MISSION STATEMENT

Rye Country Day School is a coeducational, college preparatory school dedicated to providing students from Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 with an excellent education using both traditional and innovative approaches. In a nurturing and supportive environment, we offer a challenging program that stimulates individuals to achieve their maximum potential through academic, athletic, creative and social endeavors. We are actively committed to diversity. We expect and promote moral responsibility, and strive to develop strength of character within a respectful school community. Our goal is to foster a lifelong passion for learning, understanding, and service in an ever-changing world.
THE MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM GUIDE

MIDDLE SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

The Middle School aims to provide an atmosphere that fosters independence, mutual respect, and intellectual pursuit in an environment of high moral and academic standards. The School provides healthy competition within a nurturing support system, recognizing the uniqueness of young adolescents. The School encourages a learning partnership between student and teacher, so that all students have an adult advocate to guide and support them. The School strives to meet the individual needs of students through a flexible curriculum by engaging them in significant learning experiences, using varied teaching and learning approaches.
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The Middle School addresses the distinctive needs of students in grades five through eight. We appreciate and understand their joys, problems and developmental changes. We recognize their vulnerability and learning differences in this transitional period. Our program provides the support and guidance that allows students to develop independent thinking, intellectual integrity, and physical, personal, and social maturity. The program offers students the opportunity to explore and make choices as they move through the Middle School.

Acting as a bridge between the Lower and Upper Schools, the Middle School reinforces and applies skills previously learned and stimulates the student’s emerging ability to think abstractly and reason logically. The program emphasizes the development of work and study habits to ensure success in the ever-increasing demands of academic studies.

This guide is an overview of the Middle School curriculum. As with any good program, changes and revisions are constantly being made to meet the needs of the students.
ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

RCDS is a college preparatory school; each student is expected to devote himself or herself to the academic requirements set forth by the School. Continued attendance at RCDS depends upon the student maintaining what is, in the opinion of the School, a satisfactory academic level of achievement.

THE GRADING SYSTEM

In each academic class, grades are based on a student consistently showing comprehension of course content in tests, quizzes, written exercises, homework, projects, and class discussion. A student is expected to participate in a positive and cooperative manner and to be punctual and prepared for each class. The letter grades below represent the following:

**E = EXCELLENT** 90% - 100%
The student’s performance in all areas of the course is outstanding.

**G = GOOD** 80%-89%
The student’s achievement is of substantial quality in relation to the course standards.

**HP = HIGH PASS** 70% - 79%
The student has displayed competency in the course.

**P = PASS** 60% - 69%
The student has met the minimum requirements of the course.

**U = UNSATISFACTORY**  below 60%
The student has failed to meet the minimum requirements of the course.

The following grades are for nonacademic subjects and physical education:

**S = Satisfactory**  U = Unsatisfactory
REPORTING SYSTEM
In the Middle School, progress reports are written four times a year. Early November (end of first mid-semester), early February (end of first semester), late April (end of second mid-semester), and in June (end of second semester and year). In between these reporting times, a student’s progress is closely monitored. If a student is having difficulty, parents will be contacted by the teacher, the Advisor, the Dean or by the Principal.

CONFERENCES
A general orientation, Curriculum Night, is held early in the school year when parents will have a chance to meet their child’s teachers. An individual conference for parents with their child’s advisor is held in early November, and again in February following the end of the first semester. During the year, other conferences will be arranged when necessary. Parents are encouraged to call the Principal if they feel the need for an additional conference.

HOMEWORK
Homework expectations differ at each grade level and in each course. In Grades Five and Six, the completion of homework assignments averages about sixty to eighty minutes. The time commitment increases to approximately one hundred twenty to one hundred fifty minutes in Grades Seven and Eight. At any grade level, the time that it takes for a student to complete homework will vary depending on the individual child. If a student is absent, he or she should call a classmate to get specific assignments. If necessary, parents can come to the School and get the necessary books from the student’s locker. If a student is absent for several days, parents should call the Dean and make arrangements to pick up assignments. Students will be given time to make up homework and tests when they return from their absence.

STANDARDIZED TESTING
Standardized testing is administered to all students in order to gain insights into the students’ learning profile. In February students take the Comprehensive Testing Program IV, published by the Educational Records Bureau. The tests measure verbal and quantitative ability, as well as achievement. Norms are established by comparing each student with a sample from national, suburban and independent schools. A copy of the results is mailed to parents who may make appointments to discuss them with the Middle School Learning Specialist or the Principal.
GRADE FIVE

The fifth grade curriculum is designed to help the student make a smooth transition into the Middle School. The homeroom teachers act as advisors to provide the guidance and security that young adolescents need as they are challenged and encouraged to become more independent in the preparation and completion of their assignments. Academic work at this grade level becomes more challenging and comprehensive. Instruction includes the teachers’ assistance in developing study habits which allow the students to become more efficient and successful in their academic work. Great attention is paid to the process of becoming effective learners. The organization and maintenance of school supplies and books, adherence to deadlines, and exposure to a greater number of teachers are important parts of this transitional year.

LANGUAGE ARTS

The language arts program in grade five develops the students’ skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The reading program aims to penetrate the surface of stories, poems, and articles. At the same time, the writing program emphasizes clear, precise use of language. Students write frequently, both poetry and prose. The course also emphasizes the importance of listening to others and sharing ideas.

The language arts program coordinates with the social studies curriculum through the study of Greek and Roman myths.

By the end of the year, fifth grade students should demonstrate reasonable mastery of the following:

Writing

• crafting complete sentences
• using proper punctuation: periods and question marks, commas with compound sentences and with lists
• developing a main idea in a paragraph
• using transitional words
• varying sentence structure
• avoiding sentence fragments and run-on sentences
• editing effectively
• creating poetry and poetic prose and crafting expository responses

Reading

Through a rich variety of stories, poems, and myths, the students exchange and discuss their views and reactions to literature. By the end
of the fifth grade, all students should have a reasonable mastery of the following:

- recall of factual information
- inference
- summarizing stories
- identifying mood, climax, and conclusion
- compare and contrast main characters
- note figurative language and imagery

**Spelling**
Students will learn basic spelling rules and the spelling of commonly used words.

**Formal Grammar**
By the end of the year, students should be familiar with the following:

- the eight parts of speech
- subject, complete verb, and complement of a sentence
- action and being verbs
- different sentence types: simple, compound, and complex

**MATHEMATICS**
Mathematics in the fifth grade builds on the foundation of Lower School skills as students gain mastery over computations with whole numbers, fractions, and decimals and improve their understanding of number sense, place value, estimation, fractional equivalents, and percents. Throughout each unit, emphasis is placed on discussing and honing problem solving techniques, as students engage in both independent and group work. Additionally, students develop appropriate study habits and strengthen their organizational skills.

By the end of the year, fifth grade students should demonstrate reasonable mastery of the following:

- basic whole number skills and operations
- computation of fractions and decimals
- fraction and decimal equivalents
- customary units of measurement
- geometric shapes
- perimeter and area

**SCIENCE**
Grade 5 science explores many aspects of the biological and physical sciences. Emphasis is placed on how scientists go about solving problems, and on some of the underlying physical principles that govern the way environmental systems interact. Children are introduced to the scientific
process, the modern system of classification, and other topics in their studies in Microbiology, Meteorology and Oceanography.

Text and resource materials are drawn from a wide variety of sources. All subject matter is studied using a hands-on, experiment and activity based approach, with emphasis placed on the scientific method and processes. By the end of the year, fifth grade students should demonstrate reasonable mastery of the following:

- making and recording observations
- recording and organizing data
- formulating hypotheses
- recognizing patterns in data
- drawing conclusions
- using appropriate lab equipment

HUMANITIES

The fifth grade humanities course examines ancient history from the emergence of communities and civilizations through the Roman Empire. In pursuing knowledge about this area of history, we keep guiding questions in mind. These questions provide us with a framework for our classroom inquiry and remind us that humanities is just as much about the pursuit of knowledge through the asking of questions as the learning of certain facts and concepts. These questions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- How do cultures differ and what makes them different from one another?
- How does geography affect where people live and the way people live?
- How do we know what we know about the ancient world?
- How does the ancient world affect the world in which we live today?
- How is the ancient world similar to ours?

The skills we work on during this exploration of ancient societies are:

- managing and completing daily homework assignments
- managing and completing long-term projects and reports
- organizing and managing daily materials necessary for class
- mastering concepts, facts, and historical techniques
- understanding and implementing study skills in preparation for in-class assessments
- developing the expository paragraph, including topic sentence, body, and conclusion concepts
- developing the concept of a thesis and building one’s argument using relevant materials
• comprehending chronological sequencing using historical dates and events
• developing the skill of facilitating discussion, as well as participation and listening
• utilizing the tools of the textbook and outside resources for further inquiry and understanding
• comprehending primary sources, such as excerpts from ancient writings, artwork, graphs, charts, and geographical information

FRENCH/SPANISH
Fifth grade French and Spanish students are engaged in an active educational process. Students’ grammatical awareness increases as they learn to speak, read and write in the target language while building on a vocabulary base which includes autobiographical information and terms related to sports, school supplies, numbers and geography. The goal of the fifth grade French program is to either introduce new students to the excitement of the French language and culture, or to enhance and build upon returning students’ previous experience with the language.

