



**Aquinas Middle School**  
An Aquinas Catholic School

315 South 11<sup>th</sup> Street  
La Crosse, WI 54601  
(608) 784-0156

Patty Gallagher-Kosmatka, Principal  
[www.AquinasCatholicSchools.org](http://www.AquinasCatholicSchools.org)



**Aquinas Middle School**  
**Curriculum Overview**

*"Learn - Share - Serve"*

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# Aquinas Middle School



## *Vision*

Aquinas Middle School will inspire students to become critical thinkers, problem solvers, and lifelong learners within a safe, nurturing, Catholic environment.

Students will grow spiritually, academically, creatively, socially, and physically, striving to be Christ-like influences in their communities.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

The objective of the Physical Education program is to provide exposure to a variety of activities, to develop an appreciation for physical activity, and to discover enjoyment in participation. Students learn that their level of physical expertise is secondary to the level of their effort. By providing positive experiences with awareness that many sports are lifetime activities, students develop a lifelong appreciation for fitness.

Various facilities are used for physical education classes. Weigent Park is used in the fall and spring as weather permits. The Aquinas Middle School gym, the multi-purpose room, and the Aquinas High School gym are used for indoor activities.



*Aquinas Middle School students are to select a minimum of one foreign language and one music course from the options listed in the Curriculum Overview. The course selection form is to be completed indicating those choices.*

### **MUSIC - HONOR CHOIR**

The Aquinas Middle School Honor Choir is an advanced, audition only, choir. It is available for those eighth grade choral and band students who enjoy singing and want to further enhance their vocal musicianship. Students take weekly voice lessons, participate in the Aquinas Middle School concerts, lead weekly Masses, and perform for community events and at local parishes.

### **MUSIC - GENERAL MUSIC**

General Music is a combined seventh and eighth grade class that explores many avenues of music. The students learn about the different instruments used in an orchestra and concert band. They also review and study various musical genres, their composers, time periods, and the history that affected the music. To bring it to modern day, they explore the various careers available in the music industry as well as how music affects everyday life.



### **RELIGION**

The spiritual growth of all students is fostered at Aquinas Middle School. Prayer, study of the virtues, and preparation and participation in the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation are our focus. Seventh grade curriculum is based on Sacred Scripture and stresses the dignity of each individual as an image of God. Four key truths of the Catholic faith are emphasized: God, Creation, Christ, and Commandments. Classes are designed to encourage students to take an active role in their spiritual development.

The growth of the Church from Pentecost to the present is studied in the eighth grade. Through study, discussion, and examples of how Christ and the saints lived their lives, students are encouraged to examine their own lives and offer their time and talents by serving others in our school, parishes and community.

Throughout the middle school years, students plan and carry out individual and group service projects. Supplemental studies include the Mass, liturgical year, the Passion Accounts, the Apostles, saints, and prophets. Special prayer services include Rosary services, Advent and Lenten prayer services, and praying the Stations of the Cross.



### **MUSIC - INSTRUMENTAL (Band/Strings)**

In band, seventh and eighth grade students come together to advance their instrumental skills and create music. Students develop proper technique and cooperative experience through weekly individual lessons and large group rehearsals. Musicianship is demonstrated in concerts and performances, as well as through solo and ensemble opportunities.

### **MUSIC - CHOIR**

Seventh grade choir students learn how to express themselves through song, while also learning how to bring the written notes and lyrics to life. Students develop singing voices through proper vocal warm-ups and breathing exercises. Eighth grade students advance to singing 3-4 part harmonies and incorporate various techniques and music theory.

Choir students perform at the Christmas and spring concerts. Twenty minute voice lessons are available during the school day for interested choir students.

### **LANGUAGE ARTS**

The seventh grade language arts curriculum includes a balance of grammar, usage, and mechanics for essential writing skills and oral communication. Students follow the writing process which includes revision and self-assessment. Writing focuses on paragraph development as a foundation and builds into effective essays and compositions. Creative writing is encouraged through composing poetry and short stories.

Students completing our two-year program with a “B” average or better are prepared to enroll in high school French Level II.

### **FOREIGN LANGUAGE - SPANISH**

The seventh and eighth grade Spanish program focuses on the basics necessary to understand and speak the language. Students learn the basic Catholic prayers in Spanish. Culture and conversational skills are stressed throughout the class.

Students completing our two-year program with a “B” average or better are prepared to enroll in high school Spanish Level II.



