



Middle School  
Curriculum Guide  
2018-2019

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## **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.

## **MIDDLE SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY**

The Middle School offers a challenging and joyful experience that supports students along their journey from dependent to independent learners. Our multifaceted and evolving program fosters perseverance and promotes balance for healthy development. By modeling empathy and cultivating responsibility, we encourage our students to be good citizens and advocates -- engaged in the world around them and ever mindful of the experiences and needs of others.

## **CORE VALUES**

**R – RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY**

**C – COMMITMENT TO PERSONAL & ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**

**D – DIVERSITY WITHIN AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY**

**S – SERVICE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Middle School addresses the distinctive needs of students in Grades 5 through 8. We appreciate and understand their joys, challenges, and developmental changes. We also recognize their vulnerability and learning differences in this remarkable transitional period. Our program provides the support and guidance that allow students to develop independent thinking, intellectual integrity, and physical, personal, and social maturity.

Acting as a bridge between the Lower and Upper Schools, the Middle School reinforces and applies skills previously learned and stimulates each student's emerging ability to think abstractly and reason logically. The program emphasizes the development of healthy work and study habits to ensure success with the ever-increasing demands of academic studies, and it offers students the opportunity to explore and make choices as they mature.

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, and
- having a good sense of organization.

Just as important, the program helps students 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, and
- respect for others.

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 our students.

## ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

RCDS is a college preparatory school. Students are expected to devote themselves to the academic requirements set forth by the School. Continued attendance at RCDS depends upon the student's maintaining what is, in the opinion of the School, a satisfactory academic level of achievement.

All students in the Middle School take courses in English/Language Arts, Mathematics, History/Social Studies, Science, and Foreign Language. Students are placed in classes by the Principal and Assistant Principal after careful consideration of all factors that affect the educational development of the individual student. Recommendations of past teachers, class balance, social traits, and previous record are factors that are evaluated. Parents are asked not to request the assignment of their children to specific sections or teachers but to accept the School's professional decision as to appropriate placement.

## GRADING AND REPORTING SYSTEM

In each academic class, grades are primarily based on student comprehension of course content as demonstrated through tests, quizzes, written and oral exercises, projects, and presentations. A student is expected to participate in a positive and cooperative manner and to be punctual and prepared for each class.

The Middle School report card provides two different grades for students in their academic classes: an achievement grade and a homework grade. The achievement grade is based on formal assessments, projects, and essays, and it is the grade that is entered onto the student's official Middle School transcript. The homework grade is based on the student's completion of homework. For specials classes (e.g. band/chorus, shop, art, computer, etc.), the achievement grade reflects a student's level of effort and participation, and homework grades are reported only when appropriate.

A checklist and a narrative comment for all classes accompany each set of grades. The checklist reports on "behaviors that promote learning," with the aim of providing a clear presentation of how a student approaches his or her class work each day. Listening respectfully to teachers, managing materials, remaining on task, working well within groups, and seeking help when necessary are valued student behaviors that serve our students well when they become everyday practices. The responses used in the checklist are **Frequently, Sometimes, Rarely, and Not Applicable**.

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.

These grades are for non academic subjects and physical education.

- **S = Satisfactory**      **U = Unsatisfactory**

Progress reports are written three times a year: late November (first trimester), early March (second trimester), and June (third trimester and year). In between these reporting times, a student's progress is closely monitored. If a student is having difficulty, parents can expect to be contacted by the teacher, the Advisor, or the Dean.

If, at the midpoint of a grading period a student is averaging a low HP or any grade in the P or U range, the student's parents will be notified via e-mail by the student's teacher.

## CONFERENCES

At the beginning of the school year, every Middle School student's Advisor will contact the advisee's parents for the purpose of introductions, answering questions, setting goals, and helping with the beginning of school transition. At the end of the first trimester, parents, Advisors, and students in Grades 6, 7, and 8 will meet to review the first trimester reports. Because students in Grade 5 are new to the Middle School, they will not be present when parents and Advisors meet to discuss the first trimester reports. Appointments for Conference Day are scheduled by the School several weeks in advance. During the year, additional conferences may be arranged when necessary. Parents are encouraged to call their child's Advisor or Dean if they feel the need for such a conference.

