

The background features a large, light purple watermark of the Saint Mary's Hall logo. The logo is circular and contains a shield with a cross. Text within the logo includes "SAINT MARY'S HALL" at the top, "1879" in the center, and "SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS" at the bottom. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the bottom right of the logo.

**Saint Mary's Hall  
Lower School  
Curriculum  
Guide**

**2020-2021**



**Saint Mary's Hall**  
**Lower School**  
**Curriculum Guide**  
**2019-2020**

Montessori,  
Kindergarten, and  
Forms 1-5

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# **SAINT MARY'S HALL HERITAGE AND GOVERNANCE**

## **Mission Statement**

The Mission of Saint Mary's Hall is to prepare our students for success in colleague and fulfillment in life.

The mission is accomplished by:

- Hiring and supporting an outstanding faculty who are experts in their discipline
- Providing the management and long-term planning necessary to provide sufficient resources
- Providing a rigorous, challenging, and wide-ranging curriculum and academic program
- Utilizing problem solving, creativity, and critical thinking in daily instruction
- Infusing character development and core value education into all segments of school life
- Offering, supporting and encouraging multiple activities that provide opportunities for participation in the arts, athletics, leadership and community service
- Supporting students in their personal faith while instilling universal values for life
- Creating and supporting a safe and supportive learning environment

## **Core Values**

Courage  
Integrity  
Responsibility  
Spirituality  
Tolerance  
Tradition

## **Motto**

Teach us delight in simple things.

## History

Saint Mary's Hall was founded in 1870 by Bishop Robert W. B. Elliott, the first Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of West Texas. The school was a boarding and day school for girls of all faiths.

In 1925 Saint Mary's Hall was incorporated to be administered as a non-profit educational institution with an independent self-perpetuating Board of Trustees. At that time the school moved to the site on French Place, where it operated for the next 43 years.

In 1964, the Board of Trustees, facing the issues of progress and expansion, decided that the school should develop a new campus to meet present needs and future demands for continued excellence in the field of independent education. The challenge to raise the needed money was met by foundations, alumnae, trustees, parents, and other members of the Saint Mary's Hall family. A new 60-acre campus on Starcrest was occupied in November 1968 which offered the most modern and carefully planned facilities of the time.

Co-education through Form 8 was fully implemented by 1979 and co-education in Upper School forms was fully implemented in the 1986 school year. Saint Mary's Hall became a co-educational Day School with the closing of the boarding program in 2002.

As a result of continued growth, Saint Mary's Hall now consists of the three school divisions: The Lower School, which included Montessori (preschool beginning at age 3), Kindergarten, and Forms 1-5; the Middle School (Forms 6-8); and the Upper School (Forms 9-12).

## The Board

The Board of Trustees is made up of 24 members who are selected by the Executive/Nominating Committee. The Board is led by the Board Chair and the Board President. The following committees assist in completing the work of the Board:

- Building and Grounds Committee
- Executive/Nominating Committee
- Finance Committee

The Board has four basic responsibilities:

- Set and monitor the mission of the school
- Hire and support the Head of the School
- Monitor fiduciary matters/set tuition
- Establish the policies for operation of the school

## **Accreditations**

Saint Mary's Hall is accredited by the Independent Schools' Association of the Southwest (ISAS) and holds membership in the American Montessori Society, Secondary School Admission Test Board (SSATB), College Board, Educational Records Bureau (ERB), National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), and National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).

## **THE LOWER SCHOOL PROGRAM**

### **Lower School Instructional Philosophy**

The Lower School of Saint Mary's Hall includes Montessori, Kindergarten, and Forms 1-5. Students are introduced to basic and accelerated learning techniques that they will use throughout their school years. Students encounter the challenge of mastering fundamental skills and critical thinking and problem-solving. The school community emphasizes trust based on honesty, discretion and the consideration of others.

Faculty members maintain a classroom atmosphere conducive to productivity and successful learning. Teachers know their students as individuals and provide a nurturing environment for them. The school administrators and faculty strive for effective communication between home and school. The goal is to develop a partnership encouraging each child to develop independence, self-esteem and confidence.

The Lower School's philosophy is a belief in a school program that supports the developmental needs of the students and provides them with strategies for future learning from childhood through adulthood. Students' needs are best met in a child-centered environment where learning is approached with joy and enthusiasm. The school setting encourages students to make good choices, exercise sound judgement and develop appropriate social behavior.

Within a culture that provides a strong, robust curriculum, students will grow intellectually, creatively, and physically. The establishment, implementation, and successful maintenance of such a culture thrives when there are cooperative efforts between school and home guiding and supporting the student.

### **Montessori**



Montessori education devotes itself to the total child – the social, emotional, intellectual and physical. The love of learning should be a life-long activity. Each child will grow with knowledge and strength as an individual capable of making decisions that will shape his/her own future and the future of the world. The goal is for each child to reach his/her full potential in all areas of development, guiding him/her to be an active and contributing member of society.

Saint Mary's Hall is a member of the American Montessori Society and abides by the AMS Code of Ethics. Each of the four classrooms has a lead teacher, who is American Montessori Society Certified, and a full-time assistant.

## **The Montessori Classroom and Daily Routine**

A child-centered classroom is the basis of the Montessori approach. In each of the "prepared environments", each child has the opportunity to progress at his/her own rate. The classroom is designed to offer maximum independent learning and exploration. Within this setting, the child develops freely in self-respect and confidence.

