



San Marcos Academy
CURRICULUM OVERVIEW
Lower High School (Grade 9)

G. K. Chesterton once said, “*Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another.*” It is our aim to recover the lost tools of learning, and pass on the ancient wisdom derived from the great thinkers who have shaped Western Civilization and built that edifice on the foundation of the historic Christian faith.

Lower high school students are expected to perform the following:

Lower high school students are formulating basic attitudes and essential skills necessary to function as responsible maturing adolescents. They demonstrate a growing value for discovering, contemplating, understanding, and exhibiting that which is good, beautiful, and true. They aspire to the highest ethical standards, living to the glory of God and serving as an example for the betterment of others.

Lower high school students are increasingly self-governing, with an ever decreasing degree of supervision. The students will increasingly desire to produce quality work, regularly striving for excellence in a growing array of endeavors—academic and otherwise.

Lower high school students are fully literate, able to read and comprehend varied and challenging texts. They can gather and effectively use new knowledge—classifying and organizing the information, supporting inferences, and justifying conclusions. They are able to write grammatically correct and complex sentences, and compose in an array of genres. They have a growing vocabulary. They understand how to organize and present persuasive speeches to large groups. They are able to communicate with varied cultures and groups, and they are able to use technology and media toward this end.

Lower high school students achieve prescribed academic and personal goals, identify and practice essential organizational skills, recognize quality work and compare it to their own performance, move from performing directed study habits to self-directed learning, identify and function within an academic support network, understand and practice a broad array of sound study skills, and recognize and extinguish attitudes and behaviors that would jeopardize their potential.

Lower high school students will be able to show a growing ability to integrate and reconcile added knowledge into a view of the world as it truly exists in form, substance, and interpretation as revealed by God’s word. They are developing a capacity to associate complex inter-relationships of diverse, disparate, and/or tangential, concrete or abstract information. They are increasing in knowledge of how to apply learning across-the-curriculum.

Lower high school students will be able to recognize and imitate appropriate behavior in normal settings. They will develop expanding social skills such as problem solving, coping, communication, adherence to rules and social conventions, etc. Lower high school students are aware of the nuances of varied cultures and groups and are learning to communicate accordingly. They can increasingly resolve conflict and peacefully persuade others. They will demonstrate an ability to cultivate an interdependent social network. Students will consistently treat others with respect.

What does this look like at San Marcos Academy?

- Much of our students' learning in the humanities courses are conducted by the Oxford method, through inductive research of primary sources and Socratic discussions with one another, led by the teacher.
- Our ninth grade honors students should be able to recognize and begin to meaningfully engage in the

“Great Conversation,” as a result 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 ninth grade, students polish grammatical and rhetorical skills by composing essays in all language-based classes. By the end of their freshmen year, grammatical errors should be minimized. Written assignments should contain increasingly complex sentence structure, expansive vocabulary, and becoming increasingly persuasive and logically consistent.
- Math and science courses require students to solve problems, calculate by linear reasoning, and express their understanding of difficult concepts with words as well as through successful calculation and experiment. During this year, measures are taken to ensure the student has mastered the foundational material in mathematics. Focus in the lower high school is on mastery of the scientific method, comprehension and proper use of scientific terminology, identifying fallacies, and conducting lab procedures safely.
- Lower high school classes prepare students to self-manage, to better prepare them for college and life. As such, less structure is applied once sound study habits have been formed. Teachers are encouraged to modify their classroom procedures and expectations according to student ability and performance. However, those students who continue to show a lack of ability in the area are given reinforcement through ongoing communication with parents and/or staff through the school management software, emails, or other media that will provide support for the student.

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

English – The English I class will focus upon grammar, composition, and rhetoric. In order to enroll into the honors course, students must demonstrate an adequate score in the preceding honors English course and adequacy in both reading and writing. Examples of literary genres will be explored, proper understanding and use of literary terms will be accomplished, selected whole novels and other literary works are read, where students analyze works in their historical and cultural contexts, identify aesthetic value, and examine the truth-claims. Essays will be regularly written throughout the course.

Humanities I(H) - This course is required of those taking honors English I. It is a cross-disciplinary approach to history, literature, theology, law, and the arts; with a focus on the development of the contributions of classical literary works that have contributed toward 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 I-H)

World Geography - This course examines people, places, and environments at local, regional, national, and international scales from spatial and ecological perspectives of geography. Students will describe the influence of geography on events of the past and the present. The honors course prepares students for higher level social studies coursework. In order to be successful in these classes, students must be able to read and understand grade level texts, apply learning within and across cultures, comprehend and analyze spatial relationships.

