

# St. James Academy



## 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, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.

### ENROLLMENT

SJA enrolls approximately 250 students in grades Kindergarten through eight, with one class per grade.

### FACULTY

SJA has a 16:1 faculty-student ratio that includes 11 full-time faculty, 7 part-time faculty, 1 resource teacher, and teacher aides in Kindergarten 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

## A message from our Principal

## Take Your Candle and Go Light Your World.

St James Academy 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, Adoration and Benediction opportunities, we encourage our students to grow as faith-filled responsible citizens in their everyday thoughts and actions. We have recently initiated a bully prevention education program in which students learn to advocate for themselves and for those unable to speak for themselves. They are learning powerful skills to take to activities on and off campus and with them after graduation.

**We are proud** that our small school size facilitates close relationships and 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 K-8 school result in parents staying involved in their child's school lives longer. Middle grade students in a K-8 school take on the role of leader and role-model versus having to establish new reputations upon entering middle school.

**We are proud** of our effective teachers. Over 90% of our graduating class tests out of high school algebra due to the strong foundation of math skills gained in their tenure at SJA. Our eighth graders perform exceptionally well on high school entrance examinations. Smart Boards™, award-winning interactive white boards, have

been installed in all classes. Smart Boards transform learning by helping teachers bring more collaboration and interactivity into the classroom.

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

Sincerely,  
Kathy Dunn

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*Listen to the Angels Sing* features performances by the St. James choirs with more than forty young singers and musicians from the school and parish community.

### Core Values

## 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 self-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.



**CALENDAR:**

**SEPTEMBER**

Welcome Breakfast  
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**

Advent Outreach Activities  
Christmas Pageant

**JANUARY**

Geography & Spelling Bees

**FEBRUARY**

Valentine's Day Baby Shower for women and babies in crisis  
Father-Daughter Dance  
Grandparent's Mass  
Jr. High Dance

**MARCH**

Rock the School, featuring student band performances

**APRIL**

Earth Week festivities  
Holy Thursday Retreat

**MAY**

May Crowning  
Greater San Diego Middle School Math Competition

Variety Show

**JUNE**

Memory Mass, honoring graduating eighth graders

**What makes us special:**

**Distinguishing Programs**

**Quarterly Peacemaker Awards**

Each quarter, 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, and use the gifts of the Holy Spirit: love, patience, kindness, goodness, self-control, joy, peace, gentleness and faithfulness, in ways that support and exemplify our school theme of being Christ to others.

**“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.

**Information Technology Program**

Our students acquire grade level-appropriate, hands-on skills in general computing, keyboarding, drawing and painting, word processing, spreadsheets, databases, presentations, online applications, and in the ethical use of the internet.

**Spanish**

All students receive Spanish instruction. Younger grades utilize the “Sing and Speak” curriculum while the Junior High employs Prentice Hall’s *Paso a Paso*. 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 and appreciation for the language.

**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.

**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 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.

**Athletics**

From fifth through eighth grade, students may participate in North County Parochial League school sports, including Flag Football, Basketball, Soccer, and Volleyball. Our fifth grade girls’ Volleyball and our fifth and sixth grade boys Flag Football teams each recently completed undefeated seasons.

## Highlights by Grade

### Kindergarten

Kindergarten students are led through daily leveled reading and math groups, which include reading with the teacher, independent centers, and parent-led, hand-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.

Kindergarten visits the local seniors home at Halloween for a costume parade and singing with the first graders. The residents enjoy seeing the youth, faith, and energy of our children.

### First Grade

First graders continue to build on their writing skills with book reports of different genres. These reports introduce the students to the concept of organizing their thoughts and summarization.

Students in first grade learn about the life surrounding the local beach by digging in the sand to understand how animals use their adaptations to survive in this changing environment. They also learn about the local kelp forest and its residents.

In first grade, students enjoy a visit from the Old Town Heritage Museum. The museum provides a traveling trunk show with artifacts and old-fashioned toys to be used in the classroom.

### Second Grade

Second grade students are carefully prepared for the religious sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist.

