

# Middle School Curriculum Guide

Grades 5 – 8



# Our Five Goals

## of the Sacred Heart Philosophy of Education



A personal and active faith in God



A deep respect for intellectual values



A social awareness which impels to action



The building of community as a Christian value



Personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom

# Table of Contents

<b>Our Five Goals</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Fine and Performing Arts</b>	<b>15</b>
<hr/>		<hr/>	
<b>Welcome</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Technology</b>	<b>17</b>
<hr/>		<hr/>	
<b>Curriculum Overview</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Options</b>	<b>18</b>
<hr/>		<hr/>	
<b>English</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>19</b>
<hr/>		<hr/>	
<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Physical Education</b>	<b>20</b>
<hr/>		<hr/>	
<b>Languages</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Digital Creativity</b>	<b>21</b>
<hr/>		<hr/>	
<b>Science</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>Personal Education</b>	<b>22</b>
<hr/>		<hr/>	
<b>Social Studies</b>	<b>13</b>		
<hr/>			

# Welcome



## **Welcome to Middle School!**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Middle School at the International School of the Sacred Heart.

When I think of our Sacred Heart Middle School students, I think of energy and enthusiasm, an eager curiosity and a willingness to learn. I think of their active participation in our strong and varied curriculum and the dedicated faculty that will guide them. I think of the sports they will practice, the music and drama they will perform and the art that they will create. I think of the many clubs that they can explore and the exciting after-school activities that they can involve themselves in. I think of their rich and diverse cultural backgrounds, languages and experiences, and the friendships that they will share and the values they will learn.

For me, Middle School is all about growing. Growing as a student and learning new academic content and skills is something that we all expect, parents, teachers, and students alike. At Sacred Heart, we certainly provide this and more. But, just as importantly, being a Sacred Heart Middle School student is about growing as a person and finding their place in their world. It is about strengthening their faith and beliefs. Strengthening their understanding of, and empathy for, those around them. And above all, strengthening their sense of belonging. Because for a Middle School student, really feeling like they truly belong to a community is so very important.

When I think of this, I am reminded of the first time I stepped into Sacred Heart as a new teacher in 2005. I instantly felt the intellect, the professionalism and the warmth of the faculty and staff, and the passionate intent with which my students wanted to learn. I immediately felt part of this wonderful community and I have been here ever since.

With that in mind, I welcome you again to our Middle School community at the International School of the Sacred Heart.

**Karen Wilson**  
Middle School Principal



***Growing with Courage and Confidence***



# Curriculum Overview



Middle Schoolers at ISSH study five core subjects (English, mathematics, foreign language, science, and social studies), three creative and performing arts subjects, physical education, home economics, ICT, and a variety of other courses including Options, through which students can choose from a range of non-academic courses in areas that might pertain to their interests or give them the opportunity to experience a new subject or pursuit. The number of courses per week are below:

Course	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade
English	6 periods	6 periods	6 periods	6 periods
Mathematics	6 periods	6 periods	5 periods	5 periods
Foreign Language	4 periods	4 periods	4 periods	4 periods
Science	4 periods	4 periods	4 periods	6 periods
Social Studies	5 periods	5 periods	5 periods	5 periods
2D Art	2 periods*	2 periods*	2 periods*	2 periods*
3D Art	2 periods*	2 periods*	2 periods*	2 periods*
Music	1 period	1 period	2 periods	2 periods
Drama	2 periods*	2 periods*	2 periods*	2 periods*
Home Economics	2 periods*	2 periods*	2 periods*	2 periods*
Physical Education	3 periods	3 periods	3 periods	3 periods
ICT	1 period	1 period	2 periods*	-
Options	2 periods*	2 periods*	2 periods	2 periods
Values	2 periods	2 periods	2 periods	1 period
Personal Education	1 period*	1 period*	2 periods*	1 period
Digital Creativity	1 period*	1 period*	-	-

\*An asterisk indicates courses that are one semester long.



## English

Middle School English at ISSH provides a framework to support students in developing a strong foundation of knowledge in the areas of reading, writing, grammar, oral skills, vocabulary, and effective use of language. Students read and learn to understand and analyze a variety of fiction and nonfiction texts including novels, short stories, essays, poems, and plays. They practice and gain competency in the writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing, in order to express themselves effectively through writing formats such as narratives, persuasive essays, literary analysis, and research papers. Focus is also placed on oral communicative skills—students gain confidence in expressing their thoughts and ideas clearly and accurately in class and group discussions and oral presentations. The use of media and technology is woven purposefully through the curriculum, and students will gain fluency in using technology for writing, collaborating, research, and expressing themselves, their thoughts, and their ideas through a variety of forms of media. Throughout the program, students are encouraged to read for pleasure outside of assigned texts.

