

Core Academic Course Descriptions

6th Grade

Middle School students entering grade six enroll in five core academic courses: English 6, Latin 6, World Cultures, Earth Science, and a math class. In addition to these requirements, students enroll in four quarter-long enrichment blocks. These blocks are drama, visual arts, human development and technology. Music is also an enrichment block and meets once weekly. Students are required to participate in physical education.

Latin 6 (one-year core academic course)

The objective of grade six Latin is to increase the student's awareness of the workings of language in general, using Latin as a vehicle. Through the use of the course text, students gain a rudimentary knowledge of the process and structure of language, while increasing his or her vocabulary. Drills reinforce grammar concepts, vocabulary and classical Latin pronunciation. Students develop reading comprehension of simple Latin stories, and guided discovery in translations from Latin to English. The class acquaints students with Roman history and mythology.

Pre-Algebra 6 (a one-year core academic course)

This course stresses how to determine the solution to equations and inequalities, analyzing properties of real numbers, manipulating rational numbers, and simplifying exponentials and polynomials, while reinforcing problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Topics in statistics, probability, logic, geometry and measurement round out the course. Math study skills such as organization, note-taking and test preparation are once again reinforced.

Earth Science (a one-year core academic course)

The grade six earth science course focuses on developing students' lab skills. Units are planned to support a sequence of skills learned. These include measurement, use of laboratory equipment, observation skills, recording and graphing data, and classification. The goal of the course is to provide a firm foundation for scientific thought that is applied in the lab writing process. Major topics of study include: weather, minerals and rocks, plate tectonics, earthquakes, volcanoes, global warming and astronomy.

English 6 (a one-year core academic course)

There are five components to this course: literature, composition, vocabulary, grammar and study skills. Through a wide variety of assessments, students demonstrate proficiency in each of these key instructional areas. They learn how to answer essential questions that focus on major themes and develop their critical thinking skills in classroom and small group discussions. Students are taught how to plan, organize and write single and multi-paragraph analytical essays. Writing strategies, such as choosing and developing a thesis, how to incorporate parenthetical references, using transitional phrases and proper MLA formatting are ascertained within guided instructional lessons. Students are required to read two different novels per quarter, one for classroom investigation that is teacher-selected and one for independent reading that is student-selected.

World Cultures (a one-year core academic course)

Students learn about people and events that ushered in the dawn of major Western and non-Western civilizations. Included are the studies of early humans and the early societies of the Near East, Egypt, Greece, and the classical civilizations of India and China. In studying the ancient world, students come to appreciate the significance of geographic place in the development of the human story. Students acquire a sense of the everyday life of the people, their accomplishments and contributions, and the ideas that helped transform the world. Four projects are required.

7th Grade

Seventh-graders enroll in five core academic courses: Pre-Algebra, English 7, Latin IA, World Geography and Life Science. In addition to these requirements, students enroll in four quarter-long enrichment blocks. These blocks are drama, visual arts, human development and technology. Music is also an enrichment block and meets once weekly. Students are required to participate in physical education.

English 7 (a one-year core academic course)

This literature-based program is designed to further develop the students' reading strategies: questioning, predicting, inferring, clarifying, summarizing and evaluating. In addition to working on reading strategies, we concentrate on basic reading comprehension skills including main idea, details, sequence, cause and effect, fact or opinion, inference and point of view. Students read novels, short stories, non-fiction and informational selections.

Extensive time is also spent on the instruction and practice of the essential traits of a good writer: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions (grammar) and presentation. Students further refine their writing skills by using the writing process for developing essays of various types. The course includes a comprehensive introduction to academic research. This research unit is taught in conjunction with the SMES library and focuses on accessing, evaluating, and analyzing informational materials.

Latin IA (a one-year core academic course)

Seventh-graders are guided through the process of language and develop an understanding of how language is organized in the Latin IA course. The forms, syntax and vocabulary of Latin are learned in order to help students grasp certain basic concepts of grammar. Students study the culture and civilization of Rome. Students new to the school in grade seven will be homogeneously grouped in a separate but parallel course.

Pre-Algebra (a one-year core academic course)

This course stresses how to determine the solution to equations and inequalities, analyzing properties of real numbers, manipulating rational numbers, and simplifying exponentials and polynomials, while reinforcing problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Topics in statistics, probability, logic, geometry and measurement round out the course. Math study skills such as organization, note-taking and test preparation are once again reinforced.

