

Seabury Middle School

Characteristics of the Middle School Curriculum and Program

The centerpiece of Seabury's middle school program will be integrated, experiential, project based learning experiences in which the community will serve as an extension of the classroom. Students will work with teachers to form the questions as well as discover the answers as they participate in multidisciplinary units of study formed around real issues and challenges facing both the local and global community. Study and research will take place both in the classroom and through partnerships with local organizations and leaders, allowing students to work side by side with local experts. Courses of study that are not fully addressed through multidisciplinary units, such as math and French, will be taught as stand alone classes in order to ensure that students exiting the program meet and exceed requirements for the most rigorous high school programs.

Integrated Curriculum

At Seabury, we believe an integrated curriculum best prepares children for life-long learning. Integrated education replaces the acquisition of discrete, compartmentalized subject matter with an approach to learning that cuts across disciplines, providing a process for developing skills and abilities required in the 21st century. It views learning and teaching in a holistic way and reflects the real world, which is interactive. It places heightened emphasis on projects and employs sources beyond textbooks. A body of brain research supports the notion that learning is best accomplished when information is presented in meaningful, connected patterns that correlate to a unifying theme. The ability to make connections, to solve problems by examining multiple perspectives, and to incorporate information from different fields is an essential ingredient for success.

Project based learning strategies

Project based learning refers to a set of teaching strategies that encourages active participation on the behalf of the student. In a project based learning environment, you are most likely to observe students working in small groups, working on a variety of different tasks, working in a self directed manner and asking many questions. Here, text books do not dictate the curriculum; rather the teacher and the students share a role in determining curricular projects that best match the learning objectives. With project-based learning, students constantly pose and refine questions. They design and construct simple and/or complex investigations which require them to gather analyze, and interpret data to report findings. In project-based learning, all students engage in a common project with unclear processes but clearly identified expected outcomes. Project-based learning includes an emphasis on students constructing individualistic and shared understandings of important content and concepts as they explore the learning activity.

Place-Based Education

Placed-based education promotes learning that is rooted in what is local; the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art of a particular place. Place-based education is often hands-on, project based, and has a strong link to the community. The Seabury middle school curriculum will use the greater Tacoma community as a backdrop from which the integrated curriculum theme is woven.

For example, if the integrated curriculum theme is ORIGINS, the Tacoma community, environment, economy, history, literature, and art become the place where that curriculum originates.

- Examination of the Puyallup River, from its source to its mouth, to view the history of the region
- Identify an elderly group of Tacoma residents for the students to conduct an oral history
- Examine the science of plant life as a way to view the agricultural history of the region

- Determine means to measure the volume of water flowing at mouth of the Puyallup River at different intervals of the year. Compare that data with the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission data. Build a mathematical model to represent the findings.
- Identify a youth oriented initiative that the Tacoma City Council has passed and research the history and effects of that initiative. Determine ways to participate in the project.
- Examine the architectural history of Tacoma. Research the building of the 21st bridge and work with an engineer to better understand the principles at work. Challenge the students to engineer a bridge of their own.

Here, emphasis is placed on curriculum that is relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory.

Curriculum and program based on the developmental characteristics of the young adolescent

Intellectual Developmental Characteristics

Moral/Ethical Developmental Characteristics

Emotional/Psychological Developmental Characteristics

Social Developmental Characteristics

Physical Developmental Characteristics

As with Seabury's ELC and Lower School program, the Middle School will be characterized by emphasizing the development of the whole child.

What we know that works with gifted MS students

- Students having the ability to make choices in a structured environment that increases their level of engagement
- Students that interface with a wide variety of adults that serve as “experts” will further engage students in their learning
- Students explore learning using techniques that experts in the field do
- Academic placement based on the individual child using curriculum compaction and acceleration as needed
- Integrated units that allow for great depth and complexity of understanding
- Active learning strategies where students are engaged in the learning process deeply
- Development of lasting relationships with adults and intellectual peers
- Strength based learning so that students develop the necessary confidence to tackle areas of growth
- Asynchronous development/view of the individual student
- Differentiation of curriculum as a way to recognize that students are not gifted in all areas