ART
All visual art forms are composed of common design elements, including line, shape, form, color, and textures. Students learn to compose with these elements by considering various design principles, including rhythm, contrast, emphasis, repetition, pattern, harmony, and balance. These elements and principles are considered in different projects, using a variety of materials and techniques. In addition to analyzing their own work, students are exposed to the work of other artists and crafts people.

Two-dimensional projects may include drawing, painting, collage, mixed media, and printing. Three-dimensional projects include paper mache and clay construction. Most projects are based upon visual motivation: films, filmstrips, slides, reproductions, still life, nature, the man-made environment, figure and perspective studies. In addition to studying design and techniques, students are encouraged to develop respect for their materials. They learn how to use them properly and are responsible for cleaning them and returning them to the correct storage areas.

Student art work is displayed frequently in the middle school. Two school-wide art exhibits are held each year, in the fall and in the spring.

MUSIC
The fifth grade music program is structured in order to provide all students participation in both band and chorus throughout the year. In chorus, students will explore music of various styles and historic periods in several languages. Solfege and ear training are incorporated alongside the study
and performance of standard choral repertoire. In band, students play from a beginning method book, developing a solid skill base to perform elementary band music on an instrument of their choice. All students participate in two major concerts during the school year.

MANUAL ARTS
Manual Arts for the fifth grade is the introductory course for the Middle School wood shop program. All of the projects are at the beginning level from the start of the school year, with the assignments becoming more challenging as the year progresses. Because safety is the biggest concern, there is no project quota or time limit imposed on students. They are allowed to work at a comfortable, safe, and reasonable pace with the quality and success of their work being strongly emphasized. Projects can be adjusted to the personal level of each student, and cooperative assignments may be included as well.

Students will learn the basics of shop safety, wood preparation, wood alteration, wood construction, power and manual tool usage, basic measurement, simple engineering, and full color finishing techniques as they progress through a specially designed assignment list. Practice projects and a chance to explore, discover, and learn from their mistakes are part of the process. Creativity, imaginative thinking, and personal expressions are greatly encouraged with teaching demonstrations, discussions about tool choices and proper applications being covered throughout the school year.

Tools used will include the following: Jig saw, scroll saw, coping saw, wood shapers, files, rasps, sandpapers, electric sanders, brace and bit, electric drills, wood planes, wood lathe, sawzall, drill press, wheel cutters, and a variety of measuring/tracing aides.

COMPUTER SCIENCE
This introductory survey course covers many of the basic computer tools used throughout RCDS—word processing, drawing, animation, wikis, and Internet use. Students also program the computer using MicroWorlds EX, a graphic programming environment that uses the Logo language. It is ideal for exploring a wide range of concepts from geometry to animated story telling to game making, in addition to exposing the students to the logic and rigor of computer programming. Keyboarding skills are practiced and reinforced throughout the year using the program Type Through Time. By the end of fifth grade, the student should show reasonable fluency with the following:

• using a word processor to compose and edit writing
• using drawing tools to create simple drawings
• creating simple wiki pages with text, images and links
• creating simple animations
• writing basic computer programs
• saving and backing up files to the server
• printing files
• realizing that “Try It and See” is a worthwhile problem solving skill

LIBRARY SKILLS
This class is designed to help make students comfortable using the Middle and Upper School library for their academic and recreational needs. They will begin to develop an understanding of the organization of materials in the library, and of the different types of materials available. They learn to become independent searchers of information. Some skills are covered within the context of the science or social studies classes. Sharing literature makes up another important segment of library time. Timing of some units depends on when they make sense in the context of the overall 5th grade curriculum.

SEEK
The goals of the SEEK program are to help students develop as responsible and respectful members of our middle school community and help them feel more competent and positive about themselves. Beginning in grade five students will discuss the topics listed below. The discussions will be developmentally appropriate for each age group. When the need arises, discussions will center on a topic that is highlighted in the news, and meaningful to the students.

Fall
Organization/Study Skills
Metacognition and Memory
Transition to current grade/goal setting
Team Building/Experiential activities among SEEK groups
Friendships and social situations

Winter
Citizenship
Substance Use (tobacco, alcohol, drugs)
Stress, depression, anxiety – learning to regulate mood
Decision-making

Spring
Bullying, Harassment
Prejudice/Stereotypes
Sexuality Education
Communication Skills
Revisiting goals
Transition to following grade/stress management

PHYSICAL EDUCATION
Students are exposed to a variety of team sports and physical fitness activities. Boys and girls meet separately for 50-minute periods each day of the week. The program emphasizes good sportsmanship. This program’s main goals stress that ability alone does not constitute the well-rounded athlete. We hope that the physical education program will help students develop a strong sense of self-awareness and confidence.

Activities Offered:
Soccer Figure & Recreational Skating
Football Track & Field
Field Hockey Lacrosse
Volleyball Basketball
Tumbling Baseball
Ice Hockey Squash
Tennis Softball

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

GREEK FESTIVAL
A culmination of the interdisciplinary study of Greek Mythology and the Greek history and culture.

FIELD TRIPS
These day trips change from year to year and are coordinated to enhance the curricular program.
GRADE SIX

The sixth grade curriculum is designed to reinforce students’ ability to work independently and to become more self-motivated. The advisor provides guidance and security, but the student is expected to attempt new challenges. Within the curriculum, an emphasis on the development of organizational skills, time management, and approaches to the study of various academic disciplines continues to prepare the students to become effective learners. Teachers hold students responsible for completing assignments and meeting deadlines. The curriculum requires more abstract thinking and logical reasoning, which leads to stimulating and active class discussions.

LANGUAGE ARTS

The purpose of the sixth grade language arts program is to strengthen skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The literature program includes such books as *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, and *The Outsiders*. The students read orally and independently and discuss texts together. They learn to write well by writing frequently and by revising and editing their work for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization. Their writing includes comprehension questions, literature responses, expository paragraphs, and mini essays, as well as poems and stories pertaining to their reading. Precise use of language is a major goal.

By the end of the year, sixth graders should demonstrate reasonable mastery in the following areas:

Writing:
- write complete sentences
- write cohesive paragraphs
- recognize the standard format for five-paragraph mini essays
- proofread and revise for proper spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure
- use effective transition words

Reading:
- discern main ideas, locate details, sequence events, recall information
- summarize
- understand plot, theme, character, setting, foreshadowing
- be familiar with literary devices such as simile, metaphors, and personification
• determine character traits from details in literature
• compare and contrast characters and plots in different novels
• understand point of view

Spelling:
• spell priority words correctly on all written assignments
• use spelling references (spelling lists, dictionaries, and spelling guides), as well as spell check on the computer

Formal grammar:
• recognize the eight parts of speech
• find the subject, verb, and complement in a sentence
• follow the rules of punctuation, capitalization, and subject/verb agreement
• recognize and correct run-on sentences and fragments
• use commas correctly in compound sentences and lists

MATHEMATICS
Mathematics in the sixth grade is a strengthening of the skills taught in the fifth grade and an introduction of more complex problem solving and pre-algebra concepts. During the year, students work through independent tasks as well as cooperative group activities. Problem-solving strategies are discussed within each unit. By the end of the year, sixth grade students should demonstrate reasonable mastery of the following:
• review of whole number skills
• introduction to algebraic expressions and equations
• fraction and decimal operations
• Customary and Metric units of measurement
• fractions, decimal, and percent equivalents
• percent word problems including discount, sales tax, etc.
• geometric figures (lines, angles, shapes, and solids)
• perimeter, area, volume, and surface area

SCIENCE
Grade six science employs an interdisciplinary and inquiry-based approach to learning. Students are introduced to the scientific process and methodology through frequent laboratory investigations and projects. An emphasis is placed on the development of critical thinking skills through problem solving and the collection and analysis of data. The course focuses on life science and incorporates related content and skills important to mathematics, social studies, and language arts.
Students are introduced to how scientists study people, human biology and health.
Occasionally, other topics of timely and unusual interest may be included in the planned curriculum in order to take advantage of the freewheeling curiosity of students at this age.
By the end of the year, sixth grade students should demonstrate reasonable mastery of the following:

- making and recording observations
- recording and organizing data
- formulating hypotheses
- recognizing patterns and interpreting data
- drawing conclusions and supporting them with appropriate data
- making inferences and applying concepts
- designing simple experiments
- familiarization with appropriate lab equipment

HUMANITIES
The sixth grade humanities course combines the study of history, geography, current events, and study skills. In the first part of the year, students complete a unit on understanding and applying basic geography and map skills, such as time zones, latitude, longitude, land and water forms, the use of scale, and map keys. This study forms the basis of a year long project in which the students create their own country. Then students examine the medieval period in three geographic areas: the Islamic world, Europe, and Japan. We study Islam both as an empire and as a faith while also looking at the geography of the Middle East in detail. To conclude the Islam unit, we explore Islamic contributions to and influence on our culture in a three-day study of Islam Across the Curriculum coordinated with students’ other courses. Next, the program turns to an analysis of the environment, people, culture, and economy of medieval Europe. We emphasize the feudal system, the rise of towns, knights, castles, the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, the Crusades, and the contributions of the arts and sciences during the Middle Ages. Finally, we look at the similarities as well as the differences in historical patterns between medieval Europe and medieval Japan, particularly feudal political organizations, bonds between warriors, and the role of religion in both societies. Extensive projects for reinforcement of these concepts include independent research, organizational charts, oral reports, plays, speeches, videos, radio presentations, and the creation of a newspaper. Formal current events discussions take place once a rotation, and students use the class wiki to continue these conversations with a larger audience outside the classroom. These discussions are based on articles found in *The New York Times* and Weekly Reader’s *Current Events Magazine*. 
Students go on field trips to support and enhance their learning, visiting the Islamic Cultural Center in New York, the Cloisters, and Medival Times.

