

St Brendan's Program:

Building Leaders, Strengthening Community



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Vision Statement:

The St Brendan's Program at Damascus College equips students to become compassionate, engaged leaders who positively impact the world.

Grounded in the Gospel values of empathy, integrity, and courage, students learn to care deeply, think critically, and act purposefully. Through real-world learning, they develop collaborative and problem-solving skills, embodying the legacy of the Sisters of Mercy as they shape a just and meaningful future.

Our Mission:

Students will lead initiatives that advocate for the Dunnstown community by developing local projects that support sustainability, leadership, and cultural heritage. Their work will serve their personal growth and uplift the community through advocacy, partnerships, and shared projects.

St Brendan's Program Parameters:

- Three core groups of Year 8 students will participate in the program at the St. Brendan's site for one Term, beginning in Term 2 2025 and finishing in Term 4 2025.
- Strong focus on project-based learning, with the curriculum structured around four key spheres which are informed by the Damascus College Attributes, and underpinned by the Damascus College Social Emotional Learning Competencies:
 - Focused Learning through Critical and Creative Thinking
 - Cultural Awareness and Global Citizenship
 - Mercy tradition and Transformative Action
 - Spiritual Formation.
- The program will be structured around two main Projects: Environment and Lifestyle and Creative Culture.
- Student agency and voice will be incorporated by providing choices in projects and learning experiences.
- The program will engage with College staff, families, the Dunnstown and Wadawurrung community.
- Strong emphasis on the expression of Faith and Spirituality embedded into the program along with liturgy and self reflection.

The Three Themes:

Three immersive learning projects anchor the St Brendan's Dunnstown Program focused on developing **leadership, stewardship, and social justice**. Aligned with our Mercy values and designed to engage students in real-world problem-solving, these projects empower students to identify issues, harness team strengths, and create solutions.

Leadership

The St Brendan's Dunnstown Program nurtures leadership skills across the curriculum. Students lead group projects, practice public speaking and presentation skills, and organise community service initiatives. Leadership-focused projects empower students to identify issues, harness team strengths, manage resources, and motivate others to work toward shared goals. Students develop confidence, initiative, problem-solving skills, and an understanding of their unique leadership style. Through a lens of Mercy values like courage, service, and hospitality, students learn to lead with compassion and moral purpose.

Stewardship

At St Brendan's Dunnstown, students are challenged to be responsible stewards of their communities, environment, and society. Stewardship projects teach students about sustainability, conservation, and ethical use of resources. Students gain practical experience through the design and implementation of environmental initiatives and educating peers about environmental issues related to their community and globally. They learn the importance of stewardship as a way to care for all of God's creation with respect and compassion.

Social Justice

The social justice projects empower students to analyse complex societal issues through a lens of ethics, equality, and empathy. Students research areas of injustice, examine root causes and develop solutions. Social justice projects build awareness of privilege and marginalisation while equipping students with tools to advocate for positive change with courage and determination. Students gain a sense of social responsibility and compassion, living the Mercy values of justice and service.

All projects across these three themes are designed to engage students in real-world problem-solving while meeting curriculum standards. With an emphasis on leadership, stewardship, and social justice, the St Brendan's Dunnstown Program prepares students to go forth and make their mark on the world as young people of purpose, guided by Mercy values.

The Four Spheres:

The St Brendan's Dunnstown Program integrates the four key spheres of learning to provide students with a holistic and transformational educational experience. The three central projects focused on leadership, stewardship, and social justice will incorporate the following spheres:

Focused Learning through Critical and Creative Thinking

Students will tackle complex, real-world problems through immersive, collaborative projects that sharpen their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. They will utilise technology, innovative tools, and regular assessments to enhance their learning.

Cultural Awareness and Global Citizenship

Intercultural exchanges, community partnerships, and the study of global issues will help students appreciate diverse perspectives and develop cultural competency. Students will gain a global outlook and an understanding of their role as compassionate global citizens.

Mercy Tradition and Transformative Action

By immersing themselves in the Mercy pillars of compassion, justice and service, students will grow in their commitment to transformative action. Students will be empowered to initiate positive change in their communities in the spirit of Catherine McAuley.

