

ST. MARY'S ACADEMY
JUNIOR YEARS
ACADEMIC HANDBOOK
2025-2026



A Community of Learning, Faith and Service



ST. MARY'S ACADEMY

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WELCOME TO ST. MARY’S ACADEMY

St. Mary’s Academy is a community of learning, faith and service. We encourage our students to engage deeply, to excel and to explore their personal talents and gifts. We believe in learning and teaching to increase student engagement, enhancing students’ skills in critical thinking, communication, creativity and collaboration, while fostering the belief that learning is a life-long journey. We recognize that our learning environment is central to equipping young women to become strong and confident with the capacity to meet challenges, and be contributing members and leaders in their communities. Our students graduate with the ability to “Hold High The Torch”.

We offer challenging programs and courses to meet the unique needs and interests of young women in Grades 7 – 12 and prepare them for continuing their learning and education at the post-secondary level. Courses are based on the curricula approved by Manitoba Education. Students at all grade levels participate in our Religious Studies program which includes a Service Learning component.

JUNIOR YEARS ACADEMIC PROGRAM

The grades 7 and 8 years are focused on the diverse needs of this unique developmental stage. Here is where students further develop foundational skills as they transition from elementary school to high school. We focus on nurturing their independence as a learner, understanding their own needs as a learner, increasing their ability to inquire, research and seek understanding, and improving their study skills and time management. Daily homework and/or review of course materials are expected. This helps students become more independent learners and develop a disciplined work ethic as they proceed through their studies.

Our junior students are journeying through one of the most challenging times of their development, necessitating a responsive care to the social-emotional needs of this age group. As we guide young women to become empowered, we lead our junior students in the development of their social skills with peers, their relationships with family, and an awareness of their self in relation to their immediate world. Our faculty assists our junior students in navigating the challenges and issues faced by youth in today’s dynamic world. Additionally, teachers and senior student leaders work toward expanding their view toward global issues, community membership and contributions, and how to be of service to others.

BRING YOUR OWN DEVICE

We live in an increasingly digital world and, as a community of educators, we have a responsibility to prepare our students for the future. By incorporating technology into our learning and teaching practices, we can provide our students with more interactive, collaborative, and creative learning experiences. In addition, we can take a hands-on approach to ensuring that our students learn to use technology in a way that is safe and responsible. All students in Grades 7 and 8 are required to bring their own personal laptops or tablets to use for educational purposes in the classroom. Specifications about required and acceptable devices will be shared with families upon acceptance into St. Mary’s Academy.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

At St. Mary’s Academy, we use a wide variety of methods to assess individual student growth and achievement of outcomes. We have made a commitment to ensure that all students, no matter which teacher they may work with in a subject area, have an opportunity to experience common and cumulative assessment pieces at natural points of the course. At the end of the year, all students complete a common and cumulative final exam or project.

JUNIOR YEARS CURRICULA

GRADE 7 COURSES

- Religious Studies
- English Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- French OR Français Avancé
- Dramatic Arts
- Physical Education and Health Ed.
- Human Ecology
- Coding and Technology Integration
- Choral Music

GRADE 8 COURSES

- Religious Studies
- English Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- French OR Français Avancé
- Physical Education and Health Ed.
- Human Ecology
- Exploring Digital Media
- Choral Music
- Knowing Me, Knowing You

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Religious Studies is an essential and integral component of the culture and the academic curriculum at St. Mary's Academy. "Faith Seeking Understanding" is our guiding principle which facilitates students' learning and experience. The six-year program is designed to *inform* (grades 7/8), *form* (grades 9/10) and *transform* (grades 11/12) students in their faith journey. We foster our students to grow spiritually and morally, with the beliefs, values and attitudes needed to build a better world. The Religious Studies program follows the tradition of the Catholic Christian faith.

Religion 7

Requirement: Participation in and completion of Service Learning

Following the rhythm of the Liturgical year, students will learn the basic structure of the Bible, navigate through its books, discover images of God in Scripture. Students are also introduced to the Seven Sacraments. This course invites students to explore the term 'calling' and how it applies to their lives. It will also introduce students to Mother Marie Rose Durocher, foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, who was called by God.

