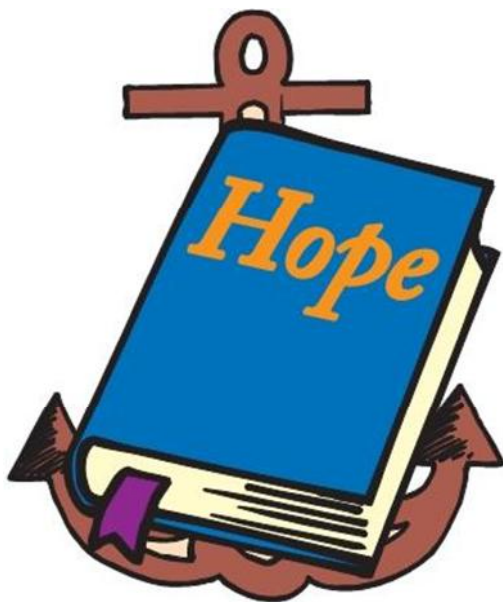




Middle School Handbook

St. Clare School

2011-2012



**"May the God of hope fill you with joy and peace in believing
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit"
(Romans 15:13)**

(Revised September 12, 2011)

Middle School Handbook

St. Clare School

725 Washington Street
Santa Clara, CA 95050

Office Telephone (408) 246-6797

Office Fax (408) 246-6726

Cool Kids Zone (408) 246-2513

www.stclareschool.org

office@stclareschool.org

Office Hours

7:30am to 3:30pm

Monday thru Friday

School Hours

First Bell (line up): 8:05am

Second Bell (assembly begins): 8:10am

Dismissal: 3:00pm

Early Wednesdays Dismissal: 12:30pm

Cool Kids Zone Hours

Morning Care: 7:00am to 8:05am

Afternoon Care: Dismissal to 6:00pm

**This handbook is subject to change throughout the school year.
Please refer to the weekly newsletter to updated information.**

**The Principal is the final recourse and
reserves the right to amend this handbook at any time!**

“Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed so that what you say will do good to those who hear you” • Ephesians 4:29

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	3
Overview	4
Middle School Faculty.....	5
Student Schedules	5
Student Behavior	6
Spiritual Development	6
Silver Circles.....	6
Homework	7
Technology & School Assignments.....	7
High School Information	7
Adolescent Development	8
Resources for Parents.....	10

Non-Discrimination Policy

St. Clare School admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at this school. St. Clare does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in the administration of their educational policies, admission policies, scholarship programs, athletic and other school administered programs.

Diocesan School

St. Clare School is a school of the Diocese of San Jose and adheres to and is bound by the policies of the Diocese of San Jose.

Overview

This handbook has been created to specifically address the needs of Middle School students at St. Clare School. It is intended as an addendum to the *St. Clare School Student-Parent Handbook* and not as a replacement. Any items or topics not covered in this handbook can be found in the *Student-Parent Handbook*. Please read all handbooks carefully.

Mission Statement

We, the community of St. Clare, believe that Catholic education is an expression of the mission entrusted by Jesus Christ to our church. Recognizing parents as primary educators, we focus on the ongoing development of the whole child. Through our Silver Box program, we foster the values of learning, caring, worshipping and growing in a Christ-centered environment where the uniqueness of every child is valued.

Schoolwide Learning Expectations

Students at St. Clare School are Worshipping

They will:

- Express/share a relationship with God
- Act with Jesus as a role model
- Model the teachings and practices of Catholicism
- Give the gifts of "Silver Boxes" to others

Students at St. Clare School are Learning

They will:

- Demonstrate responsibility for schoolwork and learning
- Read, write, compute, and problem-solve effectively
- Think critically and creatively
- Possess a strong work ethic

Students at St. Clare School are Caring

They will:

- Act respectfully towards self and others
- Serve others with care and compassion through school/church outreach programs
- Cooperate with others in various settings
- Recognize and appreciate the gifts and talents of others

Students at St. Clare School are Growing

They will:

- Practice thoughtful decision-making skills
- Take responsibility for their own actions
- Learn and grow from their mistakes
- Express themselves creatively

Middle School Faculty

Faculty Member	Subjects Taught	E-Mail Address
Ms. Ranae Marengo	Grade 6 Homeroom Grade 6 Language Arts Grade 6 Social Studies Grade 6 Religion Grade 6 Art Grade 7 Art Grade 8 Art	rmarengo@stclareschool.org
Mr. Greg Sereno	Grade 7 Homeroom Grade 7 Social Studies Grade 7 Religion Grade 7 Math Grade 8 Religion Grade 8 Math	gsereno@stclareschool.org
Mrs. Analiza Fillion	Grade 8 Homeroom Grade 7 Language Arts Grade 8 Language Arts Grade 8 Social Studies	afillion@stclareschool.org
Mrs. Cici Martinez	Grade 6 Math Grade 6 Science Grade 7 Science Grade 8 Science	cmartinez@stclareschool.org
Ms. Valerye Moore	Grade 6 P. E. Grade 7 P. E. Grade 8 P. E.	vmoore@stclareschool.org
Mr. William Dempsey	Grade 8 Algebra	wdempsey@stclareschool.org