### Grade 5 English

The fifth grade English program forms a bridge between the Junior School and the Middle School. Following a balanced literacy approach to the study of English, as well as making use of technological tools, the course is comprised of shared reading, independent reading, writing workshop, vocabulary and grammar study. Literature is a primary stimulus for both student discussion and a springboard to writing. Students engage in in-depth exploration and discussions about selected novels and short stories, and learn the practices of effective readers, including the selection of books and responding to reading.

Students also develop their understanding of the writing process including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing, and collaborate with their peers to improve their writing. They increase the depth and versatility of the vocabulary they use in their writing by collecting new words from their reading material and incorporating these new words into their writing. Oral skills are also a focus; through class and group discussions, reading aloud, and sharing their own work, students gain confidence in expressing themselves accurately and clearly.

### Grade 6 English

Sixth grade English further engages students and develops their skills through shared reading, independent reading, writing workshop, vocabulary and grammar study. Works of literature are studied in depth, and students develop skills in not only comprehension, but in analysis of the different literary elements. They learn to cite textual evidence in support of their analysis, determine a theme or central idea of a text, integrate information presented in different media formats, and engage in discussions about what they read. Through these small group and classroom discussions, students also strengthen

their oral communication skills and gain confidence in expressing themselves accurately and coherently. Students gain further familiarity with the writing process and strengthen their ability to write arguments and support their claims with relevant evidence, build well-structured narratives, and create informative and explanatory texts to clearly convey information. They conduct short research projects using a variety of technological tool and sources. Students engage in a balance of written works, visual and media projects, and oral presentations.

### Grade 7 English

Grade 7 English is designed to build on skills already acquired in Grades 5 and 6. It focuses on particular theme-based units which arise from a selection of young adult and literary texts read in class. These texts include novels, short stories, and poems, and non-fiction articles. These readings encourage critical thinking and reflection on fundamental questions and issues pertinent to middle-schoolers. To encourage students to read extensively outside of the classroom, each student also produces a book promotion on a novel of her choice. These texts also present a variety of voices and styles, allowing students to develop their vocabularies and grasp of grammar and syntax.

Group and classroom discussions provide a forum for students to continue to gain confidence in expressing themselves with accuracy, clarity, and coherence. Students continue to use the writing process firmly established in Grades 5 and 6. They write in a variety of lengths, from one- to multi-paragraph essays, and forms, including analytical and narrative. They will explore and express in writing various elements of literature, such as the relation between theme and character, setting, and plot.

### Grade 8 English

Eighth grade English applies the skills acquired in previous grades to expand and develop the literacy, language, writing, and speaking skills necessary to successfully meet the challenge of the High School English program. Students read a selection of short stories, two novels, and a play, advancing their recognition and analysis of various elements of literature and literary devices including characterization, setting, conflict, theme, and symbolism. Non-fiction texts and other materials enhance the study of literature. Students broaden their vocabularies through words introduced in the works of literature studied.

Grade 8 students confidently use the writing process mastered in prior grade levels to craft strong, cohesive essays and narratives. In addition to creative writing, 8th grade students will learn to plan, organize, and compose a literary analysis essay. Research writing skills, including appropriate citations, are also covered. Throughout the year, students express themselves with accuracy, clarity, and coherence in discussions, dramatic readings, and presentations. They use technology to produce and publish writing and present information and ideas efficiently, as well as to interact and collaborate with others.



# Mathematics

Middle School mathematics at ISSH builds on the strong foundation of numeracy and mathematical skills gained in Junior School and creates a bridge to the High School curriculum, preparing each student for continued success at higher levels. In each grade level, the mathematics program introduces and develops new topics and skills while strengthening and developing confidence in foundational skills. Middle School mathematics courses create a forum for students to not only gain mathematical fluency, but also to develop an appreciation of the power and beauty of mathematics at appropriate levels of concrete and abstract development. Investigational and practical tasks are fully integrated into the work using a range of modes of learning, including doing, observing, talking and listening, discussing with other students, reflecting, drafting, and writing. Mental mathematics and problem-solving are used throughout the course. Students engage in activities and projects which introduce them to a variety of tools and technology used for mathematical calculations and functions, and use digital and analog media to share data and findings.

