



San Marcos Academy
CURRICULUM OVERVIEW
Lower School

The mission of San Marcos Academy is to educate young men and women within a nurturing community based upon Christian values.

King Solomon wrote, “*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*” (Proverbs 22:6, NKJV). Although education in itself does not guarantee moral virtue, the ancient wisdom codified in the historic Christian faith provides the fertile soil. We aim to pass this wisdom on to our students.

Lower school students are expected to perform the following:

Lower school students are becoming aware of basic attitudes and essential skills necessary to function in the learning community. They become functional students by prescribed standards and structure. They increasingly exhibit what is good, beautiful, and true (Philippians 4:8). These students internalize the “Golden Rule” (Luke 6:31), and increasingly learn personal responsibility, while building Godly character. They aspire to living to the glory of God and serving the betterment of others (Philippians 2:3).

Lower school students will be able to learn self-governing behavior and grow in quality work. They will demonstrate developmental progress of striving for excellence in essential academics and interests (Colossians 3:23-24).

Lower school students are increasingly literate. They can read and comprehend varied and challenging texts. They are able to recognize poor grammar, write grammatically correct sentences and paragraphs, and compose short essays. These students have a growing vocabulary. They are able to communicate with varied cultures and groups (Colossians 4:5).

Lower school students will conform behaviors to prescribed learning goals, regularly practice essential organizational skills, recognize quality work, and compare it to their own performance. They will accomplish this by performing directed study habits; functioning within the academic support systems; understanding and practicing essential study skills; and recognizing and minimizing at-risk attitudes and behaviors (Proverbs 22:6).

Lower school students gather and effectively use new knowledge, classify and organize information in order to build a foundation for future learning. 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 (Ephesians 5:16).

Lower school students will be able to recognize and imitate appropriate behavior in the classroom and on campus. They will normally exhibit basic social skills, such as coping, conflict resolution, communication, obedience to rules, etc. (Matthew 18:15-16). These students are sensitive to cultural differences. They cultivate and maintain a functional social network as they are learning to treat others with respect. These students properly use words in context, with age appropriate vocabulary.

What does this look like at San Marcos Academy?

- Our lower school students will learn to recognize and begin to engage in 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 lower school, students become well versed in grammar and sentence structure, learning to compose

short essays in all language-based classes. Capitalization and punctuation errors should be recognized and corrected. Complete sentences and sufficient vocabulary to convey increased learning will be the standard for written assignments.

- Math and science courses require students to use multiple steps when solving problems. A thorough knowledge of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division will be expected and used to calculate and classify. Periodic measures are taken to ensure the student has mastered the foundational material in mathematics. Focus in the lower school is on learning the scientific method, comprehension, and proper use of scientific and mathematic terminology.
- An aim of lower school classes is to prepare students to self-manage with adequate reinforcement. As such, 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:

Bible – Students will be given the opportunity to read the Bible together as a class. Selected readings will be chosen throughout the year and read together opposite the days of chapel. Students will also be given the time and opportunity to pray together with the teacher.

Reading/Spelling/Grammar/Writing – The English Language Arts and Reading are organized into the following strands: Reading, where students read and understand a wide variety of literary and informational texts; Writing, where students compose a variety of written texts with a clear controlling idea, coherent organization, and sufficient detail; Research, where students are expected to know how to locate a range of relevant sources and evaluate, synthesize, and present ideas and information; Listening and Speaking, where students listen and respond to the ideas of others while contributing their own ideas in conversations and in groups; and Oral and Written Conventions, where students learn how to use the oral and written conventions of the English language in speaking and writing. Students will engage in activities that build on their prior knowledge and skills in order to strengthen their reading, writing, and oral language skills. Students will read and write on a daily basis.

Social Studies – Students study people, places, and societies of the United States. Students will survey the history of the United States from 1565 to the present. Historical content includes the Colonial period, the American Revolution, the establishment of the U.S. Constitution and American identity, westward expansion, the Civil War and Reconstruction, immigration and industrialization, and the 20th and 21st centuries. Students study a variety of regions in the United States that result from physical features and human activity, and identify how people adapt to and modify the environment.

Science – The science course is interdisciplinary with a content focus on life, physical, and earth sciences. As students learn science skills, they study topics such as living things through organisms and environments; how things are put together and move; and the Earth's place in the universe. This study of science establishes the foundation for success in middle school science by providing exposure to science and the natural world through scientific inquiry, writing scientific explanations using claim, evidence and reasoning from a curriculum based on instructional time for conducting laboratory and field investigations.

Math – At this level, math students will begin with numbers and operations, measurement, and data analysis and probability. This will set the foundations for future learning in algebra and geometry. 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.

Physical Education – All lower school students will participate in the Physical Education program. The Phys Ed course is designed to coincide with the development of the lower school students. 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.

Music – All lower school students will participate in the lower school music program. This music program is designed to build an appreciation of the history of music. Additionally, students will learn the basics of music composition and theory.

Spanish – All lower school students will participate in taking Spanish. Not only will this program develop the appreciation of the language and culture, but also students will have the opportunity to practice their skills both inside and outside the classroom.

Art – All lower school students will participate in the lower school art program. This art program is designed to build an appreciation of the history of art. Students will have the opportunity to learn specific art techniques relative to their developmental age and ability.

What is the typical schedule of an SMA Lower School student?

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| 8:00 – 8:15 | Arrival |
| 8:15 | School Day Begins |
| 8:15 – 8:45 | Lower School Chapel (Monday/Wednesday) |
| 8:15 | Bible and Prayer Time |
| 8:30 | Math |
| 9:20 | Break |
| 9:25 | History |
| 10:15 | Snack |
| 10:30 | Spelling/Grammar |
| 11:30 | Lunch/Recess |
| 12:15 | Reading |
| 1:00 | Break |
| 1:05 | Science |
| 1:55 | Break/Centers |
| 2:15 | Spanish |
| 2:45 | PE/Music/Art |
| 3:30 | Dismiss |

What must I do to prepare for my lower school student?

- 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.
- Read those novels, literary and historical works that will be required for summer reading.
- 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 be better connected to your church or faith community. In doing so, you can come back to school strong in spirit, mind, and body.
- Identify those areas that need to be improved and attend workshops at area service centers. For example, take a reading course, writing, or math enrichment.