## HOMEWORK POLICY

**Homework Philosophy:** The RCDS Middle School believes that homework is essential to fostering students' independent learning. In all grades, homework is assigned for a number of reasons: to reinforce classroom content, to check for students' understanding of the material, and/or to afford students an opportunity to practice skills learned in class. Homework may also be assigned so that students can preview material before a lesson (for example, a reading assignment that will be the basis of the next day's lesson). In all cases, students are encouraged to work through the homework independently and to the best of their ability, using the strategies that they have been taught. Given the purposes for which homework is assigned, all homework is either checked and/or incorporated into classroom lessons each day.

**Homework Completion Times:** We understand that our Middle School students lead busy lives outside of school, but we ask that parents help students achieve balance in their lives by ensuring students have the time available in their schedules to complete their homework. The time expectations for homework completion differ at each grade level and in each course. In Grades 5 and 6, the completion of homework assignments averages about 60 to 80 minutes. The time commitment increases to approximately 120 to 150 minutes in Grades 7 and 8. At any grade level, the time that it takes for a student to complete homework will vary depending on the individual child.

**2/3/4 Policy:** A student may have no more than two assessments in one day, no more than three assessments over two consecutive days, and no more than four assessments in one week (Monday through Friday).

**Assignment Sheets:** Assignment sheets for the week will be posted by class time on Monday of each week. Changes to assignment sheets must be posted by 2:00 p.m. on the day of the change, and changes are limited to one change per week.

Assigned Reading: Any reading assigned should be able to be completed within the recommended amount of time *for the average student* in the class.

Homework Adjustments: Teachers will consult the test calendars when planning assignment sheets, and they will lighten their homework, as much as possible, when assessments are scheduled.

No Homework Days: Teachers may opt to assign no homework approximately once per week, if possible, given the demands of the curriculum.

No Friday Homework: Students in Grade 5 will have no homework on Fridays and no Monday assessments. Students in Grade 6 will have no homework on Fridays and no Monday assessments until after winter break (except reading in LA and drop days for science and social studies).

## **GRADING AND ASSESSMENT PHILOSOPHY**

Why We Assess: Assessment serves a number of important functions in the Middle School, the most valuable of which inform instruction. Assessments help teachers and students gauge whether they are meeting curricular goals by providing a framework for students to demonstrate and apply what they have learned and for teachers to assess whether students are learning what teachers are teaching. Assessments also help teachers gauge what students know before, during, and after learning specific material. They allow teachers to measure student progress over the course of the academic year, as well as provide feedback for teachers to target topics for re-teaching or extra help. By informing instruction in these ways, assessment helps prepare our students for the next level of learning.

Assessment, as an extrinsic motivator in the Middle School, also serves as incentive for students to study, develop, and improve. Different kinds of assessments hold students accountable for their learning until their motivation for learning becomes intrinsic. Assessment also provides a venue for students to develop a sense of accomplishment and gain confidence as learners.

How We Assess: A wide variety of types of assessment help teachers and students to achieve specific learning goals. It is important to note that teachers use both formative and summative assessment in gauging student progress. Formative assessments are low stakes, ongoing types of assessment that can be used to monitor student progress at any given point. Summative assessments are medium to high stakes tools that evaluate student learning at a natural mid- or end point of an instructional unit. In the Middle School, we aim to strike a balance between formative and summative assessment. Our goal is to offer enough formative assessments so that evaluation is not unhealthily stress-inducing.

