

JTERM 2026



ST. MARY'S SPRINGS

Academy

VISION

J-Term at St. Mary's Springs Academy shall spark student interest in learning through a variety of non-traditional courses. Enhancing SMSA's regular curriculum through innovative styles of teaching and enrichment, J-Term courses will provide opportunities for project-based learning, interdisciplinary explorations, community connections, and service-learning, along with time to focus on social-emotional development and college and career planning. J-Term will highlight our school's distinctive vision of student growth that is aligned with discernment of personal interests and gifts.



MISSION

St. Mary's Springs Academy, rooted in Christ's teaching, academic excellence, and service to Church and community, prepares students to meet global challenges and become leaders for tomorrow.

CORE VALUES



Faith



Learning



Respect



Responsibility



Leadership



Community

Core values to learn, live
and grow by.

*the
Ledger
way*

Dear SMSA Parents, Guardians and Students:

The original January Term (2024) made history on the Ledge! It ushered in a unique program of experiential learning that positively differentiates St. Mary's Springs Academy from other schools in the region! Within this booklet, you will find J-Term '26 course offerings, program FAQ's, and academic policies.

For a third consecutive year, our dedicated and creative team of high school educators and higher education partners are very excited to continue this unique and engaging learning experience at the Springs. Planning has been interesting and inspirational, firmly focused on providing unique, hands-on, value added and mission-driven learning experiences for our Ledgers.

As we continue to strive for improvement and ways to advance learning at SMSA, we are confident that J-Term '26 will fulfill its vision of innovative experiential learning opportunities.

SMSA is grateful to the Archdiocese of Milwaukee for providing a G.I.F.T.S. Grant to help launch and support the development of J-Term in 2023! Since then, we have seen J-Term flourish - now into a third year. We are grateful to Moraine Park Technical College for their initial and ongoing academic partnership, creative collaboration, and enthusiastic embrace of this project. This year, we are pleased to welcome Marian University and Wisconsin Lutheran College as J-Term course collaborators, both providing dual college credit options for J-Term '26!

Of course, J-Term cannot be successfully executed without the generous and talented SMSA faculty and staff who imagine possibilities and plan the curriculum year-round. They look forward to engaging their own passions with our Ledgers during J-Term! Finally, a hearty thank you to our parent and student community at the Springs for their positive support for this unique model of learning.

Our Lady of the Ledge, pray for us.



Eamonn O'Keeffe,
High School Principal



Melissa Treppe
Director of Curriculum & Instruction



**Q: WHEN DOES J-TERM OCCUR?**

A: The first day of J-Term is Monday, January 5, 2026, the final day is Friday, January 23rd. Between these dates, there are different expectations for student attendance, depending on where students are taking classes, and what qualifies students for 0.5 academic credits.

For example:

- Students who are enrolled in courses on the campus of SMSA, at Marian University, or with Wisconsin Lutheran College shall meet for all 15 days of J-Term between January 5-23, 2026.
- Students who are using Youth Apprenticeship employment placements as their J-Term option will conclude after they have accumulated 60 hours of work within the term.
- Ledgers who enroll in MPTC courses shall conclude their classes on Friday, January 16th (more details will be shared once class rosters are set).
- For all Ledgers, Semester II courses at SMSA begin on Monday, January 26th.

Q: IS J-TERM REQUIRED FOR ALL LEDGERS?

A: Yes. From the SMSA Curriculum Guide: "As a graduation requirement, all Ledgers shall earn 0.5 credit annually during J-Term. All SMSA academic, attendance and co-curricular policies apply during J-Term. The Ledger Way Core Values are SMSA cultural guide posts during all academic terms."

Q: WILL J-TERM COURSES COST EXTRA?

A: It depends. Most courses do not cost any extra. However, just like during Semester I & II, dual college credit offering will have added tuition costs (which are heavily discounted by our partners). Courses designated as a "Premier Option" will have an added cost for students who enroll. We are fortunate to have some J-Term costs discounted or fully underwritten through the generosity of donor sponsorship.

