

CURRICULUM CHAT NIGHT · 2026–2027

8th Grade Digital Discoveries + Orientation to Careers & Technical Occupations

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WHAT KIND OF CLASS THIS IS

This is a real course.

An elective with real content, real assessment, and real expectations.

1

Content is the vehicle.

Code, career tools, hardware, and design challenges are the material we work in — they are not the destination.

2

Thinking is the cargo.

What I actually assess is the reasoning, the planning, and the revision behind the artifact your child turns in.

3

High bar, real support.

Planning, organization, time management, and task initiation are taught here on purpose — not assumed, and not an add-on.

Design test I use on every assignment: does this make the thinking visible, or does it just produce an artifact?

THE ONE THING I MOST WANT YOU TO LEAVE WITH

Productive struggle is by design.

WHAT YOU MAY HEAR AT HOME

“I'm stuck.”

**“She didn't tell us how.”
how.”**

**“It took me forever.”
forever.”**

WHAT IT ACTUALLY MEANS

The task is working. Stuck is the part where the learning actually happens.

I taught the tools and modeled the moves. Figuring out which one to use is the assignment.

Revision is built into the grade, not punished by it. Second attempts are structured, not improvised.

The most useful thing you can do at home: ask “what have you already tried?” before you ask “do you need help?”

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THE YEAR AT A GLANCE

What we're doing.

1 Problem Solving & Computing

How machines take input and produce output — and how to troubleshoot when they don't. Debugging as a discipline, not a panic.

2 Design for a Real User

Interfaces, event handlers, and the difference between “it runs” and “someone else can actually use it.”

3 Physical Computing

micro:bit projects where code controls something in the physical world. Abstract concepts you can hold.

4 Careers & Technical Occupations Occupations

Xello, industry pathways, and what these skills look like as actual jobs with actual salaries.

Full standards and course codes are in the Course Handbook coming to your inbox.

SPOTLIGHT

Xello: the through-line to high school.

What it is

A career and education planning platform students work in during class — not a one-day survey.

They complete interest and skill assessments, research careers and pathways, and build a profile that stays with them.

We return to it across the year and connect it to what we're building, so career exploration is attached to real work.

1 Why it matters later

The profile follows your student into high school course selection and into every counselor conversation about pathways, certifications, and dual enrollment.

2 What it is not

It is not a test, and it does not lock your child into anything. Interests change; the point is learning how to investigate a path.

3 What you can do tonight

Ask your student to sign in and walk you through their profile. If they can explain it to you, they understand it.

Every assignment states its AI rule.

The tag is the first line of the assignment description in Schoology. If there is no tag, the rule is Prohibited.

PROHIBITED

Do the thinking yourself. Using AI on this task is an integrity violation and is handled under the district Code of Conduct and Acceptable Use Policy.

OPTIONAL

Allowed as a tool, with one sentence of disclosure in the submission comment: which tool, what you asked it, and what you did with what it gave back.

REQUIRED

Using AI well is the skill being taught and assessed. The assignment states exactly how it is to be used.

How I check: most of the work happens in class, on monitored devices, with process visible — drafts, version history, planning documents, and conversations with me along the way.

Schoology is the hub of this classroom.

Materials

 The Help Desk (pinned)

 Week of August 24

 Monday

 Tuesday

 Wednesday

 Thursday

 Friday

 Week of August 17

 Course Information

1

Everything is on the Materials page.

Agenda, files, links, directions, due dates. If it was assigned, it is there.

2

One folder per week, one per day.

Weekly folder opens to Monday through Friday, in order. A student who was absent knows exactly where to look.

3

The Help Desk is pinned at the top.

Twenty-seven written answers to what students and families ask most. Check it before you email me.

Schoology shows what is happening now. HAC is your official grade of record, synced at least weekly.

GRADES

Remediation... because *LEARNING* is the GOAL...
There is a second chance, and it has rules.

30 / 70

Formative practice /
summative
assessment
weighting

Below 85%

85%

Remediation is
available on a
summative

Below 70%

70%

Remediation is
required, not
optional

85%

Ceiling on any
remediated grade —
every student, every
time

- Remediation comes home on paper and needs a parent signature.
- The signature and remediated word due date window is short, and it is stated on the form. When it closes, I don't chase it.
- Schoology is the current picture. HAC is the official grade of record and syncs at least weekly.

BEFORE YOU GO

When you have a question.

1 Start at the Help Desk & Course Handbook. (Schoology account needed)

Pinned at the top of the Materials page in Schoology. Most questions are already answered there, in writing.

2 Then email me.

LaurieAnn.Lawson@stjohns.k12.fl.us

3 Watch your inbox.

- Weekly Update Email ~ contains valuable information, please take a moment to read each week.
- The full Course Handbook— policies, grading, AI expectations, and how to reach me, all in one place.

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8th Grade Digital Discoveries + Orientation to Careers & Technical Occupations

7th Grade Digital Discoveries + Career Clusters Exploration

7th Grade STEM