

St. Francis Middle School Handbook 2023-2024

Middle School Teachers

Mrs. Gina Carney
7A Homeroom & Religion, 7th grade ELA
gcarney@stfrancisaa.org

Mrs. Barbara Anderson
7B Homeroom & Religion, 7th & 8th grade
Science
banderson@stfrancisaa.org

Mrs. Megan DeVerna
8A Homeroom & Religion, 7th & 8th grade
Social Studies
mdeverna@stfrancisaa.org

Mr. Chris Stankovic
8B Homeroom & Religion,
7th grade Math (Pre-Algebra),
Advanced Math (Geometry)
cstankovic@stfrancisaa.org

Señorita Anna Damiani
6th, 7th, and 8th grade Spanish
adamiani@stfrancisaa.org

Mrs. Mitra Dunbar
8th grade English Language Arts
mdunbar@stfrancisaa.org

Mr. Jeff Moyer
8th Grade Algebra, Algebra 1
jmoyer@stfrancissaa.org

Academic Course Overviews

Social Studies

Seventh Grade History

The focus in seventh grade is on US History. Students will study the earliest days of the United States from the age of exploration all the way through manifest destiny. Geographic, civics/government, and economics content is integrated within the historical context. Our new, interactive text, *History Alive! United States through Industrialism*, includes an online subscription for all students. In addition, students will analyze and discuss current events.

Eighth Grade History

The focus in eighth grade is on US History. Students will study the earliest days of the United States from colonialism all the way through reconstruction. Geographic, civics/government, and economics content is integrated within the historical context. Our new, interactive text, *History Alive! United States through Industrialism*, includes an online subscription for all students. In addition, students will participate in weekly current event discussions.

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English Language Arts

Seventh Grade English Language Arts

The purpose of this course is to develop and encourage students' competence, confidence, and enthusiasm as readers, writers, listeners, and speakers. We will read three whole class novels: *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton, *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, and Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl*. Students will also study many facets of the Holocaust through the reading of Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* and other related works. Both classic and contemporary short stories and poetry will be utilized throughout seventh grade. Students will be required to read novels of their own choice throughout the year and produce several independent book projects. A Writing Workshop approach will be used to explore various forms of writing, and students will be required to publish several of their pieces throughout the year. Vocabulary, sentence diagramming, and public speaking activities will also be included throughout the year.

Eighth Grade English Language Arts

In this class, students will read for a variety of purposes and across a wide array of genres. We will read three whole-class novels in addition to novels of choice throughout the year: *Chains* by Laurie Halse Anderson, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, and *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. We will also write for multiple purposes and in many different genres. By engaging in all stages of the writing process, students will practice the conventions of writing, including grammar and mechanics. They will also experiment with new vocabulary and writer's craft to develop their unique writer's voice.

Math

Seventh Grade Pre-Algebra

Our study this year begins with integers (Ch. 2). We will move on to rational numbers (Ch. 3), powers/roots (Ch. 4), proportions & similar figures (Ch. 5), and percents (Ch. 6). We will finish the year with an examination of statistics & probability (Ch. 10), linear functions (Ch. 9), and algebraic expressions (Ch. 7). Students will be challenged to work independently and in groups to develop a critical understanding of math concepts and math vocabulary.

Eighth Grade Algebra

Eighth Grade Algebra begins with a study of real numbers (Ch. 1). We will analyze and solve linear equations in one and two variables as well as use functions to model relationships (Ch. 2-4). Next, we will learn a variety of methods for solving systems of linear equations (Ch. 5). We will then explore triangles and the pythagorean theorem (Ch. 7) Lastly, we will study volume and surface area (Ch. 8), and congruence and similarity (Ch. 6). Students will be challenged throughout the year to apply previously developed math skills to new functions as they prepare for high school math.

Algebra 1

Students begin this course solving equations and inequalities (Ch. 1). We will then study linear functions and their equations (Ch. 2-3) and the systems of linear equations and inequalities (Ch. 4). We will then move into piecewise functions (Ch. 5), exponential functions (Ch. 6), and polynomials and factoring (Ch. 7). We will finish the year with quadratic functions (Ch. 8), solving quadratic equations (Ch. 9), and statistics (Ch. 11).

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Science

Seventh Grade Science

Students will explore both life and physical sciences. They begin the year with a launcher unit, *Diving Into Science*, in which they explore the practices of scientists as they address physical science challenges relating to gravity. Their next unit, *Good Friends and Germs*, is an epidemiology unit where they learn about the human body. They trace diseases and research how to prevent epidemics. Students study viruses and bacteria, plant and animal cells, cell theory, and the structure and function of body systems. The next unit, *Vehicles in Motion*, is a physical science unit. In this unit, students design and build vehicles with specific properties while exploring the principles of motion and force. Finally, students investigate water quality in *Living Together*, a life science unit. They work in groups to determine how water quality affects the ecology of a community.

