

HEAD OF SCHOOL
Elena Heil
HEADS OF UPPER SCHOOL
Alexander Heil & Jennifer Heil
COUNSELOR
Adam Littlefield
CEEB Code: 055062

Founded in 1981, St. Helena Montessori is an independent, WASC-accredited school serving students from 18 months through high school, which opened in 2020 to complete the full Montessori continuum. Enrollment is 215, including 10 high school students. The 20-acre Napa Valley campus connects academics, practical investigation, and purposeful work through its working farm and gardens. Facilities include a science laboratory, high school library, music room and recording studio, commercial kitchen, wood and metal shops, bicycle shop, and letterpress print shop. An outdoor amphitheater, indoor gymnasium, sand volleyball court, and soccer field support arts and athletics.

OUR MISSION

To cultivate the whole person, foster a love of learning, and guide students in virtue and character so they may reach their God-given potential.

Core Curriculum

All SHMS students follow a liberal arts core steeped in Western Civilization's classics, providing a cohesive framework for understanding the world. Integrated humanities, natural sciences, mathematics, philosophy, theology, and language emphasize close reading, analytical reasoning, and interdisciplinary connections. Individual research, laboratory investigations, and fieldwork challenge students to formulate substantive questions, evaluate evidence, and develop well-supported conclusions. Pursuing individual interests within this foundation deepens understanding, intellectual independence, and sustained engagement for advanced study.

Academic Philosophy

The high school curriculum emphasizes depth, intellectual independence, and interdisciplinary connections through inquiry-based seminars, primary texts, and independent research. Students examine complex questions, evaluate evidence and competing interpretations, and articulate well-supported conclusions. SHMS forgoes AP courses for greater academic freedom and flexibility in content and pacing, allowing faculty and students sustained inquiry, substantive discussion, and deeper exploration of challenging ideas and individual interests.

Experiential Learning

Community Work provides authentic social life, valuing each member's contribution to the community. Students care for animals and gardens, prepare food, repair bicycles, and produce goods in wood, metal, and print shops. Producing and selling farm and workshop products develops practical skills, enterprise, collaboration, and accountability. High school students who excel are invited to serve as middle school teaching assistants, leading through instruction and mentorship. We cultivate independent graduates with a strong work ethic who care for themselves and others.



ACADEMIC POLICIES

Standard 4.0 scale.

GPAs are not weighted.

Class Rank is not reported.

St. Helena Montessori does not give out academic awards.

ACCREDITATION

Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)

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All Courses University of California A-G Approved

HISTORY
The Medieval World
The Ancient World
American History
Civics
Economics
Modern World History

ENGLISH
English 9, 10, 11, 12

LANGUAGES
Latin I, II, III, IV
Spanish I, II, III, IV

SCIENCE
Physics
Biology
Chemistry
CA Natural Science
Advanced Integrated Science

MATHEMATICS
Algebra I & II
Euclidean Geometry
Integrated Math Analysis
Calculus

PHILOSOPHY
Philosophy of the Human Person
Medieval Philosophy
Ancient Philosophy
Modern & Contemporary Philosophy
Philosophy of Human Ethics

THEOLOGY
The Historical Books (Joshua - Esther), Wisdom Literature, The Pentateuch, Gospels / Acts / Letters of St. Paul

FINE ARTS
Art Appreciation
Music Appreciation
Drama & Performance

COLLEGE PREP ELECTIVES
Metal I & II, Wood I & II, Animal Science I & II, Culinary Arts I & II, Crop Science I & II, Bicycle Technology I & II, Auto I & II, Bees I & II, Music Theory, Computer Technology, Entrepreneur I

