



# Middle School Curriculum Guide

The **Mission** of St. Theresa's Catholic School is to Develop elementary and middle school students to their full potential by educating them in a Catholic and academically excellent environment.

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

St. Theresa's Catholic School middle school consists of 6th through 8th grades. Core academic courses are grade specific. Elective classes allow students to gain exposure to new subjects. Pre-AP strategies are utilized at all grade levels to enhance critical thinking and writing skills.

## **SPIRITUALITY**

As a parochial school, St. Theresa's Catholic School is part of the faith community of St. Theresa's Church. Religion is formally taught every day, and Catholic values are integrated into all subjects. Students attend and actively participate in weekly Mass. We believe Catholic education should inspire children to become instruments of God's grace, to work for justice in the world.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

As part of our students' adult formation, each middle school student is asked to volunteer community service during school hours each school year. Students are required to volunteer 15 hours per school year. The **St. Theresa's Little Way Award** is given to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduating student who earns the most service hours 6th through 8th grades. Grade levels will be assigned a general area of service as follows: 6th grade (Children-Families/Poverty), 7th grade (Elderly) and 8th grade (Persons with Disabilities).

## **HomeBASE (Building Academic and Spiritual Excellence)**

St. Theresa's HomeBASE Program provides a forum where the "whole child" is educated. This program embraces the middle school concept as we work on community building in a Catholic environment designed to build school identity v. grade level identity. Students are with the same teacher throughout their middle school years.

## **CLASSROOM GUIDANCE**

The comprehensive, developmental counseling and guidance program at St. Theresa's is intended to foster growth of all its students in the domains of academic/educational, personal/social, spiritual/moral, and career/occupational. Middle School counseling will include classroom guidance based on a curriculum which includes various topics relevant to the growth and development of Middle School age students as well as lessons related to the virtues. Special help on transition to high school is also given to all 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and parents. The counselor is available for individual guidance upon referral from students, staff or parents.

## **RESTORATIVE PRACTICES**

The mission of St. Theresa's Catholic School is to develop elementary and middle school students to their full potential by educating them in an academically excellent and Catholic environment. By integrating the teachings of the Catholic Church throughout the curriculum and all school activities, a Christian atmosphere of care, concern and respect flourishes. This transformative environment enables students to fully develop in all areas

of growth, including spiritual, cultural, intellectual, social and physical. As students grow in faith, they cultivate a Christian life in the Catholic Church and in the community at large. The faculty of the school is committed to creating an atmosphere conducive to learning and faith development for all children.

### **BUDDY PROGRAM**

Middle School students mentor early childhood and elementary students as they participate in “buddy” activities throughout the year.

### **ADVANCED CLASSES**

The academically advanced student who qualifies may be enrolled in the following classes: Math 6 (Pre-Algebra Prep), 7 (Pre-Algebra, \*Algebra), 8 (\*Algebra, \*Geometry). Students must meet specific placement criteria for these courses. *\*Courses taken for one high school credit.*

### **GRADING AND REPORTING**

St. Theresa’s middle school is on a quarterly schedule, with report cards issued every nine weeks. Interim progress reports are provided through RenWeb to enhance communication further. Student-led conferences are scheduled after the first reporting period; thereafter, upon request. Numeric averages are given on report cards. An honor roll is published for each grading period. Parents are able to review student grades/performance and homework assigned on a daily basis through the RenWeb system.

### **RECOGNITION AND AWARDS**

St. Theresa’s students are encouraged to develop leadership and responsibility skills.

Middle school students have the capability of earning the following awards:

- A, A/B Honor Roll recognized each 9 weeks
- PE fitness awards
- Service awards
- Graduation awards: Valedictorian/Salutatorian/St. Theresa’s Little Way Service Award

Middle school students in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades are selected for membership in the Junior National Honor Society based on academics, leadership, community service, and citizenship skills. Graduating students may graduate with distinction based on academics and community service.

### **ACADEMIC SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONS**

Students have the opportunity to continue their intellectual, physical, and social development by participating in a variety of school organizations. St. Theresa’s students successfully participate in the Private School Interscholastic Association’s academic

competition. Many students have advanced and placed at the state competition level. Students participate in a school-wide science fair with top-placing projects advancing to the Diocese of Austin competition. Student work is submitted for entry in various grade level writing contests, as well as math contests. Many students place in these contests.

### **SCHOOL SPORTS**

The school sports program has a no-cut policy. Students are evaluated and placed on teams according to skill.