Student Schedules

Student Schedules reflect the curriculum requirements of the Diocese of San Jose. Students move from classroom to classroom during the day. These transitions from subject to subject and room to room require a great deal of responsibility from the students, as they learn to manage their time and resources. Teachers provide schedules to the students and they are also posted in each classroom.

Teachers attempt to integrate multiple academic subjects into their lessons as an aid to learning. This integration provides opportunities to make connections between different subjects and skills. Current brain research informs us that the adolescent mind learns best while being presented material that is relevant to their lives, challenging and interesting. By integrating academic material, student learning is enhanced.

This type of scheduling, called “block scheduling,” is utilized at the majority of the local high schools. Some subjects meet daily, while others meet four times per week. Teachers have the opportunity to extend their activities with students and develop projects that require additional time. Students learn to manage their time at home, as some homework is given over a multi-day period. Our students benefit from early exposure to block scheduling and the added benefits of longer instructional periods.

Student Behavior

Classroom procedures are explained by each teacher and accepted by students. Each classroom has its own procedures for homework, missed work, environmental items and other matters. All students are expected to allow every other student in their class the opportunity to learn and grow. Any behavior that disrupts other students or the teacher will result in specific consequences. Some examples of disruptive behaviors include talking out without permission, being disrespectful to students or adults and the deliberate violation of class rules.

The following five steps will be utilized by all teachers:

First Instance	Students receive a verbal warning.
Second Instance	Parents/guardians are notified of behavior.
Third Instance	Student and parent meet with the teacher.
Fourth Instance	Student, parent and teacher meet with the Principal.
Fifth Instance	Serious disciplinary action such as suspension or expulsion occurs.

Spiritual Development

All middle school students are provided with a variety of opportunities to demonstrate and practice their faith. In addition to daily religion classes, students are expected to participate fully in prayer services, liturgies, sacramental experiences and community service events. Classes prepare one of the monthly masses and at least two prayer services each year. Students participate in Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. One of the highlights of the liturgical calendar is the Holy Thursday Stations of the Cross Prayer Service. This service is prepared and led by the eighth grade. Middle school students are also invited to participate as lectors and altar servers for St. Clare Parish.

Seventh grade students participate in an on-site retreat during the spring. Eighth grade students plan and attend an overnight retreat during the third trimester. Both retreats stress the importance of God in our lives and the ways we all contribute to the human community. Additionally, community service opportunities are available through the student council and the school Outreach Program.

Silver Box behavior and appropriate reverence are daily expectations of St. Clare School students. Middle school students, in particular, are role models for the younger children and the community as a whole. We expect that their positive example will be an inspiration to all.

Silver Circles

Silver Circles are small groups of students, led by a faculty or staff member, who meet one morning each week for discussions. Silver Circle groups discuss a wide variety of topics and practice communication and social skills. Students remain in the same group throughout their middle school years. These groups provide students with the opportunity to mentor and develop friendships with other middle school students and bond with a faculty or staff member. Research has demonstrated that groups such as Silver Circles are vital to healthy adolescent development and are a logical extension of our Silver Boxes program.

We ask that parents respect the confidentiality of student discussion that takes place during Silver Circles.

Homework

Homework is an integral part of the academic process. Teachers assign homework to develop a work ethic in students and to provide opportunities for students to practice academic skills. Middle School students are responsible for completing homework in a proper and timely fashion. Homework assignments are provided orally and in writing in each class and posted on the Teacher Web Page. Each student is given a Homework Planner, with a daily calendar and various study skill items. It is the student's responsibility to record homework assignments and to take home appropriate materials to complete the assignments.

Technology & School Assignments

Some Middle School assignments utilize technology for research or other activities. Teachers will make accommodations to assignments for students who do not have access to technology.

High School Information

Many of our Middle School students aspire to attend local private high schools. We have a very strong relationship with our Catholic high schools, as well as local public high schools. Our academic standards are high and are designed not only for successful learning, but also to prepare students for the rigors of high school.

Information Nights

The School arranges for most local high schools to visit the eighth grade class in the fall. Each high school provides information about their school and the application process. Additionally, High School Information Nights are conducted at many local elementary schools in the fall. Interested parents can gain information about the local private high schools at these events.

