

St. Joseph Catholic School



Middle School
Handbook Supplement
& Course Descriptions
<https://stjohnpaul-ii.org/sjs>
(Updated 8/2025)

St Joseph Catholic School Mission Statement:

St. Joseph Catholic School is a Catholic educational community that, in partnership with families, provides academic excellence in a safe, nurturing learning environment dedicated to:

- *Teaching basic truths of the Catholic faith and integrating these Catholic truths and values into the curriculum and into other aspects of school life,*
- *Empowering students to become committed, active Christian stewards, and*
- *Inspiring and equipping students to be lifelong learners.*

We are pleased to welcome you to St. Joseph Catholic Middle School. Our goal is to provide students with the skills, structure, and guidance that will enable them to continue to grow as they further their education. We utilize a 1-to-1 technology in which each student is given their own Chromebook to use for access to online textbooks, complete and submit assignments, conduct research, and communicate with their teacher for their classes. If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the St. Joseph Catholic School office.

Class Descriptions

Language Arts:

6th Grade Language Arts

Teacher: Miss Elliotte Witters

7th Grade Language Arts

Teacher: Mrs. Betsy Witthun

8th Grade Language Arts

Teacher: Mrs. Betsy Witthun

The Language Arts curriculum supports our mission to enhance children's talents by developing the ability to listen, speak, read and write. Our program sharpens and focuses on listening skills, develops and refines students' speaking abilities to enable them to understand, organize and clarify their own thoughts. It teaches reading skills to give students the joys of lifelong learning, vicarious experiences, improved comprehension and increased vocabulary and the tools to make informed decisions. We use the process of writing both for creative and informative self-expression, so students may become better readers, speakers, listeners and viewers.

Mathematics:

6th - 8th Grade Math

Teacher: Ms. Sarah Connor

Text: Progress in Mathematics, Sadlier

The study of mathematics is a thinking process that involves every aspect of life. With the ever changing world of technology, development of problem-solving approaches and computation skills are essential. We differentiate our math program based upon the student's abilities. Students also practice a variety of math skills outside of the classroom by the use of Freckle Math by Renaissance. Students of high ability may have the opportunity to take Algebra during their eighth grade year.

Science:

6th - 8th Grade Science

Teacher: Miss Elliotte Witters

Text: Elevate Science, Savvas

Science curriculum is based on Diocesan standards. Our program develops an interest in science and technology and provides thinking strategies that develop competencies in problem solving, provides learning experiences that will help the students move from their present level of problem-solving skills to the next higher level, develops abilities in making responsible everyday decisions by using scientific knowledge, problem-solving skills, and informed attitudes. 6th graders will be introduced to some introductory science skills and Earth Science, 7th graders will discover Life Science, and 8th graders will cover the genre of Physical Science including basic Chemistry and Physics knowledge.

Social Studies:

6th - 8th Grade Social Studies

Teacher: Mrs. Marianne Brinker

Text: various sources

The Social Studies curriculum offers students the opportunity to better understand the world around them. Knowledge of people, places, regions, governments and economies gained in 6th grade lays the foundation for broad study of World History in 7th and focused study of United States History in 8th grade. Students are challenged with engaging activities like group debate, essay writing, gallery walks and small group viewing of historical sources and creative projects that improve communication and analysis skills. Students with a strong background in Social Studies are better able to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as global citizens.

Religious Studies:

6th - 8th Grade Religion

Teacher: Mrs Marianne Brinker

Text: The Catholic Youth Bible, Sophia Institute, Ruah Woods, Virtues in Practice

The Religion curriculum supports standards set by the Diocese of Madison. Our students will know and understand the fundamental teachings of Jesus Christ in His Church, according to the articles of our Profession of Faith. They will know and appreciate the centrality of the Eucharist and the importance of the sacraments in the life of Catholics. They will understand and reflect the dignity of the human person and his vocation to freely know, love and serve God and neighbor. With the help of grace, they will seek holiness by avoiding sin, growing in virtue, and entrusting themselves to the mercy of God. They will understand the revelation and tradition of the Catholic life of prayer. Each grade level class will begin the school year with a study of Salvation History. From there, the primary focus in 6th grade is the Old Testament. The primary focus in 7th grade is the New Testament. The primary focus in 8th grade is Church History.

