

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Saint Paul's School offers a core curriculum that transcends the Louisiana Department of Education's requirements. College and career readiness are manifested in both students' academic performance and on the national battery of tests administered at each grade level: EXPLORE, PLAN, ReadStep, ASPIRE, PSAT, SAT, and ACT. Student progress is monitored from entrance through exit using this sequence from the College Board and ACT. Although SPS aligns with state and national standards (currently the Common Core), its curriculum far exceeds these expectations. Analysis of each student's standardized test data aids in gauging his progress from the entrance exam through graduation. Standardized test scores, along with curricular assessments and teacher recommendations, help ensure that each student is placed in the appropriate setting to ensure his success, as SPS offers a variety of Honors, Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment courses in addition to its college-preparatory courses. Academic interventions as well as promotions to more advanced courses are part of the routine for those who fall behind or exceed expectations. Lastly and most importantly, the 334 year old Lasallian charism remains at the center of Saint Paul's curriculum.

Students acquire the necessary foundational skills in the English curriculum because of the common threads that run from grades 8 through 12. Every year, students examine fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama. The functions of grammar and composition are stressed throughout, and ACT and SAT prep are routine. Ultimately, SPS English courses are designed to prepare students for the kind of research and writing they will be expected to complete in college and beyond. Therefore, vocabulary enrichment and proper research techniques make up an integral part of the paradigm. Every course requires a research based presentation and oration, and all students participate in Socratic Circles. Assessments are leveled within courses for students who are underperforming, and those who are performing above grade level are promoted to Honors or Advanced Placement. Additionally, instructors work with counselors to provide adjustments for students who need academic interventions in a variety of ways.

Students acquire the necessary foundational skills in math as they matriculate through the program that has been horizontally and vertically aligned. Like all departments at SPS, math is aligned to state and national standards but far exceeds those expectations as evidenced by the variety of accelerated and Dual Enrollment offerings. Students are initially leveled by achievement on national standardized tests, and the math department also offers an entrance exam for students who seek to be placed initially in accelerated courses. Students performing below level are remediated in a variety of ways: NHS and Mu Alpha Theta tutoring; leveled testing and assessments that address various learning styles; accommodating schedules to provide increased time for individualized instruction, etc. Students who perform above level are placed in honors and AP courses. Lastly, 21st century skills are incorporated as all students are required to use Pearson's web-based MathXL, a program utilized by most universities, for homework.

The science department at SPS meets the college and career readiness standards both by surpassing national standards in its core classes and by its outstanding elective offerings, such as environmental science, AP Biology, Biology II, and Biomedical Sciences I-IV (part of the Science Technology Engineering Mathematics, or STEM program), that are rooted in 21st century skills. The Gateway to Technology course (provided by Project Lead the Way, the nation's leading provider of STEM programs) is offered to incoming 8th graders; this sets a strong foundation for further STEM learning in high school and beyond and challenges students to solve real-world problems while using the latest software and tools. Beyond the normal core classes such as physical science, biology, and chemistry, SPS requires that all students take physics. Teachers and students complete lab safety training to ensure the safety and efficacy of the department's hands-on, cooperative learning approach. All students frequently practice

technical writing when completing lab reports, a necessity for college and perhaps beyond. Students who fall behind are offered in-semester remediation, and those that excel are placed into honors and AP courses.

The social studies department prepares students for college and beyond in progressive ways. Critical reading practice is a common thread at all levels, and the success of this manifests in the significant increase in ACT Reading scores. Teachers find new ways to engage students by posting assignments to Twitter and making the learning tangible via various field trips that range from an experience at a plantation in Louisiana to participating in a seminar at the National World War II Museum. SPS social studies teachers explore a skills-based, thematic approach in lieu of the traditional, chronological lecture paradigm. Research, writing, and presentation skills are also intermeshed throughout this department's curriculum.