Eighth Grade Science

Students continue their study of life and physical sciences in their eighth grade year. They begin the year with the *Structure and Properties of Matter* unit where they will do a variety of labs to explore the properties of matter. They then move to the *Air Quality* chemistry unit. They use laboratory activities and case studies to investigate the air quality of different communities. In addition, they research and present a recommendation to implement technology to reduce air pollution in a US city. Third, they study *Genetics*, in which they learn about heredity, natural selection and the promises and dangers of genetic engineering as they come up with a plan to grow more rice to help alleviate world hunger. Finally, students learn skills to design a Rube Goldberg invention in the *Energy* unit. They learn about how energy takes different forms and how it is transferred and conserved.

Spanish

Seventh Grade (Spanish 1A)

In seventh grade Spanish class, students will meet everyday for 30-minute periods. We will continue to use the SOMOS curriculum that we started in sixth grade. Students will focus on developing vocabulary, grammar, speaking and listening skills. Curriculum will also focus on learning about the cultures of Spain and Latin America. Additionally, there will be projects throughout the year that lead students through hands-on learning.

Eighth Grade (Spanish 1B)

In eighth grade Spanish class, students will meet everyday for 30-minute periods. We will continue to use the SOMOS curriculum and concentrate on vocabulary, grammar, speaking and listening skills. Curriculum will also focus on learning about the cultures of Spain and Latin America. Students will complete their two-year Spanish study with an excellent understanding of basic Spanish and be able to place into Spanish II in high school.

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Religion

Seventh Grade Religion

Using the text *Spirit of Truth: The Communion of the Faithful* (Sophia Institute Press), students begin the year exploring emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual personal growth. Through this study, students will discover how they are created in the image and likeness of God and how they can use the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit to aid their personal growth. Students will then engage in discussions and readings that explore the moral teachings of the Church, including the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes. They have opportunities throughout the year to pray individually and corporately as well as to watch the Youth Alpha series in order to develop their relationships with God. All of this is set in the context of living the virtues and learning to be kind, compassionate, and empathetic.

Eighth Grade Religion

Eighth grade religion will begin the year with the *Second Step* Program. Students will learn how to recognize bullying within friendship groups and identify strategies and solutions. Later in the year, we will explore characteristics of healthy dating relationships. In the first and fourth quarters, we will use *Spirit of Truth: The Communion of the Faithful* (Sophia Institute) to study Catholic Church History and God's Plan for Marriage and Family Life. Students will critically examine Scripture, Catholic doctrine, and the Church's social teachings. Confirmation preparation will begin in the second quarter. We will use the textbook *Chosen* to think deeply about our lives and embrace our Catholic faith with conviction. The goal of Confirmation preparation is to help young people make the serious decision to follow Christ as active members of His Church and to become true missionary disciples.

Elective Classes

Art, Mrs. Jennifer Nowicki, jnowicki@stfrancisaa.org

Chamber Strings, Mrs. Stephanie Urban, strings@stfrancisaa2.org

Coding, Mr. Patrick Peck, ppeck@stfrancisaa.org

Concert Band, Mrs. Janet Sommerfeld, jsommerfeld@stfrancisaa.org

Core, Mrs. Barbara Anderson, Mrs. Donna Lee, Mrs. Tina Kivela banderson@stfrancisaa.org,
dlee@stfrancisaa.org, tkivela@stfrancisaa.org

Cultural Cooking, Mrs. Barbara Anderson, Mrs. Donna Lee, banderson@stfrancisaa.org,
dlee@stfrancisaa.org

Drama, Mr. Patrick Laughlin, plaughlin@stfrancisaa.org

Genius Hour, Mrs. Beth Shaum, bshaum@stfrancisaa.org

Guitar, Music Exploration, and Acapella, Mrs. Robin Woodard, rwoodard@stfrancisaa.org

Health, Mrs. Heather Kaper hkaper@stfrancisaa.org

History Through Film, Mrs. Megan DeVerna, mdeverna@stfrancisaa.org

Jazz Band, Mrs. Janet Sommerfeld, jsommerfeld@stfrancisaa.org

Library Assistance, Mrs. Beth Shaum, bshaum@stfrancisaa.org

Life Skills, Mr. Chris Stankovic, cstankovic@stfrancisaa.org

Musical Theater, Mr. Patrick Laughlin, Mrs. Robin Woodard, plaughlin@stfrancisaa.org,
rwoodard@stfrancisaa.org

Physical Education, Mrs. Jen Brown, jbrown@stfrancisaa.org

Public Speaking, Mrs. Gina Carney, gcarney@stfrancisaa.org

Theater Tech, Mrs. Robin Woodard, rwoodard@stfrancisaa.org

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Technology Resources

SFA Google Student Accounts

Students are given a Google account through St. Francis School to assist with their learning experience. **SFA Google Accounts should be used for school and academic purposes only.**

- Students may not change the icon (colored circle with a letter) on their SFA Google account. No personalized photos, pictures, or icons.

Google Classroom

Many academic subjects will have a designated Google Classroom. This is where students can find and submit some assignments, and locate class resources. Students use their SFA Google account to access Google Classroom. Only students have access to Google Classroom, not parents.