Q: WHAT IF A FAMILY HAS MADE PLANS OUT OF TOWN DURING J-TERM?

A: Academic administration has approved an SMSA Credit Recovery Plan for any student who may be unable to participate in J-Term. By policy, the 0.5 credit that is lost must be "credit recovered" immediately upon return to school in Quarter 3. Further details about the SMSA Credit Recovery Plan will be shared with families on an as-needed basis.

Q: WHAT IF A STUDENT IS ABSENT DURING J-TERM?

A: The compulsory attendance policies of the State of Wisconsin, SMSA and the Archdiocese apply to J-Term. Parents/guardians are required to notify school attendance officials whenever a student will miss any part of a school day. Since J-Term is a compressed learning term (with a single J-Term class period equal to three classes of a typical semester course) missing one day of J-Term shall be significant and may hinder a student's academic progress and term grade. Per policy, Ledgers with an excused absence are responsible for all missing class work unless a formal medical exemption is approved by the principal. If a student misses more than three days of J-Term classes (for any reason) they shall be automatically withdrawn from J-Term and subsequently enrolled in the SMSA Credit Recovery Plan developed for J-Term and effective during Quarter 3.

Q: WILL LUNCH BE AVAILABLE TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS?

A: Yes. When students are learning on-campus during J-Term, cafeteria lunch will be scheduled at the usual time. When students are off-campus, teachers and chaperones will make sure to plan for lunch. Specific plans/needs will be communicated to parents and guardians through communication from the J-Term instructor(s). Students enrolled in J-Term courses through MPTC, Marian University or the Youth Apprentice option will need to provide for their own bag lunch daily. Students enrolled at MPTC and Marian University are required to remain on campus during the lunch hour.

OTHER IMPORTANT DETAILS ABOUT J-TERM ON THE LEDGE:

STUDENT REGISTRATION/SCHEDULING: Prior to the week of registration, students will learn about all J-Term '26 options during a J-Term Assembly on October 15th. At that time, they will receive the official J-Term 2026 Booklet/course guide. A digital brochure will also be available online at the SMSA website prior to registration.

Course selection/registration shall occur through the completion of electronic forms during homeroom periods - beginning with senior registration on October 20th, juniors on October 21st, sophomores on October 23rd and freshmen on October 24th. When registering, students shall indicate a 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice of J-Term classes. Last year, 65% of students were able to enroll in their 1st choice option. While we hope to accommodate student's 1st choice as often as possible, many students will be enrolled in their alternate choice course. As a small Catholic high school, unlimited curricular options are not reasonable or possible. The same is true with J-Term options. We trust that our Springs community understands this and respect all final course placement decisions. Preferential choice is given to students in the following order: senior, junior, sophomore, and freshman. After that, the time when registration is received/recorded shall be a distinguishing factor in filling final roster spots.

Each J-Term course has been designed to offer excellent value to students. Over time, SMSA educators believe that the cumulative J-Term experiences of this unique learning model will help students obtain valuable perspectives - whether through a 1st, 2nd or 3rd choice course! Scheduling decisions of the principal are final.

DRESS CODE: Unless explicitly noted as part of a class excursion/field trip activity, students enrolled in J-Term courses at SMSA or Wisconsin Lutheran College are expected to be in uniform during J-Term. Some activities may require alternative attire. Students and parents will be notified when alternate attire is expected or permitted.

Students who enroll in J-Term options through MPTC, Marian University, or the Youth Apprentice program shall not be expected to follow the SMSA uniform dress code but may, however, be required to dress in specified attire to fulfill organizational safety expectations. Students and parents will receive notice in advance.