Foreign Language - Spanish:

6th - 8th Grade Foreign Language: Spanish

Teacher: Mrs. Betsy Witthun

Middle School meets two times per week. The middle school program will focus not only on the acquisition of vocabulary, but also grammar rules, sentence structure, listening, speaking and reading of the Spanish language. Students will develop skills that will enable them to listen, speak, read and write at a beginning level range in Spanish. Students will acquire an awareness, appreciation, and acceptance of the differences between American (United States) and Hispanic (Spanish/Latin American cultures).

Music Options:

6th-8th Grade General Music (those not enrolled in Band)

Teacher: Mrs. Karen Byxbe

This class will meet twice weekly for 45 minutes. We will learn the language of music including music theory, music history, playing instruments (keyboards, guitars, ukuleles, percussion), singing, and movement. This will not be a performance based class but participation during class will be a necessary component and will require collaboration of students.

6th - 8th Grade Band

Teacher: Mrs. Karen Byxbe

Text: Essential Elements For Band (specific to instrument being studied), Hal Leonard

Middle school band students meet twice weekly for 45 minutes. We will cover proper techniques for various band instruments, as well as musical literacy. Students will learn to play proficiently by themselves and in an ensemble. We will explore different forms of music from many time periods and cultures. Christmas and Spring concert performances are mandatory. Other performance opportunities may present themselves. Daily practice is expected and does affect grades.

Middle School Choir (Grades 6-8) Wednesdays - 11:30 am - 12:00 pm

Teacher: Mrs. Karen Byxbe

Students will meet every Wednesday for rehearsal. We will perform various styles of songs. Students will prepare music to sing during the Wednesday school mass and other performance opportunities that present themselves. Participation in performance opportunities is expected of all choir members.

Physical Education:

6th - 8th Grade Physical Education

Teacher: Mrs. Kaili Tews

Students participate in 2- 45 minute classes per week. Students learn a variety of motor skills, movement patterns, organized cooperative activities, offensive and defensive strategies. Students learn the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self expression and social interaction. Students are taught and encouraged to maintain health enhancing habits, activity and fitness levels.

Health:

6th - 8th Grade Health

Teacher: Mrs. Deb Lobaugh

Text: Circle of Grace - Diocese of Madison

Health care threads are interwoven throughout the curriculum from 4K through 8th grade. The threads, emphasizing promotion of health, mind, body, and spirit, and the prevention of illness are presented various times throughout the year. The middle school grades focus on providing information and encouraging students to make discerning choices regarding their health and wellness.

Service Living:

6th Grade

Service Living (SL) is a year-long experience challenging students to explore, build, and prayerfully live out a life of service to others. Through self-reflection and conversations with peers, we explore the spirit of giving as it relates to solving "community needs" at all scales: local, national, and global. We investigate various community needs, such as hunger, homelessness, poverty, animal welfare, domestic abuse, and affordable housing (among others) with the help of leaders and heroes from the Baraboo area. We partner with local organizations to design and implement service projects and look behind-the-scenes at the results of our individual and collective impact. Through Service Living, we learn to honor others, while also finding the hero within, and are driven by the words of St. Francis of Assisi: "For it is in giving that we receive."

Elective Options

Art:

6th - 8th Grade

Did you know that a line is created by a dot? Or that texture can be imagined? 7th and 8th grade art explores the seven “Elements of Art” - line, texture, space, form, shape, value, and color - in fun ways. From watercolor to acrylic, Sharpie to pencil, we’ll create a variety of projects that will change from year to year, trimester to trimester. We will work together to encourage self-expression and our unique identities and use our collective creativity to build confidence in our abilities.

Hispanic Art & Culture:

6th Grade

As students in this class work with a variety of materials and techniques, they will explore the rich traditions, history, and creativity of Hispanic nations through hands-on projects and cultural study. Projects may include crafting traditional piñatas, designing colorful alebrijes (fantastical folk art creatures), studying renowned Hispanic artists and creating art in the style of Mexican folk traditions or Huichol yarn art.

Drama:

7th - 8th Grade

This course allows students to explore the world of drama by participating as actors, set designers, costume designers and production. All aspects of dramatic production will be completed by students through collaboration. Students are expected to participate and complete tasks throughout the course of this elective.

