

St. John Paul II STEM Academy - Academic FAQ's

You are an innovative STEM school with specialized paths. Will my child still take classes like literature and history?

Of course! Our commitment is to form forward-thinking innovators, ready for the real world and committed to serving the common good. That means that it is essential that they have the critical skills of writing which is the foundation for success in any path in life. In addition, we firmly believe in the value of reading and its capacity to form ethical, compassionate and open-minded leaders.

I'm glad your school involves so much hands on learning and real-world preparation, but will my child be prepared for college?

Yes! Our program is designed to give our students both the academic and practical skills they need for success in their next step in life. We will require the full A-G requirements (the standard courses needed for admission to UC and CS universities) and within our project-based approach will emphasize the critical thinking and research skills which will give students an edge in college. Our program is designed to give a broad range of experiences to help them decide which further area of study they want to pursue.

Will you offer AP classes?

Yes, although because of our small size, we will offer only select AP course opportunities. However, we believe actually experiencing college while still in high school is more valuable in preparing students and guaranteeing transferable credits. We are forming partnerships with local private, public and community colleges to facilitate students gaining college credit before they graduate high school.

Is there a particular kind of learning style that is best for your school?

No! For a student who already does well in a traditional learning setting of lecture and note taking, our school will build on his or her capacity and expand the ability to think critically and develop a broader range of world-ready skills. For a student who isn't engaged in a typical classroom setting, we offer the advantage of a more active and applied style of learning, with different modes of showing mastery, like portfolios and presentations.

Your model is very based on projects and hands-on learning. Does that mean my child won't take tests or attend lectures?

No. All courses will still have a theoretical component, where direct instruction and the expertise of the teachers is necessary, but our model places the emphasis on learning, which is better achieved through application and practice than lecture. We also emphasize various modalities of learning and showing mastery, so students will be expected to show what they have learning through both tests and student directed work.

What are the benefits of the 4x4 block scheduling?

The 4x4 schedule means that students will take 4 classes over each of the 8 semesters of high school. This allows students to focus on fewer subjects at a time for deeper learning. Additionally, it allows students to take a total of 32 courses throughout their high school career, instead of a more typical 28 classes. The block scheduling allows them to more time to apply their knowledge and to collaborate with peers and teachers. Our days are slightly longer, but because of lab time it pays off in less homework.

What does co-institutional mean and why is it part of your model?

Co-institutional means that we are a co-ed school, but that in our STEM specific courses the boys and girls work in gender-specific groups through junior year. This model will allow for a more individualized approach, taking into account the developmental differences that span high school. It is designed to discourage stereotyping and fully capacitate each student to take on leadership within STEM careers.