- Fall Sports (August – October) include Flag Football (Boys 5/6<sup>th</sup>), Tackle Football (Boys 7/8<sup>th</sup>) and Volleyball (Girls 5/6<sup>th</sup> & 7/8<sup>th</sup>)
- Winter Sports (November - February) include Basketball (Boys and Girls 5/6<sup>th</sup> and 7/8<sup>th</sup>)
- Spring Sports (February - May) include Soccer (Coed- 5/6<sup>th</sup> & 7/8<sup>th</sup>), Tennis (Individual), Golf (individual) and Track (Boys and Girls 5/6<sup>TH</sup> and 7/8<sup>th</sup>)

# 6<sup>th</sup> GRADE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

## **SOCIAL STUDIES**

This course will focus on exploring various world cultures. Students will have an understanding of the region's geographical, cultural, natural resources, economic and government processes. Current events will be utilized throughout the course. The five themes of geography will be woven throughout the course. Material will be processed through individual study and cooperative learning groups. Output will be assessed through various forms of writing, tests, oral presentations, debate and group participation/product. Students will learn to assess historical materials, their relevance to a given issue, their reliability and their importance, and to weigh the evidence and interpretations presented in historical scholarship.

## **MIDDLE SCHOOL MATH PROGRAM**

The Math program is designed to provide multiple pathways through middle school so that each student can grow and thrive. Students are placed into math classes based on grades, benchmark testing (Renaissance Learning Star testing given 4 times per year), standardized testing (Iowa testing for all grades and the Iowa Algebra Aptitude Test for 7th and 8th grade placement decisions), and teacher observation of work process.

- Math 6 meets the 6th grade math TEKS.
- Math 7 meets the 7th grade math TEKS.
- Math 8 meets the 8th grade math TEKS.
- Pre-Algebra addresses the 8th grade math TEKS while providing a transition to the abstractions of Algebra 1.
- Algebra 1 is a high school credit class that is the equivalent of an Honors Algebra 1 class. Geometry is a high school credit class that is the equivalent of an Honors Geometry class.

In 6th grade, students are placed into Math 6 or Math 7. In 7th grade, students are placed into Math 7, Math 8, Pre-Algebra, or Algebra 1. In 8th grade, students are placed into Math 8, Pre-Algebra, Algebra 1, or Geometry. High school credit classes require homework over the weekend and weight final exams at 25% of semester average. Public high schools will accept high school credit classes offered at St. Theresa's Catholic School. They may or may not allow a class to be repeated. If a student completes Geometry at St. Theresa's, she or he will likely be committed to an advanced math track that will include Calculus in high school.

Independent schools (including Catholic Schools) will likely give a placement test to determine placement in 9th grade. They may or may not be flexible with placement decisions. Some schools limit the number of high school credits that can be earned in middle school. For all of these reasons, decisions regarding placement in advanced math classes should always be carefully considered. For students who would like to advance beyond the class into which they were placed, there is the option of Summer Mastery

Work. Materials and practice tests are provided and the students are given the opportunity to test out of their assigned class. Students may advance in any year up through Algebra 1.

## **RELIGION**

RCL's *Christ Our Life God Calls a People* series is a "spiral model" of teaching. As opposed to studying Religion on a strictly topical basis (Sacraments one year, Old Testament, another, etc.), the spiral model attends to all major areas of catechesis year after year. This reinforces and deepens knowledge of our Catholic Faith in students with each passing year as they mature. The model rests on the four "pillars" of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC). These pillars are Creed, Sacraments, Morality, and Prayer. By "spiraling" these themes into every year of learning, students gain a more complete catechesis. In this program we will explore God's call to a People that he bound to himself in a Covenant of love. The students will embark on a study of the Old Testament and a discovery of Jesus as the fulfillment of the Covenant. Study of the Bible and participation in the Liturgy, as well as education in chaste living, round out the student's faith formation. Students will also be invited to participate in a *Protecting God's Youth* workshop designed to reinforce instruction on safety against sexual abuse. Spirituality is enhanced through a grade level retreat, school reconciliation, opportunity to altar serve participate in grade level liturgy preparation as well as participation in other Catholic traditions.

## **LANGUAGE ARTS**

In STCS middle school, students are challenged to read, write, and wonder extensively. The reading program promotes the enjoyment of reading by relying heavily on self-selected text which students then use to analyze a variety literary forms (e.g. short story, novel, poetry, nonfiction, drama, etc.) and genres (realistic fiction, mystery, fantasy, horror, historical fiction, etc.). They learn not only how to answer, but also how to generate high-level questions, eventually spending their majority of thought in the realm of critical-thinking. On occasion, students are asked to apply their Catholic faith to the analysis of text, looking for examples as well as non-examples of the cardinal virtues in fictional characters and their actions, and pondering how applying Catholic values might alter the outcome of the story.