The skills we work on throughout the year include:
- prompt and accurate completion of daily work
- prompt and accurate completion of long term projects
  - ability to demonstrate accurate comprehension of text content
  - ability to compare and contrast information in a single and multi paragraph essay
  - ability to develop and write clear multi paragraph essays
  - ability to take clear and accurate notes from the text
  - ability to prepare for all types of tests and quizzes
  - ability to write thorough yet concise summaries
  - ability to research information from several sources
  - ability to master geographic terms and maps, and comprehend primary sources, such as legal documents, art work and graphs

**FRENCH**

In sixth grade, the French program allows RCDS students to deepen their understanding of French. Classes aim to provide students with basic understanding of the language, through conversations, reading, writing, and oral comprehension.

By the end of the year, sixth grade students should be able to demonstrate reasonable proficiency as they:
- understand and apply the concepts of masculine and feminine forms and agreements
- memorize and use the conjugation of the regular “-ER” verbs, as well as some irregular verbs
- ask and respond to questions in French in order to create a French environment in the classroom
- introduce themselves, their friends and family
- talk about their schedules and favorite activities
- explain what they have (possessions), how old they are, what they like to do

Short readers are added to the textbook throughout the year in order to practice reading and enhance vocabulary. Many connections are made between French and English words and expressions. Students are encouraged to recognize cognates as well as words with the same derivation. Students are introduced to the cultures and traditions of the francophone world beyond France.
LATIN
The study of Latin begins in grade 6 and is designed around the following goals: (1) to develop understanding of the elementary structure of the language while providing a facility in reading basic Latin; (2) to expand English vocabulary through the study of Latin derivatives; and (3) to develop appreciation for the world of the ancient Romans.

Latin is introduced orally, and students are trained in regular question and answer drills in Latin. The reading connected Latin prose is a regular feature of every class. From the reading arises the grammar instruction so that the student can understand the grammar in a context. The discipline of translation, with its focus on the function of every word, teaches the student as much about English as it does about Latin. The continuing saga of the Roman family gives students a unique perspective on Roman life of the first century AD.

By the end of the sixth grade, Latin students should demonstrate reasonable mastery of the following:

• basic Latin grammar, to include subject, direct object, predicate noun and adjective, verb agreement, noun cases, and prepositions
• reading with understanding and translating into idiomatic English basic Latin prose
• Latin vocabulary of approximately 200 words, with appropriate derivatives in English
• responding orally to questions in Latin
• basic elements of Roman history and culture and their relationship to the modern world

MANDARIN CHINESE
The Mandarin program for sixth grade emphasizes listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing (both handwriting and computer writing) of the Chinese language. By the end of this first year, students will be able to hold basic conversations, recognize and write at least 74 characters, read simple texts, use the Pin Yin system in pronunciation and computer writing, and understand basic grammar.

SPANISH
The sixth grade Spanish class studies language and culture and provides the rudiments of self expression in a foreign language. Tools used in the class include time in the computer lab, videos, songs, and short readings. By the end of the year, sixth grade students should be able to demonstrate reasonable mastery of the following skills:

• understand the basic vocabulary introduced throughout the course (this includes those relating to family, clothing, colors, telling time, dates, descriptions of people, and numbers)
• have a simple conversation in Spanish
• ask and respond to basic questions in Spanish
• understand instructions given in Spanish
• use context clues in understanding a foreign language
• understand the grammatical concept of possession
• conjugate regular present tense verbs as well as the irregular verbs “ser” and “tener”
• use adjectives and pronouns
• understand and correctly apply the concept of gender and number agreement

ART
All visual art forms are composed of common design elements, including spatial relationships, line, shape, color, form, texture, and space. Students learn to compose with these elements by considering various design principles, including rhythm, contrast, emphasis, repetition, pattern, harmony, and balance. These elements and principles are considered in different projects, using a variety of materials and techniques. In addition to analyzing their own work, students are exposed to the works of other artists and crafts people.

Two-dimensional projects may include drawing, painting, collage, mixed media, and printing. Three-dimensional projects may include paper construction, wire sculpture, carved forms, and assemblage. Most projects are based upon visual motivation: films, filmstrips, slides, reproductions, still life, nature, the man-made environment, figure and perspective studies.

In addition to studying design and techniques, students are encouraged to develop respect for their materials. They learn how to use them properly and are responsible for cleaning them and returning them to the correct storage area.

Student art work is displayed frequently in the middle school. Two school-wide art exhibits are held each year, in the fall and in the spring.

DRAMA
The class will be broken down into 3 units: Improvisation, Creating a Character, and Building a Theater Piece. Improvisation is a wonderful way to begin the year because of its focus on “yes and”, accepting people’s offers on stage, and getting our minds and bodies into a spontaneous state. Through improvisational structured games the students will learn about the who/what/where of improvisation. Following improvisation, the students will have the opportunity to develop a 3-Dimensional Character. This unit will culminate in a presentation of character interviews and monologues written by the students for the character. Finally, the students will have
the opportunity to write and direct their own theater pieces, learning about theme, plot, composition, set, costumes, writing, and directing.

**INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC**
Sixth Grade Intermediate Band provides an ensemble experience for students with beginning instrumental experience on wind and percussion instruments. Those wishing to enter Sixth Grade Band without any prior instrumental experience may do so if deemed appropriate by the instructor. Through classroom instruction, an intermediate band method/technique book and appropriate repertoire, students will continue to develop a solid skill base to interpret and perform ensemble music at an intermediate level. Grading is based on the student’s participation and overall performance. Participation in the private lesson program is strongly recommended.

Members of our Sixth Grade Intermediate Band are expected to perform in two major concerts, scheduled in December and May of each school year.

**VOCAL MUSIC**
Members of the Sixth Grade Chorus continue to develop healthy singing and rehearsal habits, taking on more challenging two and three part music. Students perform a variety of musical styles in several languages. They sing two major concerts each year in addition to shorter performances both inside and outside the school community. Students will be evaluated based on their participation and overall performance.

**MANUAL ARTS**
Students receive instruction on the various types of wood, wood preparation, construction techniques, damage adjustments/repair, assembly techniques, decorative techniques, traditional, faux, and full color finishing techniques. This is accomplished with step-by-step instruction about planning, building, and successfully finishing a basic box construction. Options for a more challenging form of box construction are available as an incentive for the more skilled, adventurous, or advanced students. Once the students have completed the construction portion, they will rethink their design into a specific topic or theme that includes side, top, and decorative carvings or illustrations.

An introduction to three-dimensional design and wood sculpture is included to help create miniature scenes or “handle” sculptures for the box lids, and are a required component of a successful construction. The students will learn all the steps from initial concept, research and paper planning through the final finishing techniques.
Tool usage: All of the fifth grade tools plus the addition of more precise scroll saw techniques, shaping/carving techniques, illustration and transfer techniques, basic drafting and measuring implements, model making and miniature precision tools, model scenery materials and techniques, acrylic paints and painting techniques. Precision, attention to detail, and individual craftsmanship are greatly encouraged.

**COMPUTER SCIENCE**
Students continue with programming in the *Robotics* class. This class takes a cooperative approach to building objects with LEGO pieces and controlling movement of these pieces by writing programs using a variant of the Logo language. Students collaborate on building, programming, and troubleshooting these simple robotic devices.

**LIBRARY SKILLS**
Sixth grade students meet for Library Skills once a cycle. The class emphasizes three important aspects of finding and using information:

- efficient strategies for searching on the Internet
- evaluation of web sites using a specific six-step model
- media literacy, with specific attention to advertising in all places and in all formats

Whenever possible, the Internet skills are taught within the context of science or social studies subject matter as a frame of reference.

