

SJA FACTS

ACCREDITATION

SJA is fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and the Western Catholic Education Association. We are also a member of the National Catholic Education Association, and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

ENROLLMENT

SJA enrolls approximately 210 students in grades preschool through eighth, with one class per grade.

FACULTY

SJA has a 14:1 faculty-student ratio, 12:1 ratio in preschool, that includes 12 full-time fully credentialed faculty, many of whom hold a Master's Degree, 6 part-time faculty, 2 resource teachers, and teacher aides in Preschool through eighth grades.

CURRICULUM

SJA offers a comprehensive, faith-based curriculum which values a challenging academic, spiritual, moral, cultural and social educational experience. This curriculum meets or exceeds all diocesan, national and California state standards.

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We will find peace, we will be builders of peace, and we will spread peace around us. Pope Francis

St. James Academy (SJA) is the place for your family to grow both academically and spiritually as you share in the life of this faith community. We provide high academic standards, challenging our students to intellectual excellence. We develop learners of faith and action, inspiring them to become leaders who model Christian values and are respectful of self and others. With parents as partners, we nurture and guide students to strength of mind, body and spirit.

We are proud of our faith-based activities. In addition to weekly Mass and regular Reconciliation and Adoration opportunities, we encourage our students to grow as faith-filled, responsible citizens in their everyday thoughts and actions. Traditions rooted in our faith include weekly mass, daily prayer, Blessing of the Animals, May Crowning, Living Rosary, Lenten Retreat and All Saints Day, to name a few. Students learn powerful skills and develop strong character to take to activities on and off the campus and with them after graduation.

We are proud that our small school size facilitates close personal connections between staff, students and families. Many parents feel an additional sense of security knowing that their child will not be lost in the shuffle of a large school. The long-term relationships that come from attending a preschool-eighth grade academy further support student achievement by encouraging parents to stay actively involved in our community and their child's school life.

We are proud of our effective teachers. St. James Academy students benefit from their expertise by building a strong academic foundation. Over the years, 100% of our graduates have been accepted into the high school of their choice, and our eighth graders perform exceptionally well on high school entrance examinations. In January 2014, five of the 20 highest scoring students on the Cathedral Catholic entrance examination were St. James Academy students; an unprecedented distinction according to CCHS. In 2015, 2 of 7 perfect scores on the Cathedral Catholic exam were our students. Jr. High students become leaders and role models.

We are proud of our distinguished programs that enrich our community and further foster successful 21st Century scholars. We offer a 1-to-1 technology program in grades 4-8, an Inclusion Program, a Sustainability Initiative that includes an organic garden and energy and water efficiency, a vibrant vocal and instrumental program, a Fit to Lead program integrated into our strong athletic program, a variety of electives for our junior high students, and after school enrichment activities for our whole student body.

We are proud to welcome you to our school. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns. We are glad you are here.

Sincerely,

Kathy Dunn
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Highlights by Grade

Preschool

St. James Academy preschool students participate in a balanced program of child-centered and teacher-directed learning activities. Our preschool provides a solid foundation for your child's cognitive, social, emotional, physical, creative, and spiritual growth. In the preschool classroom, you will find numerous learning centers carefully created to meet the individual interests and needs of our students. Our preschool students engage in whole group, individual and small group lessons daily. If you were to walk into our preschool on any given day you might find us singing songs, dancing, playing educational learning games, engaging in crafts, participating in science investigations, listening to a thematic story, or exploring learning centers. A few of the concepts our preschoolers learn at SJA are letters, sounds, developing number sense, and problem solving skills.

Kindergarten

Kindergarten students are led through daily leveled reading and math groups, which include reading with the teacher, independent centers, and parent-led, hands-on activities. Writing skills are encouraged, first with phrases, then with sentences, then with stories. Our Kindergarten garden features plants, flowers, and vegetables planted and nurtured by our students. Butterflies and bugs are often observed enjoying the Kindergartners' handiwork. On the 100th day of school, our Kindergartners create unique artwork using 100 objects and learn multiple ways to write and count to 100. Science comes to life through our hands-on projects as we create landform and animal habitat models.