<b>Formative</b>	<b>Both Formative and Summative</b>	<b>Summative</b>
Diagnostic tests/quizzes	Short quizzes	Tests Quizzes
Pop quizzes	Creative writing	Analytical writing – essays, research papers, etc.
Short writing	Presentations	March Exams (grades 7 and 8)
Class discussion	Projects – individual and group	
Oral interviews	Science labs	

Q&A	Problem sets	
Observations	Class work	
Games, puzzles	Demonstrations	
Surveys	Student self-evaluation	
Homework checks	Debates	
Binder checks	Artistic creations Performances – skits, scenes, rehearsals, plays, concerts	
Exit passes/slips; entry slips		

There is no ideal range of weight for each type of assessment, except for the general rule that summative assessments often weigh more than formative assessments. Each academic department is encouraged to engage in annual, ongoing discussion about learning benchmarks for each grade level in the Middle School and how each should be weighed. Department-based grading exercises (e.g. reflection on how one grades and what it shows one values versus what the department values) help to ensure that teachers are using comparable grading methods in order to balance teacher autonomy and equity for students. Middle schoolers perform best when they know what is expected of them, so departmental conversations about what is being evaluated through assessment are key.

**Assessment Frequency:** All grades in the Middle School follow the 2-3-4 rule when it comes to summative assessment. The policy states that a student may have no more than two assessments in one day, no more than three assessments over two consecutive days, and no more than four assessments in one week (Monday through Friday). The types of assessment that fall under the 2-3-4 rule include tests, quizzes, essays/reports/papers, projects, and presentations, all of which require advanced preparation outside of class.

Formative assessment in the Middle School happens frequently, if not daily. Because each grade level in the Middle School is developmentally unique, each grade level team has a particular approach to **summative** assessment that is appropriate for the students in that grade. In terms of frequency, summative assessment happens every two to three weeks in all grades.

**Assessment Design:** Independent school teachers benefit from a healthy sense of autonomy in curriculum and pedagogy, and assessment design is no exception. In the Middle School, grade level teams are encouraged to engage in annual, ongoing discussion about assessment design, similarities, and differences across subjects. The amount of information covered, the types of questions/problems, the length of responses, point values, partial credit, directions, and age-appropriate academic press are all topics that are discussed. For courses that have multiple teachers in a given grade level, teachers coordinate on assessment design so that the expectations for students in a given grade are comparable. Departments are also encouraged to help teachers within each department with types of questions, progression of level of difficulty, and use of common language.

## STANDARDIZED TESTING

As is the custom in independent schools, the Middle School participates in standardized testing in a limited way, using the resulting information as one of many pieces of data for evaluating a student’s abilities and achievements. Students in

Grades 5 through 8 take the Educational Records Bureau (ERB) tests in the winter, and the results are made available to families after they are reviewed by the School. If parents have questions about their child's ERB scores, they should contact the Middle School Office.

## **THE PROGRAM OF STUDY**

### **GRADE FIVE**

The fifth-grade curriculum is designed to help students make a smooth transition into the Middle School. 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 teachers' assistance in developing study habits that allow 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.

### **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 support, 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 students to become effective learners. Teachers hold students accountable for completing assignments and meeting deadlines. The curriculum requires more abstract thinking and logical reasoning, which leads to stimulating and active class discussions.

### **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 continues to provide guidance and support 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, including for cumulative exams. The use of laptops and the choice of different electives complete the program of study.

### **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.

### **FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

Students in Grade 5 continue the language studied in Lower School. In Grade 6, students must choose either French, Latin, Mandarin Chinese, or Spanish and must continue the study of their language of choice through the completion of Grade 8. Successful completion of the Foreign Language studied in Grades 6, 7, and 8 will satisfy, in most cases, the first level Foreign Language requirement in the Upper School.

### **ELECTIVES**

In Grades 5 and 6, students take a variety of non-academic courses, including chorus, band, shop, art, library, drama, and computer science. In Grades 7 and 8, students choose from various elective offerings, such as chorus, band, ceramics, art, digital photography, shop, computer science, and theater workshop.

## ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

The English program at Rye Country Day School is designed to enable students at all levels to become lifelong learners with the ability to communicate their ideas effectively through the spoken and the written word. To this end, both traditional and innovative, age-appropriate techniques are used to foster a mastery of writing, an enduring love of literature, and an appreciation of diverse themes and voices.

