



**San Marcos Academy**  
**CURRICULUM OVERVIEW**  
Middle School (Grade 8)

C. S. Lewis once wrote, “*Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather, to make man a more clever devil.*” From the earliest days of recorded history, philosophers have posited that the roots of honesty and virtue lie in good education. A good education in the middle grades is value-laden. The ancient wisdom of discovering what is the true, good, and beautiful are paramount.

***Middle school students are expected to perform the following:***

*Middle school students* are aware of basic attitudes and essential skills necessary to function in the learning community. They become functional students by prescribed standards and structure. These students internalize the "Golden Rule," and increasingly accept personal responsibility, and an expanding sense of morality. They aspire to the highest ethical standards, living to the glory of God and serving the betterment of others.

*Middle school students* will be able to recognize and exhibit self-governing behavior and quality work. They will demonstrate developmental progress as they strive for excellence in the quality of work that they produce.

*Middle school students* are increasingly literate. They can read and comprehend varied and challenging texts. They can gather and effectively use new knowledge, classify and organize information, support inferences and justify conclusions. They are able to recognize poor grammar, write grammatically correct sentences, paragraphs, and compose accurate essays within and across disciplines. They have a growing vocabulary and are able to communicate with varied cultures and groups. They are able to use technology and media toward this end.

*Middle school students* will conform behaviors to prescribed learning goals, regularly practice essential organizational skills, recognize quality work and compare it to their own performance, perform directed study habits, function within the academic support system, understand and practice essential study skills, and address in a positive way any at-risk attitudes or behaviors.

*Middle school students* gather and effectively use new knowledge, classify and organize information, support inferences and justify conclusions. These students utilize, evaluate and refine the use of multiple strategies to solve a variety of types of problems. They generate new and creative ideas by taking considered risks in a variety of contexts. They are able to show a rudimentary ability to expand and integrate their knowledge into varied environments. They are able to demonstrate higher taxonomies that integrate their knowledge across-the-curriculum.

*Middle school students* will be able to recognize and internalize appropriate behavior for all of their classroom interactions. They will normally exhibit basic social skills, such as; coping, conflict resolution, communication, and compliance with the rules. These students are sensitive to cultural differences. They cultivate and maintain a functional social network. They are learning to treat others with respect. In middle school, students rudimentarily communicate with other cultures and groups. They recognize how to communicate to resolve conflict and persuade others. They properly use words in context, with age appropriate vocabulary. They are able to use basic technology and media to communicate with others.

### ***What does this look like at San Marcos Academy?***

- Much of our students' learning in the humanities courses is conducted through inductive research of primary sources and discussions with one another, led by the teacher.
- Our eighth-grade students should be able to recognize and begin to engage the “Great Conversation”, because of their examination of Western art, history, literature, theology, and philosophy. Rather than relying solely on anthologies that skim the surface of thousands of events, SMA uses the most significant primary sources, thoughtfully treated with depth, to develop each student’s competency.
- In eighth grade, students become well-versed in grammar and composition, regularly composing essays in all language-based classes. By the end of the eighth grade, grammatical errors should be recognized and corrected. Written assignments should contain sound sentence structure, and sufficient vocabulary to convey increasingly logical thought patterns.
- Math and science courses require students to solve problems, calculate using linear reasoning, and express their understanding of difficult concepts with words as well as through successful calculation and experiment. Periodic measures are taken to ensure the student has mastered the foundational material in mathematics. Focus in the middle school is on competence in the scientific method, comprehension and proper use of scientific terminology, and conducting lab procedures safely.
- An aim of middle school classes is to prepare students to self-manage with adequate reinforcement. As such, the structure is lessened once sound study habits have been formed. Students who continue to show immaturity or lack of ability to self-manage are given ample reinforcement by the consistent and clear communication with parents and/or staff that will provide support for the student.

### ***These expectations are accomplished within the context of the following courses of study:***

English 8 – The language component of this class will focus primarily on grammar and composition. In order to enroll in the honors course, students must demonstrate an adequate score in the preceding honors English course and adequacy in both reading and writing. The literature component will explore various literary genres and achieve proper understanding and use of literary terms. An anthology of selected works is read, where students analyze them in their historical and cultural contexts, identify aesthetic value, and examine the truth-claims. Essays will be regularly written throughout the course, and a final research paper of at least 1,500 words will be administered.

Humanities 8(H) - This course is required of those taking honors English 8. It is a cross-disciplinary approach to history, literature, theology, law, and the arts; with a focus on the primary contributions of medieval literature that shaped Western Civilization. Students should be able to fluently read and comprehend these works. Using the Oxford method, students should be prepared to think deeply about the literature, write persuasively, and communicate clearly on the assigned themes. (Co-requisite English 8H)

History – Eighth-grade students enroll in United States History. This course covers from the nation’s founding to the Civil War. All students will be expected to read and comprehend the text and other assigned works. They must be able to compare, contrast, and analyze these works in depth. They must be able to reasonably infer causal relationships. The course will enable students to analyze a few primary sources, as well as develop research and writing skills to enable students to include historical facts as evidence.

