2025-2026

PROGRAM HANDBOOK

AND COURSE CATALOGUE











SAINT JOSEPH SCHOOL DISTRICT
MIDDLE SCHOOL GIFTED & TALENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

NOTES/QUESTIONS:



DIGITAL HANDBOOK

SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS THE HANDBOOK DIGITALLY!
*BE SURE TO FOLLOW DISTRCT REGULATIONS REGARDING PHONE USE, THOUGH!

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WELCOME TO MIDDLE SCHOOL SCHOLARS!



Welcome! We're so excited to have you here! This year is going to be full of exciting opportunities, and this catalogue is designed to help you navigate the Middle School Scholars (MSS) program.

MSS programming is a mixture of self-selected enrichment opportunities and life skills learning offered within the walls of SJSD's middle schools!

OUR MISSION

The Middle School Scholars program empowers students at all four district middle schools to explore their identities and grow socially and intellectually through engaging, challenging, and student centered learning experiences.

OUR VISION

To cultivate a community of confident, curious, and career-ready scholars, prepared to thrive in high school and a rapidly changing world.

OUR VALUES

The MSS program encourages students to **question**, **connect**, and **contribute**.

- **question**: be curious, be interested, explore your world
- **connect**: take your learning, your experiences, and your unique perspective and use them to solve problems, innovate, and build strong relationships.
- **contribute**: collaborate, create, and help make the world a better place

WHO'S WHO @ MSS?



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QUALIFYING FOR MSS

To qualify for the in Middle School Scholars program, students must show evidence of **at least 3** of the following data points.

READING ACHEIVEMENT

Advanced MAP testing or iReady scores in ELA from the previous school year.

In the future, Mastery View Predictive Assessments taken in previous school years will be considered in place of iReady.

MATH/SCIENCE ACHEIVEMENT

Advanced MAP testing or iReady scores in math or Science from the previous school year.

In the future, Mastery View Predictive Assessments taken in previous school years will be considered in place of iReady.

ABILITY TESTING

Designation of "giftedness" through school district testing (NGAT or other data) **OR** an NGAT score in the 90th percentile or above.

*All students should be tested for gifted services by SJSD in second grade. Qualification for MSS does not qualify a student as "gifted." If you have questions about gifted testing, feel free to reach out to elisabethalkier@sjsd.k12.mo.us for more information!

ACCESS TESTING

ACCESS scores showing more than 1 year's worth of growth in a single school year or other data showing rapid language acquisition for ELD students.

PREVIOUS ENROLLMENT/ ATTENDANCE

Qualification for **and** participation in Middle School Scholars during the previous school year **OR** 95% attendance for previous school year.

Due to limited space and high enrollment in GATE, Bode is only currently able to serve identified gifted students. We are hoping to extend opportunities to the talent development pool at Bode in future school years.

MSS WEEKLY SCHEDULE

WHEN DOES MSS TAKE PLACE?

MSS programming happens during the school day once a week. Students will be pulled from their typical classes to participate in programming. More detailed calendars will be provided to students when the program begins.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Robidoux Middle School	Truman Middle School	Bode Middle School	Spring Garden Middle School	Alternates weekly for social emotional learning lessons.

WHAT COURSES ARE OFFERED AND WHEN?

A tentative schedule of course offerings is located at the end of the handbook. This schedule could change based on student interest or availability of supplies. Information about changes will be updated within the digital copy of this handbook and will be added to the Middle School Scholars web page once it is live.

WHAT CLASS(ES) WILL STUDENTS MISS AT SCHOOL WHEN PARTICIPATING IN MSS ACTIVITIES?

MSS cannot always adjust its schedule to prioritize certain subjects. If missing a class is a concern, students should choose MSS section that best fits their needs. Students will be able to see which class period they will miss when they register for courses.

CAN CLASSROOM TEACHERS KEEP STUDENTS IN CLASS INSTEAD OF SENDING THEM TO PARTICIPATE?

While extension and enrichment opportunities are important for student growth, so is instructional time in the typical classroom. If a teacher is concerned about your student missing instruction, they can choose to keep your student in class. It is very important for MSS students to keep on top if school work, especially on their designated MSS days.

Teachers who choose to keep MSS in class are responsible for communication with parents regarding their decision to keep students in class. If you have questions about a school's policy on teachers with holding them from MSS courses, please reach out to that teacher or the building principal.

Students that have been identified as gifted by the school district, however, are entitled to gifted programming as part of their identification. **MSS programming can only be withheld from gifted students at the parent's or guardian's request.**

IF A STUDENT IS IN ISS OR OSS, WILL THEY STILL BE PULLED FOR THEIR MSS GROUPS?

No. Students in ISS (In-School Suspension) or OSS (Out-of-School Suspension) will not be pulled for MSS groups or activities for the duration of their ISS/OSS time. This includes students identified as gifted.











PARTICIPATION AND EXPECTATIONS

DO STUDENTS HAVE TO PARTICIPATE IF THEY DON'T WANT TO?

While participation in MSS programming is optional, students are expected to enroll and engage in programming for the duration of the school year. Students cannot opt out for one course offering and then opt back in later. More information about attendance can be found in the section regarding attendance.

IS MSS FOR A GRADE?

No. MSS programing is currently ungraded, but a form of self-assessment aligned with the SJSD Portrait of a Graduate is currently being developed for implementation in semester s. Students will also track progress and growth related to their specific courses as they participate. This growth data and other student work will be shared at showcase events.

DO STUDENTS NEED TO MAINTAIN CERTAIN GRADES IN THEIR TYPICAL CLASSES TO STAY IN MSS?

Concerns about grades will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. While maintaining "good" grades is important, some aspects of enrichment and extension programming is equally important to the well-being of high ability students.

If a student falls behind due to struggles with understanding and mastering class content, it may be in the best interest of the student to remain in their typically scheduled classes or chose courses that are not scheduled during those class periods in the future.