GRADING: Students will earn a letter grade for J-Term courses. All college dual credit options (MU and WLC) will use the weighted SMSA grading scale (5.3 GPA for A+). All other J-Term courses - including MPTC courses and YA placements - shall use the unweighted SMSA grading scale (4.3 GPA for A+). Ledger cumulative GPA shall be calculated including J-Term grades which are official and applied to their SMSA permanent record/transcript.

FIELD TRIPS, EXCURSIONS AND GUEST SPEAKERS: J-Term is designed to encourage experiential learning. To accomplish this, sometimes learning will occur on-campus in a lab or classroom. Sometimes the primary learning activity will occur away from SMSA, and even away from Fond du Lac. Some day trips will require students to be off campus for 3 - 4 hours, some for 7-10 hours, and even some overnight. Some classes plan to invite guest experts to join with our students - either 'in the field' or in the classroom. Like normal practice, any learning that may take place off campus will require parental permission slips which will be facilitated through the J-Term teacher.

THE BEATITUDES PROJECT: Independent of their chosen J-Term class, all senior Ledgers participate in The Beatitudes Project - the required senior service capstone. To help facilitate this, most seniors will be unscheduled after 1pm each day of J-Term. The Beatitudes Project senior service must be pre-approved through senior theology courses. During the 15 days of J-Term seniors are expected to perform 8 hours of service at their approved Beatitude Project site. The J-Term Premier Option course "Have Mercy, Will Serve" features a variety of local and distant service experiences and is approved to fulfill the 8 hours of service required by The Beatitudes Project. Other J-Term courses may also integrate service as an aspect of the learning.

AP & DUAL CREDIT COURSES: To enable continuity in preparation for AP exams, each AP course shall be scheduled to meet on five afternoons during J-Term.

JAZZ ENSEMBLES DURING ZERO HOUR: Both the Vocal Jazz and Instrumental Jazz ensembles will meet during J-Term as usual M-Th during the Zero Hour slot (7:15-8 am). This shall enable our music students to maintain uninterrupted preparation for the State Solo and Ensemble competitions in February.

ATHLETICS: The SMSA high school athletic calendar and programs shall be maintained during J-Term. Proactive planning has been taken to avoid conflicts with game days and athletic practices as much as possible. However, when a course excursion may conflict with co-curricular activities, practices or games, students shall be entitled to extra leniency from a coach or moderator.

SNOW DAYS DURING J-TERM: If SMSA chooses to cancel school due to inclement weather, all students - whether enrolled in SMSA based J-Term courses, MPTC, MU or WLC shall remain home. If SMSA's campus remains open, but MPTC, MU or WLC cancels classes, students enrolled in SMSA courses on campus shall report to school, while students enrolled at MPTC, MU or WLC shall remain home. Students enrolled in the YA option for J-Term should abide by the norms of their YA program employer concerning inclement weather and attendance.

AFTERNOONS ON THE LEDGE: Students who are enrolled in J-Term courses that meet on campus at SMSA shall remain on campus for the full school day (8:05 - 3:15). Because of the unique J-Term schedule and model, there will be dedicated time to manage important aspects of student life that always seem to run short of time, including AP course meeting time; social-emotional learning and support workshops; student safety, health and wellness workshops; college and career exploration and inventories; four year planning and course scheduling; or ACT Prep boot-camp.

J-TERM DAILY SCHEDULES



7:15 AM - 8:00 AM
8:05 AM - 12:50 PM
12:55 PM - 1:35 PM
1:40 PM - 3:15 PM

ZERO HOUR Rotation of Jazz Ensembles
ONLY J-Term Classes Meet
LUNCH
Rotation of Student Life Workshops, ACT Prep, Special Programs, and AP courses

The Daily Schedule for classes meeting off-campus (MPTC & Marian University): Courses that meet off-campus will follow a calendar that is unique from the courses meeting on-campus at SMSA. More specific details regarding the daily schedule for each course that meets off-campus (not at SMSA) will be shared with students after class rosters have been finalized in November.