Photography I (Year 1):

7th - 8th Grade

Photography is open to any student who has not taken Photograph I or II before. Photography I is an introductory photography experience grounded in basic compositional “rules” and best practices. Photographers will learn about the history of photography, the importance of communicating effectively about purposeful art, arrangement of subjects in photos, and fun tricks of the trade. Students will participate fully in critiquing their own work as well as the work of their peers. **Students must have access to a smartphone or camera for out-of-class assignments.** Photography I is a fun way to explore the compositional basics of an art form that continues to change the course of humanity.

Photography II (Year 2):

7th - 8th Grade

Photography II is open to students who, in previous trimesters or years have taken Photography I. Photography II will build upon the compositional rules and guidelines learned previously, in order that photographers will be more creative and purposeful in their work. Examples of projects may

include food and portrait photography. Students will build upon their ability to effectively communicate about their work to others and will explore publication opportunities. **Students must have access to a smartphone or camera for out-of-class assignments.** Photography II will challenge students to use at-home and area resources for their photos and is a challenging and fun way to continue exploring compositional basics and artistic approaches to capturing moments and memories.

Economics (Year 2): (will occur this year 2025-26)

7th - 8th Grade

This course will provide greater understanding of economic principles in preparation for high school Social Studies and Business classes. Students will explore questions that every economy must answer; what is produced, how is it produced, who produces it and who buys it? To answer these questions students will explore the four factors of production, laws of supply and demand, federal and regulatory involvement in the economy, unemployment, business cycles, standard of living, economic measurements, international trade and barriers. The term will conclude with a final project and presentation of a business or product plan that answers the major economic questions.

Personal Finance (Year 1) will be offered 2026-27):

7th - 8th Grade

Students will learn the fundamentals of household spending and decision making. Using a term-long interactive “Game of Life”, they will explore basic budgeting through Google Sheets. Each class period students will explore a new item of their budget including; understanding parts of a paycheck, apartment renting vs. home ownership, grocery shopping, car buying, the basics of insurance and loans. They will also learn important information about banking, savings, retirement, credit and consumer awareness. Each class period students will be faced with “life events” that require students to use the information they learned to make a wise financial decision.

Career Exploration:

7th - 8th Grade

This class will research and evaluate a variety of careers to expose students to opportunities that exist as they approach the workforce. Basic skills such as learning how to complete an application, write a resume, request personal references, and create a personal budget, will be taught. The class is interactive, exploratory, and intended to allow the students to conceptualize a clear path forward to a successful, satisfying, and professional adult life.

STREAM:

7th - 8th Grade

STREAM stands for Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics. This course will include organic-problem solving, critical thinking, and collaboration across different academic disciplines. They can help students develop skills like creativity, empathy, and communication, and prepare them for the future workforce. Thanks to a donated airplane simulator, students will also have the chance to learn basic flight skills with guidance from a Baraboo pilot and in-class support.

This hands-on experience will give students a unique opportunity to explore aviation and apply STREAM principles in an engaging and meaningful way.

Jigsaw Puzzles and Brain Games:

7th - 8th Grade

Brain games and jigsaw puzzles can strengthen and relax the brain by stimulating cognitive functions and providing a mental workout. These activities can improve memory, focus, and problem-solving skills while promoting relaxation, lowering stress levels, and increasing mood. A main focus of this class will be jigsaw puzzles, which help to exercise both hemispheres of the brain. Working on jigsaw puzzles and focusing on the same image for longer periods of time can induce a certain calmness and peace in the mind.

Piano/Keyboard:

7th - 8th Grade

The piano elective class will meet twice weekly for 45 minutes. During this class we will cover the basics of reading music and beginning piano/keyboard techniques. Students will learn through group lessons and individual practice. The class will culminate with student performances of selected pieces of music based on the playing ability of each individual student.

Strategy / Logic Games:

7th - 8th Grade

This elective class will explore the world of strategy games, through board games, card games, and other manipulatives which will offer students a chance to learn about game design, strategy, and social interaction. The course aims to enhance problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and communication through the medium of games. Students participating in this elective will be introduced to multiple and varied strategy and collaborative board games like; Cribbage, Mastermind, Backgammon, Canasta, 221 Baker's Street, and more.

National History Day:

7th - 8th Grade

National History Day is more than a day; it is a process, a creative outlet, and a confidence-building experience. This is an opportunity to think beyond the social studies classroom and develop a memorable project. Students will choose a project format, the subject matter and research primary sources to answer their historical questions. They will then have the opportunity to present their work at UW-Madison on National History Day at the end of the second trimester. The presentation is optional but each student will create a project of their own. Throughout the semester students will also review primary sources and dig deeper into historical events touched on in their US and World History courses.