Dr. Maria Montessori believed that the child has an absorbent mind. It is the lead teacher's responsibility to prepare this environment so that each child learns naturally and easily with guidance and encouragement. By careful observation, the Montessori teacher introduces age appropriate materials. One success builds sequentially upon another, thus increasing a child's continuous self-confidence and knowledge.

The multi-age classroom in Montessori develops a sense of community. Older children provide the younger ones role models and assistance with their work and classroom adjustment. Through individual and group activities, children experience decision making, concern for their own and others' property rights, and independent thinking.

Each day the students have one or more specials class, enjoy outside play, have snack, and participate in large and small group activities.

The Montessori classroom is inviting and full of learning materials that are arranged on low, open shelves and sequenced from the simple to the complex. Montessori students develop the ability to make appropriate choices during their school day. Each child chooses his/her work from lessons that have been teacher demonstrated and attract interest. By exploring and repeating lessons, the child is able to solve problems independently expand analytical thinking skills, and earn the satisfaction that comes from accomplishment and achievement. There is a great deal of movement and verbalization in a calm and pleasant Montessori environment. In this ordered space each child learns self-disciplined freedom that meets his/her developmental needs.

Saint Mary's Hall encourages parents to be an integral part of this program to observe their children's classrooms, to participate in parent education opportunities, and to volunteer.

## **Practical Life**

Practical life activities are the foundation for all other areas in a Montessori classroom. Children develop large and small muscle coordination through practical life exercises, concentrating on self-help skills. Examples of these include buttoning, zipping, pouring water, and washing dishes.

When the half-day students leave for the day, the full-day students set up a classroom luncheon from food prepared by the School's dining hall staff. Serving buffet style makes it possible for children to enjoy new foods in a relaxed atmosphere. Participation in preparation and clean-up is an extension of practical life activities.

Achieving motor control of his/her body permits the child to develop inner control in the form of a longer attention span, increased self-confidence, independence, and self-discipline. These activities also prepare the child indirectly for other areas of the classroom, i.e., finger and muscle control for writing and artistic endeavors, and logical, sequential thinking so necessary for sensorial, language, and mathematics progression.

The individual classroom courtyards provide an area for more Practical Life activities and physical movement.

## **Sensorial**

Sensorial exercises expand the child's sensory perceptions of the world. Specific Montessori and teacher-made materials designed to isolate the auditory, visual, and tactile senses help sharpen the child's powers of observation and stimulate his/her inquiring mind.

Activities with materials such as smell and tasting bottles, rough and smooth sandpaper tablets, and sound cylinders give the child first-hand sensory experiences. Once the child has mastered the finer discriminations of size, weight, temperature, color, length, touch, taste, and smell, he/ she is ready to move on to variation and extensions of more advanced materials. These materials enable the children to think for themselves and develop problem solving techniques. As children develop these skills, more abstract thinking is possible.

## **Story Time**

Daily group story time is an integral part of the Montessori program as it serves as a culmination of the morning's activities and a transition to dismissal for the

younger students and lunch for the older ones.

## **Language**

The basic tools of language development are vision, hearing, speech, and sensory motor skills necessary for writing and reading. The development of oral language skills begins before the child enters the classroom. Reading books and having interactive conversation with the child provides the foundation for language development, reading, and writing. While working in the practical life and sensorial areas, a child acquires the names of all materials with which he/she works. Later, the child will learn all classroom vocabulary. When he/ she is ready for pre-reading materials, the child is introduced to a wide variety of perceptual activities including matching, figure ground, shape constancy, and patterning exercises. These materials are adapted to the child's rate of progress.

The Montessori reading program includes both phonics and whole language instruction. A variety of multi-sensory materials, including sandpaper letters and movable alphabets, are used to facilitate the development of literacy in the young child. Reading, speaking and writing for meaning are products of the Montessori language program. Conversation is the beginning of reading, and in the Montessori classrooms there is always a constant hum of conversation with adults and children.

## **Mathematics**

Math principles are acquired through indirect preparation in the practical life and sensorial area. Repetitive use of Practical Life and Sensorial materials promotes the skills of order, concentration, coordination and independence which lay the groundwork needed to introduce math. By practicing and handling these multi-sensory exercises, the child forms a solid foundation that will aid in understanding more abstract mathematics.

The child illustrates numbers in symbol, set, and sequence, establishing a basic understanding of numerical concepts.

The child progresses through the decimal system, formation of numbers from 1-100 and the basic functions of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Lessons in fractions, measurement, telling time, and introduction to money are also offered.

Montessori mathematics provides students with opportunity to develop problem solving strategies that can be transferred to all areas of learning.

## **Geography**

As in all areas of Montessori, the young child's introduction to geography begins

with the multi- sensory approach. A sandpaper globe, which distinguishes between rough land and smooth water, eventually leads the child to wooden puzzle maps. From these maps, the older child draws his/her own maps.

Through a variety of picture cards, photographs, and books that center on the brotherhood of man, the child satisfies his curiosity about similarities and differences in people of the world. Music and Spanish lessons supplement and reinforce the family-of-man concept.

## **Technology**

The basic tenets of Montessori instruction are the multi-sensory approach and Practical Life experiences. In keeping with tradition, the instructional emphasis will continue to be in those areas of a child's day. In addition, there will be supplemental technology instruction when appropriate. In our modern world, there are now a number of excellent software programs that can enhance children's intellectual growth. Mini iPads will be available in the classes for children to explore.