COURSE OFFERINGS

MPTC COURSES

The following eight (8) course options will convene on the campus of Moraine Park Technical College and are taught by MPTC instructors. Students receive academic credit from both MPTC and SMSA for successful completion of these courses. To enroll in any of the MPTC options listed here, students must be 16 years of age by January 2026. *MPTC based courses will follow an independent calendar and daily schedule that will be shared after class rosters are finalized. Students are responsible for their own daily transportation to and from the MPTC campus. Finally, Dr. Biessman will serve as the site supervisor and SMSA teacher of record for Skyward daily attendance and grade entry for these courses. He will be on-site at MPTC each day as a resource for Ledgers attending these courses.



MORaine PARK
TECHNICAL COLLEGE

MPTC Course	Course Description	(Courses meet on the MPTC Campus)
Gas Metal Arc Welding 1 (3 MPTC Credits)	Learn the essentials of welding safety and equipment setup along with maintenance tips. Get familiar with welding terminology and demonstrate safe shop practices. Students will also learn to set-up and shut-down GMAW equipment and weld mild sheet metal steel in flat, horizontal, and vertical down positions.	
NEW Gas Metal Arc Welding 2 (3 MPTC Credits)	Explore out-of-position fillet and groove welding in horizontal, vertical up and overhead positions. Learn and demonstrate the setup and performance of out-of-position welding on various material thicknesses. Welding safety and good housekeeping techniques will also be taught.	
NEW Engine Repair 1 (2 MPTC Credits)	This course equips students with the skills to identify and understand internal combustion engine components, their operation, testing procedures, and the intricacies of engine cooling and lubrication systems.	
Culinary Principles (3 MPTC Credits)	Dive into the world of culinary arts with this exciting course. Learn essential cooking techniques, from basic food preparation and sanitary practices to mastering cutlery skills and perfecting recipe calculations. Students will be able to perform a cooking demonstration, explain cooking methods, and examine culinary history and professionalism. Food sourcing and sustainability will also be examined. Students will need to supply non flammable long pants, and their Chromebook. Chef knife set and other chef wear is provided.	

MPTC Course	Course Description (Courses meet on the MPTC Campus)
Nail Care 502-309 (1 MPTC Credit)	The Nail Care course teaches students how to give basic manicures, pedicures, and polish applications, preparing you for work on the clinic floor. Through hands-on activities, you will develop professional skills and technique accuracy, as well as learn about nail structure, disorders, and diseases. Practicing skills on classmates is a key part of this course and a great way to gain practical experience in nail care.
 Artificial Nails (1 MPTC Credit)	In Artificial Nails, students will develop skill in procedure and application of nail extensions, acrylic overlay and sculptured nails including fiberglass application and gel application. Students are introduced to nail art using nail art brushes, trend techniques, and procedures for French manicuring. It is a requirement of this course that students work with assigned partners to complete learning plans. Students will practice skills on one another in this course.
 Early Childhood Education: Health Safety & Nutrition (3 MPTC Credits)	Discover the vital aspects of health, safety and nutrition within early childhood education settings. Completing this course can open the doors for various rewarding careers in early childhood education and earn students three certificates: Mandated Reporter; Abusive Head Trauma; and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Prevention.
 Understanding Substance Abuse (3 MPTC Credits)	If you are interested in psychology, this class is perfect for you! You'll explore the biological, psychological, and social factors of substance abuse, learn about different treatment approaches, and understand the impact of substance use disorders on individuals and society. It is a great way to deepen your knowledge and make a positive impact.
 Social Media Management (3 MPTC Credits)	This course explores social media's impact on advertising and its shift to one-on-one communication. The course will highlight how social media has transformed business-audience engagement, requiring quick responses and real time interactions.

What we learn becomes part of who we are. • smsacademy.org



SMSA COURSE OPTIONS

The following ten (10) course options, shall convene on the campus of SMSA and be taught by SMSA instructors. These courses will meet each weekday from January 5-23 from 8:05 am - 3:15 pm.