Electives:

The 6th Graders will be enrolled in Service Living, Mrs. Korie Kink as their instructor, which meets each Wednesday and will be presented with three electives throughout the school year which includes the following courses:

- Technology and Middle School Transition
- Art
- Hispanic Culture and Art

The 7th and 8th Graders will be given the choice of three electives throughout the school year. Courses include, but are not limited to the following:

- STREAM (Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics)
- Photography 1 & 2
- Jigsaw Puzzles & Brain Games
- Art
- Piano/Keyboarding
- Strategy / Logic Games
- Economics

Grades 6-8 Grading Scale

The grading scale is as follows:

A+ 99-100	B+ 91-92	C+ 83-84	D+ 75-76
A 95-98	B 87-90	C 79-82	D 72-74
A- 93-94	B- 85-86	C- 77-78	D- 70-71
Unsatisfactory Below 70			

Standards Grading:

- 3 Exceeds Expectations
- 2 Meets Expectations
- 1 Below Expectations
- 0 Not Assessed

Midterm reports will be sent home at mid-trimester, so you are aware of how your child is progressing throughout that particular quarter. Report cards arrive home every trimester, about every 12 weeks.

Any questions regarding grades should be discussed with the teacher.

Grades 6-8 Expectations

Behavior Expectations

St. Joseph Catholic School has the following behavior expectations:

- * Arriving on time
- * Prepared for each class
- * Attentive Listening
- * Mutual respect
- * Participation

Behavior expectations are outlined in the St. Joseph Catholic School Discipline Policy and Student Behavior Management Plan. In order to maintain the highest standards of character and academic excellence at all times, teachers and administration expect students to follow the behavioral expectations set forth in the St. Joseph Catholic School Family Handbook.

Homework & Materials Expectations

Homework is a necessary part of a middle school student's ownership of their learning and a part of the culture of St. Joseph Catholic School. A time for study, assisted by parent supervision, should be set aside every school night. Homework teaches students how to solve problems, gives parents a chance to see the content being taught, and gives students an opportunity to review class material. It also:

- teaches students about time management.
- enables students to set priorities and planning.
- enlighten students to take responsibility for their part of the education process.
- educates students that there may be things that they have to do - even if they don't want to.

If there are no formal assignments given on a particular day, we suggest:

- Reading: It is critical to read daily. Please make this part of your daily homework routine.
- Reviewing: Class notes, math processes, grammar usage, vocabulary, and spelling.
- Research: Science, social studies, or other topics of interest.

Homework will be assigned daily. Students are expected to turn in homework with their name clearly written and to follow all directions. Students are expected to have all assignments completed by the due date, as well as bring all appropriate materials to class. **Your student's Chromebook should be fully charged every night and ready for class every day.**

If homework is not completed, teachers will have a step approach to handling incomplete/missing/late assignments. Students will also lose a portion (as much as 10% per school day) of their earned score for the assignment.

1-3 assignments: teacher intervention

4-6 assignments: teacher intervention/parent email

6+ assignments: parent meeting (in-person)

Missing work will be kept on a shared document so all teachers know and can encourage students to work on missing items during study hall, in a different academic class when work is completed, or during Homework Help from 3:00 - 3:30 on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays.

If a student appears on the Missing work list for 4 or more assignments, they will have a working lunch/recess by the school office and will continue reporting to the office during that time until their name is removed off the Missing Work List and they have all of their work in.

If your student is **absent**, work from the time absent will be provided.

- Parents should be in contact with the school office regarding the reason for absence.
- **The student is responsible to email their teacher(s) to get their assignments that they missed.** Work can be sent home with a sibling or friend, if requested. Please allow enough time to get the work together when requesting.

If a student is absent for one day, they will have one day to make up the work. If they are absent for two days, they will have two days to make up the work, etc. Any tests that are missed during an absence will be given the day the student returns, unless other arrangements have been made.

If you are planning a vacation in which your child will be gone, it is very helpful to the school and your student that we are notified in advance. Please notify the office seven days prior to your planned absence. Your child should email or have a conversation with their teachers so they can try and prepare work for them to do ahead of time, while away, or even give an alternate assignment for what will be missed. Your child should have that conversation at least one week prior to the planned absence. This will help the child stay with current content and not feel overwhelmed to make everything up when they return.