ARE STUDENTS RESPONSIBLE FOR MISSED ASSIGNMENTS OR INSTRUCTION FROM THEIR REGULAR CLASSES WHILE IN MSS?

Students may be required to make up missed work from class at that teacher's discretion, but due dates for that day's assignments will be extended to the following class period. This does not apply to long term projects or assignments that have been assigned in advance-- those are still due on that due date, and students should communicate with their teacher about how to submit that work before going to their MSS course.

MSS cannot always work around individual classroom assessment calendars. If students are testing in class that day, it is up to the student and their classroom teachers to decide on a plan for making up either their test or their time at MSS. Since students know that MSS is always on the same day at their school, it should be easy to make proactive plans to avoid missing any assessments. MSS will work around district assessments like diagnostics, benchmarks and MAP testing.

Students who have been identified as gifted by the school district should follow the district's GATE handbook in regard to work missed in their typical classroom, as MSS is part of their state mandated learning opportunities:

> *"While students are in the GATE Program, they are not required to make up work missed from the regular classroom from their GATE Day. However, they must demonstrate an understanding of the concepts presented. Long-term assignments and projects due to the traditional classroom on GATE Day still need to be turned in. Students should work with the classroom teacher to determine when the project will be turned in for the appropriate grade. A student having difficulty keeping up with their regular classes while attending the GATE Program is encouraged to discuss their concerns with their classroom teacher and GATE teacher."*

WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS SURROUNDING ATTENDANCE?

Concerns about attendance will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. If a student's attendance falls below 90%, this could affect their academic performance in the typical classroom. In this case, the student should refer to expectations related to grades and academic performance listed on the previous page.

As far as participation in MSS programming is concerned, consistent attendance in MSS is vital since many courses rely on teamwork. Missing sessions affects both the student and their peers. **Choosing to stay in class instead of MSS for 3 consecutive sessions results in unenrollment (with parent contact after the 2nd).**

If a gifted student chooses to opt out of programming through choosing not to attend MSS courses, they will have to reapply for gifted programming the following year. Information about reapplication for gifted programming can be found in the SJSD GATE handbook.

BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

All MSS students are expected to follow the expectations set by each middle school building regarding behaviors. Not following these expectations will result in consequences as set by the building's handbooks.

Many of the activities in enrichment/extension learning use equipment or materials that require caution and adherence to safety expectations. Students who demonstrate that they cannot follow expected safety guidelines will not be able to participate in those activities. In these sections, students will review and sign safety contracts so that expectations are clearly explained and understood.

Students serving ISS or OSS will not be eligible to participate in MSS on those days regardless of gifted status.

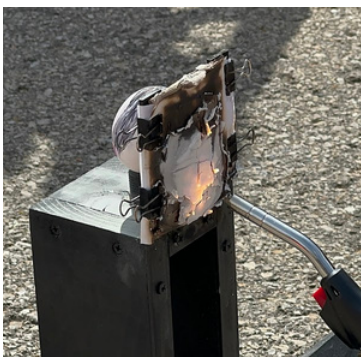
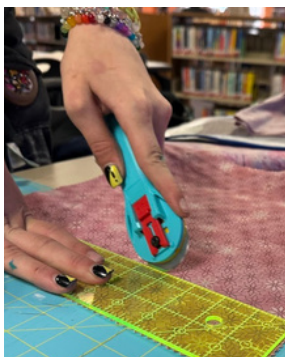
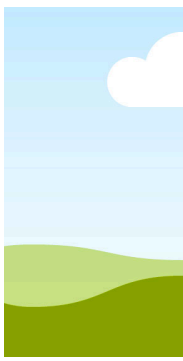
RESPECTING SHARED SPACES

At all four middle school buildings, MSS takes place in a shared learning space. Whether this space is in the school's library, a shared classroom, or a conference room, students are expected to follow that space's expectations even if those expectations are not outlined in this handbook. These expectations will be discussed in the first week of programming.

MSS students are expected to help to clean up any messes made in the MSS workspace. Unless instructed by the MSS teacher, students should not leave the learning space until it is cleaned up to its original state.

While students may be excited to work on or access any stored projects during non-MSS days, this can only be done at the convenience and with the permission of adults in charge of those spaces.





STUDENT SAFETY AND EQUIPMENT USE POLICIES

The learning happening at MSS should be fun and engaging, but it also needs to be safe. We have the following safety and use guidelines in place to ensure this.

STUDENT SAFETY WITH HANDS-ON LEARNING

Some MSS courses involve hands-on learning that requires the use of potentially dangerous tools (like soldering irons or 3D pens). Some activities could cause injury if students are not making safe choices.

For any courses using potentially dangerous supplies, students will be required to review and sign a safety contract. Violations of the safety contract could result in removal from the course or the program.

Copies of these contracts can be provided to families upon request.

WORKING WITH DELICATE EQUIPMENT

Some courses will use delicate equipment (like digital cameras or robotics) that are costly to replace if broken. For these courses, students will review and sign use contracts that ensure they they are educated on how to properly handle delicate equipment.

Students who damage or destroy equipment as a result of not following these expectations will be expected to pay for replacement or repairs, and their actions could result in removal from the course or program.

Copies of these contracts can be provided to families upon request.

GIFTED EDUCATION SERVICES & TALENT DEVELOPMENT



At the middle school level, MSS serves both the role of talent development and mandated gifted programming for students identified as gifted.

WHAT DOES BEING "GIFTED" MEAN?

The state of Missouri defines giftedness as "those children who exhibit precocious development of mental capacity and learning potential as determined by competent professional evaluation to the extent that continued educational growth, and stimulation could best be served by an academic environment beyond that offered through a standard grade level curriculum."
More information can be found at https://dese.mo.gov/quality-schools/gifted-education .

HOW DO STUDENTS QUALIFY FOR GIFTED PROGRAMMING?

SJSD has a process for identifying gifted learners that is outlined in the SJSD Gifted Education handbook. This handbook can be found at the following location: https://www.sjsd.k12.mo.us/departments/academic-services/gifted-education .