First Grade

First grade is a year full of new learning. Through creative projects and child-centered activities first graders develop a love for reading, phonics, spelling and writing. Math concepts include number sense, addition, subtraction, place value, money, time, measurement, fractions and probability. First graders experience math through a variety of differentiated experiences, including manipulatives, acting, drawing, computing and problem solving. First graders also enjoy a visit to the Birch Aquarium for science and will participate in special on site "field trips" throughout the year. First graders strengthen their relationship with God through daily formal and informal prayer, mass participation and learning about the liturgical year. It is exciting to see our first graders actively participating in the liturgy by proclaiming the welcome, readings and intentions during a few class masses!

Second Grade

Second grade students are carefully prepared for the religious sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist. Students lead the All Saint's Day Mass, write saint reports and present first person presentations. The children complete research for a wild animal project, create an iBook, and presentation. This is followed by a field trip to the San Diego Zoo. Students showcase their special talents with a second grade talent show that often includes singers, dancers, comedians, karate demonstrations, and more. In December, our second graders study Christmas customs around the world. They learn about immigration at Ellis Island. The children research a country and create a suitcase full of items that would have been brought over to America from their country.

Third Grade

Third grade's study of Native Americans is emphasized through research and report writing, native arts and crafts, and a day at Indian Hills Camp where students experience life as part of a Kumeyaay Tribe. Pioneer life is simulated giving students insight into the beginnings of the school system, complete with the teacher and students in character, replicating the school experience in a one room school house in the 1850's. A trip to San Diego Bay to experience the Marine Science Floating Lab provides a rich learning environment. Students manipulate oceanographic equipment, make observations, and gather data and specimens from the ocean waters and sea bottom. Students spend February learning about famous Americans who have had an impact on our history and have been role models for many. The biographies read and researched culminate with a performance in the form of a Wax Museum for the rest of the school. Third Graders spend the spring learning various forms of poetry from haiku to quatrains to limericks and spend many hours laughing at the silliness of many, like Shel Silverstein, and pondering the meaning of other poets. We conclude our poetry unit with a Poetry Recital for parents.

Fourth Grade

With a focus on California history, fourth grade students investigate the cultural eras of California's history through our California Time Capsule overnight field trip. On this trip students will experience first-hand what daily life was like in California during the Native American, Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo periods. They also experience a lively retelling of California's rich history with *Walk Through California*. Fourth grade students practice research report writing and create a comprehensive mission project after visiting one of California's historic missions. Fourth grade is implementing more technology into the classroom every day. iPads are used weekly as a learning tool for research, presentations, video making, and more! Students will create keynote presentations throughout the year while practicing public speaking skills by giving formal speeches. In fourth grade students learn the meaning of service with our monthly visits to a local nursing home. Students are partnered with a buddy whom they get to know throughout the year by participating in social visits, Christmas caroling, and craft activities. It is wonderful to see how much joy our Saint James students can bring to the community.

Fifth Grade

In fifth grade, students spend the night on the Star of India, where they experience the life of a sailor. Students read *Two Years Before the Mast*, the story of Richard Henry Dana's voyage from Boston to California and back. Students enjoy the fifth grade Reading Workshop, where they are assigned novels to read throughout the year. Their progress is logged daily; book reports, assessments and journaling activities are tied to the Reading Workshop. Fifth graders are partnered with a first grader to complete reading activities. Students interview their first grade buddy and read books and complete activities designed by the fifth graders. Each quarter, the class elects a new Class President. Candidates write and deliver speeches to their classmates. Duties include running class meetings and correspondence from the class (thank you notes). 4th and 5th graders visit the Encinitas Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. Students work with their elderly buddies on art and craft activities. Students perform their Christmas songs and their variety show numbers with the residents. This is a wonderful experience for the residents and the children!