Science – In ninth grade, honors tracked students enroll into Biology (H). Others enroll into Physics. To complete successfully any of these courses, students must be able to master variant uses of the scientific method, perform basic algebraic calculation, demonstrate sound reasoning, and exhibit the ability to follow lab procedures.

Math – At this level, honors math students will take the Geometry (H) course. Most other students will be enrolled into Algebra 1. To be successful in these classes, students need to be able to memorize formulas 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.

Languages – Honors students will normally take the second year of Latin, French, or Spanish. Others are encouraged to take the first year of Latin, French, or Spanish I. To be able to perform successfully in these courses, students must be able to compare, contrast, process information through both written and auditory stimuli. They must be able to meet deadlines and remain focused on language development.

Religion – First year freshmen are expected to take religion their first semester, unless granted approval to meet their graduation plan. Ninth grade students are eligible to take either the Religious Foundation Course (RFC) or Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ (LMJC). To complete successfully these courses, students must be able to read and comprehend texts, recall information, analyze truth-claims, and make reasonable inferences. Each of these courses will enable students to use religious truth as evidence in the senior thesis.

Electives – Continued enrollment in these classes are contingent upon the lower 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, JROTC, Band, Cheerleading, Visual Art, Photography, Theatre Arts, Research & Technical Writing, Math Lab, Reading, Astronomy, Analysis of Visual Media, Clay, Art Journaling, Principles of Information Technology, or Learning Skills. Other elective courses are offered through the SMA Distance Education program. On-campus electives are contingent upon meeting minimum enrollment requirements and staffing. Additional fees may apply.

What is the typical schedule of an SMA ninth grade student?

Regular College Preparatory Sequence – *The following course of study is recommended for those students intending to attend a college or university after high school, and satisfies both the Foundation and Multi-disciplinary Endorsements.*

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| Grade 9 |
| English 1 |
| Algebra 1 |
| Physics |
| W Geography |
| Language Other Than English (Latin 1, Sp 1, Fr 1) ¹ |
| Religion or Elective † |
| Athletics or Elective ² |
| Fine Art or Elective ³ |

NOTE: For those seeking endorsements, elective sections should be carefully planned to ensure you are meeting the academic requirements. Review the graduation requirements, class ranking formula, policies and procedures that govern course selections in the student handbook.

Honors College Preparatory Sequence – *The following course of study is recommended for those students intending to attend a highly competitive college or university after high school and satisfies both the Foundation and Multi-disciplinary Endorsements.*

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| Grade 9 |
| English 1(H) |
| Humanities 1(H) ¹ |
| Geometry (H) ² |
| Biology (H) |
| W Geography (H) |

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| Language Other Than English (Latin 2, Sp 1, Fr 1) ** |
| Religion or Elective † |
| Fine Art, Athletics, or Elective ³ |

NOTE: For those seeking endorsements, elective sections should be carefully planned to ensure you are meeting the academic requirements. Review the graduation requirements, class ranking formula, policies and procedures that govern course selections in the student handbook.

Students with English as a Second Language and those enrolled into the Learning Skills Program –
Alternative graduation plans must be approved by the Academic Dean as determined in consultation with the LS Director and Guidance Counselor.

To what can ninth grade students look forward at San Marcos Academy?

- The freshman class learns leadership in all facets of SMA and its programs by watching effective leaders in the upper classes, including those in JROTC, band, and athletic teams.
- Freshmen can attend most social gatherings and dances.
- Returning freshmen are eligible to be elected as Secretary or Treasurer of the Student Council.
- Ninth grade students are learning the research, comprehension, and rhetorical skills needed to get ready for their senior thesis.
- Qualified students can compete in statewide TAPPS Academic and Art competition.

What must I do to prepare for my freshmen year?

- Do everything you can to become proficient in reading, writing, and calculating math. DON'T rush to take upper level courses until you have demonstrated an ease in your performance at the foundation level.
- Decide on which organizations you would like to join.
- Read those novels, literary and historical works that will be required for your core courses.
- Plan to coordinate vacation trips to those venues that have a nearby colleges you may be interested in visiting. Visit as many colleges and universities as you can (It's never too early to start).
- 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.*
- Realize that high school is a big change, academically and socially. Spend the summer trying to get better connected to your church and 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 colleges. For example, take a reading course, writing, or math enrichment.