

# GRADES 6-8 NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2022 | TRIMESTER I



## RETREAT: GRADE 6

This year our sixth-grade retreat took place on October 28th at St. Mary's Church in Dedham. During that day, the sixth graders reflected on the meaning of friendship. Students had the opportunity to participate in fun activities and group discussions that reflected this theme.

Our parish seminarian came and shared his story about his vocation to the priesthood and the Eucharist. The students were genuinely interested in the activities, talks and discussion that took place throughout the day. Several students remarked that they had a really good time. We concluded the day with the celebration of the Eucharist.

## ADVENT REFLECTION

*"In this the love  
of God was made  
manifest among us,  
that God sent his only  
Son in the world that  
we may have life  
through him."*

*-1 Jn 4:9*

During advent season we wait in anticipation for the birth of Christ, that is, we wait for love itself to become man. A student once asked why God did not just simply forgive all our sin and destroy evil rather than going through all that he did in being born, dying, and rising from the dead. The answer lies in what God sees as best for us, and what is best for us is to know that he really does love us. If we want to get to know someone, we go out and meet them person to person. If we really want to demonstrate a selfless love, we need to be ready to give our life for others. Sure, I suppose God could have chosen another more simple and easier way, but what is easier and simpler is not what is best, most loving. In becoming man, God comes to meet us person to person, and he continues to do so in the Sacraments. In becoming man, he chooses to enter in our world and unite us with himself in our sufferings and take upon himself our own sins. This solidarity with us in our brokenness demonstrates that God's love is not some remote abstract love but one that is concrete and tangible.

We believe that God is love. He is a communion of persons. The Father loves the Son from all eternity, and the Son eternally loves the Father. This love is so real, it is another person, the Holy Spirit. This communion of love is the pattern of love for marriage and family. Love of its nature is diffusive of itself. It cannot help but go out to others and share itself. It is never centered upon itself but is always other oriented. So, God's eternal communion of love goes out of itself and shares itself in the act of creation and in the act of redemption of humankind. It is for the act of redemption that God becomes man. Yes, this little baby born to Mary is God. He is Emmanuel. God whom the universe cannot contain is contained in this little baby boy. His mission is what ours should be, to do the will of the Father. However, in his case his mission would lead to death. His death would be life for us.

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# RELIGION

## GRADE 6

The students of sixth grade have performed admirably in religious education for trimester one. So far this year we have studied how to interpret the Bible using literary devices, literary forms, and Hebrew numerology. They have also come to know how it is the books of the Bible were assembled in its final form for the Old Testament Canon. Students have explored the Books of Jonah and Job to learn from the richness of the prophetic and wisdom literature of the Bible. We have also completed reading Genesis chapter one through eleven. Students have a decent grasp on the meaning of the creation stories, the sin of Adam and Eve, Noah and the Flood and the Tower of Babel. The students have also learned the importance of these stories as they relate to Jesus, the New Testament, and the Gospel message. For instance, there is a parallel between Genesis chapter three with the Sin of Adam and Eve foreshadowing the Annunciation by Gabriel to Mary of the birth of Christ the New Adam in Luke chapter one. This concept of foreshadowing is another important principle in biblical interpretation that will be visited repeatedly throughout the school year. We are presently reading and learning about the story of God's call of Abraham to form a new people from which the Messiah would emerge. Lastly, every class begins with prayer and a reading from the Book of Sirach followed by an age-appropriate moral exhortation based on the reading chosen.

## GRADE 7

The students of seventh grade religious education classes have begun the year reviewing some concepts they learned from sixth grade such as the reality that all human beings are created in the image of God, the reality of original and personal sin, and the two orders of knowledge both natural and supernatural. We have delved into the importance of God's covenant with King David with respect to the promise of a Messiah who will be both priest and king. Students have also gained some familiarity with the Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus Christ and how these are fulfilled in Jesus. Presently we are beginning our study of the Gospels of Luke and Matthew's infancy narratives of Jesus Christ. Importance is placed upon how these have been foreshadowed by certain events in the Old Testament. We have covered the importance of angels in God's Revelation to humankind as well as the importance of Marian dogmas as they relate to the incarnation of the Son of God. Soon we will be learning the meaning of John's prologue which declares that Jesus is the very Word of God made flesh and how this Word will be rejected and opposed by many.



