

SMS High School Curriculum

Our Catholic classical liberal arts curriculum is ordered to the moral, intellectual and spiritual development of our students as human persons. As such, our program seeks to discover the truth in every branch of knowledge encompassed by our curriculum and, by word and example, to form the understanding and moral character of our students. As a faculty, we conceive our principal task as cultivating the sense of wonder with which every child is born. The image that guides us is not the filling of an empty pail, but the enkindling of a fire within the student.

Science

Course Summary

SMS science courses invite students to explore the material aspects/composition of the created world. Nature begins at the sensory level with the immediate, intimate and regular observation of the manifold aspects of nature. This direct contact with nature gradually yields to a more specialized study of the examination of living things in our biology course. The SMS chemistry course leads students into a more detailed consideration of the intricacies underlying the sensory aspects of nature. Our physics course focuses student attention upon the physical phenomena present and active in the universe and their effects on both the large and small scale.

Objectives

To cultivate in students the virtue of patience, the habits of careful observation, attention to detail, precise measurement, detailed recordkeeping and both inductive and speculative reasoning.

Sequence

Natural Philosophy
Biology
Chemistry
Physics

Forecast

The Natural Philosophy course, proportioned to developmental stages, will descend to the elementary grades; existing elements will be incorporated, and the scope of the course expanded as staffing becomes available. Astronomy - part of the Trivium and one of the seven Liberal Arts - will be introduced as a significant part of the course and will be characterized by a strong experiential approach. In addition, the drawing of flora and fauna will be incorporated in the Natural Philosophy course and integrated with SMS Art courses. This process has not yet begun.

Latin

Course Summary

SMS utilizes the Latin language to explore the origin, development, versatility of human language. Latin, a declined language, readily makes vividly clear the role of the elements of language, reveals the increasing sophistication in their development and establishes in the student an understanding of the flexibility, adaptability, power and grandeur of human language. Advanced language study allows the student a direct experience of the range, power and adaptability of human speech. The study of Latin opens the door to a direct experience of the seminal texts in history, literature, law, philosophy and poetry which have informed Western Civilization to which our students are heirs. Additionally, Latin serves as a powerful practical aid in expanding vocabulary and word power, imparting the ability to analyze new words and discover their meanings through knowledge of Latin word roots.

Objectives

To firmly establish in students a clear and comprehensive understanding of the origins, order and capacity of language itself and lay a solid foundation for the further development of the language arts in SMS's Logic, Rhetoric and Classical Composition courses.

Sequence

Latin I
Latin II
Latin III
Latin IV

Forecast

As staffing allows, the Latin courses, ordinarily administered in grades 9-12 will, ultimately be administered in grades 7-10; thus allowing juniors and seniors the option of taking up to two years of a modern language. Latin students will have a decisive advantage in the modern language courses. This process has already begun; 8th graders now take Latin I.

Mathematics

Course Summary

The study of Euclid's geometry - the Elements - establishes a strong experiential and logical foundation for the more abstract content of our Algebra I and Algebra II courses. The Pre-Calculus course returns to the treatment of geometric shapes and their properties as a preparation for the study of the Calculus.

Objectives

To foster in our students a sense of wonder at the created world by discovering to them the orderliness of nature revealed by mathematics. Our math courses proceed in an orderly

manner from the concrete to the abstract in a way that reveals the power of mathematics as a means of understanding nature while cultivating the habits of speculative reason, precision and care in computation

Sequence

Geometry (Euclid)

Algebra I

Algebra II

Pre-Calculus

Forecast

SMS mathematics courses will be more finely oriented to complement the sequence of our science courses. Calculus will be offered as an elective for those students demonstrating proficiency in the Pre-Calculus course.

Composition

Course Summary

Our composition classes seek to cultivate excellence in the use of the word - both oral and written. Complementing the language study had in SMS Latin courses, student composition skills are formed by the Progymnasmata - a series of fundamental writing exercises of the ancient Greeks promoting civic discourse. Elementary instruction begins with the imitation of classic poems, rhymes and stories and progresses through stages of increasing sophistication culminating in argumentative writing.

Classical Writing I

Classical Writing II

Classical Writing III

Classical Writing IV

Objectives

Our composition courses seek to promote the facile, skillful and effective use of language as a medium to communicating accurately, completely and faithfully the thoughts of the student. We seek excellence of communication in both the written and spoken word.

Forecast

Our classical writing courses culminate in the junior year with the Junior Oration - a speech arranged, composed and delivered to an audience of students, faculty and staff. The composition work of the senior year culminates in a research project - the Senior Thesis. The Senior Thesis is submitted in writing, and then presented and defended orally before a faculty panel. Fellow students, faculty and staff may attend the defense. The Senior Thesis is already in place; the Junior Oration will be in place by 2020-2021.

Seminar

Course Summary

Seminar, a discussion based course which uses Socratic Method, places before SMS juniors and seniors the seminal texts which have given rise to Western Civilization. In a seminar setting, the teacher poses an opening question to students, who respond to the question based upon their prior reading of the text. Students proceed to discourse with their classmates, making and rebutting arguments in favor of and against their interpretation of the text.

Sequence

Junior Seminar

Senior Seminar

Objectives

To expose students to the seminal ideas which have influenced - and continue to influence - the development of Western Civilization. Additionally, the Seminar is intended to increase, cultivate and refine the students ability to listen, speak and communicate well, in support of academic and civic discourse.

Forecast

A combined Junior/Senior Seminar is in place; as enrollment grows, the grades will separate and the Seminar will have its final form.

History

Course Summary

SMS history courses allow students to examine the history of Western Civilization - to which they are heirs - from its beginnings in ancient Greece and Rome through its development in Medieval Europe and into its modern phase in the New World.

Objectives

SMS history courses seek to inform the student of the ideas, people and events which have shaped the civilization he has inherited and, through careful examination of both the triumphs and failures observed in that history, to orient him to living well in his own day and to act for a better future both for himself and those who will follow him.

Sequence

Ancient History

Medieval History

American History

Modern History

Forecast

These courses are in place and will be more closely integrated with the reading in the SMS Literature classes.

Literature

Course Summary

SMS literature courses are concurrent with SMS history courses. Students read, analyze and discuss the great literature of each age. A careful analysis is made of the literary form, content, style and theme of each literary work. Literary forms include histories, autobiographies, short stories, novels and poems. Careful attention is paid to the relation existing between the work of literature and to the historical context in which it was produced.

Objectives

SMS Literature courses not only set before the student excellent examples of writing of but also some of the great themes and questions of life by which the imagination and mind of the student is induced to reflect upon his own existence and the purpose of his own life.

Forecast

Reading lists are substantially complete in both the middle school and high school; further refinements, in light of experience, will be made as to sequence and variety.

Sequence

Ancient Literature
Medieval Literature
American Literature
Modern Literature