Science – In eighth grade, students take Earth Science. It is an introduction to the scientific method and basic geology, meteorology, astronomy, and oceanography. Content centers on descriptive terminology with supporting concepts, and is reinforced by lab activities and demonstrations. For successful completion of this course, students must be able to understand and apply the scientific method, perform the basic mathematical calculation, demonstrate sound reasoning, and follow lab procedures.

Math – At this level, honors math students will take the Algebra 1(H) for high school credit while others take the Pre-algebra course. Those who have struggled in Pre-algebra may be required to enroll into a Math Lab. To be successful in these classes, students need to be able to memorize formulas or concepts and apply them to the right problems, think in causal relationships, process information with both written and auditory stimulus, and exhibit an earnest desire to spend whatever time is necessary to ensure they have a mastery of the basic skills.

Foreign Language I – All eighth-grade students will take their first year of foreign language. During their first year of high school, the second year of the same foreign language will be recommended thus completing the requirements for high school graduation. Foreign languages currently offered to our students include Latin, Spanish, and French. Successful performance in these courses requires students to compare, contrast, and process information through both written and auditory stimuli. Students must be able to meet deadlines, and remain focused on language development.

Principles of Information Technology (PIT) – Eighth-grade students will have the opportunity to gain high school credit while taking the Principles of Information Technology. This course will allow students to learn major concepts of information technology allowing them to perform necessary functions on the computer. This course teaches students how to maintain strong ethics and character while employing newly acquired skills.

Physical Education – All eighth-grade students must take a Physical Education course in middle school. The Phys Ed course is designed to coincide with the development of the middle school sports program. Students are expected to suit out every day and work with the coaches, who will be teaching them healthy lifestyles and training them in various sports.

Electives – Completion in these subjects beyond the required are awarded elective credits. Continued enrollments in these classes are contingent upon the upper high school student's contribution to the learning. Failure to perform at an acceptable level will necessitate the removal from that class at the recommendation of the teacher, and exempt them from future enrollments. These electives consist of, but are not limited to, MS-JROTC, Keyboarding, Prep Band, Visual Art, Math Lab, Learning Skills, and et al. Electives are contingent upon meeting minimum enrollment requirements and staffing. Additional fees may apply.

### ***What is the typical schedule of an SMA eighth grade student?***

The SMA High School Readiness/College Preparatory Plan –

Fall	Spring
U. S. History 8	U. S. History 8
English Language 8	English Language 8
English Literature 8	English Literature 8
Pre-Algebra	Pre-Algebra
Earth Science 8	Earth Science 8
Physical Education 8 or Athletics	Physical Education 8 or Athletics
PIT I	PIT I
Elective	Elective

The SMA Distinguished Achievement/College Preparatory Plan –

Fall	Spring
U. S. History 8(H)	U. S. History 8(H)
English 8(H)	English 8(H)
Humanities 8(H)	Humanities 8(H)
Algebra 1(H)	Algebra 1(H)
Earth Science 8(H)	Earth Science 8(H)
Foreign Language 1(H)	Foreign Language 1(H)
Elective	Elective
Physical Education 8 or Athletics	Physical Education 8 or Athletics

### ***To what can eighth-grade students look forward at San Marcos Academy?***

- The eighth-grade class learns leadership by practicing it in various Academy programs, including JROTC, band, and athletic teams.
- Eighth-grade students can attend middle school social gatherings.
- Returning eighth-grade students are eligible for election to the Student Council.
- Eighth-grade students are learning the skills needed to get ready for high school.
- Qualified students can compete in statewide Private Schools Interscholastic Association - Academic and Art competition.
- Qualified students can join the National Junior Honor Society.

### ***What must I do to prepare for my eighth-grade year?***

- Do everything you can to become proficient in reading, writing, and calculating math. DO NOT rush to take upper-level courses until you have demonstrated an ease in your performance at the foundation level.
- Decide what organizations you would like to join.
- Read those novels, literary and historical works that will be required for your core courses.
- Add some intellectually enriching activities to your summer plans, visit some museums, take a trip to a historical site, join a book club, *et al.*
- Spend the summer trying to get better connected to your church or faith community. So, you can come back to school strong in spirit, mind, and body.
- Decide on a schedule that will provide you with an academic foundation that will carry the weight of more difficult courses you will take throughout your high school career.
- Identify those areas that need to be improved, and attend workshops at area services. For example, take a reading course, a writing course, or math enrichment.