## GRADE 8

So far this year the students in eighth grade religious education classes have learned about some of the critical concepts in the edifice of Catholic moral understanding. First, they learned that morality is the science of what human ought to do by reason of who they are. By this definition they have learned that the human person is a moral entity who has both freedom and responsibility. Secondly, they have learned that the moral life is not one shared by the non-rational animals but is the sole responsibility of those rational creatures like human beings and angels. All creatures are driven by their instinct to fulfill the end for which they were created. Human (and angelic creatures) on the other hand can frustrate their end for which they are created. This end is sharing perfectly in the divine life of the Holy Trinity in eternity. Thirdly, students know God wants them grow in the life of virtue since, after all, this is what holiness consists of. It is through this growth that human beings reach the end for which they were created. The most important of these virtues are the Cardinal Virtues of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance. Using concrete moral situations, students have explored how these virtues operate. Lastly, and at present, we are studying the sources of moral action: object, intention, and circumstances. By knowing how the Church understands these sources of moral action, the students will appreciate how the Catholic Church analyzes each moral act.

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# SOCIAL STUDIES



This fall marks the beginning of a new curriculum for grades 6-8. While the courses might be new, the goals of the Social Studies department remain the same. The overall purpose and objective of the Social Studies program in the middle school is to provide the students with knowledge, awareness, respect, and appreciation of the global society in which they live. This program challenges students to become active, responsible, and participating Christian citizens in the twenty-first century.

## GRADE 6

In trimester 1, grade 6 students have been busy learning about the five themes of geography, as well as Earth's physical and human geography. During this time, 6th graders proved definitively that map projections of the world would always have distortion.

Looking ahead to trimester 2, we will start the country reports. The country report is a time-honored tradition in 6th grade dating back more than 25 years! During the six-month long project, students research and report on a country of their choosing. This project, which is lodged in the Social Studies department is supported in their ELA, Tech, Science classes as well as in our outstanding Library. Keep your eyes open for more details on the Country Report.



Grade 6

## GRADE 7

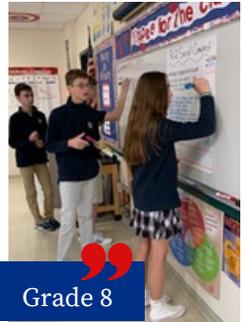
This year, we have been integrating ELA and Social Studies, especially in regard to the National History Day project. Students have selected a wide variety of topics connecting to the theme: "Frontiers in History: People, Places, and Ideas." Topics range from the Salem Witch Trials and the Berlin Wall to Muhammad Ali and Queen Elizabeth II. Students have begun early stages of gathering primary and secondary sources for their research papers. Additionally, students have been learning about Asian geography across East, South, and Southeast Asia. We have had fascinating class discussions about the physical geographies, histories, and cultures of many different Asian countries. We will wrap up our studies of Asia in trimester 2 and then move on to Oceania and Europe.



Grade 6



Grade 7



Grade 8

## GRADE 8

This year, 8th grade students have embarked on a year long course in Civics. Beginning in September, eighth graders spent time studying Enlightenment philosophers John Locke and Baron de Montesquieu. Their political writings laid the groundwork for the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. When studying the concept of a social compact, each 8th grade class came up with their own social compact.

During November, while learning about Veteran's Day, 8th grade students studied the WWI poem, "In Flanders Fields". This poem helped popularize the red poppy flower as a symbol for those men and women who gave up their lives for the freedom we enjoy today. After analyzing the poem, students created their own poppy flowers and wore them for the rest of the school day.

During trimester 2, we will be investigating elections in legislative and executive branches as well as the nomination and confirmation process in judicial and executive branches. During this time, students will be working on Project Citizen. This is a project-based learning model that teaches students how to influence public policy.