**SEEK**
The goals of the grade six SEEK program are to build on the knowledge and skills that students began acquiring in grade five. The units being discussed may be the same as those of the grade five curriculum, however grade six students will be able to process the information at a deeper level.

**Fall**
Organization/Study Skills
Metacognition and Memory
Transition to current grade/goal setting
Team Building/Experiential activities among SEEK groups
Friendships and social situations

**Winter**
Citizenship
Substance Use (tobacco, alcohol, drugs)
Stress, depression, anxiety – learning to regulate mood
Decision-making
Spring
Bullying, Harassment
Prejudice/Stereotypes
Sexuality Education
Communication Skills
Revisiting goals
Transition to following grade/stress management

PHYSICAL EDUCATION
Students are introduced to a variety of team sports and physical fitness activities. Boys and girls meet separately for 50-minute periods each day of the week. The program emphasizes good sportsmanship. The development of sound skills and overall athletic ability is certainly a main objective of any physical education program; this program’s overall goals, however, stress that ability alone does not constitute the well-rounded athlete. We hope that the physical education program will help students develop a strong sense of self-awareness and confidence.

Activities Offered:
Soccer          Track & Field
Football        Lacrosse
Field Hockey    Basketball
Volleyball      Baseball
Ice Hockey      Softball
Tennis          Year-End Field Day
Figure & Recreational Skating Dance & Step Aerobics
Squash          Wrestling

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

MYSTIC (September)
This overnight trip involves team building activities on this visit to Mystic Aquarium, Hammonasset State Park, and Camp Hazen in Chester, CT. This experience complements the study of marine and environmental science in grade five.

FIELD TRIPS
These day trips change from year to year and are coordinated to enhance the curricular program.
GRADE SEVEN

The seventh grade curriculum is designed to inspire students to be more independent in accepting responsibility for their own personal success. The advisor provides guidance and security while the curriculum challenges independent thinking and strengthens academic skills. With the faculty’s assistance, seventh graders learn how to become more organized and how to study with greater efficiency and effectiveness.

The use of laptops, and the choice of different electives complete the program of study.

LANGUAGE ARTS

The seventh grade language arts program enables students to appreciate all aspects of reading and writing. To help them to become better readers and writers, the students are introduced to a rich collection of literature, short stories, poems, novels, plays and memoirs. The reading list has included Words in the Dust, Haroun and the Sea of Stories, The Diary of Anne Frank, and A Midsummer Night’s Dream. The students spend a good deal of time in creative and expository writing, and they explore the mechanics of language, including spelling, vocabulary, and grammar. All students use the word processing program on their computers to draft, revise, and save their writing.

By the end of the seventh grade, each student is expected to demonstrate reasonable mastery of the skills and tasks listed below.

Writing

Throughout the seventh grade, the students write for a variety of purposes and audiences. By the end of the year, they should be able to do the following:

• write complete sentences with proper punctuation
• formulate and support a thesis in a well-organized five-paragraph essay
• employ effective transitions
• proofread and revise for proper spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure
• vary sentence structure

Reading

Through a rich and varied collection of novels, short stories, memoirs, and poetry, students learn to enjoy and appreciate literature. Their reading also enables them to handle the following tasks:
• discern main ideas and locate supporting material
• summarize
• recall information
• recognize and identify plot, theme, setting, and atmosphere
• be familiar with the use of such literary devices as similes, metaphors, personification, and irony

Spelling
• use effectively the “spell check” tool on the computer
• know when to refer to an outside source (spelling guide, teacher, parent) for help in spelling correctly

Formal grammar
Students enter the seventh grade having studied the eight parts of speech, subject-verb-complement, and two comma rules (compound sentences and lists). By the end of the year, students are responsible for those rules and definitions as well as those listed below.
• prepositional phrases
• main and subordinate clauses
• ten comma rules

Vocabulary
Throughout the year, the students study lists of vocabulary words, twenty words in each list. These words are presented in a vocabulary text, which reinforces the meanings through a series of exercises. Students complete the exercises and then show that they can define and use the words. They are expected to use those new words in their own writing as well.

MATHEMATICS
Math in the seventh grade is offered in three distinct levels: Pre-Algebra, Advanced Pre-Algebra, and Honors Pre-Algebra.
The central objectives of the Pre-Algebra are to continue the study of arithmetic in a more theoretical framework, to develop more sophisticated techniques in problem-solving, and to introduce the fundamental concepts of algebra.

Students enrolled in the advanced and honors level will have qualified for these levels through course work, standardized testing, and a placement test. Students in these classes will complete Algebra I by the end of the eighth grade. They are monitored closely and can be moved between the two levels at the end of each year. The primary goal of each course is to learn techniques for solving various types of problems - arithmetic, algebraic, and a considerable range of word problems. The
students in the honors level will move more quickly through the material and be responsible for understanding and using basic algebraic concepts and skills. They will also be responsible for understanding the development and theory behind the various algebraic formulas.

In all of the classes, seventh grade students are expected to demonstrate reasonable mastery of the following concepts:

- word problems involving algebra, percents, and geometry
- operations with integers and real numbers
- simplification and evaluation of algebraic expressions
- solutions to linear equations
- operations with monomials and polynomials
- basic forms of factoring with algebraic expressions
- perimeter, area, volume, and surface area

**SCIENCE**

In grade seven science, students examine important scientific concepts and processes in genetics, ecology, energy and evolution. Through inquiry-based investigations, students will develop and strengthen important laboratory, critical thinking, analytic, research and scientific writing skills. Students are also encouraged to use and evaluate scientific evidence to make informed decisions and to consider and identify the tradeoffs involved in each decision.

By the end of the year, seventh grade students should be proficient in the following science skills:

- making and recording observations
- recording and organizing data, both on paper and on computer
- formulating hypotheses
- recognizing patterns and interpreting data
- drawing conclusions and supporting them with appropriate data
- making inferences and applying concepts
- designing experiments and identifying experimental variables
- making metric measurements
- using lab equipment properly and safely

**HUMANITIES**

The seventh grade humanities course is titled World History. Its goal is to continue developing the reading, writing, critical thinking, and study skills necessary to thinking historically. Units of study delve into various cultures and time periods, as well as the geography of several continents, including Africa and Asia. At the end of the year, an in-depth unit on the Holocaust based on Facing History and Ourselves asks students not only to know
and understand events leading up to and during the Holocaust, but also to question and examine the human behaviors that set those events in motion. Throughout the year, opportunities to explore world current events will be integrated into the curriculum. As seventh grade is the first year in which the laptop is part of the students’ curriculum, we look at many ways in which technology can assist the study of history.

Specific skills that are developed throughout the year include:

- completing homework in a thorough and timely manner
- contributing to class in a positive and constructive way
- coming to class prepared
- maintaining an organized and up-to-date binder
- developing critical thinking skills
- learning to construct and support a thesis statement
- learning different types of content essay formats such as Compare and Contrast, Cause and Effect, Time Ordered and Comprehension.
- learning how to create and present a PowerPoint presentation
- developing a system for taking meaningful class and homework notes
- writing a five page research paper
- analyzing current events
- learning how to listen to and teach others
- preparing for and taking a cumulative final exam
- mastering geographic terms and maps

FRENCH

In seventh grade, the French program emphasizes, with a focus on basic skills, reviewing and refining previously acquired skills, adding verb conjugations and improving oral/aural proficiency. Classes are taught almost entirely in French, and students are encouraged to express themselves in the target language. By the end of the year, seventh grade students should demonstrate reasonable proficiency as they:

- understand and apply the concepts of gender, singular and plural forms
- conjugate a verb and understand the “ER” verbs, “IR” verbs, “RE” verbs, as well as several irregular verbs
- understand and write in the present, passé composé and future tenses
- ask questions and respond to oral commands given by the teacher in French
- write short dialogues and paragraphs with the proper sentence structure
• carry on brief conversations in French (at the restaurant, at school, etc.)

Daily practice in listening, reading, speaking and writing enhances students’ confidence and ability to communicate in French. Throughout the year, students work on projects and oral presentations that allow them to demonstrate their grammatical skills and the ability to use the Internet for research.

Short readers are added to the curriculum to enhance vocabulary and ease of expression. Students watch several videos in French with French or English subtitles.

**LATIN**

In grade seven the Latin course focuses primarily upon the acquisition of basic language skills: reading, vocabulary and forms mastery, grammatical analyses, word derivation, and oral Latin skills. Forms and grammatical structures are learned inductively, after they have been observed in context. In this manner, the structure of the Latin language is discovered rather than dictated, and the resulting understanding is deeper. Vocabulary building is accomplished through regular memorization, as well as through continual repetition in reading.

In order to add a contemporary spirit and vitality to an ancient language, Latin is presented as a spoken language. Accordingly, Latin is read aloud daily, and oral Latin is used to demonstrate and drill points of Latin grammar, as well as to test reading comprehension. Spoken Latin is also a major focus of special projects.