Concurrently, students write in response to their reading, exploring various modes of writing (i.e. narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive) with a variety of aims (i.e. entertain, inform, persuade, express). Emphasis is placed on fluency, form, and correctness in writing.

Expanding the students' reading, written, and spoken vocabulary is addressed through extensive self-selected reading, studying word parts, using context clues, and applying dictionary and thesaurus skills while reading and writing.

The class routinely uses technology for reading, writing, and research. Word-processing skills are developed by writing and editing with **Google Docs**. Enjoyment of reading is promoted by including book recommendations and reviews in an **Edmodo.com**, a website where students are also informed of release dates of books by popular authors and encouraged to post pictures of themselves reading as well as showing off pictures of their monthly “book piles.” Book trailers and book lists are also used to promote books popular among middle school students. St. Theresa’s offers **Newsela.com** as a means for students to apply critical thinking skills to nonfiction articles on current events. **Noredink.com** provides an entertaining format for practicing the mechanics of English. Other apps used include **Screencastify**, **Animoto**, **Tagxedo**, **Glogster**, and **ThingLink**.

## **SCIENCE**

Life science is the theme for sixth grade science. Areas such as genetics, environment and the kingdoms are explored throughout the year. Concepts are learned through lecture as well as labs, independent research and hands on learning. Critical thinking skills are strengthened through debate, essay writing and discussion circles. Current scientific topics are incorporated into the curriculum and discussed in relationship with Catholic moral teachings. Students participate in a school and Diocesan Science Fair.

## **6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE NINE WEEK ROTATION**

### **TECHNOLOGY**

This course focuses on 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Technology TEKS interwoven with developmentally appropriate computer science objectives. Keyboarding skills are also reinforced at this level.

### **MUSIC**

In this course, students will explore music through listening, singing, playing instruments, and movement. They will demonstrate proper audience behavior while listening to music and discuss music intelligently. The students will practice sacred music in preparation for liturgy, and they will learn about the Church's role in the history of musical development. Students will also learn about cultures from around the world through singing and playing folk songs. Basic notation and musical terms will be incorporated into various contexts over the course of the class.

### **DRAMA**

In this course, students will be introduced to the theatre arts through group work, research, exercises, and performance. They will explore the basic ideas, terminology, and components of theatre while building confidence, creativity, and public speaking skills.

### **ART**

Art at this level is still geared towards introducing students to a variety of media, concepts and techniques. Some skills are new to learn, such as the one-point perspective, while other skills, like drawing and painting are further refined. Students will gain a better understanding of compositional elements and principles as well. The relationship between culture, art history and the development of artistic styles is brought into each project.

### **FLEX CLUBS**

Students participate in various Flex Clubs on Fridays. Clubs are generated on student interest, but have included Book Club, Extreme Math, PSIA Prep, Study Hall and Technology Club.

# 7<sup>th</sup> GRADE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

## **SOCIAL STUDIES**

This course will focus on Texas history from the early inhabitants until today. Students will gain an understanding of the State's geographical, cultural, natural resources, economic and government processes. Material will be processed through individual study and cooperative learning groups. Output will be assessed through writing, tests, oral presentations and group participation products.

## **MIDDLE SCHOOL MATH PROGRAM**

The Math program is designed to provide multiple pathways through middle school so that each student can grow and thrive. Students are placed into math classes based on grades, benchmark testing (Renaissance Learning Star testing given 4 times per year), standardized testing (Iowa testing for all grades and the Iowa Algebra Aptitude Test for 7th and 8th grade placement decisions), and teacher observation of work process.

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## **RELIGION**

*Christ our Life -Jesus Christ the Way* introduces students to Jesus and the New Testament. From the Incarnation to the Letters of St. Paul, students will encounter Christ and His teachings, learning to take their role in the New Evangelization with the same fervor as the first Apostles. The textbook is based on the four "pillars", or major divisions, of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC). These include what Catholics believe, how they worship, how they live, and how they pray. In examining the life of Christ in all four Gospels and many of the writings of St. Paul in the New Testament, students learn how to live these things out in their own lives. The textbook will be supplemented by frequent reading from the sacred Scriptures that goes beyond the passages quoted in the textbook. A variety of outside resources, including books, videos, historical documents, and other media will further supplement the textbook during the course of the year. In-depth Bible study, participation in the Liturgy, and education in chaste living round out the student's faith formation. Spirituality is enhanced through a grade level retreat, school reconciliation, opportunity to altar serve participate in grade level liturgy preparation as well as participation in other Catholic traditions.