IS PROGRAMMING DIFFERENT FOR GIFTED STUDENTS AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT STUDENTS?

While there are some differences in programming policy for identified gifted students at the middle school level, many of the course offerings and options remain unchanged for students joining MSS through the talent development pool. Talent development programs strive to include students of high ability in interest-driven activities so that students can collaborate and learn through shared learning.

MSS, GIFTED EDUCATION, AND PLCS

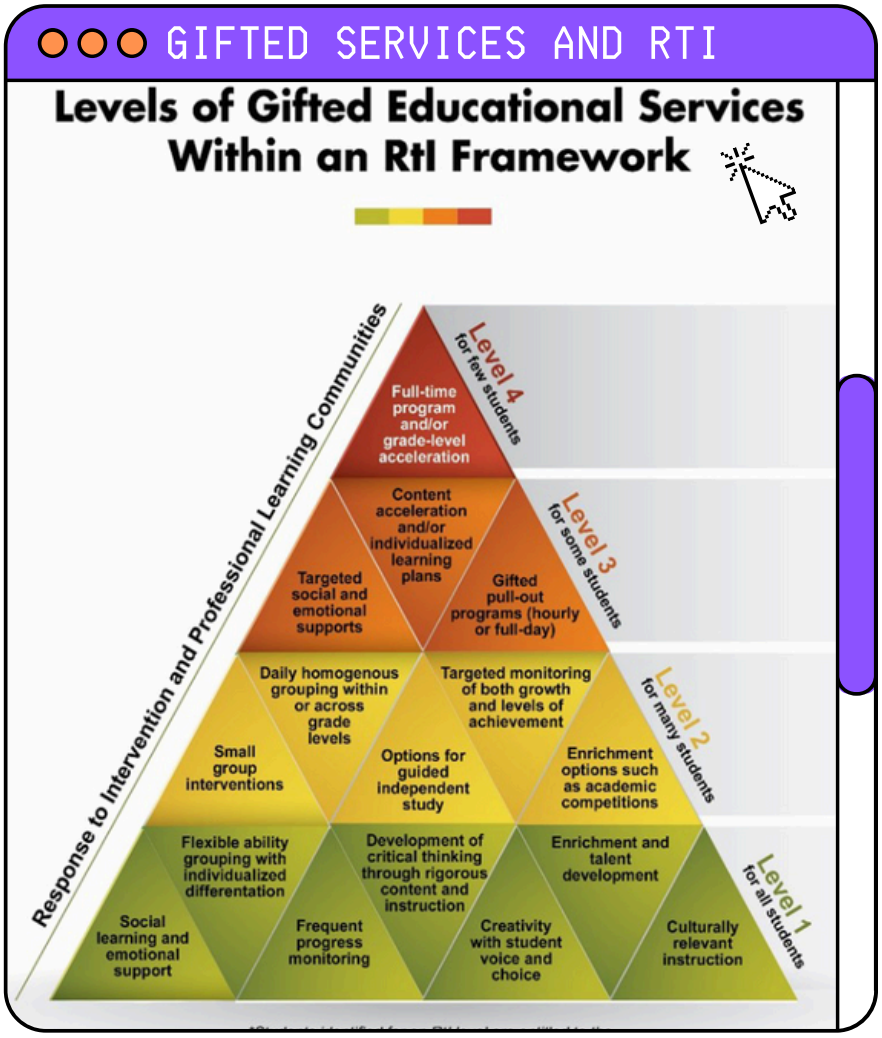


Image from https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/intro-gifted-learners

Each middle school in the Saint Joseph School District is currently in the process of becoming a PLC (Professional Learning Community) School.

As part of each middle school's PLC, MSS is one form of RtI (Response to Intervention) for both identified gifted students and high ability/achievement peers.

WHAT IS INTERVENTION?

Intervention is individualized student instruction tailored to the specific needs of that student. MSS is a form of intervention aimed at providing appropriate challenges and learning opportunities to high ability and high achieving students.

Sometimes there are misconceptions about intervention and how it is used in school settings. **Intervention is not a synonym for remediation**-- extension , enrichment, and creative exploration are also forms of intervention. Intervention, in whatever form it may take, is not negative; it is the type of learning that each individual student needs to help them continuously grow and develop their skills.

NEURODIVERSITY AND HIGH ABILITY LEARNERS



At MSS, we embrace and celebrate all kinds of minds.

What does it mean to be neurodivergent?

According to Harvard Medical School, "neurodiversity describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one 'right' way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits." In many cases this specifically refers to the experiences of people with neurological or developmental differences such as autism, anxiety, ADHD, or other conditions.

Neurodiversity and High Ability Students

Recent research suggests a that there may be an overlap in high ability children and neurodivergence, which may explain why some high achievers are intrinsically motivated, passionate about their interests, and naturally curious.

Programs like Middle School Scholars are designed to help all students-- including neurodivergent students-- to learn about the way they think, their strengths, and how to embrace what makes you different. As part of our programming opportunities, students will have access to life skills learning that helps with executive functioning skills (organization, time management, responsibility) and social skills (public speaking, self-advocacy, effective work place communication).

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A "TWICE EXCEPTIONAL" LEARNER?

The National Associate of Gifted Children defines twice exceptional students as "gifted children who have the characteristics of gifted students with the potential for high achievement and give evidence of one or more disabilities as defined by federal or state eligibility criteria." This includes gifted students who have:

- attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
- autism spectrum disorder
- behavioral/emotional disorders
- physical disabilities
- specific learning disabilities

2e students have unique needs that should be supported at school. MSS hopes to meet these needs through providing an inclusive space that prioritizes self-advocacy and resilience.

FAMOUS & NEURODIVERGENT

- Muhammad Ali- Dyslexia
- Simone Biles- ADHD
- Terry Bradshaw- ADHD
- Billie Eilish- Tourette's Syndrome
- Dewayne "The Rock" Johnson- Depression
- Demi Lovato- Bipolar Disorder
- Bella Ramsey- Autism
- Ryan Reynolds- Anxiety Disorder

MSS has a zero tolerance policy for bullying and unkind language. Students who do not follow this policy risk removal from the program.