Daily practice in the detailed analysis of Latin sentences and the study of Latin derivations provide skills which are invaluable in the study of English and other languages. The discipline of translation, with its concentration on the function of every word, teaches the student as much about English as it does about Latin.

Integrated into the program are brief readings in English about Roman history and culture, which form the basis for extended project work in the nature of the Roman world.

By the end of the year, seventh grade students should demonstrate reasonable mastery of the following:

- understand basic concepts of the structure of Latin and the application of these to other languages
- understand the noun endings in three declensions
- understand the present tense, infinitive, and imperative of the four conjugations and of two irregulars in the active voice
- comprehend the meaning of Latin sentences and translate them into idiomatic English
• understand approximately 400 Latin words
• respond orally in Latin to questions in Latin
• understand parts of speech and the structure of Latin sentences
• understand the elements of Roman history and culture and their relationship to the modern world
• articulate derivation and English vocabulary derived from the meaning of Latin.

MANDARIN CHINESE
The Mandarin program for seventh grade develops students’ skills in listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing (both handwriting and computer writing) of the Chinese language. Students continue to add to the number of Chinese characters they can recognize and write, hold basic conversations, read simple texts, use the Pin Yin system in pronunciation and computer writing, and understand basic grammar.

SPANISH
The seventh grade course reviews and expands upon the basic skills introduced in sixth grade. Classes are taught almost entirely in Spanish, and students are encouraged to express themselves in that language. Work on listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills as well as cultural awareness continues with the use of videos, web sites, songs, short readers, and oral exercises. Students prepare projects to present to the class orally.

By the completion of this course, students are expected to demonstrate reasonable mastery of the following skills:
• conjugate regular and numerous irregular verbs in the present tense
• form and use the present, immediate future, and present progressive tenses
• properly use and place the direct object pronoun in a sentence
• ask questions and respond to oral commands given by the teacher.
• be able to write short dialogues and paragraphs.
• comprehend and respond to beginner level readings.
• carry on a brief conversation in Spanish (topics include expressing feelings, what one is going to do in the immediate future, schedules, obligations, leisure activities, sports, and the weather)

LAPTOP PROGRAM
All students in the seventh and eighth grades are required to have a laptop computer which they bring to school, fully charged, every day. We are a
dual platform school, meaning students may have computers with either the Macintosh or the Windows operating systems. Prior to the summer, the school provides details about purchasing the computers.

LIBRARY SKILLS
Library and research skills are best taught within the context of a course at the time they will be immediately put to use. For this reason, research skills and information literacy (the ability to locate, evaluate and use information) are taught with classroom teachers on each level as part of a research unit. This also allows the students to practice the skills repeatedly through the school year, and apply those skills to different subject areas.

SEEK
The goal of the grade seven SEEK program is to help students learn the skills that will assist them in navigating academic and social situations that arise. Students in grade seven are at a pivotal point in their lives as they enter their teenage years. Through activities, and discussions our students will cover the following topics:

**Fall**
- Organization/Study Skills
- Metacognition and Memory
- Transition to current grade/goal setting
- Team Building/Experiential activities among SEEK groups
- Friendships and social situations

**Winter**
- Citizenship
- Substance Use (tobacco, alcohol, drugs, including FCD visit)
- Stress, depression, anxiety – learning to regulate mood
- Decision-making

**Spring**
- Bullying, Harassment
- Prejudice/Stereotypes
- Sexuality Education
- Communication Skills
- Revisiting goals
- Transition to following grade/stress management for older students
- taking final exams
PHYSICAL EDUCATION / ATHLETICS
The physical education program emphasizes good sportsmanship. The development of sound skills and overall athletic ability is certainly a main objective of any physical education program; this program’s overall goals, however, stress that ability alone does not constitute the well-rounded athlete. We hope that the physical education program will help students develop a strong sense of self-awareness and confidence.

The athletic program is presented on a seasonal basis. For a given season the student is a member of an interscholastic team, Sports Conditioning class or Dance class. For many students it may be their first time competing for a position on a team or playing against an opponent in an official contest. Coaches are aware of this and balance the interests of the individual with that of the team.

Interscholastic teams participate in the Fairchester League. Generally, RCDS teams will usually play one game each week, per season. Interscholastic teams/classes meet Monday through Friday, 2:00 – 3:15 p.m.

### Teams by Season

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Spring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross Country</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>Baseball</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field Hockey</td>
<td>Fencing</td>
<td>Lacrosse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>Ice Hockey</td>
<td>Softball</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>Tennis – boys</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tennis – girls</td>
<td>Wrestling</td>
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Seventh grade students may not try out for a position on an Upper School varsity team.

Dance and Sports Conditioning classes are offered each season.

### ELECTIVE PROGRAMS

In addition to the required academic courses, students may elect to take two of the following courses which meet twice in a six day cycle.

### ART

The art program seeks to make students aware of design elements (spatial relationships, line, shape, color, form, and texture) as well as design principles (rhythm, contrast, repetition, pattern harmony, balance, and emphasis). Using these elements, students create different projects with a
variety of materials and techniques. Two-dimensional projects may include drawing, painting, collage, mixed media, and printing. Three-dimensional projects may include ceramics, paper construction, wire sculpture, carved forms, papier-mâché, and assemblage.

In addition to analyzing their own work, students are exposed to the works of other artists.

While they study design and techniques, students are encouraged to develop respect for their materials. They learn how to use them properly and are responsible for cleaning and returning them to the correct storage area.

Student art work is displayed frequently in the middle school. Two school-wide art exhibits are held each year, in the fall and in the spring.

**CERAMICS**
The ceramics program offers an in-depth exploration of basic ceramic techniques and three-dimensional design. Students first learn how to prepare clay for use; then they are guided in a series of exercises to discover what clay can and cannot do. At this state, the physical process is emphasized more than the final results.

Students explore various hand building techniques such as coiling, pinching, and slab construction. Later they embark on more ambitious and more inventive projects. Students’ projects may be representational, abstract, functional (pottery), and nonfunctional (predominantly sculpture).

Evaluation and critiques take place both during and at the completion of each project. Students are encouraged to consider the basic form of their pieces, viewing them from all sides. In addition to analyzing their own work, students are exposed to the works of other artists and crafts people.

Although most of the projects involve hand building techniques, students are also introduced to the wheel and have the opportunity to practice basic throwing techniques.

Finished pieces are displayed in the middle school and are featured in the school-wide art exhibit in May.

**DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY**
The photography program is designed to make students more aware of and sensitive to the visual and technological world around them and to enable them to communicate their perceptions by capturing the instantaneous impression.

During the first part of the course, emphasis is placed on the technical aspects of digital photography. Students learn the basics of digital camera use—what makes the camera work, what creates an image, and how the various mechanisms can be adjusted. In addition, students
will learn basic functions in Adobe Photoshop Elements. They learn to prepare images for printing-size, resolution, and paper types.

Students are then presented with aesthetic concepts. They view their own work and that of professionals, studying various techniques and effects. They learn that digital images are the product of a marriage between a long photographic history of color, contrast, composition, lighting, and depth of field and an information driven, fast-paced, cutting edge technology. In addition, students analyze the success of their work based on spatial relationship, line, shape, value, texture, contrast and pattern. In class students prepare their work for presentation in printed form and for on screen viewing. Completed images that have been finished are featured in the Student Arts Show in February.

**FLASH**

Enter the world of computer animation using the program *Flash*. Develop proficiency with *Flash’s* drawing tools while exploring frame-by-frame animation, tweening, buttons, movie clips and some basic action scripting, all in the pursuit of creating believable and compelling short animations.

**CONCERT CHORUS**

In the seventh grade students choose Concert Chorus as an elective. Music is carefully selected with consideration to the students’ varying stages of vocal development. Along with the eighth grade chorus members, students perform a staged musical in the theater each spring. They also have the option of auditioning for CubSCATS, a select vocal ensemble. Students will be evaluated based on their participation and overall performance.

**CONCERT BAND**

Seventh/Eighth Grade Concert Band provides an ensemble experience for students with prior instrumental experience on wind and percussion instruments. Through classroom instruction, an advanced band method/technique book and appropriate repertoire, students will develop a solid skill base to interpret and perform ensemble music at a more advanced level. Grading is based on the student’s participation and overall performance. Students in this group also have the opportunity to audition for the Seventh/Eighth Grade Jazz Band. Participation in the private lesson program is strongly recommended.

Members of our Seventh/Eighth Grade Concert Band and Jazz Band are expected to perform in two major concerts, scheduled in December and May of each school year.
THEATER WORKSHOP
Theater Workshop is a full year elective course designed to teach intermediate acting with a focus on naturalism, action, moment to moment work, and text analysis. The first semester culminates in a performance of short scenes. The second semester culminates in a one act play, which will be presented for an audience.