Religion 8

Requirement: Participation in and completion of Service Learning

Following the rhythm of the Liturgical year, students focus on the Holy Spirit, study the Seven Sacraments and embrace their call to holiness. Students explore the concept of sainthood, including contemporary foundational figures such as Mother Marie Rose Durocher.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA)

There are two main components to the Grade 7 and 8 English Language Arts courses. The first component focuses on writing. Students are given the opportunity to express themselves in many different written forms, including both expository and creative writing pieces. The editing of their own texts is assisted by a study of grammar and vocabulary.

In addition to writing, the students are exposed to many types of literature which are explored from an aesthetic point of view. Through the study of short stories, novels, poems, and an introduction to Shakespeare, students are guided in extending their own experiences and understanding of the world around them.

Students are also provided with learning strategies that facilitate independent learning, the inquiry process, and tools and skills that assist them in effectively managing, organizing and evaluating information in both independent and cooperative learning contexts. Integrating technology enhances the learning process and provides the opportunity to create and communicate ideas and information.

MATHEMATICS

Through the core areas and topics covered in Mathematics, students increase their capabilities in reasoning and communicating mathematically, and become confident in their problem-solving abilities. Coding and technology applications have been integrated within the Mathematics courses at grade 7.

Mathematics 7

Core Areas: Patterns and Relations, Statistics and Probability, Shape and Space, and Number Concepts.

Topics: Problem Solving, Algebra, Data Management, Geometry, Measurement, Number Concepts, Number Operations, Fractions, and Coding and Technology Applications.

Mathematics 8

Core Areas: Patterns and Relations, Statistics and Probability, Shape and Space, and Number Concepts.

Topics: Problem Solving, Fractions, Ratios, Proportions, Algebra, Data Management, Geometry, Spatial Geometry, Measurement, Number Concepts, and Number Operations. Estimation and calculator skills are employed throughout the year.

SCIENCE

In the junior years, the science courses are designed to engage students in laboratory activities, class activities and projects that examine the fundamental processes and skills of science.

Science 7

This course develops and encourages an inquiry based approach to the world, and introduction of basic laboratory skills. The scientific method of investigation is employed throughout the program.

Topics: The Environment and Interactions within Ecosystems, The Particle Theory of Matter, The Composition of the Earth's Crust, and The Forces in Structural Strength and Stability.

Science 8

This course covers the three major science disciplines of Physics, Chemistry, and Biology with special interest and awareness dedicated to the environment. Students practise the scientific method through hands-on experiments and assignments.

Topics: Cells and Body Systems; Fantastic Fluids; Light and Optical Instruments; and Water Systems on Earth.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Social Studies is the study of people in relation to each other and to the world in which they live. In Social Studies, we combine the disciplines of history and geography, draw upon the social sciences, and integrate relevant content from the humanities. As a study of human beings in their physical, social and cultural environments, we examine the past and present, and look toward the future. Social Studies helps students acquire the skills, knowledge, and values necessary to become active democratic citizens and contributing members of their communities; locally, nationally, and globally.

Social Studies 7

Students focus on environmental, social, and cultural factors that affect quality of life for people in various places in the world. They study physical and human geography and global demographic trends. Students enhance their awareness of Indigenous peoples and explore ways of life in other places. Students become aware of the commonalities that link cultures and societies and the disparities that divide them. As they explore global challenges and opportunities, students become aware of the importance of international cooperation and begin to understand their roles as citizens in an increasingly interdependent world.

Social Studies 8

Students explore societies of the past and make connections between the past and present. They examine the origins of human societies and study significant people, ideas, and events of historical periods that have shaped the modern world. As they explore selected past societies, students become aware of differing world views and the factors that influence change in societies. They assess the influence of the past on the present and develop an appreciation for the historical significance of past societies and civilizations.



FRENCH AND FRANÇAIS AVANCÉ

Knowledge of and fluency in a second language contributes to an understanding of diverse cultures. At St. Mary's Academy all students in Grades 7 and 8 are enrolled in a French course. Students can choose to enrol in the Advanced French course at their grade level if they meet course requirements. Students in Advanced French also prepare for the *Concours d'Art Oratoire* and are encouraged to participate in the provincial competition.

French 7

This course is a dynamic system that develops the four language skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The receptive skills of listening and reading are given special attention because they are important building blocks for the acquisition of speaking and writing. The program is composed of thematic study units using short texts, worksheets, and audio/visual materials.