Pre-Algebra Accelerated (a one-year core academic course)

Pre-algebra Accelerated is an advanced course for seventh-graders. This year-long course will prepare students to enter Algebra I. The focus of the course is on building the foundation necessary for success in the study of algebra. Students will become familiar with the following: properties of mathematics; algebraic terminology; solving one step and two step equations; adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing rational numbers and integers; solving inequalities; graphing equations and inequalities; ratios, proportions, and percents; statistics and probability; applying algebra to geometry; and the study of polynomials. Students will reinforce their problem-solving and critical thinking skills and delve deeper into the various concepts that are studied throughout the year. Math study skills such as organization, note-taking, and test preparation will be reinforced throughout the year.

Life Science (a one-year core academic course)

This class incorporates hands-on labs, content rich projects and class activities that focus on the major topics of Life Science: Cells, Genetics, The Six Kingdoms and the Human Body Systems. The course will culminate with a comparative anatomy dissection of a frog.

World Geography (a one-year core academic course)

This course fosters empathy toward cultures of the world in a relevant way that facilitates an understanding of 21st century peoples, places, and environments. Students gain an appreciation of physical geography as it relates to cultural heritage, economic and political systems, and the relationship between these concepts. As they become adept at reading and drawing maps with ease and confidence, students develop valuable mental maps of the planet. Cultural Geography encourages people to approach questions of "where?" and "why?" from as many points of view as possible, by delving into modern problems and solutions in a variety of case studies and current events. These expanded perspectives help people grasp the intricacies of their own milieu and that of other countries near and far. Students recognize the interdependence of the contemporary world, thereby achieving the cultural literacy they need in order to become active and productive global citizens.

8th Grade

Students in grade eight enroll in five core academic courses: Algebra I or Algebra IA, English 8, United States History, Physical Science or Conceptual Physics, and a foreign language (Latin, Spanish, French, Chinese or Japanese). In addition to these requirements, students enroll in semester long enrichment blocks as well as physical education, dance or athletics.

Eighth Grade Language

French I, Spanish I, Chinese I and Japanese I are high school courses and successful completion of the course will allow your child to proceed to the second level course as a freshman. Students finishing Latin IB can take Latin II or take a modern language in their freshman year. If you elect to have your child start a modern language in ninth grade, he/she will have four years of study which could terminate in an Advance Placement (AP) course.

Latin 1B (a one-year core academic course)

As a companion course to Latin 1A, this second year of the Cambridge Latin Course develops the student's foundation in the essential grammar and vocabulary of the Latin language. The emphasis of this course is to develop reading skills and a sense for the language's unique means of expression. An effort is made to demonstrate the strong influence of Latin upon English vocabulary. An acquaintance with Roman literature, life, and history is made through a discussion of the meaning of words and the translation of passages. The more familiar the student becomes with the powers of language, the more adept the student becomes in his/her own thinking and expression. Finally, a coin project, where each student receives a genuine Roman coin and traces its origin, deepens the student's understanding of Roman history and culture and its profound effect on our own culture. Latin 1B is the recommended foreign language course for Eighth grade, and completes three years of Latin study.

French 1 (a one-year core academic course)

In this first-level course, students begin to attain proficiency in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing the French language. Students create original monologues and dialogues to reinforce the skills in oral understanding and communication. Students are introduced to the French culture as well as language. Language structure concepts are developed by using contemporary reading selections, comprehension activities, and vocabulary expansion activities.

Spanish 1 (a one-year core academic course)

In this first level course, the students begin to attain proficiency in the skills of listening, reading, comprehension, speaking and writing of the foundational material. Vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and verb conjugations are emphasized, in addition to other grammatical concepts. Language and grammar concepts are developed using games and paired activities, as well as traditional reading and writing activities. Students are also exposed to Hispanic history, civilization, culture, current events, and music.