Spiritual Formation

Deepening students' Catholic faith and relationship with God will underpin all experiences. Opportunities for prayer, liturgical celebrations, and reflection will nurture spiritual growth. Students will take ownership of their faith as they lead prayer groups, retreats, and service activities.



Student Outcomes:

1. Build Positive Relationships and Show Empathy

Students will build positive relationships and demonstrate empathy by practicing the Mercy values of compassion, respect, and service in group activities, role-plays, and peer feedback.

2. Apply Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving with a Focus on Justice and Service

Students will apply critical thinking to solve real-world problems, focusing on justice and service, and will demonstrate this through projects, presentations, and community engagement.

3. Express Creativity Through Christian Reflection

Students will use their creativity in ways that reflect Christian teachings, particularly in response to *Laudato Si'* and *Laudate Deum*, by designing projects and participating in activities that care for creation and others.

4. Adapt Socially with Compassion and Respect

Students will develop social skills by adapting to various situations with compassion and respect, practising these values in role-plays and peer interactions.

5. Engage in the Dunnstown Community as Stewards of Creation

Students will actively engage in the Dunnstown community, participating in projects that demonstrate stewardship, respect for creation, and commitment to justice and compassion.

6. Develop and Present Ethical Business or Social Initiatives

Students will create and present original business or social initiatives based on the values of service and justice, showcasing ethical leadership and positive community impact.

7. Provide and Apply Peer Feedback with Compassion

Students will learn to give and receive constructive feedback with compassion and respect, using it to improve their work and support the growth of others in group projects.

8. Demonstrate literacy and numeracy skills through real world community and environmental projects.

Students will enhance their literacy and numeracy skills through real-world community and environmental projects focused on themes of justice and compassion, applying these skills in assignments, presentations, budgeting, data analysis, and environmental modeling

St Brendan's Program

Action Habits

Each morning, students will participate in an Actions Habits session. Student will select a topic/skill of interest in which they are allocated time to research or practise their chosen topic or skill. Examples may include: learn an instrument, gardening, enhance their skipping or knitting skills.

Projects

Two main projects will be studied and rotated at the midway point of the program (about 4-5weeks) Students will be in smaller groups for their projects which are studied Monday to Thursday. Friday is set as a Discovery Day.

Project 1: Environment & Lifestyle (STEM and HPE)

"Sustaining Our Future: Environmental Stewardship and Healthy Living"

This project integrates environmental responsibility with personal well-being, emphasizing sustainability and health. Students will engage in activities like reforestation, water testing, and gardening, while also exploring nutrition, fitness, and personal growth through challenges like "Run the Hill." The project fosters a holistic approach to caring for both the environment and oneself, rooted in the values of stewardship and resilience.

Project 2: Creative Culture (English/Hums/Language/RE)

"Creative Voices: Enriching Dunnstown's Cultural and Spiritual Tapestry"

This project focuses on celebrating the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of Dunnstown through creative expression. Students will explore storytelling, digital media, and visual arts, collaborating with local artists and community members. Through these activities, they will reflect on cultural identity, religious traditions, and the power of art to foster connection and community, all while living out the values of compassion and justice.

Discovery Day - Fridays

Friday is Discovery Day. Students will participate in wellbeing curriculum to enhance their understanding of leadership and positive relationships. STEM activities will feature to further their study of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Project-Based Learning Summary