SCENERY, SETS & PUPPETS
Scenery, Sets, & Puppets concentrates on scenic painting and basic construction techniques. Students will learn how to paint faux surfaces such as wood grain and marble.
Students may also work on the sets for school shows, which provides a hands-on experience for them to apply the skills they have acquired in class. Students will also learn about the fascinating world of puppetry. They will make several different kinds of puppets using various materials such as papier mache, paper bags, and household objects. In addition, students will make use of material tools such as shadow and light.

DIRECTING FOR FILM
Students will learn the artistry of directing and story telling through the medium of film. Each student will have the opportunity to engage in writing, directing and cinematography. Mimicking the world of independent film making, the class culminates with a Middle School Film Festival, the audience being the school and perhaps larger community.

MANUAL ARTS
The seventh grade Manual Arts program is a flexible and student driven shop experience.
A beginner / refresher project is taught and required at the beginning of the school year so that all levels of student participation can be assessed. Students then have the flexibility to choose from the following:

- a prepared list of over thirty class assignments with visual aides and finished samples to refer to
- a project from an evolving classroom “book of ideas” featuring over 100 color photographs of potential projects
- to plan and build their own choice of assignment(s)
- join an “engineering” contest and build a fully operational model of a siege engine that is based on ancient or medieval designs.

Movies on operational theories, siege machine types, and working scale models are shown in class.
After the initial learning assignment, students may complete as many projects as they choose with the emphasis being placed on the quality, skill, precision, and completeness of the work. Individual and team
assignments are available with projects being assigned at the teacher’s discretion. All 7/8th grade shop projects can be adjusted to the comfort and skill level of each student while continuing to maintain a challenging and thought provoking level of participation. Student generated ideas require paper planning in addition to verbal explanations before being approved for inclusion.

Tool usage: All of the appropriate hand and electric tools in the shop with individual or group instruction on the more specialized power tools. Where appropriate, instruction on basic electrical wiring and lighting is also covered in addition to advanced model making tools and techniques.

THREE DIMENSIONAL DESIGN
Three Dimensional Design is a course that includes both basic and advanced levels of topographical, architectural, scenic, and representational scale modeling. It was developed to help students explore and become experienced with the materials and techniques of successful miniature dioramas or “extra credit” type presentations.

Students have the option to select and research their own choice of historical or fictional subjects, climates, geographic locations, or seasons of the year. This will determine how they will interpret “in miniature” the natural elements of the world they are creating such as rocks, earth, water, fire, wind direction, and ground vegetation. Demonstrations and discussions of how to construct each of these elements are covered with many visual aids, finished models, and informational videos being available throughout the process.

The students will design and finish one miniature diorama, of a specific size and scale that contains all of the above elements. Students may then make as many dioramas as time permits, or may combine their creations with other student projects for a larger scenic presentation.

Paper planning with overhead and elevation drawings will begin the process with close attention given to climate and seasonal features. Soft foam “sheets” will be built up in layers with natural or man made features being sculpted directly into the foam. Appropriate ground textures, water effects, and color techniques will be completed before crafting the appropriate trees and vegetation.

Basic drafting skills and tools will be discussed, demonstrated, and utilized to create balsa wood models of houses and other structures after all of the natural elements have been completed in full color. Options for adding historical or other scale model people will be covered depending on student interests.
ADVANCED ROBOTICS
This course provides the opportunity for students to continue with hands-on investigation of robotic devices. Students build and program a variety of projects using the LEGO Mindstorm NXT system.

DIGITAL VIDEO
This course in an introduction to creating digital video. While covering the basics of movie making, students learn to use a digital movie camera, import the video to a computer, and then use software to edit the video.

DIGITAL 3D DESIGN
Students will be introduced to creating 3D digital designs using Google SketchUp. The assigned projects allow students to practice using all of the program’s drawing, animation, and spatial orientation skills in order to produce sketches of architectural structures and commonplace, everyday objects.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

FIELD TRIPS
Field trips include a day trip during September to the Adam Kreiger Adventure Center in New Haven, CT and an overnight trip to Boston, MA. Additional curriculum related field trips occur during the rest of the year.

GRADE EIGHT
The eighth grade curriculum is designed to build upon the academic skills and intellectual curiosity of the middle school student in preparation for entrance to the upper school. In this last year of middle school, teachers continue to help students acquire the skills, knowledge, and motivation to succeed in those subjects in which they are most interested and to tackle the challenge of the subjects that may be more difficult.

LANGUAGE ARTS
The eighth grade language arts program refines the skills acquired in the seventh grade. The students read, discuss, and interpret literature. They write in several modes, and they gain an appreciation for the beauty of the English language. They read modern classics such as Of Mice and Men and To Kill a Mockingbird, an assortment of poems, and a Shakespearean comedy. Their writing is rich and varied, from formal expository essays to
poetry. In addition, they study the definitions and rules of formal grammar. By the end of the eighth grade, each student is expected to demonstrate reasonable mastery of the skills and tasks listed below.

**Writing**
The students will be expected to meet the standards of writing from the seventh grade. Those standards include the following:

- writing complete sentences and using correct punctuation
- developing formal five-paragraph essays by formulating a thesis and supporting the thesis with well-explained examples
- varying the style and structure of sentences
- using appropriate transitions
- editing and revising to eliminate errors in spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure

**Reading**
The eighth grade reads a variety of literature, including novels, plays, and poems. In addition to finding the main ideas, summarizing, and recalling information, they interpret and analyze the literature. By the end of the eighth grade, they should be able to do the following:

- identify the distinct qualities of literary genres
- understand how literary elements and techniques convey meaning and add nuance and beauty to a written work

**Formal grammar**
At the start of the eighth grade year, students review the definitions and rules studied in the seventh grade. Those include parts of speech, subject-verb-complement, prepositional phrases, main and subordinate clauses, and ten comma rules. By the end of the eighth grade, all students are expected to be skilled in handling the aforementioned rules and definitions as well as the following:

- semicolon rules
- colon rules

**Vocabulary**
Throughout the year, the students study lists of vocabulary words, twenty words in each list. These words are presented in a vocabulary text that reinforces the meanings through a series of exercises. Students complete the exercises and then show that they can define and use the words. They are expected to use those new words in their own writing as well.

**MATHEMATICS**
Math in the eighth grade is offered in three distinct levels: Introduction to
Algebra 1, Algebra 1, and Honors Algebra 1. Students are enrolled in the class that will allow them to sharpen their mathematical skills and proceed comfortably onto the next level of mathematics.

Students in the Introduction to Algebra 1 level cover the summation of arithmetic and geometric concepts and the first one-third of Algebra I. The emphasis throughout the course is on problem-solving. Students set up and solve problems using equations with whole numbers, percentages, integers, and variables. Evaluation, simplification of algebraic expressions, and factoring are introduced. Students in this class will complete Algebra I in the ninth grade.

The Algebra I course is the completion of the Algebra I program begun in the Advance Pre-Algebra class. The text offers exposure to all of the concepts and operations involved in an Algebra I course. This course is not as theoretical in nature as the honors course but does give students a very solid understanding of Algebra I and a strong foundation on which to build in the upcoming years. Students must be highly motivated and have strong mathematical skills. At the end of the 8th grade year, the students will have completed high school Algebra I and will enter geometry at the regular or honors level.

The Honors Algebra 1 course is the completion of the Algebra I program begun in the Honors Pre-Algebra level. The text offers a thorough and challenging exploration of the concepts and operations involved in a demanding Algebra I course. The course requires technical skill and speed, an analytical facility, independence, and sharp reading skills. The pace is fast-moving and requires strong ability and motivation on the part of the student. At the end of the year, students have completed a very rigorous high school honors Algebra I program and are expected to enter the honors program in geometry in Grade 9.

By the end of the eighth grade, students are expected to demonstrate reasonable mastery of the following topics:

- various number properties and axioms
- solutions to equations, including equations containing rational numbers
- operations with integers
- exponents
- inequalities
- absolute value
- operations with polynomials
- factoring by various methods
- operations with rational expressions
- graphing linear equations
- quadratics
- operations with irrational expressions
- systems of equations
INTRODUCTION TO PHYSICAL SCIENCE
Science in the eighth grade is offered at two distinct levels: Regular and Honors. The basic purpose of this course is to give all grade eight students a beginning knowledge of physical science and to offer insight into the means by which scientific knowledge is acquired. The focus of the course is chemistry.

Chemistry topics include the following: a review of the metric system and measurement, scientific notation and significant figures, mass changes in a closed system, characteristics properties, solubility, mixtures, compounds, the periodic table, chemical bonds and reactions, writing and balancing chemical formulas and equations, acids and bases, and nuclear chemistry.

The Regular level of this course helps students to understand some of the basic principles of physical science, and to acquire useful laboratory skills, which they will make use of in this and all future science courses. The course develops reasoning and realistic problem-solving skills. It encourages communication by requiring individual students to take part in the cooperative learning process.