Japanese 1 (a one-year core academic course)

Japanese I is an introductory course in which students learn to listen, speak, read, and write simple daily conversational Japanese. Students develop an understanding of basic grammatical structures and study verb tenses in the polite form of speech. Students learn basic vocabulary and useful idiomatic expressions based on several different themes and perform a number of interactive and role-playing activities. Students acquire communicative skills to convey and comprehend mostly factual information on a variety of familiar topics. Students master two sets of phonetically written syllables, Hiragana and Katakana, and recognize some basic Kanji characters. Students are also familiarized with some aspect of Japanese culture such as their lifestyle, annual holidays, food and traditional arts.

Chinese 1 (a one-year core academic course)

Chinese I is a basic course for the beginning students of Chinese. In this class, the students learn the course objectives including the following: (1) Listening: students understand basic daily conversation, (2) Speaking: students develop accurate pronunciation through the Pinyin system, communication in daily dialogues, (3) Reading: students learn to read over 120 Chinese

characters and essays with or without Pinyin, (4) Writing: students are capable of writing 84 Chinese characters, and short sentences.

Cultural activities are arranged to provide each student with opportunities to enhance language and cultural learning; these activities include Chinese carnivals, Chinese movies, Chinese performances, field trips such as visiting museums, markets, restaurants.

Eighth Grade Math and Science (One year of Math and Science Required)

Students taking Algebra IA and Algebra I will be required to take Eighth Grade Physical Science. Geometry Honors students may opt for Conceptual Physics which will require an application to the class. The math and science teachers and the administration determine the appropriate science placement. It is completely acceptable for an Algebra I student to take Physical Science. Students completing Conceptual Physics in 8th grade may be eligible to enroll in Biology and/or Chemistry (requires recommendation of Conceptual Physics 8 teacher) in 9th grade.

Algebra 1A (a one-year core academic course)

This course is designed for students who have demonstrated competency in basic calculations and problem-solving. The pace of the program is such that more time is spent on each concept. This course is a comprehensive program that helps students build their critical thinking and problem solving skills as well as their understanding of algebra. The course begins with a thorough exploration of the fundamentals of algebra and real number properties. Further topics include simplifying expressions, solving one-variable equations, manipulating polynomials, and factoring. This course stresses and reinforces important skills such as organization, note-taking and test preparation throughout the year.

Algebra 1 (a one-year core academic course)

This course introduces important algebraic concepts and their applications. The textbook is designed to help students build their critical thinking skills and problem solving skills through the study and exploration of various algebraic topics. Problem solving techniques are used extensively as students explore solving equations, simplifying polynomials, real number properties and basic algebraic proofs, factoring, systems of equations and inequalities, functions, and rational and irrational numbers. The course culminates with a study of the quadratic formula and its applications. This course stresses and reinforces important skills such as organization, not-taking and test preparation throughout the year.

Geometry Honors (a one-year core academic course)

Geometry stresses inductive and deductive reasoning and higher level thinking skills. Through the use of theorems, postulates, and definitions, students use their reasoning skills to prove theorems about basic geometric shapes, e.g., triangles, quadrilaterals, and circles. Throughout the year, both plane and solid geometric applications are stressed. Skills previously introduced in algebra are maintained through the solution of various types of geometry problems.
Prerequisite: Algebra I.

Physical Science (a one-year core academic course)

Physical Science completes the middle school science sequence of building knowledge and skills bases for high school science. The knowledge base is enhanced in chemistry through the concept of the atomic theory of matter and chemical reactions and in physics through the concept of conservation of energy and matter in mechanical systems. Skills developed range from critical thinking used to design programs to solve a problem to the manipulation of computers, software, and laboratory equipment for the collection of data. Hands-on and investigative activities are used to supplement traditional learning strategies.

Conceptual Physics (a one-year core academic course)

Conceptual Physics is a required foundation course for future study in physics, chemistry, and biology. Students learn to think scientifically by studying basic concepts in Physical Science including statics, kinematics, the Scientific Method, Newton's Laws, Conservation Laws, elementary chemistry, and biochemistry. Students are guided by lecture, demonstration, and lab investigation through topics of historical interest to important scientists. Students explore these topics by reading, question & answer (journal), artistic rendering (portfolio) and problem-solving. Students present their understanding not only by traditional assessment, but also in PowerPoint presentations, model-making, computer simulation, and using Excel spreadsheets to present data. Students are asked to question topics like the scientists whose lives they study, with answers changing through the year. They learn basic laboratory skills, and apply mathematics to problem-solving, including ratio and proportion, scaling, formulas, vectors, graphing, slopes, and linear equation. (Prerequisite- Concurrent enrollment with Geometry Honors)

Physical Education, Dance, and Athletics

The Physical Education Department presents a varied program based on the recognition that the integration of physical, emotional, social and mental health is imperative to the development of the individual. Physical education is a required course in the Middle School through participation in Physical Education Class, Dance, or Athletics.