Project 1: Environment and Lifestyle

| Details | Information |
|---------------------------|---|
| Project Title | Environment and Lifestyle |
| Activities | Growing, preparing, and planting on local farms, reforestation at Mt Warrenheip, water testing, and indigenous history research. Students will engage in activities such as the “Run the Hill” challenge, gardening, conservation tasks, and food preparation through the Paddock to Plate program. |
| Final Outcome (Challenge) | Solo Experience, Run the Hill Challenge, and Environmental Stewardship Projects |
| Primary Organisations | Parks Victoria, Local Farms, Waterwatch/Citizen Science, Indigenous groups (Wadawurrung Traditional Owners) |
| Secondary Organisations | Local Farmers |
| Partnerships Overview | Partnerships with local farms, environmental organisations, and Indigenous communities for hands-on conservation and environmental learning. |
| Week 1 Activities | Ephemeral Art, Conservation Walk at La Gerche, Mt Buninyong geological and indigenous history, gardening |
| Week 2 Activities | Mini-solo, tree planting, indigenous plant research, water testing (citizen science) |
| Week 3 Activities | Solo experience, reforestation project, farm visit on land use and sustainable practices |
| Evaluation Methods | Reflective Journal, Teacher/Peer Feedback, Group Project Evaluations |
| RE Connections | Justice, Compassion, Stewardship (Christian Ethics-Personal and Social), Responsibilities toward creation (<i>Laudato Si'</i>). |
| Literacy Connections | Reflective journal writing, reading and comprehension tasks related to environmental conservation and indigenous knowledge. |
| Numeracy Connections | Data analysis, budgeting for sustainability, calculations for carbon footprints, statistical analysis of environmental impact |

Project-Based Learning Summary

Project 2: Creative Culture

| Details | Information |
|---------------------------|---|
| Project Title | Creative Culture |
| Activities | Digital storytelling, filmmaking, cultural history projects, creative writing, and visual arts focused on the local Dunnstown community and Indigenous heritage |
| Final Outcome (Challenge) | Presentation of Creative Project |
| Primary Organisations | Dunnstown Community, Local Artists, Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, Ballarat City Council |
| Secondary Organisations | Eureka Centre, Art Gallery of Ballarat, Creative Victoria |
| Partnerships Overview | Engagement with local artists, community members, and cultural institutions to support creative projects and cultural awareness |
| Week 1 Activities | Introduction to creative projects, roles, and themes; Digital storytelling and narrative building |
| Week 2 Activities | Scripting and editing of creative projects; Visual arts workshops (plein-air painting, narrative crafting) |
| Week 3 Activities | Final project presentation, exhibition setup, peer reviews, and community showcasing |
| Evaluation Methods | Peer reviewing, journaling of creative processes, presentations |
| RE Connections | Christian Ethics: Compassion, Creativity, Community (<i>Laudato Si'</i>) - celebrating local culture and creative expression through a moral and social lens |
| Literacy Connections | Writing narratives, scripting, reflective journals on creativity and culture, oral presentations |
| Numeracy Connections | Project planning, time management, budgeting for exhibitions and materials |



St Brendan's Campus Timetable

| Time | Duration |
|---|---------------------|
| Bus departs Damascus Mt Clear Campus | 9:00am |
| Student Duties (Action Habits) | 9:20am to 9:50am |
| Session 1 | 9:50am to 11:00am |
| Recess | 11:00am to 11:20am |
| Session 2 | 11:20 am to 12:30pm |
| Lunch | 12:30pm to 1:10pm |
| Session 3 | 1:10pm to 2:30pm |
| Reflection | 2:30 to 2:50pm |
| Bus departs Dunnstown | 2:50pm |
| Dismissal from Damascus Mt Clear Campus | 3:18pm |



St Brendan's Program: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

What is the St Brendan's Program?

The St Brendan's Program is a unique initiative for Year 8 students at Damascus College. It offers a term-long immersive learning experience focused on leadership, stewardship, and social justice, with a strong emphasis on community engagement and personal growth.

When will students attend the St Brendan's Program?

Year 8 students will attend the programme for one term each, rotating through Terms. Each group will participate in thematic projects aligned with the Victorian Curriculum.

How will students travel to the St Brendan's campus?

Students will travel by bus each day. Students will need be at the bus set down 9.00am for immediate departure to St Brendan's.

Students will have two roll calls in the morning at Mt Clear and at Dunnstown, and one in the afternoon prior to departure.

Students will not be allowed to be dropped off at St Brendan's Campus daily.

What should students wear during the program?

Students are able to wear their sports uniform for the entire term. The sports uniform ensures that students are comfortable and ready for the various activities, including outdoor and hands-on learning experiences.

What presentations will be held for families?

There will be two presentations to families each term:

1. **Welcome Ceremony:** Held at the beginning of the term to introduce families to the program, themes, and goals.
2. **End-of-Term Showcase:** This presentation celebrates the work students have completed during the term, acknowledging their achievements and progress toward their goals. Families are invited to participate and witness the students' growth.