# Math

## Grade 6

The sixth graders started their year in math by determining the formulas for various quadrilaterals and triangles. They then moved up a dimension and learned to construct different polyhedra from flat net diagrams. Learning how to fill up space and look at shapes from all sides, the students calculated the volume and surface area of different types of prisms and pyramids.

In unit two, our sixth-grade mathematicians practiced representing ratios with diagrams, double-number lines, and tables. They used graduated cylinders to measure different ratios of yellow and blue water to create a desired shade of green water. Equivalent ratios were used to triple or quadruple baking recipes correctly. The students also created and solved word problems related to the fall season.

Here are a few examples of problems the students created for a quiz.

1. At a Halloween party, there are 6 ghosts for every 4 skeletons. If there are 160 people at the party, how many ghosts are there at the party?
2. A recipe for a pie that will feed six people requires 2 eggs,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups of flour, 1 teaspoon of cinnamon, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of sugar. How much flour is needed to make enough pies to feed exactly 24 people?

The students also learned how to apply ratios to determine the cost of multiple or individual items. Our lives are filled with numbers and it is important that the students learn how to become savvy shoppers by determining the unit rate of items. An example from their Illustrative Mathematics book was, "A caterer needs to buy 21 pounds of pasta to cater a wedding. At a local store, 8 pounds of pasta cost \$12. How much will the caterer pay for the pasta there?"

On election day, the middle school students voted on the gubernatorial candidates and the ballot questions. The vote results were used in math class as an introduction to percentages. The sixth-graders turned fractions into decimals and then percentages to determine what percentage of a homeroom voted for Maura Healey or Geoff Diehl, and what percentage voted yes versus no on a certain ballot question. With the holiday shopping season upon us, the students are learning to determine the final cost of sale items after the percentage savings are applied. In addition to comparing prices, the students are comparing unit rates and speeds. Many were challenged by the following question, "Lin and Diego both ran for 10 seconds, each at their own constant speed. Lin ran 40 meters and Diego ran 55 meters. If Lin and Diego want to run a race in which they will both finish when the timer reads exactly 30 seconds. Who should get a head start, and how long should the head start be?" Good luck solving that one.

As we race into the second trimester, we will do more work multiplying and dividing fractions and decimals, and use expressions and equations to dive deeper into pre-algebra. An overarching goal for sixth grade is for the students to maintain a growth mindset about their math ability as they learn how to apply their math skills to enrich their lives outside of school. As Dean Schlicter said, "Go down deep enough into anything and you will find mathematics." While life is filled with problems, you can always count on math for solutions.



# Math

## Grade 7 | Pre-Algebra

Seventh grade Pre-Algebra students have been working hard this trimester to learn the important Algebra topics of Integer operations, simplifying both numerical and variable expressions, and solving equations. They have also reviewed their properties and learned some new ones like the Properties of Equality.

This accomplishment has required much practice (in class, at home, and on IXL) as well as working collaboratively to help each other fix mistakes and improve steps so that they are clear and logical. I am happy to report that after much practice, all students are showing their inverse operations like Algebra students!

Recently, they have been working with multi-step equations and solving geometry applications and word problems by translating them to equations. Solving word problems will be an ongoing process this year and will challenge and sometimes frustrate many a student, but I am confident based on what I have seen so far that they are up to the task!

Students have also been connecting their ELA and math skills by doing some writing in math. When students receive below 80% on a quiz or test, they are required to correct their mistakes and explain what they did wrong or what they need to understand better. Also, they have learned how to do procedural writing to clearly explain how to perform a specific procedure, like solving a multi-step equation. They have been showing much improvement in this skill and using appropriate math vocabulary and good transition words to indicate the order of their steps. This has been a helpful way to review topics and practice formal writing.

$$\begin{aligned} 48 &= 15 + 4(x - 3) \\ 48 &= 15 + 24 + 4x - 12 \\ 48 &= 27 + 4x \\ 48 - 27 &= 4x \\ 21 &= 4x \\ \frac{21}{4} &= x \end{aligned}$$