A NOTE ABOUT COURSE OFFERINGS:

This workbook is a living document that updates and changes as needed. Please refer to the the digital copy at this URL (or follow the QR code included to access the mort up-to date version. Please note that:

- Final course offerings are determined by interest level, enrollment, and location.
- When and where courses are offered are subject to change based on student selection, available space in buildings, and other factors.

THIS VERSION UPDATED MAY AUGUST 27, 2025

DIGITAL HANDBOOK

SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS THE HANDBOOK DIGITALLY!











MSS CURRICULUM AND GIFTED LEARNERS

MSS programming is designed with gifted and talented children in mind, and its creation is guided by Missouri's Gifted Learner Outcomes, the Portrait of a Gifted Learner, and standards established by the National Association for Gifted Children. More information about how programming aligns to these standards is included alongside each course in the course catalogue.

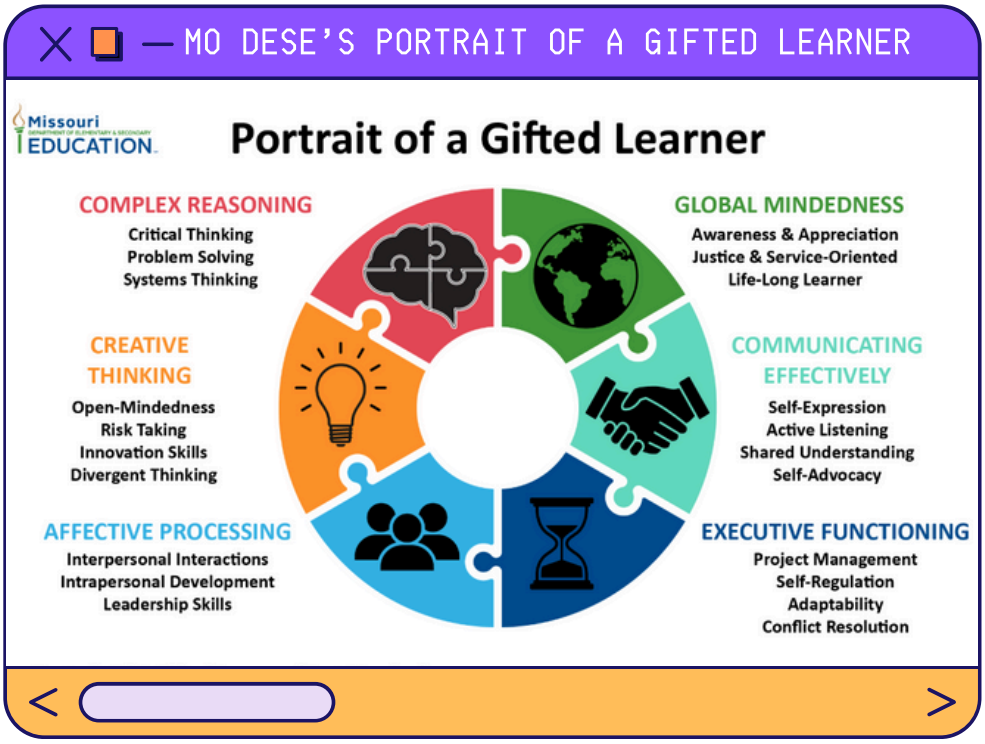


Image from https://dese.mo.gov/quality-schools/gifted-education

MSS coursework is also informed by student choice, course variety, and an appropriate level of academic and social-emotional challenges. Middle school is a transitional time where students are learning about themselves, their roles in their community, and their futures, and the MSS program hopes to provide experiences that help guide students through those discoveries.





For information about SJSD's gifted education policies, please refer to the district's GATE handbook linked here or found at https://www.sjsd.k12.mo.us/departments/academic-services/gifted-education.

THE SJSD PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

MSS coursework is aligned with SJSD's Portrait of a Graduate, encouraging future-ready skills and traits as middle school students work towards high school careers.



ENGAGED CITIZEN

- I can express my opinions in a respectful and constructive way to contribute to discussions.
- I can listen to and respect others' ideas and perspectives, even if they are different from mine.
- I can be a role model by showing respect, kindness, and responsibility in my school.
- I can find ways to give back to my community by volunteering or helping others.

RESPECT

- I can treat everyone with kindness, no matter their background or differences.
- I can follow school and community rules to help create a safe and respectful space.
- I can accept responsibility for my actions and learn from my mistakes.
- I can be patient and understanding when working with others.

COURAGE

- I can see failure as an opportunity to grow, not a reason to quit.
- I can remind myself that effort and persistence lead to success.
- I can advocate for myself by seeking extra support when needed.
- I can take responsibility for my mistakes and work to improve.

PROBLEM SOLVING

- I can use logic and reasoning to develop possible solutions.
- I can break down a complex problem into smaller, manageable parts.
- I can reflect on what worked and what didn't to improve my approach.
- I can handle setbacks and mistakes by learning from them.

COMMUNICATION

- I can respectfully disagree and explain my reasoning.
- I can participate in group discussions, building on others' ideas.
- I can listen to others' perspectives and respond respectfully.
- I can support my opinions with facts, examples, and reasoning.

GRADES 6-8

MSS COURSE CATALOGUE

DIGITAL HANDBOOK

SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS THE HANDBOOK DIGITALLY!

The Middle School Scholars program strives to create courses that enrich and empower students academically, socially, and emotionally. The course list is organized into "Enrichment" and "Life Skills" categories, and listed in alphabetical order.

HOW TO READ EACH LISTING:

Title

How this experience aligns with SJSD's Portrait of a Graduate

Related Missouri Gifted Learner Outcomes (MOGLO) domains addressed in this course

BREAKOUT!