Sixth Grade

Students actively work on integrating technology to enrich and extend the existing curriculum. Students create iMovies on the lives of Saints, conduct research on historical people and events, build 3D models of ancient architecture and explore literary works using online resources. In addition, students develop organizational skills and study skills to ensure success in the classroom. Sixth Grade participates in field trips, including the Natural History Museum and the Lux Art Institute. In the spring, students attend Astrocamp, a three-day camp which emphasizes physical science, astronomy, and the exploration of the universe. Students also participate in *Walk Through the Ancient World*, where they discover Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome through role-playing and guided instruction. The 6th grade is devoted to creating a learning environment where students are encouraged to develop their individual learning styles, think analytically and embrace their faith.

SJA Citizenship

The students of St. James Academy exemplify the successful efforts of both parents and teachers in instilling high moral values and social consciousness. The children have a respect for authority, and responsiveness to those in need. Students are continually given opportunities to grow in responsibility. Rising to the challenge of developing their potentials to the fullest, students undertake an impressive variety of creative, academic and outreach endeavors. The students' educational experience is also enriched by the diversity of culture among them.

Peacemaker Awards

Each trimester, the teachers and staff of St James Academy honor an outstanding student from each grade level with a Peacemaker Award. Peacemakers model a high standard of Christian discipleship in their thoughts, words, and actions. In ways that support and exemplify our school theme of being Christ to others, they use the gifts of the Holy Spirit: love, patience, kindness, self-control, joy, peace, gentleness and faithfulness.

Junior High



Our Junior High program features a longer day and two days of block-scheduling per week to allow for special classes, electives and project based learning.

Math

In our Pre-Algebra and Advanced Pre-Algebra, seventh grade students will develop critical thinking and reasoning skills used to solve algebraic problems. The students reinforce their knowledge through several projects, including: creating cipher codes to investigate algebraic expressions, surveying to collect data and organize it into a circle graph, and drawing tessellations and enlarging common objects to explore spatial thinking. The eighth grade Algebra and Advanced Algebra course emphasizes the use of mathematics in real life situations in order to authenticate problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. The students enrich their learning through projects such as creating a scale drawing of their houses, examining real exponential growth and decay situations, and applying quadratic equations to investigate car accidents. Also during this course eighth graders prepare for their high school entrance exams by refining their standardized test-taking skills.

Science

All students in grades 6 – 8 participate in an annual science fair which utilizes the scientific method and combines critical thinking skills with each child's creativity culminating in the completion of a long term project. Seventh grade science is a year that focuses on Biology. Students will study inheritance, make Jello cells to learn about the functions of the cell organelles, as well as study the different organ systems of the body. The students will dissect a frog, which is a highlight of the year, and allows the students to visualize how organ systems work together in an organism. Eighth grade is a year studying physics. The students will study Newton's Laws, the periodic table, and end the year with a unit on the Universe. The students will complete hands-on science labs and participate in field trips to reinforce the concepts learned in the classroom.

Religion

Seventh grade religion focuses on prayer and the sacraments. It is a year of studying the Eucharist in depth and the special components of the liturgical celebration to ensure a full appreciation of the celebration of the mass. The students participate in the liturgy as lectors, ushers, musicians and choir. Eighth grade Religion is studying the New Testament. Planning and leading school family activities in which the eighth grade students are the leaders of their family creates leadership opportunities. Students will also attend a field trip to the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles to gain insight into discrimination. Junior High students also participate in a three-day retreat, led by faculty and our parish youth minister.

Spanish

The Junior High utilizes the "Sing and Speak" Spanish program. In addition to their Spanish curriculum, Junior High students are challenged with projects such as Dia de Los Muertos, Christmas traditions in Spanish-speaking countries and designing community maps, to enhance comprehension. Guest speakers and a visit to a Mexican restaurant expand cultural awareness relationships with God and with each other. Students are given numerous opportunities to speak, read and write the Spanish Language.