## Grade 5 Mathematics

Fifth grade students cover a variety of topics across the areas of numbers and computation, measurement and geometry, data and statistics, and algebra. Building on their studies in Grade 4, they engage in activities that deepen their understanding of numeracy and the nature of numbers. Particular focus is placed on the development of skills in understanding and computing fractions, decimals, and percentages. Students learn to calculate the areas and perimeters of shapes, identify and name a variety of polygons, and identify lines of symmetry. They strengthen their knowledge of grids and graphs,

practicing plotting coordinates, identifying location, and reflecting, rotating, and translating shapes around a grid. Over the course of the year, students gain confidence in using graphs, charts, and diagrams as a way to display and understand data. They collect different types of data, draw and interpret bar charts, pictographs, stem and leaf diagrams, and pie charts, and identify errors in displayed data. They also learn to find averages, medians, and means in sets of data. Students also engage in projects and group work to strengthen understanding.

### Grade 6 Mathematics

Mathematics in Grade 6 focuses heavily on geometry topics while also building on numeracy and algebraic concepts developed in Grade 5. Students have the opportunity to use different instruments to measure to different levels of accuracy. They gain confidence in measuring angles and bearings, using correct angle notation, and working with supplementary and complementary angles, and angles within parallel lines. They also gain fluency with using protractors and compasses to construct triangles and regular polygons. Through an exploration of the properties of 3D shapes, students learn to

use isometric paper to draw 3D shapes and draw nets for 3D objects. They develop a strong working knowledge of the calculations used to find the area of more complex shapes and surface area and volume of prisms, and practice calculating missing dimensions from a known area or volume. The course covers algebraic topics such as linear number patterns, substituting values into equations, plotting linear functions, and writing equations for straight line graphs. Students also continue to develop their skills in computing fractions, decimals, and percentages.

### Grade 7 Mathematics

Grade 7 mathematics is divided into Enriched and Standard groups after careful consideration by the Grade 6 mathematics teacher, the Head of Department, and the Middle School Principal. Each group covers the same course work, with smaller class sizes for the Standard groups, allowing students to make a smooth transition from one group to the other when necessary. Students build on previous study to delve deeper into geometry and algebra concepts while continuing to strengthen various areas of numeracy skill and knowledge. The algebra components of the course focus on gaining fluency with manipulating algebraic equations. Students learn to simplify

expressions, combine like terms, factor out common factors from equations, and solve equations with one variable. They practice analyzing word problems and write equations to solve them. Geometry topics include using the Pythagorean Theorem, applying area formulas for triangles, quadrilaterals, circles, and complex shapes, calculating perimeters, and finding surface areas and volumes for prisms and cylinders. Students also consolidate and expand on their knowledge of fractions and percentages, and learn to calculate simple interest, ratios, and rates. They read and draw stem and leaf plots to understand data.

### Grade 8 Mathematics

Like Grade 7, Grade 8 is divided into Enriched and Standard groups based on each student's performance in Grade 7 or on the admissions assessment. There are two smaller classes for the Standard stream and one larger class for the Enriched stream. Each group covers the same course work, which allows for students to transition between streams when necessary. Course material builds on the skills and concepts covered in Grade 7. The number and computation topics covered include exponents and indices; scientific notation; calculation of percentage increases, decreases, and interest; and scale factor. In the geometry and measure-

ment units, students will use Pythagoras' Theorem; work with angles on parallel lines, identify congruent triangles and similar figures; and learn trigonometric ratios to find sides and angles of right triangles. In the probability and statistics units of the course, students will predict outcomes; draw Venn diagrams and use them to solve problems; learn set notation; and learn to find the five-number summary and draw a boxplot. They also learn to solve linear and simultaneous linear equations; work with speed and distance-time graphs; expand, factor, and solve quadratic expressions; and graph functions in the algebra units.



# Languages

The study of an additional language at Sacred Heart is integral to our commitment to International Mindedness. Students not only learn the skills to communicate in their language of choice, both through writing and speaking, but also develop cultural competencies as they delve deeper into the traditions and cultural background of the countries linked to their language of choice. Students have the option of studying Japanese (as a first or second language) and French, with a variety of leveled classes offered within each language stream in order to meet the needs of learners with diverse previous experience learning their chosen language.

## French Language

Language as communication is the basic concept of the Middle School French program. There are two levels offered to students who are placed according to their proficiency in the four language skills. Students will learn to read, to speak, and to write about a variety of topics beginning with themselves and reaching out to the world around them.

Grammar, sentence structure and vocabulary are presented in dialogues, descriptions, short stories, poems, small plays, drill exercises, educational games, songs, as well as using videos and Internet resources. They are integrated through specific projects and productions, such as dialogue presentations and skits. Emphasis is placed on vocabulary expansion, verb tense mastery and pronunciation. Students are encouraged to extend their language skills beyond the program when possible.