COMMUNICATION
PROBLEM SOLVING
RESPECT

MOGLOs:
Complex Reasoning
Affective processing

Using a mixture of teamwork, leadership skills, and problem solving, with with your peers to break into a locked box full of prizes!

Course Description and Essential Question(s)

WHAT IS INTEREST BASED ENRICHMENT?



Enrichment is an opportunity for students to explore an area of interest in further depth than in a typical classroom setting. For high-achieving and high-ability students, these experiences let them dig deeper, be curious, and learn beyond the curriculum.

MSS offers a variety of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) enrichment options each quarter. These experiences are created based on student input and new options are added each year.

3D PRINTING & DESIGN



PROBLEM SOLVING
COURAGE

MOGLOs:
Complex Reasoning
Creative Thinking
Executive Functioning

Using 3D pens, 3D printers, and computer aided design (CAD)n software, create 3D objects with bot practical and impractical solutions to everyday problems. Discover the creative possibilities of using 3D printing tools in art, engineering, and design.
Essential Question: How can 3D printing tools be used to create both functional and artistic designs?

ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY



PROBLEM SOLVING
RESPECT
ENGAGED CITIZEN

MOGLOs:
Global Mindedness
Creative Thinking

Learn about famous archaeological dig sites, learn how to excavate your own artifacts, and explore what it means to learn about human history. You'll also work as anthropologists to explore how environments affected human life... and death.

Essential Question: How does learning about human history through artifacts and human remains shape our understanding of today?

BUILD YOUR OWN ECOSYSTEM



PROBLEM SOLVING
RESPECT
COURAGE
ENGAGED CITIZEN

MOGLOs:
Global Mindedness
Creative Thinking
Executive Functioning

Build your own self-sustaining, bioactive ecosystem with plants, insects, and gastropods from both native and non-native Missouri environments. While those grow and thrive, learn about how the ecosystems in NW Missouri are affected by factors like invasive species, weather, and human interaction.

Essential Question: How can we create a self-sustaining ecosystem that mimics nature? Why is it important to study and understand native wildlife in our local environment?

🚀DESTINATION, MARS!



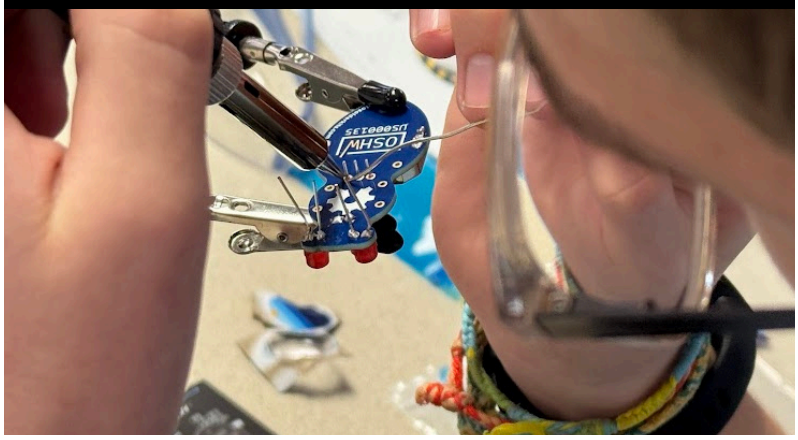
COMMUNICATION
PROBLEM SOLVING
RESPECT
COURAGE
ENGAGED CITIZEN

MOGLOs:
Complex Reasoning
Affective processing
Creative Thinking
Global Mindedness
Executive Functioning

It's estimated that humanity will reach Mars by the 2030s! Explore some of the science that it will take to reach the Red Planet and make it habitable for human life, including ablative heat shields, rovers and landers, and hydroponics stations as you play the role of a space colonist.

Essential Question: How can humanity effectively prepare for a habitable Mars colony?

🔋ELECTRONICS 101



COMMUNICATION
PROBLEM SOLVING
COURAGE

MOGLOs:
Complex Reasoning
Affective processing
Executive Functioning

Wire your own electronics and learn the basics of using a soldering iron, breadboards, and other electronics tools. Leave with your own moving machine and a better understanding of how the electronic items we use each day function.
Essential Question: How does one use a knowledge about how electricity works to design and create simple electronics?

👩‍💼ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND CAD



COMMUNICATION
PROBLEM SOLVING
RESPECT
COURAGE
ENGAGED CITIZEN

MOGLOs:
Complex Reasoning
Affective processing
Affective Processing
Global Mindedness
Communicating Effectively
Executive Functioning

Design, prototype, create, market, and (finally!) sell your own small business products using CAD (computer aided design) tools and machines like CO2 Laser cutters and 3D printers.
Essential Question: How can you turn an idea into a successful product using design and prototyping tools? Why is prototyping essential in creating your own products?

🎒IF I RAN THE SCHOOL



COMMUNICATION
PROBLEM SOLVING
RESPECT
COURAGE
ENGAGED CITIZEN

MOGLOs:
Complex Reasoning
Affective processing
Global Mindedness
Executive Functioning

Discover what the inner workings of a school day look like for the adults that "run" the school-- and then spend some time helping an SJSD principal with their work day.
Essential Question: Who and what are involved in making a school building run successfully?

💰MARKETING AND ADVERTISING



PROBLEM SOLVING
RESPECT
COURAGE

MOGLOs:
Complex Reasoning
Creative Thinking
Executive Functioning

Work with an aspiring entrepreneur to develop a marketing plan for their small business. Your team will develop a branding plan, business cards, and photograph/video products for advertisements.
Essential Question: How do marketing professionals work with clients to create effective advertising for their products?

📷PHOTOGRAPHY



PROBLEM SOLVING
RESPECT
COURAGE

MOGLOs:
Complex Reasoning
Creative Thinking
Executive Functioning

Discover the history of photography, build your own pinhole camera, and learn about the basics of taking even better digital photographs.
Essential Question: How do different tools and media affect the ways that one creates and shares photographs?