The eighth grade curriculum provides opportunities for students to improve their writing, speaking, and listening skills through a variety of applications. Reasoning ability is utilized as students expand their writing to include problem-solving essays, persuasive compositions, and research papers. Through these writings students recognize their need for continuous study of grammar, mechanics, and usage. Students continue to develop oral communication skills through public speaking and oral presentations.

Throughout their middle school career, students use technology to locate and evaluate information. They are given numerous opportunities to apply their language arts knowledge across other curricular areas.



### **LITERATURE**

The literature program includes a study of the major literary genres. Selections include poetry, drama, science fiction, fiction, and nonfiction. Students read a wide variety of short stories, plays, and novels.

Students develop strategies to become active readers, build vocabulary, and analyze elements of both classical and contemporary pieces of literature. Literary analysis of character and setting, plot, mood, tone, and theme is developed through group discussions, independent practice, and technology applications.

The literature curriculum provides an opportunity to share and discuss the characters and stories of faith, courage, and love which identify with the Church's teachings and our Catholic beliefs.



### **MATHEMATICS**

Students explore and practice a variety of strategies for solving real-world problems. Number patterns involving integers, exponents, square roots, and geometry are topics of investigation. Basic operations involving integers, proportions, and percents are mastered. Working with algebraic expressions, translating real-life problems into symbolic equations, solving multi-step



### **COMPUTER EDUCATION**

In seventh and eighth grade computer education students learn and develop many different computer and technology skills. Students review correct keyboarding practices while expanding their knowledge of word-processing programs, multi-media presentations, and spreadsheet creation. Students learn how to use a simple computer graphics program and basic movie editing techniques. Internet safety is practiced through project research and exploration of free internet software programs.

### **FOREIGN LANGUAGE - FRENCH**

The seventh and eighth grade French program begins with an introduction to the basic phonemes necessary to understand and speak the language. Students learn the basic Catholic prayers in French and are exposed to elementary level of poetry, music and drama.



## ART

In seventh grade art, students develop their skills in traditional fine arts through drawing, painting, collage, printmaking, mixed media, and sculpture. Art history is integrated within each unit to enhance students' ability to analyze works of art and become familiar with famous artists who have mastered their specific genre. Students learn the elements of art through units which include portrait drawing, abstract art, perspective, ceramics, wire sculpture, collage, and relief printing.

In eighth grade art, students develop their skills in traditional fine arts through drawing, painting, bookmaking, printmaking, fiber art, and sculpture. Students use the elements of art and principles of design to elevate the quality of their artwork. Students are inspired by learning about famous artists and cultures around the world who have mastered their skills in a variety of areas such as: batik, graffiti, pop art, grid drawing, ceramics, and storytelling through illustration.

equations, and using formulas and variables in geometry are basic preparation for algebra.

## ACCELERATED MATH AND ALGEBRA

Analyzing and interpreting real-world problems algebraically and using symbols and mathematical words to develop effective communications skills are the goals. Students explore a variety of problem solving strategies using the real number system and properties of real numbers. Students learn to evaluate numerical and algebraic expressions, simplify and factor polynomials, apply formulas, solve literal equations, solve and graph equalities and inequalities, and solve systems of equations. A strong foundation in algebra

prepares students for the future study of geometry, probability, and data analysis.





Throughout the school year, in both seventh and eighth grade, all units are supplemented with various technologies, projects, demonstrations, and laboratories.



## SCIENCE

The seventh grade life science curriculum focuses on the living organisms that inhabit planet Earth. Throughout the school year, numerous facets of life science are explored. These topics include the characteristics and needs of living things, cell structure and function, the processes of photosynthesis, respiration and cell division, applied human genetics, the classification of living organisms, systems of the human body, and ecology.

The eighth grade science curriculum encompasses a variety of earth science topics. Students learn the properties of matter and basic atomic structure. As students explore Earth, there is a focus on its atmosphere, oceans, and landmasses. Earthquakes and volcanoes, as well as rock and mineral classification, are also examined. The weather unit includes the study of climate zones in the United States. The year concludes with a study of the solar system and space exploration.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

The seventh and eighth grade social studies curriculum includes the study of American history from pre-Civil War through WWI (1820-1920), and the geographical study of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Russia. The impact of human behavior, social justice issues and the importance of economic and political systems are highlighted in both United States history and world cultures/geography lessons. Projects, simulations, lectures, research, and group projects enhance the content. Cross-curricular planning, technology integration and current events provide exceptional opportunities for engaging students in learning about the world around them.