Application Process

The application process is conducted according to the particular admission policies of each high school. Admission information can be found on the individual high school web sites. St. Clare School assists parents by hosting an informational night for St. Clare families. The School also provides information, with parent permission, to the high schools concerning transcripts, standardized testing results and teacher recommendations.

Shadowing

All high schools encourage students to spend a day at their campus "shadowing" a current high school student. St. Clare School welcomes this opportunity for eighth grade students to visit the high school campuses. All visits are arranged by the students themselves by following the high schools' shadow policies. Students are required to make-up missed assignments.

Placement Tests

All students are required to take a standardized test (the HSPT) in January as part of the high school application process. Students interested in taking additional classes to prepare for this test are encouraged to investigate local tutoring centers that specialize in test preparation. Courses exist for students in seventh and eighth grades. Please consult school faculty if you are uncertain about your student's ability to benefit from these courses

Adolescent Development

Adolescence is one of the most unique periods of human development. Growth spurts, as noticeable as those of infancy, combine with hormonal changes to affect the adolescent in a variety of ways, including ways that lead to inconsistent and, sometimes, irrational behavior.

The faculty and staff of St. Clare School recognize the inherent difficulties of being an adolescent in today's world and our procedural and behavioral guidelines represent this understanding. It is our duty, and the responsibility of all adults in an adolescents' life, to provide the structure and consistency that is so essential to appropriate adolescent development.

There are four major areas of "change" during the adolescent period: physical growth, cognitive development, moral development and identity-formation.

Physical Growth

The growth spurts that occur during adolescence are unparalleled in human development (other than those during infancy). It is common for physical changes to occur spontaneously and quickly. Of course it is also common for physical changes to occur over a long period of time. The important thing to remember is that the physical changes of adolescence vary from person to person and are completely beyond the adolescent's control. Therefore, adolescents need our understanding and patience!

These physical changes coupled with changes in hormonal output affecting the reproductive system, are confusing and difficult for many children. Adolescents need reassurance from adults that what they are going through is normal and their self-identity should be based on more than just their appearance. Communication between parents and children regarding these changes allows for appropriate questions and answers. Communication also provides a supportive environment which helps children to understand their own bodies and develop self-respect. Additionally, issues of personal hygiene arise from these physical changes and should be discussed in an open, safe environment.

Cognitive Development

The human mind is an evolving entity that develops in predictable and recognizable stages according to physical years and intellectual exposure. The mind evolves from the *Concrete-Operational Stage*, where one's thinking is based on real objects in front of them and what can be done with these objects, to the *Formal-Operations Stage*, where individuals can now comprehend items in their mind and use them without being able to physically touch them. In other words, the adolescent mind is moving from the concrete, touchable world of their immediate environment, to the conceptual, abstract world of thought.

This is a fascinating time in young people's lives, as possibilities that did not exist previously are suddenly very real in the imagination. However, due to the fact that the mind is constantly evolving and children enter these stages at variable rates, the adolescent is an oftentimes contradictory being. For example, some teens cannot remember to take out the trash, yet become obsessed with solving world hunger. Adolescents while longing for their own responsibilities and freedoms of the adult world, cannot fathom the fact that they must do the dishes once a week. Adolescents may demand justice and fairness in all facets of life (justice is a highly abstract idea), yet become defensive and angry if they do not get what they want.

As adults, we need to provide many opportunities for adolescents to expand their minds and world views. We can do this in a number of ways:

- we *encourage independent thinking* by stressing reading and discussing problem solving techniques (current events discussions are great for this!);
- we *provide rationales* for our decisions and our rules which allow adolescents to reason for themselves and see other possibilities;
- we can *stimulate perspective-taking*, by enjoying books, films or art in a variety of genres; and
- we can simply *be patient* with our children as their minds grow—sometimes at the same time as their bodies!

Moral Development

Similar to cognitive development, morality develops in stages that are sequential and recognizable. As adolescents grow, the methods of their decision-making also change. According to the research of Lawrence Kohlberg, adolescents typically move from a stage of moral development where they are particularly motivated by either the punishment or reward offered for a certain behavior. The typical fourth or fifth (or sixth or seventh...) grader is more concerned with what *they* get out of something and not with how the event may affect *others*.

Like their minds, in terms of moral decision-making, adolescents are moving towards a moral development stage where other people are placed at the center of their moral views. This is good! We would much rather raise individuals that are concerned with the cares of others as a motivator to their behavior.

In terms of adult behaviors, we want to encourage adolescents to do three main things:

- *consider other people's point of view* when making a decision (considerations of the consequences of an act or decision on others is paramount to moral growth);
- *provide rationales for our decisions* (this can be accomplished when explaining rules and consequences); and
- *provide opportunities for discussion* of issues relevant in the life of the adolescent (whether they be real, imagined or stimulated by others).