## **Art**

As a child refines the motor skills necessary to handle scissors, pencils, crayons, paint brushes, etc; he/she is free to construct his/her own creations. Care is taken to allow the child many avenues of expression using various media such as collage, clay, pastels, water colors, and a variety of paints. Art in the Montessori classroom is an extension of the practical life area.

## **Music**

The Montessori music curriculum is based on the Orff Schulwerk teaching philosophy. The learning atmosphere is joyful and game-like, full of singing, dancing, and instrument playing. Critical listening skills are developed through exposure to great and lasting music and composers from diverse cultures and styles. Musical concepts are brought to life through literature, props, puppets, and imagination.

## **Motor Skills**

Working with the physical education coaches, Montessori students engage in motor skills activities developing gross motor coordination. Development of motor skills is accomplished through challenging games and movement activities. Interpersonal skills are enhanced by working with others outside the classroom. The development of listening skills and the importance of following directions are also emphasized.

## **Science**

Science encourages active observers, stimulates curiosity, and builds scientific vocabulary at a time when the child is unconsciously absorbing new language. Materials are presented sequentially from the inorganic states of solids, liquids, and gases to earth science to weather and the organic classifications of plants and animals.

The younger child experiments; the older child is able to verbalize what happened and why. By demonstrating to the child that the world is indeed comprehensible and a knowledgeable place, many of the child's fears are reduced or eliminated.

## **Library**

Full day Montessori students receive instruction in library skills throughout the year in the Lower School library. Students visit the library for a 30 minute class once a week where they learn the proper care of books, demonstrate good citizenship in the library by following rules and procedures, enjoy picture books for pleasure, as well as receive instruction in location skills, evaluation and selection techniques, parts of a book, listening and viewing skills and literature appreciation. The main goal is to develop in the children a life-long love and appreciation for reading. Students incorporate their library skills as part of their overall learning experience.

## **Classroom Observations**

A picture is better than a thousand words. Observing a child in the classroom provides insight into the Montessori Method and is an excellent preparation for the parent-teacher conference which takes place twice a year.

## **Kindergarten**

Each of the three self-contained kindergarten classrooms has a certified lead teacher and a full time assistant. Children attend library, the science lab, music, physical education, and Spanish during the week. They also have the opportunity to play outside every day in self-selected activities. Classes begin at 8:00am and end at 2:30pm each day.

The benefit of a set schedule is that routine establishes a balance between teacher-initiated and child-selected activities from a variety of creative and academic centers. Centers provide areas for children to participate in both open-ended and structured activities, to promote creative and artistic abilities, and to strengthen social and independent work skills. Children learn to persevere with self-chosen tasks and make decisions about how to utilize their time. Centers include: Book Corner, Math, Science, Geography, Computer, Manipulative, Art,

Blocks, Listening, Dramatic Play and The Daily Five.

Teachers work with individual children, small group, and some whole group activities at different times during the day. This setting allows children to learn through active participation and involvement. They explore the environment, manipulate materials, and experience concrete and hands-on activities.

## **Language Arts**

Children engage in many activities that develop their oral language skills and help them begin to read and write. Students participate in language activities that extend their vocabulary and conceptual knowledge. They learn to follow directions and learn the vernacular of school. Students discuss the meanings of words from familiar and conceptually challenging selections read aloud and also through expressing themselves in complete thoughts. Students listen to a wide variety of children's literature, including selections from classic to contemporary works. The children are also exposed to nonfiction and informational materials. They learn how to listen attentively and ask and respond to questions and retell stories by learning the simple basic story structure. They engage in the *Daily Three Centers*; reading, writing and word work. On a daily basis.

Students learn to identify and write using the D'Nealian style lettering. They learn that individual letters are different from printed words and that words have spaces between them and print is read from left-to-right and from top-to-bottom. They learn to write simple sentences. Through meaningful and organized activities, students learn that spoken language is composed of sequences of sounds. Through a daily phonics program the children learn to segment and identify sounds in spoken words. Each child applies what he/she is learning through reading and writing activities that are introduced at his/her own pace.

## **Mathematics**

A well-balanced mathematics' curriculum focuses on developing whole-number concepts and using patterns and sorting to explore number, data, and shape. Daily routines and games are part of the program, designed to build conceptual understanding and ensure mastery of basic skills in authentic and interesting contexts. Students have many opportunities for cooperative learning activities, explorations and projects.

*Everyday Mathematics* for Kindergarten is organized into the following content strands:

- Data and Chance
- Geometry
- Measurement and Reference Frames
- Numeration

- Operations and Computation
- Patterns and Functions

Woven throughout the content strands are several other key mathematical themes:

- Estimation Skills and Number Sense
- Mental Arithmetic Skills and Reflexes
- Problem Solving

## **Science**

Students are introduced to Earth science, life science, physical science and the application of the thinking process to learn more about the world around them. They attend classes in the science lab and use classroom and field investigations to develop the skills of asking questions, gathering information, communicating findings, and making informed decisions. Students also use computers and information technology tools to support their investigations. Kindergarten science includes the identification of organisms and objects and their parts. Students learn how to group living organisms and nonliving objects into collections and explore the basic needs of living organisms.