PODCASTING



PROBLEM SOLVING
RESPECT
COURAGE

MOGLOs:
Complex Reasoning
Creative Thinking
Executive Functioning

Write, record, and produce your own podcast series using recording tools and digital effects.
Essential Question: How can writers use both written and audio techniques to create an engaging podcast.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SPACE IN VISUAL ARTS



PROBLEM SOLVING
RESPECT
COURAGE

MOGLOs:
Complex Reasoning
Creative Thinking
Executive Functioning

Learn about how you use positive and negative space to create your own linoleum stamps and cyanotype prints.
Essential Question: How do different tools and media affect the way that one creates and shares art? How can positive and negative space be used effectively to create a cohesive image?

🎭SHAKESPEARE IS FOR EVERYONE



COMMUNICATION
RESPECT
COURAGE
ENGAGED CITIZEN

MOGLOs:
Creative Thinking
Global Mindedness
Communicating Effectively

Shakespeare wrote his plays for the average person-- discover what it was like to live in Shakespeare's England and attend one of his performances, learn how to read those fancy lines, and choreograph your own swordfight!

Essential Question: What elements are required in a successful theatrical performance, and how do these elements work together to convey information about the human experience?

🧵TEXTILES AND SEWING



COMMUNICATION
PROBLEM SOLVING
COURAGE

MOGLOs:
Complex Reasoning
Creative Thinking
Executive Functioning

Learn about how to design, cut, and construct items from fabric and other fibers using sewing machines and other tools. Leave with a constructed item of your own design and the pattern to make it again!
Essential Question: How can fabric and fiber be transformed into functional or artistic creations?

🖌️SCHOLASTIC ART AND WRITING AWARDS

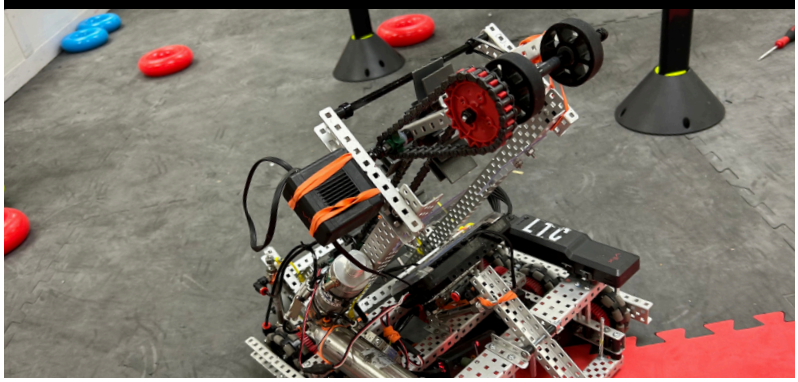


COMMUNICATION
PROBLEM SOLVING
RESPECT
COURAGE

MOGLOs:
Creative Thinking
Communicating Effectively

Explore the options for submission to the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards and work to create, revise, and publish your own art or writing submission with a group of peers.
Essential Question: How do creators use example media to inspire originality in their own work?

🤖VEX ROBOTICS



COMMUNICATION
PROBLEM SOLVING
COURAGE

MOGLOs:
Complex Reasoning
Creative Thinking
Executive Functioning

Learn how to build and program a competition level robot using VEX5 robotics kits and programming software.
Essential Question: How do engineering, coding, and design come together to create a functional robot? How can and communication impact the success of a robotics project?

WHAT ARE LIFE SKILLS?



If a student has qualified for this program, they probably already know how important it is to do their best academically. Sometimes, though, those "common sense" skills can accidentally get left behind when students focused on things like social lives, sports, new school expectations, and all the other things that middle school throws at you.

These "life skills" courses are designed to help students practice those skills that we need in our everyday lives. Students will meet on 5 Fridays throughout the school year for "life skills" learning about a variety of topics.

BREAKOUT!



COMMUNICATION
PROBLEM SOLVING
RESPECT

MOGLOs:
Complex Reasoning
Affective processing

Using a mixture of teamwork, leadership skills, and problem solving, with with your peers to break into a locked box full of prizes! It's like an escape room that you are breaking into instead of escaping!

- **Essential Question:** How do I work as part of a team to solve problems and reach a common goal?

🤔COULD YOU BE AT HTC?



COURAGE
ENGAGED CITIZEN

MOGLOs:
Affective processing
Global Mindedness

Hillyard Technical Center is SJSD's center of career and workplace learning. Learn about the opportunities that await you in High School from professionals at HTC through guest speakers and a guided, interactive tour of the HTC Campus.
Essential Question: How does technical education prepare students for both college and the workforce? What can we learn from real-world professionals that can help shape our career goals?

I'M BORED... NOW WHAT?



COMMUNICATION
COURAGE
ENGAGED CITIZEN

MOGLOs:
Communicating Effectively
Executive Functioning

High achieving students often get bored in day-to-day situations for a variety of reasons. Learn about ways to combat boredom, focus when you need to, and increase your opportunities for learning.
Essential Question: How can I advocate for my needs, maintain focus, and take responsibility for my actions when something is not engaging.

INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION



PROBLEM SOLVING
COURAGE
ENGAGED CITIZEN

MOGLOs:
Communicating Effectively
Executive Functioning

Have a topic that you'd love to learn more about? Create an action plan for an independent research study of your choice. Gather data, review your findings, and share what you've learned with a group of your selection.
Essential Question: How can you manage and share interest-driven research?