Physical Education

The physical education curriculum consists of team sports, individual sports, daily aerobic and conditioning activities, and quarterly physical fitness testing. There is an emphasis on teaching the benefits of exercise and proper nutrition to enhance health and wellness. Physical education in the Middle School includes, but is not limited to, those sports which are offered in the Middle School athletic program.

The following are goals of the physical education curriculum:

- To develop the fine and gross motor skills of each student;
- To improve skeletal muscle strength and the aerobic and anaerobic endurance of each student;
- To improve student knowledge in the various activities;
- To enhance the student's self-concept;
- To improve the social and sporting skills of each student;
- To instill an interest in life-long fitness;
- To introduce each student to at least one life-carry sport.

Dance

This course offers a strong foundation in dance technique for both beginning and more advanced dance students. Instruction focuses on correct posture, basic coordination, rhythmic patterns, fundamental dance positions, effort/shape and dance conditioning techniques. Ballet, Jazz (both Lyrical and Funk) and Tap dance styles are introduced. Dance history and basic terminology are integrated into the exploration of various dance genres. The course enforces essential life skills such as concentration, self-discipline, precision, goal-setting, confidence-building, self-expression, teamwork, effective communication and responsibility. Students will learn instructor-choreographed numbers to be presented at various school functions and the biannual dance recitals.

Middle School Interscholastic Athletics

During the season when students participate on a sport team, their practices will be held during the physical education block. Participation on a Middle School team during the season or seasons meet that seasons' physical education requirement. Our goal is to foster greater opportunities for more students to experience the lessons that can be learned through teamwork. All 6th grade students will be required to participate on one St. Margaret's team during the year but are certainly encouraged to participate in more if they so choose. 7th and 8th graders are encouraged to participate on sports teams but are not required to do so.

Fall Season

Flag Football (boys)
Cross Country
Volleyball (girls)
Dance

Winter Season

Basketball
Lacrosse
Dance
Golf (7th and 8th only)

Spring Season

Volleyball (boys)
Track and Field
Soccer
Softball (girls)
Baseball (boys)
Dance

Enrichment Program

Middle School students are required to take a variety of enrichment courses throughout their three years in the Middle School. In 6th and 7th grades, students take four specific quarter-long courses (Technology, Visual Art, Drama, Skills for Success/Health). In addition to these courses, 6th and 7th graders are required to choose one Music class which will meet one day a week during their enrichment block (Band, Choir, or Orchestra). 8th graders are permitted to choose their enrichment course on a semester basis.

6th Grade Enrichment Courses

Drama

In Drama 6, students are introduced to the basic concepts of dramatic structure through the use of theater games, improvisation, monologues and scene work. The essentials of theatrical communication of vocal projection and articulation, body use and state pictures are introduced in the first sessions and emphasized throughout the course. Concepts of character, environment, relationship and conflict are introduced through non-threatening theater games and

improvisations. Through simple scripts, the use of text and subtext is introduced. Basic theater terminology is taught throughout the course.

Technology

This course will enable the student to build computer skills, application skills gain an overall knowledge of the information technology arena. In addition to skill-based curriculum, Internet safety will be presented through the iSafe curriculum.

Visual Arts

The course curriculum combines the study of art with projects that explore various art media. Students experience art as both a means of expression and communication. Emphasis is placed on creative problem solving, elements of art, and the application of the principles of design. The course will include, but not be limited to, drawing, painting, sculpture, graphic design, and clay exploration. Writing about art will be included. Students will also learn about of the development of the visual arts from several early cultures.

Skills for Success in Adolescence

This sixth grade course focuses on the skills needed to help young adolescents succeed in school and in life. The course will address multiple aspects of a student's social, emotional and school success through the main themes of empathy and communication, bullying prevention, emotion management, problem solving, decision making and goal setting. During the quarter the students will apply their understanding of these social skills by teaching lessons to our preschool students.

Music Courses

Students choose one music course in which they will participate one day a week.

