **7<sup>th</sup> Grade Automation and Robotics**

In the Automation and Robotics (AR) unit, students trace the history, development, and influence of automation and robotics as they learn about mechanical systems, energy transfer, machine automation, and computer control systems. Students use the VEX Robotics platform to design, build, and program real-world objects such as traffic lights, toll booths, and robotic arms.

### **8<sup>th</sup> Grade Design and Modeling**

Design and Modeling (DM) provides students opportunities to apply the design process to creatively solve problems. Students are introduced to the unit problem in the first activity and are asked to make connections to the problem throughout the lessons in the unit. Students learn and utilize methods for communicating design ideas through sketches, solid models, and mathematical models. Students will understand how models can be simulated to represent an authentic situation and generate data for further analysis and observations. Students work in teams to identify design requirements, research the topic, and engage stakeholders. Teams design a toy or game for a child with cerebral palsy, fabricate and test it, and make necessary modifications to optimize the design solutions.

## **WORLD LANGUAGE**

### ***Language Exploration: French and Spanish***

Students will take one semester of French and one of Spanish. These semester long courses expose the students to the richness of culture and history of the languages by looking at them through global lenses.

The Spanish semester focuses on aural skills through songs and tongue-twisters. They will begin to read and to write the texts that they have learned to recite and also will learn some basic vocabulary and some basic expressions.

The French semester will utilize music and games to introduce contact with the language. Students will listen to and say/sing the alphabet, numbers 1-20, basic greetings, and language to talk about themselves. They will learn basic information about Francophone countries in the world. Using digital curriculum students will be able to access all material from home on their electronic devices. Focus is familiarization with sounds, pronunciation and simple meaningful content.

## **ARTS**

### ***Music Experience***

Seventh and Eighth Grade Music Experience aims to create a life-long passion for a variety of musical genres through extensive listening experiences. The course is rich in activity based learning which includes student presentations on classical and contemporary performing artists.

Saint Dominic Academy's mission of female empowerment is examined through the lens of mixed messages, both empowering and misogynistic, that young women

encounter in today's music. Also, students will watch, discuss and write about several movie musicals.

Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month and Women's History Month are celebrated at the appropriate times, with an emphasis on the contributions of a diversity of people and cultures to world music. Also, students sing Carols and watch the Nutcracker during the Christmas season.

Students are encouraged to join the Saint Dominic Academy Glee Club where they learn to sing, harmonize and perform both classical and contemporary choral music.

### ***Visual Art Experience***

Students will focus on learning the elements of design: line, shape, color, texture, and space; they will also learn the principles of design: unity, focus, balance, rhythm, and pattern. Different artists and art movements, noting both the western world and cultures outside the western tradition will be discussed in class.

Projects will bring about a variety of art mediums, including paint, pencil, charcoal, and printmaking. Students will study and learn about the relationship between creative expression and culture as they reinforce their understanding of art as well as finding inspiration and focus for their own work. Different projects will include portraits, still life and landscape.

### **HEALTH**

Health Education focuses on current health topics related to personal growth and development of adolescent females. Through discussion, readings, short videos, and projects, the students will focus on healthy body image, decision-making and goal-setting skills, disease and health conditions, safety, social and emotional health, interpersonal communications, character development, and advocacy.

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Physical education focuses on the physical, emotional, and social needs of each student. A wide variety of individual and lifetime fitness activities, as well as individual and group challenges and cooperative activities help each student find commitment to her well-being. Activities may include zumba, kick-boxing, fitness stations, resistance training, aerobic conditioning, yoga, dance routines, and fitness testing.