

Welcome Bloodhounds to SJA!

As we begin the school year, the members of the Saint Joseph Academy Counseling Department would like to welcome you to what we hope will be a rewarding and successful year for all of our students. One of Saint Joseph Academy's unique and special qualities is the emphasis we place on caring for each student as an individual. As a Marist school, we believe in the idea of the Marist "family spirit," and we operate as a family does – celebrating together when our students succeed and standing together to help them when they experience challenges. As school counselors, we are committed to seeing that all students are given the support that they need to grow personally, academically, socially, and spiritually. We want to be sure that all parents are aware of the services offered through the Counseling Department.

There are 3 grade level counselors: Mrs. Vilma Wolfe is the counselor for students in grades 7 and 8; Ms. Mary Beth Martin is the counselor for students in grades 9 and 10; and Mrs. Imelda Munivez is the counselor for students in grades 11 and 12. All grade level counselors provide personal and academic counseling for their students. Throughout the year, counselors make class presentations to discuss a variety of topics related to adolescent concerns as well as college planning. Students may stop by to schedule an appointment with their grade level counselor at any time; they may also be referred by teachers or parents if there is a concern where the counselor can help.

At every step along the way, our goal is that all Saint Joseph Academy students will feel that they belong to a school community that supports them, challenges them, and cares for them. We hope that you will encourage your son or daughter to see any of the members of the Counseling Department if we can help them in any way. We would also encourage any parents with concerns about their son/daughter to contact us by email (listed below). We look forward to working with you and your sons and daughters to help all of our students have a happy and successful school year.

News / Updates

We are excited to welcome several new members to the Saint Joseph Academy leadership and counseling teams this school year. We are pleased to welcome Mr. Francis X. Curley as our new Principal and Ms. Melody Middleton as our new Dean of Student Success. We are also delighted to welcome Mrs. Imelda Munivez as the newest member of our Counseling Department. Mrs. Munivez previously served students across the Los Fresnos, Harlingen, and Port Isabel school districts. After 26 rewarding years in public education, she retired, but her passion for guiding and supporting youth has remained as strong as ever. She is looking forward to partnering with you and your children to help them navigate these crucial years and make a lasting and positive impact at St. Joseph Academy.



7th & 8th Grade

A Fresh Start

A new school year is a wonderful opportunity for students to set goals and establish positive habits. We encourage student to:

- Come to school prepared and ready to learn.
- Stay organized and keep track of assignments and deadlines.
- Ask for help when something is difficult or confusing.
- Get involved in activities, clubs, athletics, and service opportunities.
- Build positive relationships with classmates and teachers.
- Make healthy choices and practice good time-management skills.
- Set realistic academic and personal goals.

Remember, success is not about being perfect. It is about making progress, learning from mistakes, and continuing to grow.

9th & 10th Grade

Managing Stress: Strategies That Work

Making the transition from summer vacation to a new school year filled with academic demands and busy schedules can be stressful. The good news is that you can learn strategies to manage stress before it becomes overwhelming.

Start by getting organized. Write down assignments, activities, and important dates so you don't have to keep everything in your head. Breaking a large assignment into smaller steps can also make it feel much more manageable.

Take care of your body. Getting enough sleep, eating healthy foods, drinking water, and being physically active can make a big difference in how you handle stress. Even a short walk or a few minutes of stretching can help you reset.

Give yourself a break. When you feel overwhelmed, pause and take a few slow, deep breaths. Step away from your screen, listen to music, or spend a few minutes doing something you enjoy.

Most importantly, **don't try to handle everything alone.** Talk with a parent, counselor, coach, or trusted adult when you need support. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. Using stress management strategies can help you have a happy, successful school year.

11th & 12th Grade

Determination Today – Success Tomorrow

- **Prioritize Attendance and Consistency:** Being in class shows teachers that you are engaged and capable of building stronger relationships. If you have valid reasons for missing school, please discuss them with your counselor.
- **Develop strong time management skills.** Use planners, calendars, and digital tools to track assignments and extracurricular activities.
- **Take care of your mental health.** Academic pressure is high, especially in your junior and senior year, but its normal to feel anxious or overwhelmed. Practice self-care, get enough sleep, eat well, and take breaks. If stress becomes unmanageable, talk to a counselor or trusted adult.



College Counseling

College admissions have become increasingly competitive, particularly at selective institutions, making it important for students to approach high school with purpose and consistency. While strong grades and challenging coursework remain the foundation of a competitive application, colleges also value students who demonstrate genuine curiosity, meaningful involvement outside the classroom, leadership, resilience, and a sustained commitment to their interests. Rather than trying to build a résumé filled with activities, students should focus on developing their strengths, exploring their passions, and making contributions to their school and community. Families play an important role by encouraging balance, personal growth, and steady progress rather than comparing their student's journey to others. Ultimately, it is about making intentional choices throughout high school that reflect a student's character, interests, and readiness for the opportunities and challenges ahead.

Therefore, we are providing students grade-level-specific college planning resources throughout high school. To help students stay informed in the college planning process, we have College Counseling Google Classrooms for each graduating class. Students should join their respective Google Classroom using the class code below:

- Seniors (Class of 2027): **7nvwork**
- Juniors (Class of 2028): **dvysjos**
- Sophomores (Class of 2029): **cf255cq**
- Freshmen (Class of 2030): **bxkdh4vi**

College Tours

We are excited to offer juniors and seniors the opportunity to participate in college campus tours. We are tentatively planning visits to The University of Texas at Austin, St. Edward's University, and The University of Texas at San Antonio.

Participation is limited and will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis. Interested students must submit a completed parent permission form and a deposit by the deadline to reserve a spot. If these are not received on time, the spot will be offered to a student on the waiting list.

The estimated cost is \$300–\$400 per student, depending on the number of participants and transportation arrangements. We encourage families to take advantage of this valuable opportunity for students to explore college campuses and begin envisioning their future.

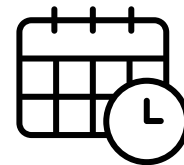
Important Dates

August 25 (6:30 PM) – Senior Parent Meeting (Library)

September 9 (6:30 PM) – Open House

September 15–17 – NWEA (15th–7&8 grade, 16th–9&10 grade, 17th–11&12 grade)

October 9 (1:00–3:00) – College Fair (Student Center)



THE COLLEGE COUNSELING DEPARTMENT

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