## **Social Studies**

The focus is on self, home, family, and classroom. Students study our state and national heritage by examining the celebrations of patriotic holidays and contributions of historical people. Students discuss and learn geographic concepts such as location and physical and human characteristics of places. Students are introduced to the basic human needs of food, clothing, and shelter and in ways that people meet these needs. Students learn the purpose of rules and the role of authority figures in the home and school. They also learn customs, symbols, and celebrations that represent American beliefs and principles and contribute to our national identity. Students compare family customs and traditions. To support the teaching of essential knowledge and skills, a variety of rich materials such as biographies, folktales, myths, legends, poetry, songs, and artwork is incorporated.

## **Technology Instruction**

Kindergarten students receive technology instruction throughout the year in the classroom through the use of an interactive board, classroom I-pads and in a collaborative learning space with Chromebooks and Makerspace technology. Students learn the proper use of the technology components. Teachers use their iPads to present information and lessons that will enhance the student's learning. Students have an opportunity to explore appropriate curricula on mini iPads.

## **Fine Arts**

Four basic strands: perception, creative expression/performance, historical and cultural heritage, and critical evaluation provide broad and unifying structures for organizing the knowledge and skills students are expected to enjoy in art, music and drama.

## **Art**

Students hone their perceptions of the environment, developed through increasing visual awareness and sensitivity to surroundings, memory, imagination, and life experiences, as a source of creating artwork. Exposure to great and lasting art and artists gives students historical and cultural clues that can increase their knowledge of the world around them. Students at their own rate will have many opportunities to explore technique and develop their talents.

## **Music**

The Kindergarten music curriculum is based on the Orff Schulwerk teaching philosophy. The learning atmosphere is joyful and game-like, full of singing, dancing, and instrument playing. Critical listening skills are developed through exposure to great and lasting music and composers from diverse cultures and styles. Students learn how to read, write and play simple rhythmic and melodic patterns. Musical concepts are brought to life through literature, props, puppets, and imagination.

## **Drama**

Many opportunities in centers and curriculum are designed to develop the child's awareness of drama skills; students learn to cooperate with others in these endeavors. Through dramatic play, students enhance their perceptions of self-awareness, explore space using expressive movements, and imitate and recreate stories. They learn to create roles and use costumes and props effectively to communicate. Students develop awareness of time periods by acting the events of the historical past.

## **Physical Education**

Students acquire knowledge and skills for movement that provide the foundation for enjoyment, continued social development through physical activity, and access to a physically-active lifestyle, which helps them begin to understand the relationship between physical activity and health throughout their life span. Led by the Saint Mary's Hall coaches, students attend P.E. classes each week in the school gym.

## **Spanish**

Spanish in the kindergarten program emphasizes vocabulary and oral



communication. Students learn how to respond and converse using everyday command and questions in a foreign language. Students also engage in a variety of games and songs designed to help them increase Spanish vocabulary and learn about the Spanish culture, cuisine, art and lifestyle.

## **Library**

Kindergarten students receive instruction in library skills throughout the year in the Lower School library. Students visit the library for a 30 minute class once a week. They learn the proper care of books; demonstrate good citizenship in the library by following rules and procedures; enjoy picture books for pleasure; instruction in location skills; evaluation and selection techniques; parts of a book; and, listening and literature appreciation. The main goal is to develop in the children a lifelong love and appreciation for reading. Students incorporate their library skills into their other learning experiences.

## **Forms 1-5**

### **English/Language Arts**

#### **Form 1**

The Form 1 language arts program is literature-based, organized around themes and famous authors. The texts consist of high-quality literature; the works of the authors have been selected to represent a diversity of genres, topics, and styles in writing. Oral reading and comprehension skills are taught and emphasized using the framework of the Reading Cafe. Skills and practices are organized into the categories of Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, and Expand Vocabulary. Written and oral communication, along with vocabulary development, phonetic principles, grammar development, spelling, and handwriting are stressed in the program. Language arts teaching is organized within the Daily 5 framework: Read to Self, Read to Someone, Listen to Reading, Work on Writing, and Word Work.

#### **Form 2**

The Form 2 language arts program is a literature-based program organized around seven writing styles. The writing element of each unit teaches students how to compose original texts using the basic conventions of written language such as capitalization and end punctuation, how to spell proficiently, how to use the writing process, and how to evaluate one's own writing as well as the writing of others. The reading portion of this program helps students learn to use a variety of word identification strategies, to read with fluency and understanding, and to read for different purposes. It also provides instructional strategies for comprehension and vocabulary development. Through various oral language experiences, the students learn to listen and speak appropriately to audiences and to communicate clearly.

Daily lessons reinforce phonetic principles, grammar development, spelling, and handwriting.

### **Form 3**

The Form 3 language arts program is designed to transition students from learning to read – to reading for understanding, information, and enjoyment. The theme for the school year is “What makes a good story?” Students focus on this question throughout the school year as they discover how setting, character development, plot, author’s style, and other story elements contribute to the quality of a book, story, or movie. Students read from a variety of genres including fantasy, poetry, historical fiction, and autobiography. Students use what they read as models for their own writing. Proper use of the writing process is emphasized through the use of Writing Workshop. Grammar skills are introduced in isolation and then incorporated into writing instruction as needed. In addition, students write to learn as they use writing to aid in reading comprehension. Students are assessed in a variety of ways including objective tests, classroom observations of reading strategies, writing assignments, journals, and class discussion and participation. The spelling program emphasizes breaking words into morphographs. Students are assessed regularly on their spelling progress and encouraged and expected to apply learned spelling rules to written work. Students in Form 3 begin to learn cursive writing techniques.