## **LANGUAGE ARTS**

In STCS middle school, students are challenged to read, write, and wonder extensively. The reading program promotes the enjoyment of reading by relying heavily on self-selected text which students then use to analyze a variety literary forms (e.g. short story, novel, poetry, nonfiction, drama, etc.) and genres (realistic fiction, mystery, fantasy, horror, historical fiction, etc.). They learn not only how to answer, but also how to generate high-level questions, eventually spending their majority of thought in the realm of critical-thinking. On occasion, students are asked to apply their Catholic faith to the analysis of text, looking for examples as well as non-examples of the cardinal virtues in fictional characters and their actions, and pondering how applying Catholic values might alter the outcome of the story.

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their monthly “book piles.” Book trailers and book lists are also used to promote books popular among middle school students. St. Theresa’s offers **Newsela.com** as a means for students to apply critical thinking skills to nonfiction articles on current events.

**Noredink.com** provides an entertaining format for practicing the mechanics of English. Other apps used include **ScreenCastify**, **Animoto**, **Tagxedo**, **Glogster**, and **ThingLink**.

## **SCIENCE**

In Grade 7, the study of science focuses on Earth Science and developing the student’s appreciation of the natural world in which s/he lives. Topics of study include astronomy, weather and climate, physical geology, historical geology and preservation of natural resources. While learning about the natural world, the student will develop critical-thinking, problem-solving, and scientific methodology skills through field and laboratory investigations. They will use tools such as weather instruments, computers, calculators, and data loggers to collect and analyze information to explain natural phenomenon. Students participate in a school and Diocesan Science Fair.

# 8<sup>th</sup> GRADE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

## **SOCIAL STUDIES**

This course will focus on historical events from 1492, with Exploration to 1877, Post Civil War. Students will connect and compare past events with present events and have an understanding of the importance of individuals and groups through environment, interactions, economic and government processes. Students will be given a variety of assessments, including test, quizzes, homework assignments, projects, document based, free response & research essays, and interactive analysis of historical events.

## **MIDDLE SCHOOL MATH PROGRAM**

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## **RELIGION**

*Christ Our Life- The Mystery of the Church* acts as a vehicle for students to explore the ancient teachings and Tradition of the Catholic Church. At a higher level than in previous years, students will revisit the ways that God has revealed Himself to His people and what He intends to show us through Scripture and the life and teaching of the Church. Students will focus on the Person of Christ and the meaning of His Incarnation and Gospel. The History of the Church will be studied, and in the process light will be shed on the often confusing subjects of the Crusades, the Inquisition, and other controversial and important times in the history of the Church. The causes and effects of the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation will be addressed. The Church in our modern day and her critical and unique role in the world will be assessed and contemplated. The importance of the Sacraments and of forming a strong conscience and living a moral life in imitation of Jesus Christ will also be addressed. In-depth Bible study, participation in the Liturgy, and education in chaste living round out the student's faith formation. Spirituality is enhanced through a grade level retreat, school reconciliation, opportunity to altar serve participate in grade level liturgy preparation as well as participation in other Catholic traditions.

## **LANGUAGE ARTS**

In STCS middle school, students are challenged to read, write, and wonder extensively. The reading program promotes the enjoyment of reading by relying heavily on self-selected text which students then use to analyze a variety literary forms (e.g. short story, novel, poetry, nonfiction, drama, etc.) and genres (realistic fiction, mystery, fantasy, horror, historical fiction, etc.). They learn not only how to answer, but also how to generate high-level questions, eventually spending their majority of thought in the realm of critical-thinking. On occasion, students are asked to apply their Catholic faith to the analysis of text, looking for examples as well as non-examples of the cardinal virtues in fictional characters and their actions, and pondering how applying Catholic values might alter the outcome of the story.

Concurrently, students write in response to their reading, exploring various modes of writing (i.e. narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive) with a variety of aims (i.e. entertain, inform, persuade, express). Emphasis is placed on fluency, form, and correctness in writing.

Expanding the students' reading, written, and spoken vocabulary is addressed through extensive self-selected reading, studying word parts, using context clues, and applying dictionary and thesaurus skills while reading and writing.