Identity-Formation

The adolescent is engaged in discovering their own identity and role in the world. While this may be unpleasant for adults, it is perfectly normal for a teenager—physically approaching adulthood, whose mind is capable of all sorts of new ideas, who has an independent idea of why things are the way they are—to strive to discover themselves. They want to know who they are and who they are going to become. Naturally, this means that adolescents will experiment with a variety of behaviors and interests. As adults, we need to be patient with this experimentation, as most of these new ideas and behaviors will NOT work out the way the adolescent envisions them. We must remember that trying things out is vital to discovering who we are.

Oftentimes, while searching for an identity, adolescents will deliberately attempt things in opposition to their family or the community that raised them. This is a human reaction and not a result of the failure of the family or community. "If I am NOT what these people around me are, then maybe I am the opposite?" is a completely legitimate question for an adolescent. As adolescents search for their own identity, they must first reject the one that they believe others have imposed upon them. It is up to adults to stay consistent, allow the adolescent some space, and once again, be patient.

Adolescents place a much higher premium on the opinion of their peers during the period of adolescence. As they separate from their families, they will often seek out the validation of their peers instead. As adults, we need to allow children to be with their peers, but also remain involved in their lives. We must ask questions. We must

talk to the adolescent about what interests them. We must week their opinions. This shows that we care, that we understand, that we value their opinions and that we are willing to allow them to be themselves.

Finally, as adolescents seek their own identity, adults must expect some risk-taking and be prepared to be consistent in all things. As their world is constantly changing, adults need to provide the structure that is lacking in their lives. We need to be prepared to be firm and enforce the consequences that we have set out for certain behaviors. It is our job to set the standard and to enforce it. This is how adolescents learn the boundaries of adult and social behavior. Adolescents will push and push and push until they either get what they want (many children have learned that if they continue to ask for something they will eventually get it) or the adult follows-through with the agreed-upon consequence.

In Summary

The following table summarizes the main points of this section.

Area of Change	Adolescent Issues	Adult Behaviors
Physical Growth	Growth spurts, hormonal output, reproductive formation, variable rates	Patience, availability, consistency, reassurance
Cognitive Development	From the concrete to the abstract, concern for the ideal, egocentrism	Encourage independent thinking, stimulate perspective-taking
Moral Development	Why be good? (from “to avoid punishment” to “please others”)	Consider other points-of-view, provide rationales, make time for discussion
Identity-Formation	Separation from parent, peer approval, risk-taking	Allow space, allow for mistakes, be open-minded, ask questions

Resources for Parents

Web Sites

- www.parentteachersupport.org
Formative Support Services for Parents and Teachers,
a ministry of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
- www.kidshealth.org
Nemours Center for Children's Health Media
Nemours Foundation
- www.aap.org
American Academy of Pediatrics
- www.apa.org
American Psychological Association
- www.chconline.org
Children’s Health Council, Palo Alto

Books

Parenting

- *How to Talk so Teens will Listen and Listen so Teens will Talk*
(Faber, Adele and Elaine Mazlish, 2005)
Improve your relationships with your teen through more effective communication.
- *Get Out of My Life, but First Could You Drive Me and Cheryl to the Mall?: A Parent's Guide to the New Teenager.*
(Wolf, updated edition, 2002)
Anthony Wolf's book attempts to explain adolescents' behavior to their parents. It contains chapters on a variety of subjects (e.g., school, sex, suicide), as well as such themes as "What They Do and Why."
- *The Growing Season: A Parent's Guide to Positive Parenting of Teens* (video and Parent handbook)
(Pitzer, Ronald. University of Minnesota Extension Service, University of Minnesota, 2000.
- *Why Do They Act that Way? A Survival Guide to the Adolescent Brain for You and Your Teen.*
(Walsh, 2004)
Dr. David Walsh is a nationally known expert in adolescence and parenting. He explains in easy to understand language how the changes in the brain during adolescence bring about many of the behavior problems often associated with teenagers. He also offers practical solutions for parents on how to deal with a broad range of behavioral issues.

Social Issues

- *The Price of Privilege*
Mel Levine
- *Cliques, Phonies and Other Baloney*
by Trevor Romain
- *Best Friends, Worst Enemies*
Michael Thompson
- *The Company They Keep*
Bikowski, Newromb, and Hartup
- *Educating for Character*
Thomas Lickona
- *Odd Girl Out*
Rachel Simmons
- *Reviving Ophelia*
Mary Phifer

Films

- Thirteen
- Mean Girls
- Welcome to the Dollhouse
- The Breakfast Club