Honors Introductory Physical Science has the same basic purpose as the regular course, but the mathematical problem solving is taught at a higher level. Students need strong algebraic problem-solving skills in order to thrive in the honors section.

By the end of the year, all eighth grade students should be proficient in the following science skills:
- making and recording observations
- recording and organizing data, both on paper and on computer
- formulating hypotheses
- recognizing patterns and interpreting data, both qualitatively and quantitatively
- drawing conclusions and supporting them with appropriate data
- making inferences and applying concepts
- designing experiments and identifying experimental variables
- the proper and safe use of lab equipment

HUMANITIES
The eighth grade humanities course is titled United States History. Its main goal is to give students an appreciation and understanding of the significance of people, places and events that relate to the unique history of the United States and what is considered “American.” We investigate
selected periods from the colonial era through the Civil Rights movement. The culminating exercise of the course is a research paper which allows students to look deeply into a topic of interest from the 20th century. Current events are also integrated into class discussions to help students see the relevance of the country’s past in today’s news and society. Students and teachers continue to seek new ways to utilize the laptop as an instrument in their learning, by means including but not limited to thoughtful Internet research and the creation of wiki pages. Building on the seventh grade experience, students will continue to read and take notes from a variety of sources (primary and secondary), participate in cooperative exercises, research and synthesize information, write descriptively and analytically, and articulate thoughts through formal public speech and debate. Interdisciplinary connections and learning are encouraged and practiced.

By the end of the year, eighth grade students are expected to be proficient in the following skills:

- managing and completing daily homework assignments
- managing and completing long-term projects and reports
- seeking assistance when necessary
- actively participating in class discussions
- contributing to group projects
- writing a well-organized expository essay
- developing a main idea supported with primary or secondary sources
- developing a thesis to begin a 3-5 page research paper with proper documentation of resources
- becoming literate in finding and assessing information
- preparing for cumulative exams

**FRENCH**

The eighth grade course continues to utilize all four language skills, (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) which are incorporated through a variety of activities including working with dialogues, listening to and watching videos in French (with French or English subtitles), writing short biographies and creative pieces, and reading short stories. In addition, students continue to study the culture and traditions of France and francophone countries. They often use the Internet to do research on cultural, artistic, and sporting events that span the French-speaking world.

Successful completion of grade eight French enables students to enter Level 2 in the Upper School.
Throughout the year, students are expected to:

- write and edit short essays on a variety of topics
- ask and answer questions in French
- write, memorize and present short skits
- read short stories and express both the main idea as well as their opinion of the piece in written and spoken form

**LATIN**

In grade eight the Latin course continues the acquisition of language skills and completes Level I of Latin. Focus is on reading and translating skills, vocabulary and forms mastery, grammar and syntax analysis, word derivation, and oral Latin skills. Forms and grammatical structures continue to be learned inductively from their observation in context. Vocabulary building develops through continual repetition in reading, as well as through regular memorization.

Oral Latin is a continuing feature of daily classroom experience both in recitation aloud and in question-answer drills. The daily practice of translation, with its concentration on the functional equivalent of every word, teaches the student as much about expression in English as it does about expression in Latin.

In eighth grade, students begin to see original Latin literature in readings that parallel the regular lessons. There are also regular readings in English about Roman history and culture, which form the basis for extended project work in the nature of the Roman world.

Through this integrated program, each student can not only gain an understanding of the Latin language within the context of Roman civilization, but can also make relevant connections to our contemporary world.

Successful completion of eighth grade Latin enables a student to enter Latin II in high school.

By the end of the eighth grade program, students should be able to:

- understand five declensions of nouns and three declensions of adjectives
- understand six tenses of verbs in four conjugations, in both active and passive voices, plus five irregular verbs, in the indicative mood
- understand the present infinitive (active and passive), and the imperative of verbs of four conjugations and of five irregular verbs
- understand personal, possessive, reflexive, demonstrative, indefinite, interrogative, and relative pronouns/adjectives
• comprehend the meaning of basic Latin prose and translate it into idiomatic English, from both artificial Latin and original Latin literature
• understand the meaning of approximately 750 Latin words
• respond orally in Latin to questions in Latin
• understand the parts of speech and articulate the grammatical and syntactic structure of Latin sentences
• understand the basic concepts of the structure of Latin and the application of these to other languages
• understand and articulate the derivation of English vocabulary from its Latin source
• understand elements of Greek and Roman history and culture, and their relationship to the modern world

MANDARIN CHINESE
The eighth grade course continues to utilize all five language skills, (listening, speaking, reading, writing and computer typing) which are incorporated through a variety of activities including working with dialogues, listening to and watching videos in Chinese (with Chinese or English subtitles), writing creative pieces, and reading short stories. In addition, students continue to study Chinese culture and traditions. They often use the Internet to do research on cultural, artistic, political and sporting events.

Successful completion of grade eight Chinese enables students to enter Level 2 in the Upper School.

Throughout the year, students are expected to:
• write and edit short essays on a variety of topics
• ask and answer questions in Chinese
• write, memorize and present short skits
• read short stories and express both the main idea as well as their opinion of the piece in written and spoken form.
• learn Chinese measure words and basic Chinese grammar.
• use Chinese dictionary proficiently and frequently.
• introduce Chinese newspaper and magazines to students

SPANISH
The eighth grade course continues to utilize all four language skills, (listening, speaking, reading, writing) which are incorporated through a variety of mediums including dialogue, music, creative writing, videos, the news, and short stories. In addition, students continue to study the culture and traditions of Spain and Latin America. They often use the Internet to
research current cultural, artistic, and sporting events that span the globe. The Internet is also used to practice verb conjugations. Successful completion of grade eight Spanish enables the student to enter Level 2 in the Upper School.

Throughout the course, students will be expected to do the following:
• write and edit essays on a variety of topics
• write and memorize creative pieces for performance in class
• read short stories and then express both the main idea as well as their opinion of the piece in written and spoken form
• ask and answer questions in Spanish

By the end of the eighth grade, students should be able to use the following both orally and in their writing:
• present, present progressive, past, and future tenses of regular and irregular verbs
• negative and positive commands
• reflexive verbs
• direct and indirect object pronouns
• demonstrative adjectives and pronouns
• superlatives and comparatives

**LAPTOP PROGRAM**
All students in the seventh and eighth grades are required to have a laptop computer which they bring to school, fully charged, every day. We are a dual platform school, meaning students may have computers with either the Macintosh or the Windows operating systems. Prior to the summer, the school provides details about purchasing the computers.

**LIBRARY SKILLS**
Library Skills/Information Literacy helps students develop effective skills and strategies for efficient “information problem solving,” especially in the electronic context, and in coordination with the 8th grade curriculum. Technology issues such as copyright, plagiarism in the digital age, safety, privacy, the “digital divide,” and our role in the Internet community are investigated.

**SEEK**
The grade eight SEEK curriculum builds upon and augments the skills, activities, and topics covered during the program in grades five, six, and seven.
The program also serves as an opportunity for students to share concerns and information about adolescent issues, ranging from peer interactions to school responsibilities.

**Fall**
Organization/Study Skills  
Metacognition and Memory  
Transition to current grade/goal setting  
Team Building/Experiential activities among SEEK groups  
Friendships and social situations

**Winter**
Citizenship  
Substance Use (tobacco, alcohol, drugs, including FCD visit)  
Stress, depression, anxiety – learning to regulate mood  
Decision-making

**Spring**
Bullying, Harassment  
Prejudice/Stereotypes  
Sexuality Education  
Communication Skills  
Revisiting goals  
Transition to following grade/stress management for older students taking final exams

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION / ATHLETICS**
The physical education program emphasizes good sportsmanship. The development of sound skills and overall athletic ability is certainly a main objective of any physical education program; this program’s overall goals, however, stress that ability alone does not constitute the well-rounded athlete. We hope that the physical education program will help students develop a strong sense of self-awareness and confidence.

The athletic program is presented on a seasonal basis. For a given season the student is a member of an interscholastic team, Sports Conditioning class or Dance class. For many students it may be their first time competing for a position on a team or playing against an opponent in an official contest. Coaches are aware of this and balance the interests of the individual with that of the team.

Interscholastic teams participate in the Fairchester League. Generally, RCDS teams will usually play one game each week per season. Interscholastic teams/classes meet Monday through Friday, 2:00 – 3:15 p.m.
Eighth grade student-athletes may try out for a position on an Upper School varsity team. The student must pass the New York State classification fitness test before attending pre-season tryouts. Upon passing the fitness test the student must attend all pre-season tryouts, and must have the skills and tactical knowledge to take a starting position on the varsity team. Please contact the Athletic Office for details.

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<th>Fall</th>
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Dance and Sports Conditioning classes are offered each season.