Within the study of the language students will also get to discover French culture, as well as other cultures included in *La Francophonie*, or French-speaking countries. Each year, the French Department focuses on one country from *La Francophonie* and organizes events and workshops in relation to this country, in order to deepen the understanding of students, and to make the language come alive.

The levels taught are in line with the DELF's exams from the French Ministry of Education and the levels of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

### Japanese as a First Language

This course is designed for native Japanese speakers and follows the Japanese language curriculum program used in Japanese schools. Students follow a balanced program, which incorporates development in the four language skills.

Mirroring and complementing the skills learned in English classes, students develop critical thinking, as well as linguistic sensibility and sensitivity through reading fiction and nonfiction, appreciating poetry, and writing on varied topics. Focus is placed on ensuring students gain confidence in their language expression and are fluently able to use relevant and accurate expressions in writing and speaking. The Japanese as a First Language course also emphasizes *kanji* skill, supporting the development of native-level reading skills. Students are given the opportunity to connect with their own experience and to foster a positive attitude to Japanese culture and other cultures. Teachers use varied methodology in class and students are placed in levels according to their language ability.

### Japanese as a Second Language

Students who would like to learn Japanese as a second language are placed in different levels according to their language ability. The aim of these courses is for students to acquire sufficient competence in Japanese to meet their communicative needs, to gain knowledge and appreciation of Japanese culture, and to enjoy using the language so that they may become life-long learners. Whether beginners or intermediate learners of Japanese, special focus is placed on developing all four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, including *hiragana*, *katakana*, and *kanji*.

Through making connections to their daily lives and interests, as well as to Japanese cultural events and the world around them, students learn in an interdisciplinary way that fosters international mindedness. They are challenged to express their thoughts and ideas in Japanese through role-plays, skits, interviews, essays, journals, projects, presentations, and more.

### English Language Acquisition in Middle School at ISSH

For students with limited experience learning in an English-language environment, ISSH offers an English Language Acquisition (ELA) course to help students to refine their academic English language skills. Students enrolled in the ELA (Language) program receive additional English language instruction while other students are taking French or Japanese. ELA students use these periods for theme-based English language study with a communicative and genre-based focus. Content material is often based on the themes and the language skills addressed in mainstream classes.

ELA students in this program have generally achieved a strong communicative competence in their interpersonal use of language, but require additional ELA instruction to support development of their academic language skills. This course aims to develop academic reading and writing skills, in particular. As student independence is also one of the goals of the ELA program, these classes also aim to further develop learning-how-to-learn skills, as well as compensatory strategies to enable students to continue to learn language independently. Instruction and assessment focus on skills which enable students to self-monitor, self-correct, and self-assess in order to become active and independent language learners. Growth in English is monitored on a regular basis through a variety of language-based tasks.

Once a student has acquired a level of competency that allows her to function in the content areas along with her peers, she may transfer from the program to take either Japanese or French.



## Science

Science at ISSH is presented as a field of inquiry rather than just as a body of knowledge. Therefore, the courses emphasize the development of the skills of scientific investigation as well as the acquisition of knowledge and the understanding of scientific concepts. Laboratory work constitutes an important part of each course.

Middle School science is designed to introduce students to the concepts and skills used to learn science at a higher level. It bridges the inquiry-based, interdisciplinary, real-world learning at the center of the IPC science units in the Junior School and the advanced science curriculum in the High School which culminates in a variety of AP and other high-level courses. Grade 5, 6, and 7 science make up a three-year general science course which develops competence and confidence in the areas of laboratory work, using scientific equipment, the scientific method, and the main areas of science. The Grade 8 course is designed to prepare students for the High School science courses.

### Grade 5 Science

Grade 5 science is the beginning of a three-year general sciences course in the Middle School. The course is designed to provide students with a basic but broad understanding of science, and is taught with an emphasis on skill and knowledge development through practical work. During the year, fifth grade students are introduced to the basic concepts of scientific study that will serve as a foundation for future courses, including laboratories and equipment, the scientific method, the main areas of science (biology, chemistry and physics) and study techniques such as lab reports and research.

Students are oriented in the importance of laboratory safety and are introduced to science equipment and skills used in science investigations. They learn to describe the properties of substances around us and the changes they undergo. They also study the topics of "life basics," which is an introduction to the characteristics of life, types of living organisms, and the life cycles of animals. They explore the concept of energy, investigating different forms of energy and their uses. Students produce a variety of work including lab reports, research projects, and reflections.