SPS supports college and career readiness for each student, as evidenced by the school's extensive AP, STEM, Dual Enrollment, and career-oriented courses. The school not only aligns to the Common Core Anchor Standards but also endeavors to ensure that its students are professionally prepared. SPS is committed to continuous improvement, including a focus on effective curriculum alignment, realizing that these standards serve as the baseline of what students should know and be able to do after graduation. The Lasallian mission, stellar ACT scores, and varied, challenging curriculum all speak to the aforementioned support of Saint Paul's students' futures.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

In addition to its outstanding core curriculum, Saint Paul's supports its students' acquisition of essential skills and knowledge through its focus on religion, physical education, and the arts, and through its challenging, career-focused elective program. Beyond the normal theology track mandated by the Archdiocese of New Orleans, the Lasallian Five Core Principles are intermeshed deliberately into the curriculum of religion and all departments: Concern for the Poor and Social Justice, Inclusive Community, Respect for All, A Quality Education, and Faith in the Presence of God. Authentic service learning is an integral part of the religion department as each student is required to complete, in addition to 5 years of religious education, a minimum of 10 service hours annually. Many students are recognized for greatly exceeding this minimum. Service learning days are enmeshed in the curriculum. The faculty models this by taking students into the community to help at food banks, hospitals, retirement homes, public parks, etc. The expectation is that graduates will embrace their role as men of faith and servant leaders in their communities well beyond commencement.

The physical education and health department offers choices beyond what is required by the state. Students may opt to take Athletic P.E., a course focused on weightlifting, agility, and speed training, or traditional P.E. courses which are an amalgam of training, national fitness tests, and games. Although the state mandates 2 years of P.E. and one semester of health, students may opt to take one of these courses for all 5 years. Life-long fitness, sportsmanship, and nutrition are all byproducts of this program. Beyond that, a student may also enroll in the four-year Air Force Junior ROTC program, where leadership, life skills, management, communication, citizenship, and career opportunities are acquired for life beyond SPS.

Saint Paul's is in compliance with the program's foreign language requirements. The foreign language department's main objectives not only include effective written and oral communication but also an authentic understanding of the cultures of Latin America and Spain. Students are required to take Spanish I and Spanish II in 8th and 9th grade, respectively. These classes introduce and later enhance the four skills of communicating in a foreign language: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Elective options

include Spanish III, IV Honors, and V Honors which are taken during the sophomore, junior, and senior years in a continuum. In addition to the four skills, these classes focus on music, movies, culture, dance, body language, history, and politics. Students complete research projects in presentational and written formats at the honors level. The skills attained in the foreign language department will greatly benefit the students well into the 21st century regardless of their chosen vocations. Students interested in other languages are encouraged to complete a variety of offerings by accredited on-line schools.

SPS also offers business and law courses. Freshmen may enroll in Introduction to Business, a non-quantitative course that immerses them in small business, corporations, ethics, etc. From sophomore through senior years, students may opt for Management/Marketing, Economics/Finance, and Entrepreneurship, courses designed to aid in discerning possible careers in these fields. The elective law studies program begins in ninth grade with the prerequisite Criminology course which deals with the scientific study and prevention of criminal behavior. Next, students can enroll in Law Studies I and, subsequently, Law Studies II. Here, students acquire the skills necessary to begin undergraduate law enforcement programs or post-baccalaureate law school.

The decorated journalism program is a one or two year elective that students can begin during the sophomore year. The only student-maintained electronic newspaper in the state, The Paper Wolf (thepaperwolf.com), mirrors what college journalism classes produce including video production, Op Ed pieces, sports articles, movie reviews, etc. Also, beginning in tenth grade, the Creative Writing elective allows students to present their own workshops and critique peers' stories which are published in the school's annual literary magazine, The Maelstrom. Both courses build on skills attained in the core English courses as students explore journalism and writing as professions.

