

Social Emotional Learning

Mount Madonna School's commitment to Positive Character Development shows in the number of classes and experiences dedicated in part or in full to Social Emotional Learning. The principles of character development permeate all the curricula at the school, including academics. In addition, the SEL program dedicates many classes and experiences almost exclusively to character education.

Life Skills (Grades 6-8)

In Life Skills, students and teachers divide time between processing issues that arise in the school community with an intentional process of dialogue, and learning practical skills to prepare for life after high school. Life skills classes examine digital citizenship and gain media literacy. They also prepare for shopping, cooking, job skills, and even auto maintenance. Dialoging sessions examine emotional safety and trust in the group, and how individuals balance their goals with the needs of the community.

Students learn about nutrition and self-care, and 8th graders learn about human sexuality.

Yoga (Grades 6-8, 11, 12)

Students in Yoga class learn how to use the techniques of breathing, meditation, and Yoga postures to increase concentration and relaxation. Students learn self-control and self-awareness while developing strength and flexibility. Yoga is required for all Middle School Students once per week throughout the year; it is also offered to High School students as an elective.

Values in World Thought (Grades 11 and 12)

"Values" is a capstone course that spans 11th and 12th grades, and incorporates trips to Washington D.C., and South Africa or India. Students prepare for interviews with world leaders by studying their written work, and analyzing it through reflective dialogue, journaling, presentations, and essay writing. Past interviewees include Nobel Laureates F.W. de Klerk, Bishop Desmond Tutu, and the Dalai Lama. Students spend time with other schools and non-profit organizations around the world in the program. Curriculum materials include A World of Ideas: Volumes I and II by Bill Moyers. The aim of the Values in World Thought program is to develop capacities of self-awareness and to support an ongoing inquiry into the values that inform our actions and our life purpose. Students are expected to strengthen their ability to engage in positive and mutually beneficial relationships with each other and with their communities.

Middle School Learning Journey (Grades 6-8)

The Mount Madonna Middle School spends the first week of school on a waste-free camping experience that includes learning experiences in Riparian, Marine, and Redwood ecosystems. Students participate in leadership and team-building activities designed to develop their skills at interfacing with their community outside their family of origin. Students keep self-reflective and scientific journals. The eighth grade spends two nights of the journey on an intensive primitive backpacking experience.

High School Learning Journey (Grades 9-12)

The High School spends the first week of school on a challenging whitewater rafting and open-air camping trip. Students are challenged to face their fears and learn to rely on their community of teachers and peers for support as they engage with the outdoor environment on the American River.

Rite of Passage (Grade 8)

Eighth graders spend one night in silent self-reflection on a solo camping experience at the end of middle school as part of a 3 day experience. On this trip, students learn about themselves and their process of self-discovery by contending with boredom and a lack of technology. They also explore traditional and historical rites of passage, and return to process their experience with the community of parents and teachers.

Catalina Environmental Leadership Program (Grade 9)

In ninth grade, students spend a week in the spring at the Catalina Environmental Leadership Program. Students are asked to face their fears on a high ropes course, a climbing wall, and underwater in close encounters with marine animals. Students step out of their comfort zone and develop their capacity for understanding others in leadership activities and challenging travel situations without technological devices.

Performing Arts (Grades 6-12)

Along with providing a platform for expanding skills in all aspects of musical theatre, Performing Arts at Mount Madonna presents a dynamic opportunity for students to engage in collaborative community building. Students learn not only about theatre, but also about the importance of respect, responsibility, accountability, mutual support and openness to one another. In the first quarter, after participating in song share, students engage in the audition process, including prepared dance, songs, scenes or monologues. The class provides an opportunity to discover individual strengths, talents and confidences. Even more importantly, students work together in a larger context to develop community and to foster positive qualities of teamwork, support, and respect for each other. Theatrically, this is a course less about acting, dancing and singing in isolation and more about putting truth on stage.