### **Form 4**

The Form 4 language arts program is based on the premise that reading is a form of thinking, and literal and inferential comprehension skills are stressed and integrated into units of study. A stimulating environment is emphasized in the classroom in which a variety of writing skills are developed. Instruction includes word study skills, reading comprehension, and thesaurus use. The steps of the writing process are followed: brainstorming, pre-writing, drafting, proofreading, and writing a final draft. The use of proofreading marks is reinforced. The integration of computer technology is an essential part of the writing process.

### **Form 5**

The Form 5 language arts program is designed to help students become more independent readers as well as provide opportunities to become metacognitive learners. Through a focus on genres, students explore the literary elements of novels, poetry, science fiction and short story in addition to studying these as models of good writing. Students evaluate literary elements in their reading as they analyze character development, setting, fact and opinion. Students write reflectively and expressively on a daily basis in Writer’s Workshop as well as writing to respond to their literature units. Taking grammatically correct writing through the full writing process is emphasized in addition to gathering seed ideas for students to write in their writer’s notebook. Throughout their writing, students complete imitation exercises, which give them needed practice for effective writing.

## Mathematics

The basic principles of Saint Mary's Hall's mathematics program are based on the best practices from the recent research of children's mathematical thinking and on curriculum and instruction.

- Children acquire knowledge and skills and develop an understanding of mathematics from their own experience. Mathematics is more meaningful when it is rooted in real life context and situations and when children are given the opportunity to become actively involved in learning. Numbers, skills and mathematical concepts are not presented in isolation, but are linked to situations and context that are relevant to everyday lives. Students are encouraged to explain and discuss their mathematical thinking in their own words. Children begin school with more mathematical knowledge and intuition than previously believed. The curriculum is built on this intuitive and concrete foundation and gradually helps students gain an understanding of the abstract and symbolic, aiming for a significantly higher achievement than has traditionally been expected.
- Because very few people learn a new concept or skill the first time they experience it, the curriculum is structured to provide multiple exposures to topics and frequent opportunities to review and practice skills.
- Children are provided numerous methods for basic skills practice and review. These include written and oral fact drills, mental math routines, practice with fact triangles, daily sets of review problems, homework, timed tests and a wide variety of math games.
- Mental mathematics is central to the program. Opportunities to verbalize thoughts and strategies give children the chance to clarify their thinking and gain insights from others. Students learn to be flexible and resourceful problem solvers.

### Form 1

The design of the mathematics program is to develop the mastery of facts from one through eighteen and the understanding of concepts of number patterns, place value through 100, measurement, and geometry. The objective is to provide an introduction to fractions, money, and time. There is a strong emphasis on the use of manipulatives to enable students to visualize concepts before moving to abstract operations. Recognition and development of varied math strategies are encouraged for use in daily estimation, operations, problem solving, and computation. Students also explore sets, patterns, attributes, graphs, numbers, and numeration. Exposure to these concepts is important for building a firm foundation of math knowledge. Each classroom is furnished with manipulative materials from which students learn a hands-on approach to mathematics. The children are exposed to mathematics while working individually, in small cooperative groups, and in total class activities with integrated themes.

## **Form 2**

The mathematics program emphasizes the mathematical strands, skills and concepts in numeration (counting, reading and writing numbers, identifying place value, comparing numbers, working with fractions, and using money to develop place value and decimal concepts); operations and computation (recalling addition and subtraction facts, exploring number families, adding and subtracting without and with renaming, introductory multiplication, and exchanging money amounts); data and chance (collecting, organizing and interpreting data using tables, charts and graphs, and exploring concepts of chance); geometry (exploring 2-3 dimensional shapes and classifying polygons); measurement (using tools to measure standard and metric units on length, capacity, weight and volume); and patterns, functions and algebra (exploring number patterns, rules for number sequences, relations between numbers and attributes). Emphasis is placed on problem solving to develop critical thinking based on everyday situations. Wide varieties of math manipulatives, computer programs, Smart Board tools, and calculators are used to enhance the child's learning.

## **Form 3**

Skills in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division are developed in Form 3. Mastery is the goal in the memorization of facts, and division is introduced. Strategies for understanding, analyzing, and solving story problems are practiced. Geometric concepts with attributes of shapes, and area and perimeter are covered. Measurement of time, weight, distance, and volume are extended in standard units. Basic computer skills and the use of calculators are also included. Additional learning experiences are provided in the areas of logical thinking, probability, graphing, and functions. The mathematics program includes mental mathematics and daily drill of facts and new skills. Creativity is promoted by using a variety of materials and activities and by helping the student to see several ways of solving a problem. Manipulatives are used to provide concrete, hands-on experiences. These allow the student to establish the understanding that eventually is shaped into the symbols of word and number and the mechanics of the operation.

## **Form 4**

Learning how to solve problems is one of the most important reasons for studying mathematics. To be successful problem solvers, students must know their basic facts and understand concepts. By the beginning of Form 4, students are expected to have mastered their basic facts in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Students will expand their study of place value, rounding, multiplication, division, fractions, decimals, graphing, estimating, geometry, elapsed time, money, and measurement. Logic activities and number sense will also be stressed. Solving problems, reasoning, and communicating will enable and empower each student in solving real world problems.