### Grade 6 Science

The second year of the three-year Middle School general science course, this class provides students with a basic but broad knowledge of science that serves as a foundation for future science courses in High School. The course is taught with an emphasis on skill and knowledge development through practical work. As well as learning science skills i.e. observation, recording data, analyzing information, planning and carrying out experiments, the students will also develop their skills of researching and group work. Students will investigate a wide variety of integrated science topics, including the water cycle and properties of water; the main gases

and their properties; water and air pollution; the properties of sound and light, and how the eyes and ears work; ecology and how living things interact with each other and their environment; different types of forces and their effects; the structure and function of the human body systems; and the solar system and the effects of the Sun and the Moon on the Earth. Students will continue to develop their confidence producing lab reports, conducting research, preparing written reports, and giving oral and multimedia presentations, all of which prepare them for success in their future science study.

### Grades 7 Science

In the third and final year of the Middle School general science course, students will cement their basic and broad foundation of science knowledge that will be further developed in future science courses. Emphasis is placed on developing skills and knowledge through practical, hands-on lessons and assignments. The curriculum not only focuses on the development of scientific skills, such as observation, recording data, analyzing information, and planning and carrying out experiments, but also on strengthening students' research skills and the ability to work collaboratively in teams and groups. Topics

covered include microbiology; the classification of animals; work and machines; electricity; respiration and photosynthesis; and evolution and fossils. Students engage in hands-on learning activities such as examining cells through a microscope, conducting controlled experiments to investigate bacterial growth, and constructing simple electrical circuits. Upon the completion of Grade 7 science, students will have developed a foundation of knowledge in biology, chemistry, and physics, as well as confidence in conducting experiments and creating lab reports that will prepare them for High School.

### Grade 8 Science

This course is an introduction to the physical principles at the foundation of all sciences. It is designed to offer a strong introduction to the physical sciences: chemistry, physics and Earth science. There is also a focus on accuracy and good scientific practice throughout the year, which prepares students for future science studies in High School. Considerable emphasis is placed on laboratory work. Topics covered include units and density; the study of matter, the movement of particles, and the differences between elements, mixtures, and compounds; plate tectonics; forensic science and the

collection of scientific crime scene evidence; the periodic table; rock types, the rock cycle, weathering, and erosion; separating techniques; temperature, the effects of heating, and the Kelvin scale; and heat transfer, weather, and weather maps. Students will conduct hands-on laboratory experiments and study specific, real-life case studies to deepen their understanding and contextualize their studies. The curriculum also focuses on the development of writing skills for lab reports and research, preparing students for success in High School science.



## Social Studies

The Middle School social studies courses at ISSH are designed to give students a core understanding of world history and geography, which in turn becomes a foundation for higher-level learning in High School. After cementing key skills such as the reading of maps and atlases; timelines; identifying and referencing primary and secondary sources; and understanding bias and credibility of sources, students explore the histories of ancient civilizations such as Mesopotamia, Greece, and Egypt, East Asia, the Roman, Islamic, and Byzantine empires, Europe, Africa, and pre-Columbian America. This balanced approach provides students with the basic understanding needed to prepare them for High School, in which the study of history becomes more nuanced, with the end goal of giving students a working knowledge of history and current affairs in order to develop their ability to tackle world issues and engage in meaningful discussion of current events. Middle School social studies also introduces students to historical research and imbues an understanding of finding, assessing, using, and citing sources correctly, which prepares students for future academic research in High School and beyond.

### Grade 5 Social Studies

The fifth grade social studies curriculum provides a foundation for Middle School students in both geography and history. Students learn the main themes of geography: place, location, movement, region, and human-environment interaction. They also study historical practices, such as chronology and timelines; primary and secondary sources; author's point of view and bias, and they then figuratively step back in time to study the rise and fall of Mesopotamia, ancient Egypt, and ancient Greece focusing on the features of civilizations. To introduce the concept of researching using credible sources, students are tasked with writing

a biography of a historical figure. They learn how to ask questions that will help drive their research, to choose and cite sources, and to organize their findings into a non-fiction report following an essay structure. The course is designed to provide a firm basis of historical knowledge and primary geography skills, foster historical imagination, and teach students the basic geographical location of the places studied. It also develops the writing, reading comprehension, and oral expression skills that students will use in future social studies courses.

### Grade 6 Social Studies

The sixth grade social studies curriculum further develops students' understanding of history and geography while making connections to today's world whenever applicable. This course introduces the civilizations of East Asia with particular emphasis on the cultural appreciation of Japan and China. Focus is placed on map reading and atlas skills, and students gain confidence using these geographical tools to better understand why early civilizations chose to settle in the areas they did while making comparisons to today. Students further develop their research and writing skills, and are challenged to use details and examples to

support their writing, begin to understand primary sources and the context in which information was recorded, and learn to interpret sources with accuracy. The course aims to enrich students' experience of living in East Asia, to foster an understanding of China's influence on the region, and to provide a historical background to the culture of Japan. Students explore the concept of culture and how it is viewed between countries, compare forms of government and analyze the ways in which they are effective or not, explore the ways in which trade develops, and make comparisons between the past and today.