We do understand that emergencies come up at home and a student may not be able to complete their homework assignment, if this should occur please be in contact with your student's teacher(s) as soon as possible. **Student should still be communicating with their teachers by email or in person.**

Being on time to school and in the classroom is essential. Tardiness is a disturbing interruption into the school day. The disruption occurs for all - the late students, other students learning in the classroom, and the teacher. The middle school day includes a very full schedule with the first class of the day beginning promptly at 7:45am. Tardies will be recorded and after every third tardy, the student will have a working lunch/recess by the school office.

If you or your child is concerned about their academic performance or if he/she simply would like a place to do homework or get extra help, **Homework Club is available after school from 3:00-3:30 on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.**

Technology Expectations

● Chromebook

Each Chromebook is assigned to an individual student. Students are responsible for bringing their Chromebook, fully charged, to school each day. If a student is participating in an activity that is not conducive to using their Chromebook (i.e., field trip, assembly, locker room, restroom, etc.), they are required to leave their Chromebook in their classroom in a safe place (backpack, cubby, etc.).

- Students will get only one warning (freebie) when they forget to charge their Chromebook and it results in the Chromebook having no battery power left during the school day. Repeated offense of not having their chromebook charged will result in a working lunch/recess detention by the office.

If the Chromebook is damaged or not working properly, it must be taken to St. Joseph Catholic School for repair or replacement. Neither students nor parents/guardians are authorized to attempt repairs themselves, or contract with any other individual or business for the repair of the Chromebook. If the Chromebook is lost, stolen, or damaged by another party, parents/guardians should immediately report the loss or theft to the Police Department and St. Joseph Catholic School. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Mrs. Denise Brinker.

For additional information, please read and review the St. Joseph Catholic School Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) for Technological Devices.

● Cell Phone and Smartwatch Policy

Any cellular devices should preferably remain at home. However, if a student must bring such a device to school, that device must be off and in the backpack during the school day.

Students are not permitted to use the phone or watch to call or text for forgotten articles. (i.e. homework, Chromebook, projects, etc.) Permitting them to contact home for such things does not teach responsibility. Students are not to call, text, or message their family members during the school day. If an emergency arises, the school office will notify the teacher and/or student(s). If a student needs to use their cell phone or smart watch at the end of the school day, we ask that they initially ask their teacher and then use their device in the school office.

Parents can help us enforce this policy by not texting your children and calling or answering their calls during the day. Again, if an emergency arises, the school office will notify the teacher and/or student(s).

Communication with Teachers and Staff

Our teaching staff is looking forward to the school year and getting to know each student. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email or call. If you would like to speak in person, we can set up a conference before or after school at an agreeable time.

Academic Probation

All students must remain in good academic standing to participate in all extracurricular activities. If at any time a student has 1 F or 2 D's in their classes, they will be placed on academic probation. They will be suspended from such activities until their grade is passing. Coaches will also be notified of habitual late work and behavioral disciplinary action. Refer to the Athletic and ExtraCurricular Handbook for additional and more specific information.

Reward Days

Reward Days are opportunities to take a break from school work to play games, enjoy treats, and share fellowship. All students have the ability to participate in these events, whether planned or unannounced by remaining off the Homework List, have no behavioral issues, and be an attentive and dedicated student.

Weather Advisory Guidelines

The Middle School students will be outside for a short period of time after lunch prior to their afternoon classes. Children should take that time for fresh air, exercise, and time to relax from the structure in the classrooms. Teachers may occasionally take their class outside for a variety of learning activities.

Wisconsin weather can change drastically from when a child leaves for school and when they return home. Parents should prepare their child to be dressed for a variety of conditions. Dressing in layers or leaving a sweater or sweatshirt in the classroom will be helpful for any changing conditions.

Temperature condition and suggested dress:

(Final decisions come from the office)

Below 60 degrees	Jacket or long sleeves suggested
Below 50 degrees	Lined Jacket or sweatshirt, long pants, closed shoes suggested
Below freezing (32 degrees)	Gloves, and hats are suggestions - all other items above are essential. Middle school students will NOT be allowed outside without a coat or shoes. A sweatshirt, fleece top, or blazer is not considered a coat and sandals are not to be worn below freezing.