The class routinely uses technology for reading, writing, and research. Word-processing skills are developed by writing and editing with **Google Docs**. Enjoyment of reading is promoted by including book recommendations and reviews in an **Edmodo.com**, a website where students are also informed of release dates of books by popular authors

and encouraged to post pictures of themselves reading as well as showing off pictures of their monthly “book piles.” Book trailers and book lists are also used to promote books popular among middle school students. St. Theresa’s offers **Newsela.com** as a means for students to apply critical thinking skills to nonfiction articles on current events. **Noredink.com** provides an entertaining format for practicing the mechanics of English. Other apps used include **Screencastify**, **Animoto**, **Tagxedo**, **Glogster**, and **ThingLink**.

## **SCIENCE**

In Grade 8 the study of science focuses on Physical Science and developing the student’s understanding of the chemical and physical processes that affect their daily lives. Topics of study relating to chemical processes include atomic theory, the periodic table of the elements, chemical bonds and reactions, solutions, acids, and bases. Students will use math skills to predict the outcome of physical processes including the mechanics of motion, force and energy, wave theory relating to sound and light, and electricity and magnetism. Students will conduct laboratory investigations to expand their critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. They will use a variety of data collection tools including temperature, pressure, force, pH, and conductivity probes with data loggers to collect, graph, and interpret information. Students participate in a school and Diocesan Science Fair.

## **7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> GRADE ELECTIVE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

Elective courses include a variety of fine arts, band, technology, and other interest based classes that may change from semester to semester. Elective courses will be provided to the students during the school year. Courses will remain an option provided the class size meets expectations. Enrollment priority for elective classes will be given to 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Students will be scheduled into their alternate choices if space is not available in their first choice class.

### **FLEX CLUBS**

Students participate in various Flex Clubs on Fridays. Clubs are generated on student interest, but have included Book Club, Extreme Math, PSIA Prep, Study Hall and Technology Club.

# FOREIGN LANGUAGE

## SPANISH

- **6<sup>th</sup> Grade**

This one semester course is designed to be an introduction to the seventh and eighth grade Spanish course. It will focus on developing the four communicative skills; Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing at an introductory level. Students will be able to engage in short conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions. Students will understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics. Students will present information, concepts and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics. They will also get an insight into cultures of other countries.

## LATIN

- **6<sup>th</sup> Grade**

This one semester course provides an introduction to the Latin language and the peoples of the Roman world. Students will interact with the Latin language in every way: reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and will explore concepts in a multisensory and interdisciplinary fashion. Through cultural units and accompanying projects, students will gain a better understanding of the contexts in which the Latin language was spoken. Assessment will be based on tests and quizzes, completion of assignments and active class participation. Students will work independently and in groups. Employing effective study strategies and organization will be stressed.

## 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> GRADE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DESIGNATION

Students in 7<sup>th</sup> grade designate a foreign language which may be taken in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades for one high school credit or as an exploratory course. Designations are made at the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade year.

## SPANISH (7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>)

The completion of this two year course is equal to the first year of high school Spanish. This course will focus on developing the four communicative skills in our students: Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing. Students will be able to engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions. Students will understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics. Students will present information, concepts and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics. They will also get an insight into cultures of other countries.

## LATIN (7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>)

The completion of this two year course is equal to the first year of high school Latin. The course will develop reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, and will explore concepts in a multisensory and interdisciplinary fashion. Focus will be on language

acquisition with supplementary cultural units to provide context about the peoples of the Roman world.

## **GENERAL MIDDLE SCHOOL INFORMATION**

### **WELLNESS/PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Students attend physical education classes 4 times per week in 6th through 8th grades. An emphasis is placed on strong physical fitness and sports skills. Students receive health instruction as part of their PE TEKS. Students also receive training in various sports as determined by the season. Athletics is divided into three seasons. The fall season offers Flag Football for 5/6 boys, Tackle football for 7/8 boys, and Volleyball for 5/6 and 7/8 girls. The winter season offers Basketball for both boys and girls in 5th through 8th grades. The spring season offers Soccer, as a co-ed team either at the recreational or competitive levels, Track and Field, Tennis and Golf. Fees are collected for each sport to pay for league fees. We encourage parents to get involved as coaches, score keepers and/or team coordinators.

### **EXTRA PROGRAMS**

**OTHER:** After school enrichment programs have included Robotics, Chess Club, Quiz Bowl. These and other programs are based on student interest.