### Grade 7 Social Studies

The seventh grade social studies curriculum centers around study of the growth and development of Western countries from the fall of Rome to the Age of Exploration. The theme of the year is change: fall of Rome and the rise of the Islamic, Byzantine and European states; cultural changes of the Renaissance and Reformation; changing geographical horizons due to the voyages of exploration, and the Scientific Revolution. Through this course, students gain an appreciation of change and continuity, cause and effect, and the interaction of cultures in history. They continue to develop their geographical skills, and gain an understanding of

the geography of the regions studied. The curriculum also continues to focus on written, oral, and comprehension skills, as well as the identification and use of sources in research. Students become more familiar with primary sources and learn to identify bias. Over the course of Grade 7 social studies, students engage in research papers, group projects, and presentations, and hone their skills in note-taking and answering written prompts with detail and citing examples that have been studied in class. They also engage in interactive debates, simulations, and role-plays to deepen their understanding of the topics.

### Grade 8 Social Studies

The eighth grade social studies curriculum traces the history of Africa and Pre-Colombian America from prehistoric times to 1500. Students examine themes such as the influence of geography and cultural diffusion on the development of certain civilizations and the causes for the rise and decline of certain civilizations, making comparisons and connections to today. Focus is placed on the importance of anthropology and archaeology in learning about and understanding the past. Students dig into key questions, such as why civilizations first appeared along river systems and how culture traits are transferred

and transformed over time. They analyze the role of technology in the rise and fall of civilizations, and are challenged to find the similarities and differences between the different civilizations. Students strengthen their geography skills, honing their abilities and gaining confidence in reading charts, maps, and graphs. They also engage in analysis of primary and secondary sources with special emphasis placed on determining the context and bias in primary sources. Students continue to develop their oral skills through discussion, debate, and simulations.



## Creative and Performing Arts

Middle School students at ISSH take a broad range of creative and performing arts courses. Students take classes in visual arts, music, drama, culinary arts, and handcrafts each year, which allows students to try out each artistic area offered at Sacred Heart to prepare them to select their arts of choice in High School. It also gives students the opportunity to gain exposure to different artistic areas that they may not have experienced before, and to learn to appreciate different types of arts in their lives. The home economics course equips students with life skills they may use as they grow up. Additional arts courses are available through the Options program (see page 18 for details).

### Music

Middle School music aims to develop an appreciation of music through a varied schedule of activities including guided listening, note-reading, improvisation, and composition. Performance is an important part of the course, and over the four years of Middle School, students learn to effectively rehearse and gain confidence singing two and three-part songs, singing accompanied and acappella songs, and singing songs from different musical eras. They also play instruments from different cultures around the world. An emphasis is also placed on understanding rhythmic notation, aural listening and developing sight-reading skills to improve students' music literacy. Students also further their understanding of music theory by identifying intervals, key signatures, major scales and whole/half steps. By eighth grade, students develop their music reading, aurally recognize intervals, and practice sight-reading in every class.

The fifth and sixth grade courses focus mostly on folk songs and multicultural songs of different eras. Students are challenged to deepen their knowledge of music as reflected in different cultures. In seventh grade, the music and drama classes collaborate throughout the first quarter of the school year to create musical theatre performances where students experience performing in small ensembles, focusing on more advanced singing and instrumental repertoire later in the year. The eighth grade curriculum covers periods such as Renaissance and Baroque music. Students experience singing repertoire in small ensembles and develop stage confidence through their performances.

## Visual Arts

### 2D Art and Design

The course promotes an enjoyment and appreciation of art while developing the necessary skills to enable the realization of successful works of art. Each year, students are introduced to different mediums, materials, equipment, and techniques and then encouraged to practice them through creating original works of art. Emphasis is placed on both creativity and skill development. The course also challenges students to develop and improve their observational skills and their ability to create thoughtful, original, and well-composed finished pieces.

Each class period, students plan and complete projects that give them experience in the areas of drawing and painting. Topics covered include portraits, still-life drawings, charcoal, chalk pastels watercolors, acrylic paints, printmaking, and design through cellophane stained glass-style art.

### 3D Art and Design

Middle School 3D art covers the exploration of ways to create functional and sculptural three-dimensional artwork. Students experience and gain confidence in using different media such as clay, wire, papier-mâché, and paper to create meaningful and personal artworks. Throughout the course, students learn to develop original ideas using sketchbooks, and to revise and reflect on their creative processes. Students will be introduced to contemporary 3D artists and art-related careers.

