

Daily Courses

Theology

As adolescents grow in their journey with Christ and His Church, our theology classes focus on Catholic catechesis and begin to explore the deeper questions about life and faith that young adults confront in the modern world. Theology class utilizes Scripture, as well as prayer services, liturgies, and regular Eucharistic adoration to guide students in this faith journey. The Archdiocese of Dubuque religion standards requires students to demonstrate knowledge of the message taught, reflect Christian involvement in service, and show evidence of Christian relationships as we build a Christian community. Students at Blessed Maria Assunta Pallotta have the opportunity to attend Mass weekly with their peers and to celebrate the Sacraments of the Catholic Church throughout their academic experience in Middle School.

English Language Arts

English includes the integration of the critical components of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Students at Blessed Maria can reflect on the literary pieces through both written and oral responses as well as collaborative opportunities. Students are guided to analyze, critique, and evaluate various works to which they are exposed throughout the academic year. Effective communication through both the written and spoken word will be emphasized, including teaching grammar and spelling tools and strategies. Various genres of writing are incorporated throughout the curriculum. Students participate in theme-driven units and work with the Iowa Core ELA standards to uncover the skills and dispositions of a successful reader.

While at Blessed Maria, students will encounter a number of age appropriate classics, either in full novel length, as excerpts, or as short stories. These classics and time-tested works are virtue-rich and offer students both practice in reading and practice in moral reasoning. Examples of our body of middle school literature include:

- The Odyssey
- The Grapes of Wrath
- The Time Machine
- Peter Pan
- The Wind & The Willows

- The Wonderful Wizard of Oz
- Alice in Wonderland
- The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe
- Number the Stars
- The Outsiders
- The Giver

Math

The Blessed Maria Math program utilizes the Illustrative Math curriculum resource to fully align to the focus, rigor, and coherence of the Iowa Core State standards. This curricular resource helps to guide student learning to ensure students are exposed to the rigorous challenges of the 21st Century math concepts and has been given the stamp of approval by EdReports, earning perfect scores in the areas of Focus & Coherence and Rigor & Mathematical Practices. The scope and sequence of units, activities, and representations are designed to help students develop a deep understanding of mathematical concepts, build mathematical and numerical fluency, and guide student learning to ensure a coherent math experience through the middle school years

Science

Science education is a journey of discovery about the world. Science education includes both content and inquiry through experimentation. The students explore science concepts and content through exploration using the Discovery Science curriculum. Students utilize a variety of manipulatives and experience-related science methods to help them uncover the important understandings of the Next Generation Science Standards. Students learn process skills, such as observing, classifying, experimenting, describing, measuring, inferring, predicting, and evaluating. The acquisition of these skills makes it possible for students to discover and learn a body of scientific knowledge through the four strands of science: earth, life, physical, and environmental.

Social Studies

The Social Studies curriculum focuses on the historical, political, geographic, cultural, economic, and religious influences of various areas and periods. Through their experiences in Middle School social science the students will learn about the global society, the impact of geography and climate and

culture on various civilizations. The students will interweave Iowa and American history throughout their social science experiences and build connections between the history of Iowa and that of the broader United States. The students will also learn essential skills of critical analysis of texts, argumentation, and organizing informative and opinion-based writing

WIN

WIN, or “What I Need,” is a 20 minute opportunity built into every student's schedule allowing them to receive support in math and literacy. Any student not receiving support will engage in free reading or our Lectio Virtutis reading program.

Leader In Me

Leader in Me is a year-long course designed to help students develop the leadership, character, and life skills needed for success in school, relationships, and beyond. Rooted in Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* and aligned with our school's Catholic mission, the course empowers students to become responsible leaders who make positive contributions to their classrooms, school, families, and communities.

Throughout the course, students will learn and practice skills such as goal setting, personal responsibility, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, organization, and service. Students will reflect on their strengths, set academic and personal goals, monitor their progress, and develop habits that support lifelong learning and leadership.