INTERVIEW BASICS

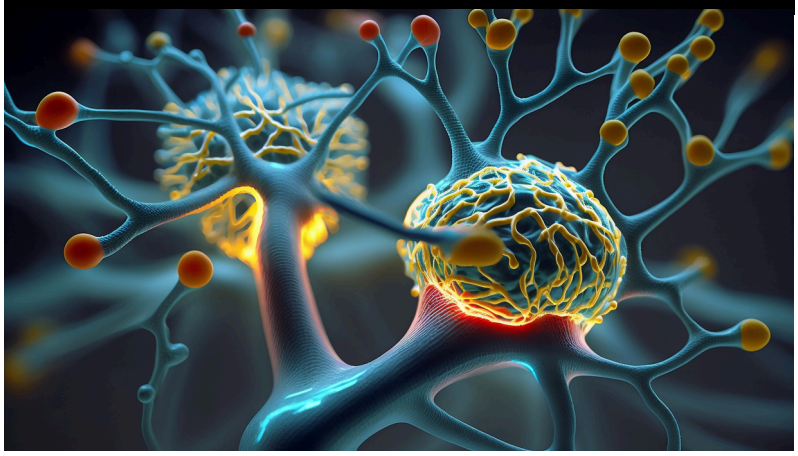


COMMUNICATION
PROBLEM SOLVING
COURAGE
ENGAGED CITIZEN

MOGLOs:
Communicating Effectively
Executive Functioning

Your first job could be right around the corner! Learn what interviewers look for in potential employees and engage in mock interviews with local professionals.
Essential Question: How can you effectively prepare for an interview?

NEUROSCIENCE



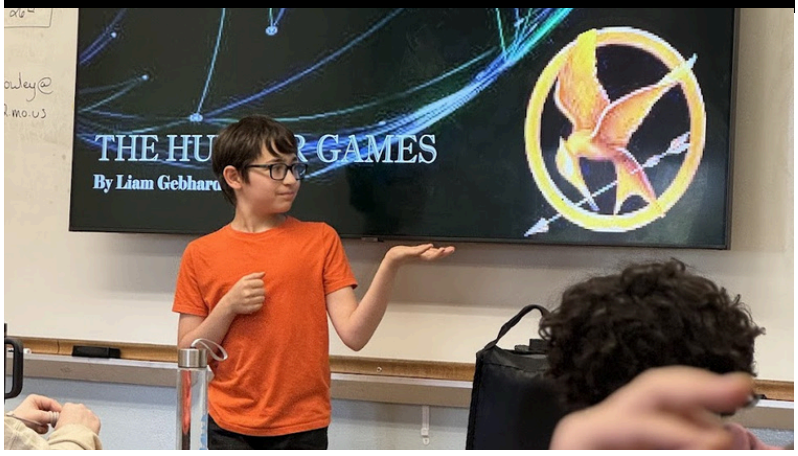
RESPECT
COURAGE
ENGAGED CITIZEN

MOGLOs:
Affective Processing
Executive Functioning

Your brain is a complex piece of machinery! Discover the inner workings of what makes the human brain do the things that it does, and learn some life hacks for "tricking" your brain into doing what you need it to do.

- **Essential Question:** How can knowledge of how the brain functions help someone better understand their own thinking?

PUBLIC SPEAKING



COMMUNICATION
RESPECT
COURAGE
ENGAGED CITIZEN

MOGLOs:
Complex Reasoning
Affective processing
Communicating Effectively
Executive Functioning

Public speaking is one of the most common fears a student can have, but it's really not all that intimidating if you know what you need to do! Learn how to rock your next presentation while preparing "mini-speeches" on your favorite areas of interest.

- **Essential Question:** How does someone convey a message while effectively holding the interest of an audience?

💵SHOW ME THE MONEY!



PROBLEM SOLVING
ENGAGED CITIZEN

MOGLOs:
Complex Reasoning
Creative Thinking
Executive Functioning

Studies show that many young people don't know how to properly budget as they approach adulthood. Learn the basics of money management through real-life scenarios and future planning.

- **Essential Question:** What skills does someone need to effectively manage their own money?

📣SELF ADVOCACY 101



COMMUNICATION
PROBLEM SOLVING
RESPECT
COURAGE
ENGAGED CITIZEN

MOGLOs:
Complex Reasoning
Creative Thinking
Affective processing
Communicating Effectively

Speaking up for yourself can be difficult-- especially when working with so many teachers and adults in secondary school years. Learn how to effectively advocate for your needs as an individual and take responsibility for your success.

- **Essential Question:** How can I effectively advocate for my unique needs with the adults at my school.

WHAT IS EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING?



COMMUNICATION
RESPECT
COURAGE
PROBLEM SOLVING

MOGLOs:
Affective processing
Creative Thinking
Communicating Effectively

Executive functioning skills are the gears in our brains that help us successfully navigate our daily lives. Learn about your own strengths and weaknesses and tips and tricks to help you master your own EF skills!

- **Essential Question:** How can self reflection help me better understand my executive functioning abilities.

BUILDING LEVEL COURSE SCHEDULE

This is a living document online at www.bit.ly/MSSHandbook .

This version was last updated on August 22, 2025.

It's important to note that this schedule will likely change based on student interest or available space in school buildings. Some courses may be offered in multiple sections if they are popular. Others may only be able to be offered in one section or at one location due to the number of materials available or where certain tools are able to be housed in building.

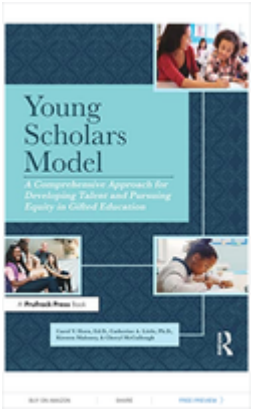
- **Bolded classes** last for an entire semester.
- Starred* class have a smaller capacity. For these sections, 8th grade students are given priority, as 7th grade students can take those classes the following year.
- If some courses are popular, they may be offered a second time in another quarter in place of less popular options.