The children complete research for a wild animal project and presentation, 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 write a report about the country of their ancestors, illustrate the country's flag, and outfit a paper doll in traditional dress.

### Third Grade

Third grade students participate in a marine science floating lab. In teams, they manipulate oceanographic equipment, make observations, and gather data and specimens from the ocean waters and sea bottom of San Diego Bay.

A simulation of pioneer life is performed in third grade. Replicating the school experience of the mid-1800s, this simulation has students write in a diary, create paper dolls, complete old-fashioned math drills, and work in groups, giving them insights into the history and the beginnings of the school system. Students also read literature available at the time such as *Little House in the Big Woods*, and write about the pioneer experience.

In third grade, study of Native Americans is augmented with a trip to Indian Hills Camp where our students experience life as part of a Kumeyaay Tribe. This visit includes meeting historical characters, hearing folklore around the campfire, learning archery, becoming part of a tribe, practicing native craftsmanship, and living in a tepee.

### Fourth Grade

With focus on California history, fourth grade students experience research report writing, overnight Gold Rush camp, and a lively retelling of California's rich history with *Walk Through California*.

Fourth graders complete a comprehensive poetry unit, quarterly book reports, and a unique artist-of-the-month program.

A special writing project introduces fourth graders to interviewing skills as students complete a biography of a family member.

Students are partnered with an elderly buddy at a local nursing home whom they visit several times through the year (and in fifth grade) and with whom they complete craft activities and develop friendships.

At the end of the year, the fourth grade creates a time capsule with special photos and items reflective of memorable events through the year. The time capsule is opened when the students are in eighth grade.

## Highlights by Grade

### 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).

### Sixth Grade

Sixth grade attends Astrocamp, which emphasizes physical science, astronomy, and the exploration of the universe through innovative, interactive exercises.

With *Walk Through Ancient Times*, students discover Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome in an imaginary tour of the ancient civilizations. Students portray historical people of the past, such as Julius Caesar, Cleopatra, and Socrates. Students broaden their understanding with maps, timelines, and games.

In math, our sixth grade achieves success through working independently and collaboratively. Students compete in local high school math competitions and complete quarterly projects that are in alignment with our math standards.

Each quarter, the sixth grade participates in an outreach project. Past activities include: creating toiletry bags for the homeless, hosting a diaper drive for local shelters and making holiday place mats for retirement centers in the area.

### Seventh Grade

Seventh grade students complete several pre-Algebra projects, including: inventing instruments to apply scale fractions, creating cipher codes to investigate algebraic expressions, planning a graduation ceremony to utilize linear functions, and completing a treasure hunt to explore spatial thinking.

Students study the different cultures and empires that thrived during the Medieval time period, including European culture through the Renaissance.

In seventh grade, students are introduced to Claim, Data, Warrant (CDW) technique. CDW is a formal and analytical writing style that aids students in the elaboration and development of their writing, heightens their sense of audience, and creates a willingness to examine their underlying assumptions. Our junior high vocabulary program is rooted in SAT and ACT preparation. Word etymology is studied, including Greek and Latin root words, suffixes and prefixes.

Students follow the whooping cranes' migration and share the excitement, perils and, in some cases, the heartbreak of the scientists of Operation Migration.

### Eighth Grade

Junior High students participate in Project ASTRO™, a program of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, that matches a teacher and students with their own "classroom scientist" as a resource and mentor for multiple classroom visits and hands-on, inquiry-based astronomy and space-themed activities.

In eighth grade, our students read five novels, using active reading skills to build comprehension. The CDW foundation continues to be developed as students complete various writing assignments, including a study of writing and rhetoric and a research paper.

Students are taught the basics of entrepreneurship, business, and finance by learning how the entrepreneurial cycle operates in the friendship bracelet industry. Students are divided into companies, with each student taking on a leadership role to support the team in designing, manufacturing, and selling their products in the marketplace.

Eighth grade's study of Shakespeare culminates with an SJA- staged version of a Shakespearean play, performed by our students.

In Junior High, students participate in a three-day religious retreat, to grow in their relationships with God and with each other.