

Social, Emotional and Ethical Learning (SEEL) – Middle School

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

Beginning of the Year Learning Journey

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.

Boston Learning Journey

The Boston learning journey for the eighth grade class is an opportunity to support classroom-based learning with a visit to sites and locations of historical significance that can make a lasting educational impression on students. The students have the opportunity to survey the major events and ideas that led to the American War of Independence. This excursion showcases the importance of Boston as a city that experienced slavery, revolution, and abolition, and how this impacted the development of the early United States.

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. Students examine digital citizenship and gain media and financial 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 eighth graders learn about human sexuality.

Performing Arts (Grades 6-8)

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.

Rite of Passage (Grade 8)

As part of a three-day experience, eighth graders spend one night in silent self-reflection on a solo camping experience at the end of middle school. 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.

Yoga (Grades 6-8)

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.