## Form 5

An extension of the material introduced in Form 4 is continued at this level. After a review of division, measurement, geometry, multiplication, simple fractions, and metrics, lessons are provided in two-digit divisors, manipulation of fractions, statistics, graphing, and more advanced geometry involving area and perimeter of triangles, quadrilaterals, and volume of prisms. Graphs are used to collect and display data and to extend the investigations into probability. Spatial relationships are explored to enhance logical thinking skills. Students use calculators to solve multi-step problems dealing with real-life situations. Emphasis is on thought processes, and students are expected to explain why their answers are reasonable and how they derived their solutions.

## Science

The Lower School science program focuses on three areas of learning: content knowledge, conducting investigations, and building explanations. Content knowledge consists of the facts, vocabulary, and principles that a person knows about his or her natural world. By conducting investigations, students are called upon to construct new ideas. They are given the opportunity to share their learning with others.

Life, earth, and physical science units are included at each grade level. Field trips, special speakers, and related research/presentations using the computer lab (Internet) are all part of the science program. Saint Mary's Hall's goal is to foster the development of lifetime learners who have an appreciation for their world and a desire to better it.

## Form 1

### Earth Science

Space: Patterns & Cycles  
Sun, Moon & Stars

### Life Science

Structures, Functions &  
Life Cycles of Organisms

### Physical Science

Waves: Sounds &  
Light

## Form 2

### Earth Science

Earth's Place in the Universe  
Slow & Fast Land Changes

### Life Science

Ecosystems: Interactions,  
Energy & Dynamics  
Interdependent  
Relationships

### Physical Science

Matter & Its  
Interactions  
Structure &  
Properties of Matter  
Chemical Reactions

## Form 3

### Earth Science

Earth's Place in Space: Our Solar System  
Earth's Dynamic Systems: Processes That Change the Earth  
Weather and Climate  
Earth's Systems: Natural Resources

## **Form 4**

### **Life Science**

Animals; Structures & Functions  
Ecology & Ecosystems;  
Relationships & Interdependence,  
Biodiversity  
Weather & Climate

## **Form 5**

### **Physical Science**

Chemistry; Properties of Matter,  
Mixtures & Solutions  
Physics;  
Force & Motion, Energy

## **Social Studies**

### **Form 1**

The social studies program focuses on the concepts of My Community, My Country: Past and Present, The World Around Us, and Celebrating Texas and Our Texas Traditions. Form 1 teachers also teach lessons on citizenship and getting along with others throughout the year. These topics expand students' awareness of their world and introduce the concept of the "human family", the concept of history, and geography. Geographic skills are developed through the use of the globe, special workbooks, map making, and other related activities. Selections in the language arts program and other connections to literature enrich the social studies emphasis on these big ideas.

### **Form 2**

The social studies program focuses on the concept of "community" and developing personal, social, and civic responsibility. Form 2 expands the child's perspective from the family to the local community with students studying questions such as: What is a community? Who makes the goods and services in our community? How do leaders help their communities? What makes a good citizen? The concept of diversity within our community is emphasized.

Map making and related geography activities reinforce each unit. Selections in the

language arts program and other connections to literature enrich the social studies emphasis on the community.

### **Form 3**

The social studies program expands the emphasis on community from local to national as students examine communities within Texas and across the United States. As the curriculum extends the child's focus from local to national dimensions, students learn the states and capitals, as well as key geographic and historical features of five regions in the United States. The curriculum concludes with the introduction to the history of Texas. During this Texas History unit, the students will complete a study of family history, including the creation of family trees, reinforcing the students' sense of time and place. Readings from short stories and other connections to literature enrich the social studies emphasis on the local and national community.

### **Form 4**

The social studies program takes on a global dimension by focusing on cities and cultures around the world. Students take a "journey" to historic cities in North America, Africa, Europe, Asia and Latin America. On that journey, students encounter Vikings, Kenyans on safari, classical Athenians and Romans, travelers on the Silk Road across Asia, and residents of the Amazon's Rain Forest. The Form 4 global emphasis involves communicating with school children living in the cities and cultures studied and engaging in a global outreach activity. Research-oriented lessons and a wide range of classroom research materials engage students in a myriad of activities.

### **Form 5**

The Form 5 Social Studies curriculum focuses on early American history. Using the textbook, *Social Studies Alive! America's Past*, material is presented chronologically with early units highlighting geography, Native American lands and cultural regions, along with reasons for European exploration of the New World. Early English settlements are studied. The curriculum places particular emphasis on colonial daily life and includes an optional trip to Colonial Williamsburg during Spring Break. During the second semester, students examine the growing rift between the colonies and Great Britain which leads to the American Revolution, and results in the founding of our nation.

## **Classroom Guidance**

The Lower School has a full-time counselor who works with students, teachers, and parents and also teaches classroom guidance lessons at the K-5 levels. Lessons include topics such as developing friendship, taking responsibility for

actions, learning positive communication skills, participating in compliment activities, making cards for sick friends or patients at local hospitals, roleplaying bullying prevention activities, and beginning to learn appropriate digital citizenship.

## **Technology Education**

The Lower School instructional technology program provides all students in Forms 1 - 5 opportunities to learn how to use various devices as effective tools for research and exploration, communication, and creative expression. Students are taught the mechanics of using devices such as Chromebooks and iPads, and are introduced to keyboarding, word processing and researching skills. They explore a variety of software programs designed to develop critical thinking skills and enhance curricular studies in their classrooms.