PowerSchool

PowerSchool is our online grading system. Students and parents should use this resource regularly to check assigned work and grades.

Email

Email is one of the best ways to contact your teachers. When emailing any adults in your life, it is important to follow good email etiquette. Please adhere to the following rules when emailing teachers:

1. Title the subject of your email by stating the topic you plan to address. For example, "Question about Homework" or "Help with Google Classroom."
2. Begin each email with a salutation. For example, "Good Morning Mrs. Carney,".
3. Use final draft writing in the body of the email. This includes correct grammar and punctuation. This also means refraining from using texting language like "lol" or "thx."
4. End each email with a thank you to your teacher and a signature. For example, "Thank you very much, Student Name."
5. Allow a teacher up to 24 hours to respond to your email.

If your email does not meet these basic standards, your teacher will email you back with the following response:

Thank you for reaching out to me. Please revise this email to reflect proper etiquette and final draft writing and resend.

Lastly, it is a rule at St. Francis that **all email communications between teachers and students include a parent.** When emailing a teacher, please copy (Cc) a parent. If not, you may expect that your teacher will add a parent to the correspondence when responding.

→ To email all middle school teachers, use the email group msteachers@stfrancisaa.org.

Technology in School

Laptops: Students must bring their charged* laptop to school every day. **Direct instruction or permission from a teacher is required for a student to use his/her laptop in school.** Laptops may only be used for **academic purposes** in school.

*Students should also bring their laptop charger to school each day.

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Phones: If a student has a phone at school, it should be **turned OFF and stored in the student's locker during the school day**. Phones are not permitted in class or during school hours. Students may take out and turn on their phone only when they are outside the school building.

Policies

Homework

Daily homework is reviewed during each class period. Students are expected to record assignments and tests in their student planners. Google Classroom and PowerSchool are also good resources that should be utilized for checking assignments and due dates.

Grading Scale

- A = 100-92%
- B = 91-82%
- C = 81-72%
- D = 71-62%
- E = 61% and lower

Missing Work

Any missing assignments will be recorded as a "0" in PowerSchool, even if the student is absent (in this case, it will also be marked as "absent"). The 0 acts as a placeholder until the assignment is turned in, at which point the grade will be changed from a 0 to the grade earned on the assignment.

Late Work

All late assignments will receive 50% credit if they are turned in after the due date. If you are having trouble with an assignment and/or the due date, please *email your teacher before the due date*. All late work must be turned in one week before the end of each marking period.

Cheating

Students may work together on assignments, but their work and answers must be their own. No computers or other tools may be used on a test/quiz (unless your teacher gives permission). Cheating on a test or assignment may result in a demerit, detention, and/or an automatic zero on that assignment/test.

Plagiarism

When writing answers, students can (and should) research, but then answers must be put in their own words. Students **MAY NOT COPY AND PASTE** from internet sites (or books) and submit that as their work, nor may they use AI-powered technology (e.g. ChatGPT) to complete assignments. Proper credit should be given when the ideas or words of others are used.

Exams

As a way to prepare our students for the challenges of high school, St. Francis middle school students will participate in midterm and final exams. Exams will be given at the end of each semester. Students will be given an exam schedule in advance of exam week.

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Absences

It is *the student's* responsibility to find out what was missed during an absence and make up the work. Google Classroom and PowerSchool are the best places to check for missed lessons and assignments. Students may also reach out to the teacher in class or via email if they have questions about absent work. Generally, students have the number of days they were absent to make up the work without a late penalty.

Lunch

Generally, seventh/eighth grade students will eat lunch in the PAC. If the PAC is unavailable students will eat in their homeroom classroom. Students should pack a lunch each day. Please note that there will also be NO MICROWAVE USE during lunch and students are expected to follow the school's nut-free policy.

Snacks

Students are permitted to **eat fresh fruit or veggies and drink water** during class. No other food or beverage is allowed during class. All students are encouraged to bring a water bottle. No food is permitted in the science lab.

Behavior

Class behavior management: Many teachers employ a system of points and rewards to encourage positive student behavior.

Merits: A merit is earned when a student goes above and beyond the normal expectations of a St. Francis student. These are given at the teacher's discretion, and may not be asked for.

Demerits: A demerit is earned when a student exhibits recurring behavior that is below the normal expectations of a St. Francis student, or a more significant behavior offense. Three demerits in one quarter will result in a detention.

Detentions: A detention is earned when a student has 3 or more demerits within a quarter, or for a more significant behavior offense.

Both demerit and detention forms must be signed by a parent and brought back to the teacher who issued the demerit or detention *the next school day*.

Houses

A unique part of the middle school experience at St. Francis is involvement in one of four "houses." Each house is named for one of the Evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Students are sorted into houses on the first day of school and remain in those houses throughout the year. As a house, students will participate in special activities and competitions to earn house points. House points will also be awarded for positive actions of individual students or groups and subtracted for negative behaviors. Scores will be tallied at the end of each quarter and at the end of the year. House winners will receive a special reward. Students may also organize by house to plan and/or promote service projects for the school.