The engineering program at SPS is only one of three to be certified by Project Lead the Way (PLTW) in Louisiana. There are four sequenced levels of engineering which students can begin as freshmen: Introduction to Engineering Design, Principles of Engineering, Civil Engineering and Architecture, and Digital Electronics. Additionally, the Computer Science and Software Engineering courses may be taken concurrently or independently. These project-based, hands-on courses give students 21st century skills that will lead to success in similar programs in college and professionally in these fields.

The biomedical sciences program, a four-year, elective track which can begin during a student's freshman year, includes Principles of Biomedical Sciences, Human Body Systems, Medical Interventions, and Biomedical Innovations (which has an internship element). Like engineering, the biomedical program's curriculum is driven by PLTW and is project-based and rooted in skills that encourage career readiness.

SPS has four levels of visual art that a student can begin during his freshman year. A student can complete the state's mandated two years of art electives (visual or performing) by completing Art I and Art II and may then continue this elective path by choosing Art III and IV during his junior and senior years, focusing on a variety of skills in preparation for careers in architecture, interior design, photography, sculpture, print making, painting, etc. Also, AP Art History is offered as a college-level elective for sophomores and beyond.

For budding performing artists, Theatre I, II, and III impart skills ranging from public speaking to writing, directing, and producing one act plays. Additionally, students participate in the fall play or spring musical productions that occur annually. The music curriculum offers the students a chance to explore musical interests that can become life-long avocations or vocations. The marching band instills integral life skills: work ethic, discipline, and leadership, and members may begin participating during the 8th grade year. Students are also eligible to audition for concert and jazz band, and they have the opportunity to take percussion, guitar, music theory, and music appreciation (beginning in the sophomore year).

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

SPS utilizes varied instructional methods to meet the needs of students with diverse learning styles and abilities. Each student may enroll in a variety of College-Preparatory, Honors, and Advanced Placement courses in each content area based on ability and interest. Administrators and counselors meet to disaggregate the standardized tests scores of all students once accepted. Every effort is made to ensure that each student is placed where he can enjoy his greatest academic success.

Counselors, teachers, and administrators monitor each student's norm and criterion-referenced assessments and intervene if a student begins to fall below expectations. Teachers in each department schedule before and after school tutoring sessions to offer one-on-one academic coaching. The counseling department consistently communicates changes in a student's adjustments, and counselors aid teachers by providing extended time, oral testing, etc. The fully-staffed counseling department communicates frequently with the teachers and parents of students who need early and consistent intervention.

Because SPS accepts students of varying abilities, the school also offers an academic summer program, Success, for new students who are at-risk. This camp focuses on organizational and study skills and has greatly aided students through in-depth, early intervention.

SPS orchestrates a well-organized peer tutoring program using students in Mu Alpha Theta, National Honor Society (NHS), Spanish NHS, Junior NHS, and Peer Mentors. Moderators of these organizations monitor peer tutoring sessions for quality control. The school also intervenes in non-traditional ways. Supper clubs financed by the Mother's Club provide tutors and meals for at-risk students, and the counseling department has created tiered math intervention during the school day for students who fall below expectations.

Teachers differentiate instruction by leveling assignments and assessments by ability and learning styles, and department chairs and administrators supervise instruction and assessment. Lesson plans are reviewed weekly by the Assistant Principal and are posted on Edline, a web-based online and mobile learning system, for use by students and parents. Technology supports learning in a variety of ways. SPS purchased electronic tablets to ensure that walkthrough observations allow feedback on instructional practices and differentiation to be efficiently conveyed. After much research and discernment, SPS opted for a Bring Your Own Device policy and invested significant funds into the infrastructure of its wireless network. Teachers post grades, lesson plans, assessment reviews, and varied instructional aides to Edline. Technology-based learning is supported by computers in classrooms, mobile labs, and multiple computer labs on campus. Teachers and students utilize a variety of web-based services such as Google Docs, Turnitin, Khan Academy, and varied others to differentiate instruction and support learning.