Language Arts

Junior High Language Arts programs focus on the skills necessary to succeed in high school and beyond. Junior High uses McGraw Hill's Study Sync program. Study Sync is literacy instruction made possible by utilizing digital tools and print resources. Study Sync is an integrated reading, writing, and review platform designed to advance critical thinking, reading, writing, language, spelling, and listening skills! This curriculum ensures rigorous, focused core English Language Arts instruction. Junior High students are required to read nightly from free choice or assigned novels.

Social Studies

Seventh grade students study different cultures and empires that thrived during the Medieval time period, including European culture through the Renaissance. Students augment their studies through document-based learning projects. Eighth grade studies U.S. History from the colonies to the Vietnam War. Document based questions and projects conclude with a research paper.

Electives

Past, Present, and Future

These are interest-driven and change based upon class dynamics and student interest

Art

Students will be introduced to and create art projects with different media which may include pencil, colored pencil, chalk pastel, water color paint, acrylic paint, sculpture or decoupage. Basic principles, art history and technique will be explored during these projects. Depending on the quarter, this class may also provide artistic support for the Drama elective.

Band

The band class focuses learning and performing rock, pop and Christian contemporary music. The band supports SJA Friday masses and one Sunday mass per month. Students also perform in SJA's annual Halloween Carnival Talent and Rock the School shows. Core instruments include bass, guitar, keyboard, percussion, ukulele and drums. Other instruments and singers may join on a case by case basis.

Computer Skills

Web design with HTML, CCS and JavaScript classes include lecture/demonstration and self-paced practice. JavaScript, Python or Scratch Visual Programming classes introduce programming concepts with increasingly difficult game design projects.

Drama

This class will feature the history of drama and the development of acting skills. Students will practice monologues and one act plays, and the class will perform a full-length play at the end of the trimester.

Peer Mentoring

Peer mentors are involved in a very significant way in the education of our students who may face challenges at school. Mentors provide service that is meaningful and genuinely needed for students in our inclusion program and others who may need assistance. Mentors must be punctual, work hard, take guidance from teachers and behave with excellence. This is a position of responsibility and an opportunity to demonstrate leadership. Peer Mentors learn a great deal, about themselves and others around them.

Performing Arts

This third trimester class participates in SJA's annual May Variety Show. Students have the opportunity to audition for acting, dancing, singing or musician roles and help with the production and technical support for the show.

Photojournalism

Every picture tells a story, thus we focus on the purpose and the creativity behind every photo. Students also learn the basic principles of photography and have the opportunity to share their pictures on SJA social media.

Robotics

The robotics class works with the Vex IQ robots. Students work in teams of two to build, program, and operate a robot. Students develop creative solutions to accomplish various tasks in a competitive format. The robots are operated manually as well as programmed to run autonomously. The teams compete against each other in the Vex IQ Crossover Challenge game.

Teaching Assistant

Students assist K-5 teachers in classrooms performing a variety of duties.

Ultimate Athleticism

Students are challenged to be "ultimate athletes" as they learn about performance training, nutrition and healthy habits, while experiencing a variety of ultimate athletic challenges on the field and at the beach. We also take a field trip to see firsthand physical therapy & performance training centers.

Distinguishing Programs

Athletics - "Fit to Lead"

We desire for all of our students to be "Fit to Lead." Through our Fit to Lead program students are empowered to be healthy in every aspect of their lives, while also growing in their teamwork and leadership skills. During P.E., students will develop in movement literacy, athletic skills, teamwork, leadership, self-defense, and grow in their faith through physical activity. We offer 5th-8th grade students the chance to compete in basketball, soccer, volleyball and football. Our Surf Team is a great opportunity for 6th-8th grade students to further their enjoyment of the ocean and one another, as we are the only Catholic middle school in San Diego to compete in the Scholastic Surf Series (SSS) events. Preschool-4th grade students can play Pee Wee soccer & 3rd-4th grade students can compete in Pee Wee basketball for St. James. All students are invited to participate in the cross country & track meets each year, and families can join the "Beach Cruisers" each week. Through P.E. classes, students are also introduced to rugby, lacrosse and field hockey, and we offer after school golf sponsored by the PGA. Our goal is that students are engaged, enjoy physical activity, and develop an enduring value for a healthy lifestyle.