Choir

An all-inclusive music course designed to further the individual students' experiences in choral performance, correct vocal technique, music history and music reading. Students will be introduced to part and sight singing in many different genres and styles of music. Every student participating in the St. Margaret's choir will have various performance opportunities during the school year.

Band

The intermediate band composed of woodwind, brass and percussion instruments including the flute, oboe, bassoon, clarinet, alto and bass clarinet, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophone, trumpet, French horn, trombone, euphonium and baritone horn, tuba, keyboard percussion, drum and auxiliary percussion, and timpani. This ensemble is a year-long course and will perform at the Spring Concert.

Pre-requisite: Grade five band or equivalent.

Orchestra

The intermediate strings are composed of violins, violas, cellos and basses. This ensemble is a year-long course and will perform at the Christmas Concert and the Spring Concert.

Pre-requisite: Grade five strings or equivalent.

7th Grade Enrichment Courses

Drama

In Drama 7, concepts of character, environment, relationship and conflict are reinforced through more advanced monologue and scene work. Vocal projection and articulation, body use and stage picture will continue to be stressed. Students will be introduced to the different aspects of the theater: playwright, director and actor, as well as design and technical positions such as scenic, costume, lighting and sound designers. Students will produce an original, student-written, student-performed theater piece.

Visual Art

The curriculum combines the study of art with projects that explore various art media. Students experience art as both a means of expression and communication. Emphasis is placed on and the principles of design such as balance, unity, repetition, variety, rhythm, focal point, positive and negative space . The course may include, but not be limited to, drawing, painting, collage, design, printmaking and some 3D media. Writing about art will be included. Students will be introduced to historically important artists and art movements. They will continue to use sketchbooks to explore the creative process, critical observation and self-critique.

Technology

This course will enable the student to expand their computer and application skills. Internet safety will be presented through the iSafe curriculum. Students will be introduced to digital media, computer programming, and Web 2.0 applications with projects focused on creative self expression.

Health

The 7th grade Health class will cover Nutrition, Fitness, Goal Setting, and Growth and Development. The Nutrition portion will cover the dissection of nutritional food labels, creating a healthy food alternative, and understanding how nutrition relates to overall health and performance. The Fitness component will cover heart rate, blood pressure, and how to set up an exercise program. The Goal Setting portion will teach students how to set and achieve realistic goals. The Growth and Development portion will cover changes in the body during puberty.

Music Courses

Choir

An all-inclusive music course designed to further the students' experiences in choral performance, correct vocal technique, music history and music reading. Students will continue to practice part singing and sight singing, in many different genres and styles of music. Every student participating in the St. Margaret's choir will have various performance opportunities throughout the school year. Attendance at these performances is a basic expectation of the course.

Band

An intermediate band composed of woodwind, brass and percussion instruments including the flute, oboe, bassoon, clarinet, alto and bass clarinet, alto, tenor and baritone saxophone, trumpet, French horn, trombone, euphonium/baritone horn, tuba, keyboard percussion, drum/auxiliary percussion, and timpani. This ensemble is a year-long course and will perform at the Spring Concert.

Prerequisite: Sixth Grade Band or equivalent.

Orchestra

The Middle School Orchestra consists of student instrumentalists who play violin, viola, cello, double bass, piano, percussion, and performs intermediate/advanced string repertoire. Students study and perform the works of major composers like Bach, Handel, Mozart, and Vivaldi, and work on developing critical ensemble performance skills. This is a year-long course that includes a major performance in the Spring Orchestra Concert. Selected advanced members of the group have the opportunity to perform in the Musical Theatre Orchestra along with musicians from the Upper School for Drama productions throughout the year.

8th Grade Enrichment Courses

During the 8th grade year, students select which semester long enrichment courses in which they would like to enroll. One day a week will be devoted to our Human Development course. The other three days a week will be devoted to your enrichment selection.

8th Grade Enrichment Course Offerings:

8th Grade Drama

Drama 8 pulls together all the concepts of dramatic structure that are introduced in earlier courses. Performance skills will continue to be developed through work on more sophisticated material. Playwriting will help students understand character, conflict, dialogue, setting and structure as they create their own plays.