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SOLVE	EXPLAIN
$-5(2x-7) + 24 = 89$	To solve this equation, use the distributive property to simplify the equation. Next, combine like terms. After that, subtract on both sides. Lastly, divide on both sides to get a solution.
$-10x + 35 + 24 = 89$	
$-10x + 59 = 89$	
$-59 - 59$	
$-10x = 30$	
$-10 -10$	
$x = -3$	

## Grade 8 | Algebra

The first trimester is especially important and busy for our 8th graders as they work hard to meet more challenging academic concepts at the same time as making decisions about where they will be attending high school next year.

In both Algebra classes, students have reviewed and ideally mastered many topics introduced in Pre-Algebra like simplifying expressions and solving multi-step equations. They have really stepped up their abilities to use equations to solve word problems of many varieties: cost and value, geometry perimeter and area, consecutive Integers, rate-time-distance, similar figures, etc. This ability to translate words to math and execute a strategy helps them develop their critical thinking skills and allows them to see that problems can be solved and shown in a clear and logical way. Working with others collaboratively is an effective way to practice communication skills and provides opportunities for students to find and fix mistakes, which is crucial to growth and understanding.

Writing in math continues to be used when students explain their mistakes in test corrections and when they do procedural writing to master certain topics that require multiple steps. Students also continue to practice new skills and review weak skills by using IXL regularly.

Most recent topics include square root properties combined with Pythagorean Theorem for 8.1 and exponent properties when operating with polynomials and factoring polynomials in 8.2. Coming attractions for December include Solving Inequalities for 8.1 and Solving Quadratic equations for 8.2. We have lots to look forward to both in the classroom and in 8th grade in these next few weeks!!

# English Language Arts

## GRADE 6

It is hard to believe that term one has ended! It has been a marvelous term for our sixth graders who have transitioned beautifully to the life of a middle school student.

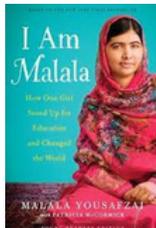
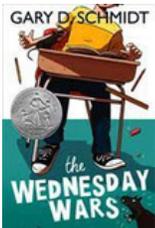
We have accomplished a lot in these past 3 months! In reading we looked at literary elements and how they help in the understanding of what we read. The students thoroughly enjoyed reading our first novel, *A Fish in a Tree*. This book's title is taken from a famous quote by Albert Einstein. This book helped the readers to understand differences in learning, as well as delving into the character traits and the transformation the main characters undergo. The theme an author intended was inferred as well. There were many opportunities for literature group discussions, as students read and shared their thoughts with their group members. This book lent itself to written reflections as well.

In writing we investigated the qualities of a memoir or personal narrative. We experimented with ways to hook a reader in the introduction, to develop the plot in a interesting way, and to conclude with thought-provoking endings. In addition, the students often did "Night Writes". These were intended to assist the students to express themselves in written form. We concluded the term with a 5-paragraph essay. This type of writing is one that the students will be experiencing all through their school years. The more they write them, the better the quality will be and the easier they will become. We all know that the ability to express oneself in written form is a valuable life skill!

In addition to reading and writing, the students were developing their vocabularies using the Wordly Wise vocabulary program. We recently began a year-long study of Latin roots. Understanding the meaning these roots add, helps the reader to determine words and their meanings.

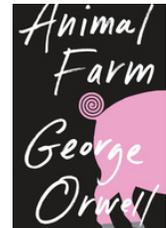
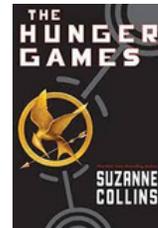
## GRADE 7

During trimester 1, we read *The Wednesday Wars* by Gary Schmidt. Students worked in groups to create presentations comparing and contrasting 7th grade life in 1967 vs. 2022. We studied Edgar Allan Poe and in class, we read two of his most famous works, "The Raven" and "Tell-Tale Heart." We covered 5 lessons of Wordly Wise, that's 75 new vocab words! Looking ahead to trimester 2, we will be reading *I Am Malala: Young Reader's Edition* and *The Outsiders*, continuing on with Wordly Wise, and adding in more Latin roots and grammar practice along the way.