Technology projects in the *Collaboratory*, a collaborative learning space with Chromebooks and Makerspace technology, are developed to enhance current curriculum. Throughout the year the learning process continues as projects become more sophisticated. Lower School students keyboard reports, do Internet research, and create multimedia presentations. In the core subject classrooms, the teachers, using iPads and Clevertouch projection screens, instruct students with the latest in educational applications and software programs. Students use mini iPads and Chromebooks to link to the teachers' lessons.

## **Physical Education**

Students in Forms 1-5 attend physical education classes daily. The focus of the physical education program is to develop the whole child and emphasize healthy living. In Forms 1 to 3, special attention is given to the development of motor skills and fitness. This is done through games and activities that challenge each student, but also to provide a setting for each student to be successful. In Forms 4 and 5, in addition to fitness and skill development, students are introduced to team sports. Particular attention is paid to helping the child develop a positive self-concept through meaningful physical activities and student interaction.

### **The Mission of the Saint Mary's Hall Physical Education Program in Lower School is to:**

- Teach and demonstrate health and fitness issues that will give students the knowledge and skills to maintain lifelong health and fitness;
- Promote a lifelong desire to maintain a physically active lifestyle;
- Provide basic education in nutrition to allow students to make life-long sound nutritional decisions; and,
- Provide the tools to allow students to make appropriate social and moral decisions throughout adolescence and adulthood.



## **Spanish**

The Spanish program uses an aural-oral-visual approach to language learning. There is an emphasis on listening, understanding, and speaking the language through vocabulary acquisition, with gradual progression toward reading and writing. The language is presented in an interesting context with the study of Hispanic cultures integrated into the program. Students are encouraged to personalize what they have learned and to integrate their knowledge into everyday conversations. Music, songs, games, stories, and special activities supplement the program.

## **Fine Arts**

The fine arts program has a diverse and widely-recognized reputation for excellence. The fine arts faculty constantly strives to find new and innovative ways to further the vision of the fine arts department: “to instill a life-long appreciation and participation in the arts by fostering creative expression and developing a strong sense of self through the creative process.”

In Forms 1-5, art, drama and music are offered to all students on a weekly rotation, with dance being offered to interested students. Throughout the year students will actively perform in plays, concerts, musicals, and one major dance production.

The following fine arts courses have fees that are supplemental to regular tuition and fees:

- Private Music Lessons
- Dance

Parents dropping fee-based fine arts classes after the first 10 days of class will still be responsible for paying those fees and there will be no refunds.

## **Art**

Lower School Art fosters community for all students to explore artistic expression individually and collaboratively through drawing, painting, sculpture, interdisciplinary methods, and image-based storytelling. Each student will make a variety of projects which implement art history and the elements of art and design as the base of the curriculum. Forms 1-5 Art will build a foundation for students to gain problem-solving skills, self-confidence, increased teamwork, curiosity of research, and higher levels of thinking.

## **Drama**

Drama classes in all Forms have been carefully designed to encourage self-expression and cooperation with others, to develop speaking and performance

skills, and to build confidence and critical thinking skills. Story drama, mime, improvisation, tableau work and scene devising are major components of the Lower School Drama curriculum. Students in Forms 1-4 participate in musical performances, which are presented in the theater each school year. In Form 5 students participate in a culminating experience, when they collaborate to write and perform in an original drama production.

## **Music**

The positive music experience is a vital and necessary element in education. All students have the opportunity to gain knowledge of music in a variety of ways. Students create music through singing and playing various instruments, individually or with others. Composing, improvising, and reading and notating music are integral parts of this curriculum. Students also are taught to listen critically and evaluate music.

## **Library**

### **Form 1**

Form 1 students receive instruction in library skills throughout the year during their weekly 30 minute library class. Form 1 students learn to read for pleasure, demonstrate care for print and non-print materials, and demonstrate use of initial library vocabulary (author, title, fiction, nonfiction, and librarian). Location skills include cataloging (knowing the materials in the library have a specific arrangement and order), fiction and nonfiction, periodicals, and non-print materials will be taught. Interpretation skills introduced to the Form 1 students include evaluation and selection techniques, parts of a book, listening and viewing skills and literature appreciation.

### **Form 2**

Form 2 students will demonstrate an awareness of the general types of materials available in libraries, understand that fiction and non-fiction books have different areas in the library and will be able to identify parts of the title page. Form 2 students will be able to locate books in the “easy” section by the author’s last name. The student will understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction books and how to look up a book on the computer. Students will recognize Caldecott Award Books. The students will be introduced research skills utilizing the dictionary and encyclopedias in the Reference Collections. The library vocabulary for Form 2 will include cover, spine, call number, spine label, title page, parts of the title page. Students will be able to identify the publisher, place of publication and date of publication. Students will continue to hone their interpretation skills, listening and viewing skills and literature appreciation.

### **Form 3**

Form 3 students receive instruction in library skills throughout the year during their weekly 45 minute library class. The emphasis for Form 3 students in the library will be learning the Dewey Decimal System and initiating research skills utilizing the Saint Mary's Hall cadre of data bases.

### **Form 4**

A strong emphasis will be placed on research skills and the Reference Section of the library for Form 4 students during their library class. Students will know and understand the 10 main Dewey Classes and will locate appropriate material in the Reference Section and through the on-line data bases provided by Saint Mary's Hall.