8th Grade Visual Art -- Three-Dimensional Art

The 8th grade curriculum combines the study of art with projects that explore various art media. Students experience art as both a means of expression and communication. Emphasis is placed on creative problem solving, and the application of the principles of design. The course will include, but not be limited to clay exploration, and sculpture using various media such as wire and paper. Sketchbooks and writing about art are an important part of this course. Students will also have an overview various artists that have had an impact on society.

8th Grade Visual Art – Two-Dimensional Art

The 8th grade curriculum combines the study of art with projects that explore various art media. Students experience art as both a means of expression and communication. Emphasis is placed on creative problem solving, and the application of the principles of design. The course will include, but not be limited to drawing, painting, graphic design, printmaking and collage. Sketchbooks and writing about art are an important part of this course. Students will also have an overview of the development of various artists that have had an impact on society.

8th Grade Visual Art – Portrait and Figure Drawing and Sculpture

The Portrait and Figure class starts with an emphasis on accurate proportions and drawing faces. Students will also make a mask and a clay head in order to better understand facial structure. The curriculum will then move to proportions and the figure. We will have a historical look and how artists in Egypt, Greece and Italy during the Renaissance thought about proportion and the figure. Drawing the figure with fabric will be the emphasis during the second half of the class culminating with combining the portrait and figure in a final drawing. Sketchbooks and writing about art are an important part of this course. Students will also have an overview of the development of various artists that have had an impact on society.

8th Grade Choir

Eighth Grade Choir is an all-inclusive music course designed to further the individual students' experiences in choral performance, correct vocal technique, music history and music reading. Students will continue to practice part singing and sight singing, in many different genres and styles of music. Choir in 8th grade will ready the individual student to enter choir in the Upper School. Every SMES choir will have the opportunity to perform in various ways during the school year.

8th Grade Band

The *St. Margaret's Concert Band* is a combination of intermediate to advanced 8th through 12th grade musicians. Instrumentation includes: flute, oboe, bassoon, clarinet, bass clarinet, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone, trumpet, horn, trombone, baritone, tuba, drum percussion, auxiliary percussion, and mallet percussion. Past pieces have included *Colonel Bogey*, *Clumsy* by *Fergie*, *Canned Heat* from *Napoleon Dynamite*, *Fire Dance*, *Medley from Shrek*, *A Hymnsong On Philip Bliss*, *Sleepers Awake*, and *Semper Fi*. We have two required performances: The Christmas Concert and The Spring Band Concert. Prerequisite: 6th and/or 7th Grade Band.

8th Grade Orchestra

Eighth Grade Orchestra students currently rehearse and perform with the Upper School Chamber Orchestra, which includes performers in grades eight through twelve. This advanced ensemble includes musicians that play violin, viola, cello, double bass, harp, and piano, and appears in concert several times a year as well as in the musical theatre productions. Over the past three years the Chamber Orchestra has performed masterworks by Vivaldi, Bach, Mendelssohn, Schubert, as well as concert settings of movie soundtracks like "Pirates of the Caribbean" and "Star Wars." Prerequisite for this course is a minimum of two years of ensemble experience (in grades 6 and 7), or equivalent playing ability as demonstrated by audition.

8th Grade Digital Media

The digital media course is designed to teach the basics of video production while allowing students to explore their creativity with the digital medium. Students will learn script writing, storyboarding, lighting, shooting and editing using the latest in computer technology. This course is designed for students that have an interest in production or those that would like try it out to see if it is something they would like to pursue further. The only prerequisites are that you are willing to work hard, be a team player and commit fully to the course requirements.

8th Grade Visual Storytelling: 8th Grade girls only

This project based course provides a creative, safe environment to express your feelings, ideas and stories through artistic journaling, photography and multimedia. Students will use a variety of technology tools such as Adobe Photoshop and Web 2.0 internet applications to tell their stories.

8th Grade Flash Animation

This project based course introduces the students to Adobe Flash software. Students learn FLASH animation basics, visual storytelling, the use of color, and the proper use of motion and symbolism. Certifications include storyboarding, targeted scriptwriting, motion and video effects, creating characters, and audio engineering.

8th Grade Video Game Programming

This project based course introduces students to video game programming. Students learned about the various phases involved in creating a video game including developing a game story, learning basic programming concepts and functions using the language Dark Basic, and adding audio effects to enhance the game.