## Drama

Middle School drama introduces students to the world of acting, theater, and public speaking. The Grade 5 course focuses on the development of group work through improvisation and basic drama skills, as well as building confidence through a variety of simple drama games. Students also gain a foundational understanding of voice projection, enunciation, spatial awareness, focus and eye contact. Grade 6 drama centers around aspects of storytelling, introduction to different styles of theatre from around the world, and looking at different themes through process dramas. Students learn to construct a narrative, gain basic theatre performance skills, and develop collaboration skills. In Grade 7, students analyze and perform a script, create a scripted story, explore voice work through shadow puppetry, and experience musical theatre. They learn about stage design and the relevant technical vocabulary. Finally, in eighth grade drama, students explore contemporary styles and texts through epic theatre and physical theatre by examining the use of the body as a vessel for expression. Students also enhance their skills to analyze a performance, experimenting with traditional texts, such as Shakespeare, and with new styles to create a short performance.

## Home Economics

The home economics course teaches students to be independent in the kitchen and enjoy the creative process of cooking. In fifth and sixth grade, students learn the basis of the culinary arts and acquire knowledge about kitchen and food safety, nutrition, basic kitchen equipment, measuring techniques, and cooking terminology and techniques. In the higher Middle School grades, the cooking portion of home economics culminates in such activities as a cooking demonstration speech and a cooking project together with kindergarteners. Seventh and eighth grade home economics expands to include not just cooking but several other areas of life skills. Students learn about child development and learn first-aid skills. In the final topic area, interior design, students learn the basic elements of design and color scheme, and express their style through a room design project.



## Technology

Middle School Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) courses are intended to give students a practical foundation of knowledge that will prepare them to succeed in a world of ever-changing technological advances. All Middle School students at ISSH take ICT in Grades 5, 6, and 7, preparing them to move on to the coding curriculum in Grades 9 and 10. The main objective of the Middle School ICT course is to develop each student's independence on the computer through engaging assignments in which skills can be transferred to all other curriculum areas. A heavy focus is also placed on Internet best practice, online safety, and digital citizenship. Students with an interest in computer science are also encouraged to enroll in relevant Options courses (see page 21).

As fifth grade is the first year in which students carry their own laptop at ISSH, the ICT course plays an integral role in acclimating students to preparing and submitting work and assignments digitally, and to the variety of ways technology impacts their learning in all subject areas.

In Grade 5, students set up and learn to manage an individual email account and gain experience using Google Drive to manage files as well as save, share, and work collaboratively. They learn to research online, develop critical literacy skills to assess the content of online research, and gain experience presenting their research findings in an informative and visually-appealing manner. Grade 5 ICT also covers the basic concepts behind computer programming.

Students continue to develop and hone their skills in Grade 6, and gain proficiency using Google Drive and its varied functions to manage files as well as save, share and work collaboratively. They create interactive slideshows that progress in a non-linear format, and use spreadsheets to plan and budget. They also further develop their basic coding skills using the Python programming language.

Grade 7 students further develop their coding and logical thinking skills using the Python programming language, giving them a solid foundation in the concepts of programming and computer science. They carry out a survey project using design thinking and are tasked with presenting their findings in a persuasive manner. They also complete an ICT capstone project using programs of their choice.

# Options



The Options program aims to broaden students' educational experiences by giving them the opportunity to enroll in classes relevant to their particular areas of interest or future aspirations. Students enjoy taking the opportunity to learn a variety of new skills, including practical ones—in this way, the Options program encourages a love of learning. Many Options courses also develop group skills and cooperative learning, and many encourage the creative use of the imagination.

Options courses include:

## Broadcasting, Film, and Performing Arts

- Documentary Making
- Jazz Dance
- Podcasting

## Visual Arts and Crafts

- Crochet
- Japanese Craft and Culture
- Jewelry Making
- Sashiko (traditional Japanese stitching)

## STEM

- IT Explorers and Coding
- VEX-IQ Robotics
- Math Lab
- Chess

## Communication and Global Studies

- Debate
- Global Issues
- Introduction to Korean



## Values

The aim of all Values courses is to encourage students to discover and define the values by which they live, to show concern and respect for all people and for their faith, to reflect on their own behavior, and to value prayer and spirituality. Students are guided in connecting religion to real-life experiences like community, prayer, and reflection, which helps them understand why religion matters to many people around the world, even if they don't belong to a religion themselves.