### **Form 5**

Form 5 students will demonstrate proficiency in all previously taught skills and hone their research skills through weekly "Think Quests" in the library. All library classes will be coordinated with the classroom teachers in order to present more meaningful and pertinent learning experiences for the students.

## **Forms 1 – 5 Academic Policies and Procedures**

### **Homework**

Homework for students in Forms 1-5 is to solidify and reinforce information learned during the day. In all grade levels, the goal is to develop good study habits, time management, and understand the importance of daily preparation for class. The Lower School does not expect students to have an unbearable amount of home study. Homework is rarely given on weekends, except to make up missed work or to complete a project. Parental involvement should be to give support and encouragement during homework time, but the completion of assignments should be the responsibility of the students. There is an expectation that students complete their homework assignments on time.

### **Form 1**

In addition to daily reading, homework assignments should take no longer than 10 – 15 minutes.

### **Form 2**

In addition to daily reading, homework assignments should not exceed 20 minutes.

### **Form 3**

In addition to daily reading, students should expect 30 minutes to one hour of homework assignments each evening, except on weekends.

### **Form 4**

In addition to daily reading, students should expect 45 minutes to an hour of homework assignments each evening, except on weekends.

### **Form 5**

In addition to daily reading, students should expect an hour of homework each evening, except on weekends.

## **Students with Learning Differences**

Saint Mary's Hall is a college preparatory school whose mission includes providing students with the curriculum and skills necessary for success in college. Admission is selective, and students who enroll are expected to meet the academic expectations of the program. Occasionally, a student qualifies, through professional evaluation, to receive certain accommodations for learning differences. While being sensitive to these students' needs, Saint Mary's Hall reserves the right to limit the psychologist's specified recommendations. Once accommodations are granted, the student will be required to use them. Only a parent can waive, in writing, the use of these accommodations. To qualify for these accommodations, a student must have been professionally diagnosed by a certified professional whose credentials are appropriate to the learning difference. If testing is new or updated, an appointment must be made with the Learning Specialist or Head of Lower School for a parent-teacher conference. Each year, as the student is placed with new teachers, parents and the School must ensure the teachers are acquainted with the student's approved accommodation(s). All documentation for accommodations should be current (within the past three years) and on file in the Lower School Office.

The file will:

1. State the specific learning differences as diagnosed;
2. Describe the presenting problem(s) and relevant (educational and medical) developmental history;
3. Describe the comprehensive assessments (neuropsychological or psycho-educational evaluations), including evaluation dates, used to arrive at the diagnosis;
4. Describe the functional limitations resulting from the disability, as supported by the test results;
5. Describe specific recommended accommodations and provide a rationale explaining how these accommodations address the functional limitations;

- and,
6. Establish the professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about licensure or certification, education, and area of specialization.

Student and parent responsibilities include the following:

1. To adhere to the recommendations specified in the professional evaluation;
2. To take full advantage of extra help sessions offered by faculty, but not to expect individual tutoring in lieu of traditional classroom instruction;
3. To use books on tape;
4. To take responsibility for the reading of/and responding to tests and written instructions;
5. To complete the test within the day the test is given (This may mean that a student will need to come to school outside of class time); and,
6. To be responsible for communicating recommendations and updated testing to the Learning Specialist and Division Head.

At the end of each academic year, the school administration will assess whether Saint Mary's Hall can adequately accommodate the needs of a student with learning differences or whether that student would be better served in a different school setting.

## **Academic Support**

Saint Mary's Hall is a college preparatory school. For this reason, there is an expectation of maintaining high academic standards. Grades are reviewed quarterly and an individual academic support plan will be implemented for students who qualify for academic support. At the end of each quarter, a written notification will be given to parents of students whose grades meet the standard for Academic Support:

- 1 or more grades of D (below 70%)
- 1 or more grades of F (below 60%)

A student who has received Academic Support for two or more quarters and who has not shown sufficient improvement may not be eligible for reenrollment and may have his or her contract held at the discretion of the Head of Lower School.

## **Report Cards**

Report cards will be updated electronically in the Parent Portal at the end of each 9-week period.

## **Standardized Testing**

Standardized testing occurs in the spring semester for Forms 2-5. The **Otis-**

**Lennon School Abilities Test** and the **Educational Records Bureau (ERB) Comprehensive Testing Program (CTP IV)**, and the Writing Assessment program are used.

The **Otis-Lennon School Abilities Test (OLSAT)** measures the cognitive abilities that relate to a student's ability to learn in school. By assessing a student's abstract thinking and reasoning abilities, **OLSAT** supplies educators with information they can use to enhance the insight that traditional achievement tests provide. **OLSAT** scores may also be used to relate a student's actual achievement with his or her school ability. **OLSAT** assesses students' thinking skills and provides understanding of a student's relative strengths and weaknesses in performing a variety of reasoning tasks. This information allows educators to design educational programs that will enhance students' strengths while supporting their learning needs.

The **Educational Records Bureau (ERB) Comprehensive Testing Program (CTP IV)** measures verbal and quantitative ability and achievement. The test compares students to those who typically rank above the 80th national percentile on other standardized tests. The ERB Writing Assessment Program, for Forms 3-5, measures writing abilities and skills.

## **Release of Academic Records**

Academic records may not be released until the financial obligations of the student have been met in full. A student will not be allowed to continue classes, nor will grades or transcripts be released, if any account is in arrears.