8th Grade Service and Social Action

Service and Social Action is an opportunity to become aware of how one can become an effective catalyst to make the world a better place. In this course, we begin this process by becoming aware that there are great needs and injustices even in our own backyard. Students then explore their passions and developed a personal mission statement. Through an awareness of issues regarding justice and our potential, we will learn as a class about five areas of concern and taking action to make a positive impact. These five areas have included the homeless, elderly, environment, disabled, and issues regarding literacy. Also each student will take on an individual project to positively affect the world through human interaction. This class is both a challenging and a positive experience as one grows to expand their world view and develop a new paradigm towards our place in the world. We do this as thankful and good stewards of what God has given us and as emerging individuals.

8th Grade Introduction to Scripture, Ethics and World Religions

(This course will meet once per week for the entire year)

This course is a survey course and will be an introduction into the humanities as they pertain to philosophy, ethics, and religion. The humanities are the stories, the ideas, and the words that help us make sense of our lives and our world. The course will briefly introduce the student to the history of western thought and philosophy. We will delve quickly into ethics and look at ways to arrive at ethical decisions. We will introduce ourselves to the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, and finally we will quickly review some of the great religions of the world.

Middle School Activity Groups

These groups meet one time each week during our activities/tutorial block. Participation in one of these groups is optional based on your particular interest and the description of the process will

occur during the 2nd week of school. To participate in any of these groups, auditions/interviews occur during the 2nd and 3rd weeks of school. Most of these groups may be comprised of students from all three grade levels; yearbook being the only exception which is open to 8th graders only.

Tartan Chorale

Tartan Chorale is an auditioned, honor choir made up of 6th, 7th and 8th grade students who show a love for and commitment to the SMES choral program. This group will meet once per week during the school day. Auditions will be held at the beginning of the school year, and the group will be featured in various performances during the coming year. The advanced choir student in this ensemble will perform in at least three parts, and be exposed to much more difficult music – in different languages, genres and time periods.

Pre-requisite: Students must be enrolled in either 6th, 7th, or 8th Grade Choir to be eligible for this group.

Middle School Big Band

The Middle School Big Band is the Middle School's premiere performing jazz band. Available by audition only, instruments include: alto sax, tenor sax, baritone sax, trombone, trumpet, piano, guitar, bass and drums. This ensemble is a year long course with two main concerts; the Christmas Concert and the Spring Concert, in addition to other performances throughout the year.

Co-Requisite: 6th, 7th, or 8th grade band.

Middle School Orchestra

The Middle School Orchestra is the Middle School's premiere performing orchestra. Available by audition only, instruments include: Violin, Viola, Cello, and Bass. This ensemble is a year-long course with two main concerts, The Christmas Concert and The Spring Concert, in addition to other performances. Co-requisite: 6th, 7th, or 8th Grade Strings.

Yearbook (8th Grade Students)

The Middle School yearbook class consists of several creative and organizational elements. Students are in charge of photography, copy, layout and design, business management, and the production of the Middle School yearbook. Meeting deadlines and balancing schedules is an integral part of the entire process. New technology allows the students to work from any computer with an internet connection. This year long commitment gives students the opportunity to produce a keepsake that their peers will cherish for years to come.

S.W.A.T. Team (Technology)

Since its inception in 1997, SWAT (Students Working to Advance Technology) Teams are taking the lead in supporting teachers and students with technology needs at their schools and in their communities. The mission of the nationally recognized SWAT concept is to promote student leadership training, address technology competencies, provide outreach to the community through parent involvement, corporate support, and student community service, and to encourage collaboration among student SWAT Teams nationally.

Dance Ensemble

The Dance Ensemble is a Middle School Honor Group with a year-long commitment. Dance Ensemble members study ballet, tap, and jazz dance at an accelerated pace. Dance Ensemble members also have the opportunity to practice choreographing on a small scale. Because the Dance Ensemble only meets once a week, it is designed primarily for those students who take additional dance classes outside of school or who have a lot of previous experience. Students are selected through audition only and must maintain good academic standing in order to remain in the Ensemble. Students in the Ensemble will need to make up academic tests and quizzes (if they are absent) during lunches or before/after school since they will be spending the Wednesday tutorial time in Dance Ensemble rehearsals. Dance Ensemble members will perform in all dance recitals and other community events.