## GRADE 8

We recently finished reading *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins. After an introduction to utopian societies turned dystopian during the summer reading of *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, we switched gears to read specific dystopian science-fiction. Students wrote essays creating their own utopian society and what they would want in their ideal community. Students also wrote detailed and concise How-To articles from the protagonist's point of view as their final project. We have covered 5 lessons of Wordly Wise so far and will be continue with more Latin roots and grammar practice in trimester 2. We are starting *Animal Farm* by George Orwell this week, continuing the theme of dystopian fiction. We will cross over lessons with Religion and Civics through reading this world-famous novelette the next few weeks.



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# SCIENCE

## GRADE 6

Trimester 1 was an exciting trip through outer space with 6th grade! We started off the year with Astronomy studying the Sun-Earth-Moon system. We spent time learning about the Earth's movement in our Solar System and how it's movement causes both day and night as well as seasons. I received so many incredible extra credit projects that modeled the Sun-Earth-Moon system in a very creative way. The students impressed me with their knowledge and thoughtfulness during this unit.

Over the past few weeks, 6th graders have started learning about the Sun and Other Stars, our second 6th grade unit. We have spent time understanding how scientists learn about stars from their view on Earth, the composition and structure of stars as well as the evolution and life cycle of stars. We wrap up Astronomy learning about galaxies where the students have a chance to work on a Minilab in which they will look at photos of other galaxies taken from the Hubble Space Telescope.

We move onto Biology after the Astronomy unit where we will begin by learning about how organisms are classified followed by cell structure and function. The 6th grade students have done a fantastic job so far this year and I look forward to exploring Biology with them!

## GRADE 7

7th graders started the school year focusing on Earth Science. We studied the Earth Systems (Biosphere, Hydrosphere, Atmosphere and Geosphere) and how they interact with one another. The students created board/card games demonstrating their understanding of the Earth Systems and then had the opportunity to play each other's games. We spent time digging into the Geosphere and learning about the layers of the Earth from the crust down to the inner core. Students had the opportunity to create models of the Geosphere for extra credit and I received some very impressive projects.

Then we moved to Plate Tectonics and learned about the ever-changing surface of the Earth. Students learned about how the continents have moved over time and about the driving force moving the tectonic plates. This brought us to our Earthquakes and Volcanoes chapter where the 7th grade students will learn about what causes earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Even with challenging topics, the students have worked really hard and ask thoughtful questions that spark interesting conversation!

From Earth Science, we move to our chapter on Animal Behavior, always a favorite for students especially the animal lovers!

## GRADE 8

The 8th graders began the year with the chapter Reproduction of Organisms. They had the opportunity to look at yeast reproducing under a microscope, which was really interesting! We discussed Mitosis and Meiosis and I was so impressed with their understanding and thoughtful questions throughout this complex chapter.

We then began our chapter on Genetics (a personal favorite of mine!) and students learned about Fr. Gregor Mendel and his experiments with peas. After discussing the father of Genetics, we discussed inheritance and how genes are passed from parent to offspring. Students are able to use a Punnett Square to predict the likelihood of a specific trait being passed onto an offspring. 8th grade learned about DNA and RNA and how they are connected to genetics. The students have been so engaged in our Genetics units and have been thoughtful and creative in thinking of examples and sparking discussion.

We are currently on our last chapter connected to Genetics - Heredity and How Traits Change. From here, we will be moving to the wonderful world of Chemistry!