Anchor Time

Anchor Time is a daily advisory period designed to help students build the organizational habits needed for success in middle school and beyond. This time provides an opportunity to reflect on learning, organize materials, review assignments and upcoming assessments, set goals, and prepare for the next school day. Students will strengthen executive functioning skills such as time management, planning, prioritization, and self-monitoring while developing responsibility and independence. Through teacher guidance, check-ins, and community-building activities, Anchor Time provides a consistent, supportive conclusion to each school day, ensuring every student leaves informed, organized, and prepared for tomorrow.

Required Specials Courses

Physical Education / Wellness

Students attend Physical education every other day for the entire school year. Life is about making healthy choices from a Christian perspective. Physical education class involves studying health and safety issues that may affect the choices students make for their well-being. The physical education courses interweave physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices with health concepts that are important to developing not only physically, but also mentally and spiritually. Students utilize various health-related resources, such as heart monitors, to learn more about physical fitness and healthy life choices related to physical activity.

Art

Students will attend Art class every other day for one semester. In Art class, students will explore various art techniques and media such as drawing, painting, printmaking, and the use of technology. They will use different techniques and media to generate artwork to demonstrate their knowledge of what they have learned throughout each lesson. The students will also be completing written critiques of some of their works. This will help them understand how to view their work critically. Being able to critique one's work to recognize areas that need improvement is important for future success. Students will be working on projects to develop their creativity, which will help them in their future endeavors. Additionally, the study and critique of Art History are incorporated into each unit. Students culminate their learning through the use of pottery and learning about the techniques of pottery and using the kiln to finalize a product of art.

STEM

Students will take STEM every other day for one semester with additional opportunities for students to participate in competition-focused teams building on STEM-related concepts and opportunities. The STEM course aligns student work with computer science standards and offers students the opportunity to build, collaborate, recreate, and analyze different challenges and products within the STEM fields. Students can code and produce robots,

build paper roller coasters, and utilize the 3-D printer to successfully design products that come to fruition.

Non-Required Specials Courses

Spanish

If student schedules allow, students may take two semesters of Spanish in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade. Class activities will be centered on students learning to communicate (speaking, listening, and writing) in the Spanish language. Students will build a working vocabulary and use the language to express their ideas to others and also to obtain information from others. Class activities will also focus on specific cultural aspects of the Hispanic world as well as building a solid foundation of Spanish language concepts and vocabulary. By comparing the history and traditions of their own families and cultures to the history and traditions of Hispanic cultures, students will become more aware of their significance in the world.

Art Studio

If schedules allow, students may take an additional art class. This class allows students to expand on skills and techniques acquired in art class.

Performing Arts Electives

Band

Students at Blessed Maria can participate in Band as an elective course. Band is a year-long course. Students in band participate in large group lessons as well as individual lessons which support their individual development for the school year. Additionally, students in the band participate in multiple performances throughout the year to showcase their learning in large group and individual lessons.

Choir

Students at Blessed Maria can participate in choir as an elective course. Choir is a year-long course. Students in choir participate in large group lessons as well as individual lessons which support their individual development for the school year. Additionally, students in choir participate in multiple performances throughout the year to showcase their learning in large group and individual lessons.

Additional Offerings

Guiding Star: Intro to Womanhood and Intro to Manhood

Once per year Guiding Star will deliver a sexual health course to the boys and girls separately in middle school. Students will receive a permission slip from parents to participate. This class includes the development of the body, anatomy, physiology. It is designed for boys and girls to gain insight on what it means to be a young man and young woman and how to build meaningful Christ-centered relationships with family and friends.

Lectio Virtutis Reading Program

Students may earn rewards for reading through participation in our independent reading program called Lectio Virtutis. This program orients itself around the Four Cardinal Virtues of the Catholic Church and serves to cultivate a habit of reading while developing a deeper understanding and appreciation of Catholic virtues and values through age-appropriate literature. Students are provided an extensive list of qualifying literature, including dozens of books available in our library. By reading these works and writing a reflection for their Academy teacher, students earn can points and “cash in” for rewards.