(Courses meet on SMS Campus)

SMSA Course	Instructor(s)
Food Science A-Z <i>Students will dive into the satisfying world of Food Science. Through a combination of laboratory experiments, real-world applications and visits to community food partners, students will develop a deep understanding of how food makes life not only possible, but interesting.</i>	Mr. Allen & Mr. Zimmer
Break A Leg: Presenting & Performing Without the Pressure of Perfection <i>This is a course intended to allow students who are interested in the theatrical arts an opportunity to become more comfortable with presenting and performing dramatic and creative pieces in a relaxed environment. Students will learn how to create, execute, and critique various types of speech and stage arts, both individually and collaboratively. Not only will students perform existing works, but they will also create and compile their own pieces. Students will have the opportunity to view and reflect upon both amateur and professional performances.</i>	Mrs. Besson & Mrs. Herbst
Introduction to Taekwon-Do <i>Students will be introduced to the basic techniques, philosophy, and culture of Taekwon-Do. Taekwon-Do is a Korean martial art. It incorporates kicking, blocking, punching, and striking techniques. The class also incorporates physical, mental, and spiritual elements of training, including the Tenets of Taekwon-Do: Courtesy, Integrity, Perseverance, Self-Control, and Indomitable Spirit. Students will be introduced to basics of the Korean language and culture as learned within a typical Taekwon-Do class. This includes proper protocol and etiquette for respect during training, counting in Korean, etc. Finally, your instructor, Señor Mattias, AKA Master Mattias, a 7th Degree Black Belt, will demonstrate his skills developed over 30 years of Taekwon-Do training experience.</i>	Mr. Mattias & Mr. Mueller
Life Skills <i>So what is a life skill? A skill that is necessary for full participation in everyday life. Can you earn all of your merit badges for life skills? Come find out. Students will learn how to fix what is broken instead of replacing it, a homeowner essential skill. In addition, students will dive into basic first aid, social etiquette, and how to follow a basic recipe, just to name a few. Life is full of challenges, whether it's starting college, moving to a new community, or planning a budget, we are here to help.</i>	Mrs. Brusky & Ms. Pannier

SMSA Course	Instructor(s)
Crime Scene Chronicles: The Science Behind the Scene <i>Explore the fascinating intersection of science and law in Forensic Science. From fingerprint analysis to DNA profiling, delve into the methods used to solve crimes. Learn about hair analysis, toxicology, and crime scene investigation techniques. Discover how forensic scientists piece together evidence to uncover the truth behind mysteries. Engage in hands-on experiments and simulations to understand real-world applications. Develop critical thinking skills as you analyze evidence and draw conclusions. Gain insights into the criminal justice system and the role of forensic science in it. This course combines biology, chemistry, and physics with investigative skills, preparing you for potential careers in law enforcement or forensic science.</i>	Ms. Sweeney
Picture This: Creative Photography <i>Get exposure to the art of photography. This course will use digital photography to help students learn and apply the principles of design. Experiment with a variety of environmental lighting and camera settings, including ISO, aperture, and shutter speed. Actively photograph stills, action, and landscapes. Capture human expression while shooting portraits and candid. Research the talents of famous photographers. Meet with professional photographers. Discover your creativity through the camera lens.</i>	Ms. Haugen
Cooking with Confidence <i>Students will develop basic culinary skills, while learning concepts such as menu planning, food prep, and food/kitchen safety. Students will learn to cook confidently with and for others, gain a better understanding of cooking methods, kitchen tools and ingredients used. This course includes several opportunities for hands-on cooking in a professional kitchen.</i>	Mrs. Anderson & Mrs. Arndt
Have Mercy, Will Serve  <i>Meets daily on school days from 8:05 am - 12:45 pm from January 5-23, with some days extending the entire school day. Students will learn the Corporal and Spiritual works of Mercy by actively performing them. The course will offer both classroom learning and hands-on service experiences at various local non-profit community service organizations. This year's service will include an immersion experience in Milwaukee with an overnight stay with a Catholic partnership. Local service locations shall include Loaves and Fishes, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Father Carr's Place 2B in Oshkosh, Holy Family Church, Feeding America in Appleton, a local nursing home and more.</i>	Mr. Braun Mrs. Anderson Mrs. Adsit