In Grade 5, students explore the five major world religions, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, and Sikhism, by learning about the people who helped shape them, such as Jesus, Muhammad, and Guru Nanak. They also discover how religious communities express their values through stories, celebrations, and acts of care. Prayer and meditation are introduced as ways people seek peace, connection, and meaning in their lives. By encouraging reflection, curiosity, and respectful learning, this course helps our students appreciate both the diversity and shared values of the world's beliefs.

Sixth and seventh grade Values focus on Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, and Sikhism. Students take a close look at Christianity through the lens of human experience and shared values. They explore its teachings with a focus on understanding how religion can shape choices, community, and identity while encouraging each student to reflect on their own values. Students also deepen their understanding of the fundamental beliefs, symbolisms and rituals of world religions, furthering their knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the diversity and shared values of the world's beliefs.

Grade 8 Values is a non-denominational Christian-based course that encourages students to consider their own faith and to explore what having a religious view of life means. Students will reflect on their own experience and beliefs, as well as the experiences and beliefs of others, through the themes of communication, celebration, and values. Students consider ideas about prayer, freedom and responsibility, decision-making and reconciliation. Students are encouraged to discover and define the values by which they live, to manifest concern and respect for others, to reflect on their own behavior and to value prayer and worship. An understanding of the common strands in all religions is fostered.

# Physical Education



The Middle School physical education curriculum focuses on developing lifelong fitness and health attitudes in students. The courses guide students through physical activities that strengthen and enhance their understanding of physical health by using a variety of fitness and health disciplines that promote healthy habits and thought processes that will benefit students for the rest of their lives.

Throughout this course, students will participate in rhythm and dance activities, invasion games and leadership, and net and wall games. They will dig into sports science and investigate ways to improve human performance, health, and well-being through physical activity. Focus is also placed on the development of collaboration skills and teamwork. The units incorporate project-based learning to allow students to use their own interests, work with others and use a range of technologies to support their learning throughout each unit. Students are assessed in both formative and summative assessments and a PE journal is used by students to reflect on their learning and engage in continual feedback.

Over the course of grades 5 through 8, students participate in a number of sports and activities to gain and strengthen understanding of skills, game play, rules and strategies. The course also includes fitness testing at each grade level.



## Digital Creativity

The Middle School Digital Creativity course, taken for one semester each in Grades 5 and 6, is a transdisciplinary exploration into the use of technology for artistic expression. Students build key skills in a variety of softwares, while engaging in the opportunity to express themselves and develop their creativity.

In both the Grade 5 and Grade 6 courses, the curriculum is divided into two units. The first unit focuses on producing and editing music digitally. In fifth grade, students learn the basics of GarageBand and compose their own musical tracks, which they can then export to be stored and played on their devices. In Grade 6, they build on the skills learned in Grade 5, composing and editing more complex original music tracks.

The second unit focuses on 3D design using voxel-based software. Students in Grade 5 build and showcase their own unique 3D creations. The following year, they take their skills to the next level using Tinkercad, a free web app for 3D design, electronics, and coding. They design a 3D model that illustrates their personal motto and create their version of a perfect living space.

The aim of the Digital Creativity curriculum is to encourage students to explore their creative potential and provide an opportunity to use programs students may not have experienced thus far in their education. The course encourages self-expression, thoughtful design, and confidence with digital creation tools. Students who enjoy Digital Creativity may choose to go on to explore their interests through such courses as Introduction to Computer-Aided Design, where students learn the basics of CAD software, and Band, where students learn to professionally record music and music videos in High School.

# Personal Education



Middle School Personal Education is an engaging and interactive course designed to empower students with essential life skills that promote self-confidence, responsible decision-making, and healthy relationships. Through a variety of hands-on activities, group discussions, and real-life scenarios, students develop a deeper understanding of themselves and others.

Students take Personal Education from Grades 5 to 8, which builds a foundation for the High School Personal Education course. The goal of the course is to support students in developing self-awareness, self-confidence, and a sense of personal responsibility to allow students to effectively work with and relate to others, and to resiliently face the demands of an increasingly changing society and world.

The Personal Education curriculum encourages students to explore their strengths, manage their emotions effectively, and build positive communication skills. A range of issues that relate to physical, social, and emotional well-being are explored, including self-identity, safety and boundaries, puberty and menstruation, relationships, and an age-appropriate introduction to sex education and sexuality. The course also introduces critical concepts such as digital safety, goal-setting, and basic financial literacy to prepare students for the challenges of adolescence and beyond. By fostering empathy, teamwork, and leadership qualities, this course nurtures well-rounded, confident, and responsible individuals who are equipped to make informed choices and contribute positively to their communities.



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Learn more about our Middle School curriculum here!

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