Advanced French 7

This course is designed to accommodate students who have been in a French Immersion or Français program and features instruction in the target language. Students engage with French culture through activities such as readings, discussions, and projects. Grammar concepts, exercises, and composition are included in language study. Both interpersonal and presentational oral communication skills are refined via skits, spontaneous conversation, and thematic presentations.

French 8

This course is a continuation of the dynamic program begun in Grade 7. Students continue to gradually increase their communicative competencies by doing group work, presentations, dialogues and skits. They are further challenged with the rules of grammar and language. Students use a widening variety of themed worksheets, audio/visual programming, and literature study while increasing their interpersonal communication skills.

Advanced French 8

This course builds on the skills and competencies introduced in the Grade 7 Advanced French course. The literature component consists of novels, culturally relevant French legends and tales, poetry, and music. The grammar aspect includes a concentrated study of parts of speech, essential verb tenses and their contexts, and an introduction to larger grammatical concepts. Interpersonal and presentational oral communication skills are further developed through classroom discussions, spontaneous conversations, and prepared presentations.

THE ARTS AND APPLIED ARTS

During their junior years, students develop their skill set in three domains. The learning outcomes in these courses are intended to provide students with an understanding and appreciation of the arts as a source of lifelong, personal enjoyment. Students are exposed to each domain throughout their two years, helping them to decide if they would like to choose these courses as high school electives.

Theatre Arts: Grade 7

The focus of this course is to help students become comfortable with the arts, connecting through cooperative learning and performing for an audience. Students learn about basic building blocks for theatre, how to engage in storytelling, how to create a character and how to use their voices and bodies to tell a story to an audience. Students will learn a variety of different skills through drama games and activities, public speaking, improvisation, create new work such as script writing, as well as study specific texts that are already published.

Coding and Technology Integration: Grade 7

Grade 7 students use their own devices as learning tools across the curriculum, learning effective and responsible technology practices along the way. In addition, a small component of the grade 7 math course is devoted to coding. In this mostly hands-on component, students explore basic coding concepts and develop a better understanding of how computers work and their role in modern society by building simple programs, practicing problem-solving and logic skills as they do so.

Exploring Digital Media 8

This course introduces students to basic knowledge and skills relevant to using and creating digital media content. Through a series of projects, students combine technology and artistic skills to create digital media. Topics explored include basic principles of design and composition, photography and video techniques, 3-D modelling and 3-D printing, and animation basics. File management and project management skills are developed, and ethical considerations related to copyright and privacy are introduced.

Choral Arts: Grades 7 and 8

Our grade 7 and 8 students are exposed to the choral arts with a weekly choral class. The students work through the fundamentals of basic voice theory, preparatory warm-ups, harmonies, and organized vocal arrangements, as they spark the joy of choral singing in the middle years.

PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

The aim of the Physical Education/Health Education curriculum is to provide students with planned and balanced programming to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes for physically active and healthy lifestyles.

Through a combination of gymnasium and classroom instruction, this course endeavours to accomplish the following general learning outcomes:

Movement

The development of skills and movement through a variety of learning experiences and learning environments.

Fitness Management

The development and follow through of a personal fitness plan.

Safety

The development of safe and responsible decision making in order to manage risks and prevent injuries in daily living.

Personal and Social Management

The development of self-understanding and strategies necessary to build positive relationships with others.

Healthy Lifestyle Practices

The development of informed decision making in personal health, active living, nutritional practices, substance use and abuse and human sexuality.

Knowing Me, Knowing You

This additional program is presented to grade 8 students in their homeroom classes by the counsellor. Topics include self-discovery, beliefs and values, family and friends, choices, communication and conflict resolution skills. Students learn how to appreciate, relate and build healthy relationships with their peers, family and teachers.

HUMAN ECOLOGY

The study of Human Ecology is designed to help students acquire skills for improving the quality of life for the individual, the family, the community and society as a whole. This course is divided into two distinct areas: Clothing & Textile Arts and Foods & Nutrition. Students will experience each area, studying both theoretical and practical components.

Clothing & Textile Arts: Students learn how to safely use and care for equipment in the lab, develop and execute textile projects using both machine and hand-sewing techniques, and explore sustainable fibers and fabric properties as part of textile project construction.

Foods & Nutrition: Students study kitchen safety and equipment, basic food preparation skills, use of both the Imperial and Metric Systems and safe food handling. Students review Canada's Food Guide and related nutrient functions along with recognizing the importance of reading food labels.