How does the program integrate faith and spirituality?

The St Brendan's program is rooted in the values of the Sisters of Mercy. Students will participate in daily reflection, prayer, and faith-based activities, fostering spiritual growth and a commitment to service. The program emphasises Gospel values and includes liturgies and community service opportunities.

How are literacy and numeracy incorporated into the St Brendan's Program?

Literacy: The program has a strong focus on enhancing students' literacy skills through project-based learning. Literacy development is integrated into every aspect of the program, including:

- **Reflective Journals:** Students will regularly write reflective journals, analysing their learning experiences and expressing their thoughts on leadership, stewardship, and social justice.
- **Creative Writing and Presentations:** As part of the Creative Culture Project, students will engage in creative writing, storytelling, and digital media projects. These activities will help build students' writing, reading comprehension, and oral communication skills.
- **Research and Reporting:** Students will conduct research related to their projects, critically engage with texts, and present their findings through written reports and presentations. Literacy skills such as synthesising information, structuring arguments, and editing will be emphasised.

Numeracy: Numeracy is an essential part of the St Brendan’s Program, particularly within real-world, hands-on projects. Students will apply mathematical skills to:

- **Environmental Stewardship Projects:** Students will use numeracy in activities like budgeting for sustainability, analysing environmental data (e.g., water testing results or carbon footprints), and making calculations related to conservation efforts.
- **Project Planning and Management:** Numeracy will be central to planning and organising their projects. For example, in the Creative Culture Project, students will manage budgets for materials and exhibitions, calculate timeframes, and use data to inform decisions.
- **STEM Integration:** Numeracy is also embedded in the Environment & Lifestyle Project, where students will engage in tasks such as analysing fitness data, participating in environmental modelling, and interpreting statistical information relevant to sustainability.

Numeracy Skills Drills: In addition to project-based numeracy, students will participate in focused numeracy skills drills throughout the term. These drills are designed to:

- Reinforce core mathematical concepts such as percentages, ratios, data analysis, and geometry.
- Provide practice in applying numeracy skills to real-life scenarios, such as calculating carbon emissions, working with measurements in environmental science, or managing project budgets.
- Enhance students’ confidence and fluency with numbers, ensuring they can effectively apply their skills in various contexts.

These activities ensure that literacy and numeracy are not taught in isolation but are integrated into meaningful, context-driven projects, helping students see the relevance of these skills in real-world situations while strengthening their foundational abilities through targeted drills.

Will students have homework during the program?

The focus of the program is on experiential and project-based learning. Most of the work will be completed during school hours. However, students may be asked to reflect on their experiences and prepare for presentations or projects outside of regular school time.

How does the program support student wellbeing?

Student wellbeing is a priority in the St Brendan’s Program. Alongside the thematic projects, students will engage in activities that promote personal growth, resilience, and positive relationships. The daily routine includes structured time for reflection, peer interaction, and community building.

Are there any special events during the term?

Yes, students will participate in special events such as:

- **Discovery Days:** Once a week, students will take part in specialised programs
- **Community Engagement Days:** Students will work with local community members, including environmental groups, cultural institutions, and local artists, to apply their learning in real-world contexts

What is the involvement of the Dunnstown and Wadawurrung communities?

The St Brendan's Program fosters strong ties with the Dunnstown and Wadawurrung communities. Students will collaborate with these communities on various projects, such as environmental stewardship and cultural initiatives. This engagement helps students build a deeper understanding of local heritage and cultural awareness.

How can families stay involved and support their child's learning?

Families are encouraged to stay engaged by attending the presentations and providing ongoing support for their child's projects. Regular communication will be shared through newsletters, and families are welcome to reach out to program staff with any questions or concerns.

What are the daily timings for the program?

9:00am: Roll Marking and Bus departing from Mt Clear

9:20am to 2:30pm: Students engage in project-based learning activities, including breaks for recess and lunch

2:30pm to 2:50pm: Reflection, closing activities and depart

3:15pm: Students arrive at Mt Clear

Who can I contact for more information?

For any additional questions or concerns, please contact the St Brendan's Program Leader, Karen Goonan (k.goonan@damascus.vic.edu.au), or visit the Damascus College website for updates.



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