SMSA Course	Instructor(s)
Winter Sports Odyssey	Mr. Knepfel & Mrs. Schermacher
Our goal in this course is to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and appreciation for a variety of winter sports and activities. These activities will include: skating, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, downhill skiing, winter survival, dog sledding, & several Olympic sports. In addition, students will get a taste for outdoor adventure through problem solving and communication activities, as well as high or low element challenges such as rock climbing and orienteering. There is infinitely more to winter than cozy sweaters and fireplaces - join us as we explore ways to stay active and involved with Mother Nature during the traditionally "restful" seasons in Wisconsin.	

Take Me Out to the Ballgame?	Mr. Kieser & Mr. Krueger
Renowned baseball philosopher Yogi Berra once said, "It's fun." The same could be said of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame", our J-term course, which explores the rich history of baseball, the greatest game ever invented. Over 13 days, we'll look at legendary players and unforgettable moments, as we explore the cultural impact that has made baseball a part of our national identity. Who's on first? What's the infield fly rule? Why is there no joy in Mudville? You'll learn the answers to these questions and countless others through historical deep-dives and lively discussions if you step up to the plate and join us for "Take Me Out to the Ballgame."	

PREMIER OPTION COURSES:

These courses require additional charge/payment (indicated) for enrollment.

University Dual College Credit Course	Instructor(s)
RAD to the Bone 3 MU Credits  PREMIER COURSE \$525 cost / student	Dr. Garvey (MU)
Where is radiation found, and is it all bad? Radiation is often viewed as scary or dangerous, yet it plays a significant role in many aspects of science and society. From medicine and biology to art, warfare and chemistry, radiation has transformed the way we live. This course explores the diverse uses of radiation, its impact on various fields, and the historical significance of nuclear events such as Chernobyl, Fukushima, Three Mile Island and the atomic bomb. Students should have basic knowledge of algebra and biology. Dual Credit offering (3.0 college credits 0.5 SMSA credits). No text required. A minimum of 7 students must enroll for the course to run. (Classes will meet at Marian University)	
Intro to Sports Management 3 WLC Credits (Classes will meet at SMSA)  PREMIER COURSE \$225 cost / student	Mr. Kaiser (SMSA) Prof. Hoffmann (WLC) Prof. Martens (WLC)
This course provides students with an introduction to concepts, theories and principles within sports management. Students develop their organizing, management, & leadership skills while identifying today's important issues, future trends, and potential career opportunities. Especially for students interested in sports management careers, this unique college course will offer students excursions to visit interesting sports venues and meet working professionals in this hot and growing industry.	



YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP OPTION

SMSA Liaisons: Mrs. Cauley & Mrs. McCarthy

Students currently enrolled in the CESA 6 Youth Apprenticeship Program (YA) have the option to use J-Term to enhance their work experiences at their existing YA work placements. A separate application form will need to be completed to apply for this option. If interested, YA students should inform their CESA 6 YA Coordinator (Julie Nass) that they are choosing this option. It allows us to work with YA employers to suggest activities that can expand the YA employment experience. If employers agree to supporting this option, students will then be required to log and certify a total of 60 hours of work at their YA placement site during the 15 days of J-Term. A summative reflection on their experience during this 15 day period will also be required. If all criteria is met successfully, students who choose this option will receive 0.5 academic credits.

**J TERM
2026**



**For additional information, or for questions
regarding J-Term, please contact:**

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