Endow - Educating the Nature and Dignity of Women

A program for 6th – 8th grade girls where they foster their relationship with God, learn about their feminine genius, and grow their holiness as daughters of Christ!

Information Technology Program

Our students acquire grade level- appropriate, hands-on skills in general computing, coding, keyboarding, drawing and painting, word processing, spreadsheets, databases, presentations, online applications, and in the ethical use of the Internet. Grades 4-8 have a 1:1 technology program, putting iPads into the hands of each student in conjunction with the existing classroom SmartBoard and weekly visits to the computer lab.

Music and Arts

Our walls are filled with masterpieces that demonstrate the artistic talents of our students developed through the Arts Attack and other SJA art programs. Our music curriculum includes music appreciation, history and theory, and incorporates multi-part singing, movement, percussion, recorders, ukulele, boomwhackers, and multicultural genres. Each grade takes turns providing liturgical music for weekly masses. Through St. James parish, students may participate in one of three choirs. In 2009, the choirs released a well-received CD, *Listen to the Angels Sing*, under the direction of our music teacher. In 2015-2017, advanced SJA singers were invited and performed with Deke Sharon (known for *Pitch Perfect* films, *The Sing Off* television shows, *In Transit* musical) in sold out Carnegie Hall concerts.

"School Family" Activities

All SJA students are part of a school family, comprised of one student from each grade. The school family meets at least once monthly to complete a group activity, led by the Junior High members of the family. The school family remains the same as the student progresses through the grades, each year losing a graduating eighth grader and gaining an entering Kindergartener. School families are another example of how SJA cultivates leadership skills in all of our students, as the students accept additional responsibility while moving through the grades and become more senior members of their family. This tradition fosters cross grade friendship and connectedness.

Spanish

All students receive Spanish instruction. We utilize the "Sing and Speak" curriculum which teaches primarily through song and puppetry in the younger grades and covers the equivalent of high school Spanish I in Junior High.

Super Science

Standards-based science is taught to all grades, engaging the younger students' sense of wonder about the natural world, and moving to a more rigorous use of scientific methodology in Junior High. Our program includes hands-on, inquiry-based experiments in the science lab as well as in the classrooms. Technology is used to enhance our students' exploration of the world, and develop critical thinking and scientific literacy skills to analyze their results. Our mission is to prepare and produce engaged citizens, the innovators and leaders of tomorrow.

Sustainability

In line with Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudito Si: On Care of Our Common Home* on the environment and human ecology, SJA has incorporated sustainability and environmental education in Grades K-8 and facilities. The sustainability program includes organic gardening and food preparation, wildlife conservation including raising Monarch butterflies, composting and rainwater capture and reduction of single use plastics on campus. SJA has student and parent Green Teams working additional green initiatives.

Calendar

SEPTEMBER

Welcome Back Coffee
Back-to-School Night

OCTOBER

Blessing of the Animals
Red Ribbon Week
Fall Festival & Talent Show

NOVEMBER

All Saints Day Mass & Second
Grade Parade of Saints

DECEMBER

Christmas Pageant & Concert

JANUARY

Geography & Spelling Bees
First Reconciliation

FEBRUARY

Grandparents' Day
Valentine's Day Baby Shower for
women and babies in crisis
Father-Daughter Dance

MARCH

Jr. High Retreat, Jr. High Drama
Presentation, Rock the School
featuring student band
performances

APRIL

Holy Thursday Retreat
First Communion
Earth Week festivities

MAY

May Crowning
Living Rosary
Variety Show

JUNE

Memory Mass honoring graduating
eighth graders
Seventh Grade Goodbye Prayer
Service and Coffee for graduating
class
Eighth Grade Awards and
Graduation
School-wide Beach Day