Co-Curricular Activities

STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM Social Chair, Communications Chair, Treasurer, Outdoor Adventure Chair, Service Leaders, "Odyssey" Planning Committee, Newspaper Editor **ANNUAL BACKPACKING TRIPS** Emigrant Wilderness, Sierra Nevada (2023); Sinkyone State Park, "Lost Coast" (2024); Castle Crags State Park (2025); Point Reyes National Seashore (2026), Leadership Retreats, Lake Tahoe **SERVICE** Sisters of Charity Soup Kitchen, Silverado Orchards Retirement Community, Rainbow House Family Shelter, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Weekly Community Lunches **CULTURAL OUTINGS** San Francisco Symphony, De Young Museum, Legion of Honor Museum, American Bach Soloists **ANNUAL "ODYSSEY" STUDENT-PLANNED TRAVEL LEARNING** California Coast (2023); Washington, DC, Virginia, Maryland & Pennsylvania (2024); New Mexico & Arizona (2025); England (2026); New York City (2027) **FUNDRAISING** Monthly Public Community Dinners, Annual Student-Run "Harvest" Dinner, Annual School Gala

Extra-Curricular Activities

SPORTS *in partnership with St. Maximilian High School*
Varsity Boys' Soccer and Basketball
Varsity Girls' Soccer, Basketball and Volleyball

CLUBS
Hiking Club, Student Newspaper

Graduation Information

TYPICAL CLASS LOAD	65-85 credits/year
CREDITS FOR GRADUATION	250
ATTENDING 4-YEAR COLLEGE	100%

COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES 2024 - 2026 (FIVE GRADUATES)

Baylor University | Belmont Abbey College | Benedictine College | Carroll College | Catholic University of America, Honors College | Creighton University | Fordham University | Gonzaga University | Hillsdale College | Pepperdine University | Santa Clara University | St. Mary's College of California | University of California, Davis | University of California, Merced | University of California, Riverside | University of Colorado, Colorado Springs | University of Dallas | University of Denver | University of Notre Dame





Samples from the Curriculum

INTEGRATED HUMANITIES: THE MEDIEVAL WORLD
Students examine medieval civilization from the decline of Rome through the Renaissance, connecting history with literature, philosophy, theology, and Latin. Selected readings include *Beowulf*, Augustine's *Confessions*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Through primary-source analysis, Socratic seminars, and research, students explore questions of virtue, moral identity, and human responsibility. The course culminates in a **major thesis paper integrating historical research and literary analysis.**

ADVANCED INTEGRATED SCIENCE: UNVEILING CONNECTIONS THROUGH SCIENCE
This senior-level course builds on a full year each of biology, chemistry, and physics. Students explore algebra-based physics, introductory modern physics, anatomy, molecular biology, physiology, and introductory organic chemistry, examining connections across scientific disciplines. With mentorship from faculty and other experts, students complete an **independent research project**, progressing from a research proposal and literature review through data collection, analysis, and communication of findings.

LATIN IV
Students progress from the Cambridge Latin series to the **translation and analysis of original Latin texts** by Virgil, Catullus, Ovid, and Livy. Through epic and lyric poetry and historiography, students refine their command of Latin grammar, develop literary interpretation, and examine the history, culture, and ideas of the Roman world.

In 2026, SHMS students earned one Gold *Summa Cum Laude*, three Silver *Maxima Cum Laude*, one *Magna Cum Laude*, and four *Cum Laude* awards on the National Latin Exam.

ECONOMICS
This semester-long course introduces macroeconomics, microeconomics, and financial principles through the study of resource allocation, costs, benefits, and trade-offs. For a **culminating business project**, students design an enterprise within the school's farm, kitchen, or workshops, assessing needs, costs, income, labor, assets, liabilities, and return on investment. A program-wide presentation examines planning, adjustments, outcomes, and lessons learned, connecting economic theory with practical judgment and decision-making.

Capstone Projects

Every year, students complete a capstone project in both the Humanities and Sciences, culminating with a presentation given in front of a school audience. Examples of past projects include:

GRAZING FOR RENEWAL Sheep and Pasture Regeneration

BEES AMONG THE VINES Pesticides and Honeybee Health in Napa Valley

INSIDE THE FLAME The Chemistry of Wildfires

THE MEDIEVAL IMAGINATION OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE The Enduring Power of Language and Imagination

LITTLE BIGHORN Conflict on the Great Plains