**ELECTIVE PROGRAMS**

In addition to the required academic courses, students may elect to take two of the following courses which meet twice a week for the entire year:

**ART**

The art program seeks to make students aware of design elements (spatial relationships, line, shape, form, color, contrast, and texture) as well as design principles (rhythm, contrast, repetition, emphasis, pattern, harmony, and balance). Using these elements, students create different projects with a variety of materials and techniques. Two-dimensional projects may include drawing, painting, collage, mixed media, and printing. Three-dimensional projects may include ceramics, paper construction, wire sculpture, carved forms, papier-mâché, and assemblage.

In addition to analyzing their own work, students are exposed to the works of other artists. While they study design and techniques, students are encouraged to develop respect for their materials. They learn how to use them properly and are responsible for cleaning and returning them to the correct storage area.

Student art work is displayed frequently in the middle school. Two school-wide art exhibits are held each year, in the fall and in the spring.

**CERAMICS**

The ceramics program offers an in-depth exploration of basic ceramic techniques and three-dimensional design. Students first learn how to prepare clay for use; then they are guided in a series of exercises to
discover what clay can and cannot do. At this state, the physical process is emphasized more than the final results.

Students explore various hand building techniques such as coiling and pinching. Later they embark on more ambitious and more inventive projects. Students’ projects may be representational, abstract, functional (pottery), and nonfunctional (predominantly sculpture).

Evaluation and critiques take place both during and at the completion of each project. Students are encouraged to consider the basic form of their pieces, viewing them from all sides. In addition to analyzing their own work, students are exposed to the works of other artists and crafts people.

Although most of the projects involve hand building techniques, students are introduced to the wheel and have the opportunity to practice basic throwing techniques.

Finished pieces are displayed in the middle school and are featured in the school-wide art exhibit in May.

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY
The photography program is designed to make students more aware of and sensitive to the visual and technological world around them and to enable them to communicate their perceptions by capturing the instantaneous impression.

During the first part of the course, emphasis is placed on the technical aspects of digital photography. Students learn the basics of digital camera use—what makes the camera work, what creates an image, and how the various mechanisms can be adjusted. In addition, students will learn basic functions in Adobe Photoshop Elements. They learn to prepare images for printing—size, resolution, and paper types.

Students are then presented with aesthetic concepts. They view their own work and that of professionals studying various techniques and effects. They learn that digital images are the product of a marriage between a long photographic history of color, contrast, composition, lighting, and depth of field and an information driven, fast-paced, cutting edge technology. In addition, students analyze the success of their work based on spatial relationship, line, shape, value, texture, contrast and pattern. In class students prepare their work for presentation in printed form and for on screen viewing. Completed images that have been finished are featured in the Student Arts Show in February.

FLASH
Enter the world of computer animation using the program Flash. Develop proficiency with Flash’s drawing tools while exploring frame-by-frame
animation, tweening, buttons, movie clips and some basic action scripting, all in the pursuit of creating believable and compelling short animations.

CONCERT CHORUS
In the eighth grade students choose Concert Chorus as an elective. Music is carefully selected with consideration to the students’ varying stages of vocal development. Along with the seventh grade chorus members, students perform a staged musical in the theater each spring. They also have the option of auditioning for CubSCATS, a select vocal ensemble. Students will be evaluated based on their participation and overall performance.

CONCERT BAND
Seventh/Eighth Grade Concert Band provides an ensemble experience for students with prior instrumental experience on wind and percussion instruments. Through classroom instruction, an advanced band method/technique book and appropriate repertoire, students will develop a solid skill base to interpret and perform ensemble music at a more advanced level. Grading is based on the student’s participation and overall performance. Students in this group also have the opportunity to audition for the Seventh/Eighth Grade Jazz Band. Participation in the private lesson program is strongly recommended.

Members of our Seventh/Eighth Grade Concert Band and Jazz Band are expected to perform in two major concerts, scheduled in December and May of each school year.

THEATER WORKSHOP
Theater Workshop is a full year elective course designed to teach intermediate acting with a focus on naturalism, action, moment to moment work, and text analysis. The first semester culminates in a performance of short scenes. The second semester culminates in a one act play, which will be presented for an audience.

SCENERY, SETS & PUPPETS
Scenery, Sets, & Puppets concentrates on scenic painting and basic construction techniques. Students will learn how to paint faux surfaces such as wood grain and marble. Students may also work on the sets for school shows, which provides a hands-on experience for them to apply the skills they have acquired in class.
Students will also learn about the fascinating world of puppetry. They will make several different kinds of puppets using various materials such as papier mache, paper bags, and household objects. In addition, students will make use of material tools such as shadow and light.

**DIRECTING FOR FILM**
Students will learn the artistry of directing and story telling through the medium of film. Each student will have the opportunity to engage in writing, directing and cinematography. Mimicking the world of independent film making, the class culminates with a Middle School Film Festival, the audience being the school and perhaps larger community.

**MANUAL ARTS**
The eighth grade Manual Arts program is a flexible and student driven shop experience. A beginner / refresher project is taught and required at the beginning of the school year so that all levels of student participation can be assessed. Students then have the flexibility to choose from the following:

- a prepared list of over thirty class assignments with visual aide and finished samples to refer to
- a project from an evolving classroom “book of ideas” featuring over 100 color photographs of potential projects
- to plan and build their own choice of assignment(s)
- join an “engineering” contest and build a fully operational model of a siege engine that is based on ancient or medieval designs

Movies on operational theories, siege machine types, and working scale models are shown in class.

After the initial learning assignment, students may complete as many projects as they choose with the emphasis being placed on the quality, skill, precision, and completeness of the work. Individual and team assignments are available with projects being assigned at the teacher’s discretion. All 7/8th grade shop projects can be adjusted to the comfort and skill level of each student while continuing to maintain a challenging and thought provoking level of participation. Student generated ideas require paper planning in addition to verbal explanations before being approved for inclusion.

**Tool usage:** All of the appropriate hand and electric tools in the shop with individual or group instruction on the more specialized power tools. Where appropriate, instruction on basic electrical wiring and lighting is also covered in addition to advanced model making tools and techniques.

**THREE DIMENSIONAL DESIGN**
Three Dimensional Design is a course that includes both basic and advanced
levels of topographical, architectural, scenic, and representational scale modeling. It was developed to help students explore and become experienced with the materials and techniques of successful miniature dioramas or “extra credit” type presentations.

Students have the option to select and research their own choice of historical or fictional subjects, climates, geographic locations, or seasons of the year. This will determine how they will interpret “in miniature” the natural elements of the world they are creating such as rocks, earth, water, fire, wind direction, and ground vegetation. Demonstrations and discussions of how to construct each of these elements are covered with many visual aids, finished models, and informational videos being available throughout the process.

The students will design and finish one miniature diorama, of a specific size and scale that contains all of the above elements. Students may then make as many dioramas as time permits, or may combine their creations with other student projects for a larger scenic presentation.

Paper planning with overhead and elevation drawings will begin the process with close attention given to climate and seasonal features. Soft foam “sheets” will be built up in layers with natural or man made features being sculpted directly into the foam. Appropriate ground textures, water effects, and color techniques will be completed before crafting the appropriate trees and vegetation.

Basic drafting skills and tools will be discussed, demonstrated, and utilized to create balsa wood models of houses and other structures after all of the natural elements have been completed in full color. Options for adding historical or other scale model people will be covered depending on student interests.

ADVANCED ROBOTICS
This course provides the opportunity for students to continue with hands-on investigation of robotic devices. Students build and program a variety of projects using the LEGO Mindstorm NXT system.

DIGITAL VIDEO
This course in an introduction to creating digital video. While covering the basics of movie making, students learn to use a digital movie camera, import the video to a computer, and then use software to edit the video

DIGITAL 3D DESIGN
Students will be introduced to creating 3D digital designs using Google SketchUp. The assigned projects allow students to practice using all of the program’s drawing, animation, and spatial orientation skills in order to
produce sketches of architectural structures and commonplace, everyday objects.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

FIELD TRIPS
Field trips include a day trip during September to the Adam Kreiger Adventure Center in New Haven, CT and a three day, two night trip to Washington, D.C. Additional curriculum related field trips occur during the rest of the year.

COMMUNITY SERVICE
In October and May the eighth grade spend three days off-campus, working at local nature centers or interacting with young children or the elderly at facilities such as Port Chester Carver Center, WestHELP in Greenburgh, or the Sarah Neuman Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. Through working with others our students will understand the importance of giving back to their community.
CONCLUSION

By the time students leave the middle school, they are expected to have mastered the guidelines put forth in each academic discipline. We also expect that they will have become confident and capable students in all spheres of their learning. The curriculum is designed to help students strengthen the following study skills:

• preparing efficiently for class and for tests
• managing time successfully
• using various tools, including the Internet, for research
• taking notes
• following directions
• having a good sense of organization

Just as important, the program is geared to helping develop the following social skills, which enable students to be happy, contributing members of the school community:

• a positive attitude
• kindness toward others
• pride in self
• responsibility
• leadership
• working well within a group
• respect for others