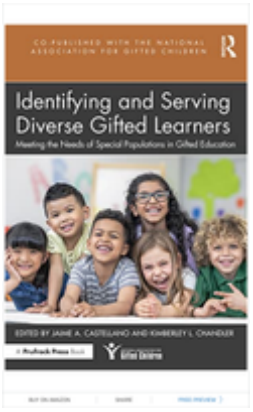
School	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Bode	• Scholastic Art and Writing Awards • Marketing and Advertising* • Positive and Negative Space • **VEX Robotics***	• Archaeology and Anthropology • Electronics 101* • Entrepreneurship and CAD* • **VEX Robotics**	• If I Ran the School • Photography • Textiles and Sewing • Entrepreneurship and CAD* • **Destination Mars**	• Shakespeare is for Everyone • Build Your Own Ecosystem* • Podcasting • **Destination Mars**
Robidoux	• Scholastic Art and Writing Awards • Marketing and Advertising* • Positive and Negative Space • **VEX Robotics***	• Archaeology and Anthropology • Electronics 101* • 3D Printing • **VEX Robotics**	• If I Ran the School • Photography • Textiles and Sewing • **Destination Mars**	• Shakespeare is for Everyone • Build Your Own Ecosystem* • Podcasting • **Destination Mars**
Spring Garden	• Scholastic Art and Writing Awards • Marketing and Advertising* • Positive and Negative Space • **Destination Mars**	• Archaeology and Anthropology • 3D Printing • Textiles and Sewing • **Destination Mars**	• If I Ran the School • Photography • Electronics 101* • **VEX Robotics***	• Shakespeare is for Everyone • Build Your Own Ecosystem* • Podcasting • **VEX Robotics***
Truman	• Scholastic Art and Writing Awards • Marketing and Advertising* • Positive and Negative Space • **Destination Mars**	• Archaeology and Anthropology • Textiles and Sewing • Entrepreneurship and CAD • **Destination Mars**	• If I Ran the School • Photography • Electronics 101* • Entrepreneurship and CAD • **VEX Robotics***	• Shakespeare is for Everyone • Build Your Own Ecosystem* • Podcasting • **VEX Robotics***

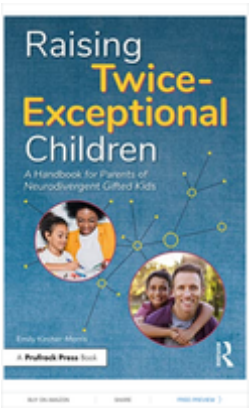
APPENDICES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

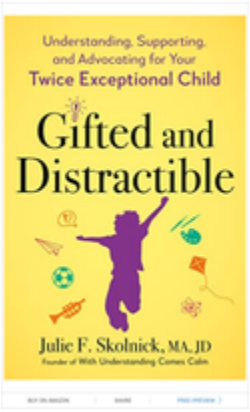
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Items below are hyperlinked. Access the digital copy of the handbook from www.bit.ly/MSSHandbook .



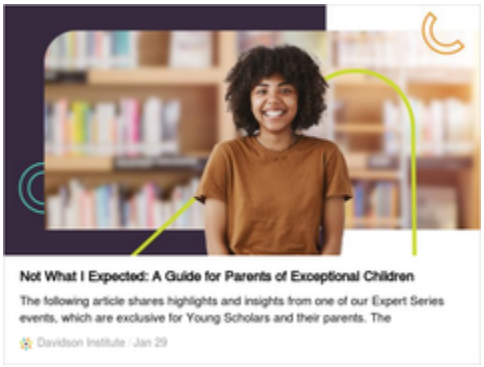






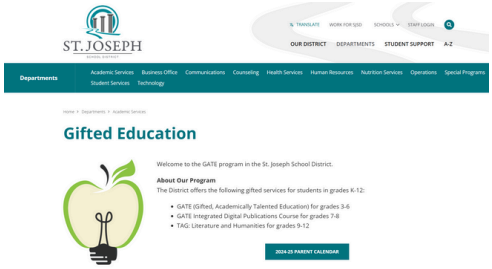












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MSS STUDENT CLASS WAIVER

Middle School Scholars (MSS) Attendance Overview

MSS gives gifted students opportunities beyond the typical classroom. To participate, students will miss some time from their regular classes.

Important Notes for Families:

- **Consistent attendance** in MSS is vital since many courses rely on teamwork. Missing sessions affects both your student and their peers.
- MSS **cannot adjust its schedule** to prioritize certain subjects or class periods. If missing a certain class period is a concern, students should choose an MSS course that is not scheduled during that class period.
- Students identified as gifted **do not always need to make up missed assignments**, but they **must understand concepts covered** while they're away. (See policy below.) **Students not identified as gifted may have to make up missed work.** Students should check with the school's administration or the classroom teachers about their school's policy for missed work for MSS.

Official Policy regarding missed time in the traditional classroom for gifted students:

> "While students are in the GATE Program, they are not required to make up work missed from the regular classroom from their GATE Day. However, they must demonstrate an understanding of the concepts presented. Long-term assignments and projects due to the traditional classroom on GATE Day still need to be turned in. Students should work with the classroom teacher to determine when the project will be turned in for the appropriate grade. A student having difficulty keeping up with their regular classes while attending the GATE Program is encouraged to discuss their concerns with their classroom teacher and GATE teacher."

Family Acknowledgement Summary:
By signing, you understand that:

- Your student will miss weekly class periods for MSS, plus **4–5 Fridays** for Social Emotional Learning.
- MSS absences **do not affect placement** in advanced courses (e.g., Algebra).
- Students must commit to their selected MSS course (no mid-quarter changes).
- **Choosing** to stay in class instead of MSS for **3 consecutive sessions results in unenrollment** (with parent contact after the 2nd). This does not include an absence caused by the student being absent from school.
- If a teacher holds a student from MSS, **teachers—not MSS—will communicate the reason**.
- Students in **ISS or OSS** may not attend MSS that day.

Parent Printed Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date:_____

Student Name: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date:_____

NOTES/QUESTIONS:

question. connect. contribute.

SJSD MIDDLE SCHOOL SCHOLARS

question. connect. contribute.

BODE PATRIOTS

SJSD MIDDLE SCHOOL SCHOLARS

question. connect. contribute.



SJSD MIDDLE SCHOOL SCHOLARS

question. connect. contribute.

SJSD MIDDLE SCHOOL SCHOLARS

question. connect. contribute.

SJSD MIDDLE SCHOOL SCHOLARS