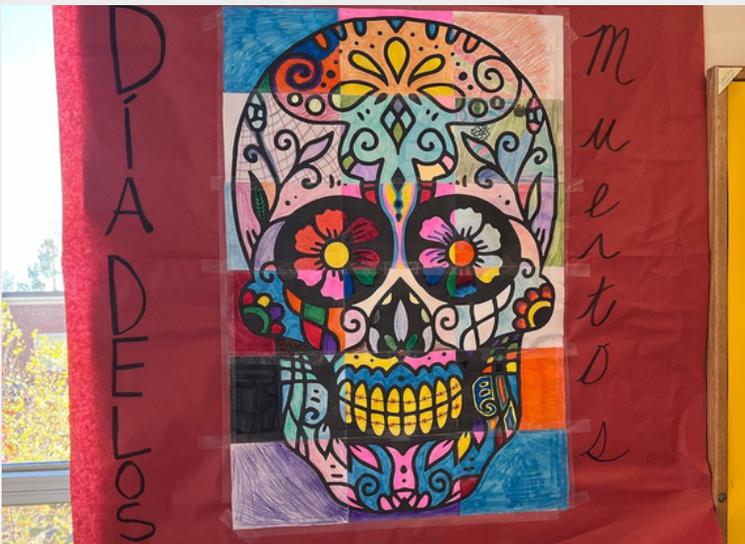
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# SPANISH



## GRADE 6

Grade 6 Spanish started the year learning about everywhere Spanish is spoken, and why it can be so valuable to learn another language. A lesson on the alphabet has helped with our pronunciation – everyone did a wonderful job of saying their prayers in Spanish. Throughout the year we will explore more of Spanish-speaking cultures, but students started the year with each of them giving a mini lesson on a different cultural celebration. We recently spent some additional time on dia de los muertos, learning more about the history and tradition. Next up: culture in Spain and talking about things that we like to do.



## GRADE 7

Grade 7 Spanish began the year with some review – repetition, repetition, repetition! We have also been adding more verbs to our vocabulary. We have taken time to read more about and discuss the culture of Puerto Rico, while also dedicating time each week to writing. Most recently we have been using possessive adjectives and describing our family trees. The students enjoy discussing dia de los muertos every year– check out the collage grade 7 put together (yellow)!

## GRADE 8

Grade 8 Spanish began the year with a review of the preterite tense. We will be adding to our preterite vocabulary list and later in the year we will be talking about the difference between two past tenses – the preterite and the imperfect. Different students have started bringing in an article each week to share with the class and help us to read more. Next week we will begin reading our short novela, Mi propio auto. Students recently completed mini research projects where they planned a three-day trip to Costa Rica to see all the nature it has to offer. Look at the collage grade 8 put together as part of our time spent on dia de los muertos (red)!

# MUSIC

The 7th Graders (7A) started the semester by writing about a particular song that accompanies a special memory or person in their lives. Then we learned about different genres of music as we read about the origins of modern-day bands and their music.

# STREAM

In STREAM, the students worked in cooperative groups on lessons aligned with the Massachusetts Engineering Standards, using the Engineering Design Process. The sixth and seventh graders learned about hurricanes and the damage they can cause. They researched, designed, created and tested varieties of prototypes of houses that could possibly withstand a hurricane. To complete the project, the students brainstormed ways they could iterate their project to be more successful.

The 8th graders studied different zoo enclosures, and how they met, or didn't meet, the needs of the animal caretaker, the visitors, and the zoo animals themselves. They created signage for a particular animal and then created a prototype of an enclosure for their chosen animal.

In Term 2, the middle school students will be given their gmail addresses, provided by the school, and introduced to different enhancements Google provides, such as Google classroom, Docs, Slides, and Drive.



## ART

Students in grade six discover the technique of Iris Paper folding and create Autumn leaves in Art class this past week.



# Save the Date LIVE NATIVITY



The middle school students of SJS would like to invite everyone to the annual Living Nativity on December 16, 2022, at 1:30 pm in the Upper Church. This beloved tradition goes back over 25 years. This year, we are delighted to include our entire school community in the audience and are thrilled the Grade 6 and 7 choir will be returning. The performance is the final event of the calendar year at SJS and a beautiful reminder for us all of the true reason we celebrate Christmas.