### FIFTH-GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS

To raise the linguistic complexity of the writing skills of fifth graders, students learn how to provide evidence to support a topic sentence, to compose memorable closing sentences, to write clearly and convincingly with varied sentence structure, and to employ precise language. They begin to read closely to penetrate the surface of novels, stories, poems, and articles.

Reading: Learning how to read actively and to identify meaningful passages and examples of literary devices are important components of the reading program. In addition to reading poetry and a variety of novels as a class and on their own, students enjoy independently three Diversity Reads, which they discuss in three book club sessions as part of language arts and social studies. In a once-a-cycle “Kindling the Classics” session, students listen to literature. Fifth graders independently read books of their own choice, as well. Nonfiction reading comprehension assignments reinforce the skills of finding main ideas, sequencing events, understanding vocabulary from context, predicting, and making inferences.

Texts: The books that fifth graders read include, among others, *Number the Stars*, *Elijah of Buxton*, *Belle Teal*, *Adventures of Odysseus and the Tale of Troy*, *D’Aulaire’s Book of Greek Myths*, and an abridged version of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Writing: Fifth graders compose paragraphs from Quick Outlines, summarize, and receive instruction in editing, revising, and the writing of effective sentences and paragraphs. Occasional creative writing exercises include poems, stories, and letters. Students are encouraged to write in cursive.

Grammar/Mechanics: The teaching of grammar and mechanics is embedded in expository writing exercises with emphasis on the parts of speech, agreement, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. Students learn the ten comma rules. Revising and editing their own work as well as combining sentences reinforce these skills.

Spelling: Students learn spelling rules, study words for spelling quizzes, and are encouraged to copy words carefully, to employ spelling dictionaries, to run spell check on the computers, and to ask for the spellings of unfamiliar words.

Vocabulary: Vocabulary comes directly from their reading. Students also study the etymologies of words through handouts, reinforcement exercises, and discussion. There is a focus on words with both Latin and Greek roots.

Collaboration/Public Purpose: Fifth-grade language arts and social studies classes partner in Diversity Book Clubs, and the Middle School Art Department and fifth graders collaborate in the crafting of clay pots, a culminating project after reading *A Single Shard*. Collaboration around *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* involves the Middle School Drama Department, seventh-grade language arts classes, and sixth-grade language arts students. Fifth graders have also listened to the first-hand experiences of a Holocaust survivor when reading *Number the Stars*. A partnership with the Wema Learning Center in Kenya allows for the exchange of discussion through blogs about specific topics in literature or science.

### SIXTH-GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS

Sixth-grade students use both oral and written language and technology for expressive, informative, argumentative, critical, and literary purposes. In order to speak and write effectively, students also explore the structure of language and study grammatical rules.

Reading: Students learn to interpret, synthesize, and evaluate a range of literature that is thematic in nature. In order to read effectively and more critically, students delve beyond a basic understanding of a text and explore elements of literature. Novels are selected to help students take notice of others and the world they live in and bring issues of social justice to the forefront. Class discussions encourage students to explore topics and to be open to contrasting views.

Texts: Selected novels have included but are not limited to *The Circuit*, *Glory Be*, *The Breadwinner*, and *The Seventh Most Important Thing*. Literary selections often serve as a springboard for writing assignments that vary in terms of form and length.

Writing: Expository writing is the focus of the sixth-grade curriculum. The development of the writing process with strong topic sentences and details of support is the cornerstone of the writing program. A major goal is to teach students a formula and structure that can assist them as they write. The year begins with intensive sentence work that transitions to thoughtful paragraph responses and ends with multi-paragraph expository essays. Students are challenged to craft a variety of assignments that reflect independent thinking and analysis. These, along with class discussions, enable students to delve deeper into texts and to express themselves thoughtfully.

Grammar: The sixth-grade grammar and writing programs are directly interwoven. Grammar studies are designed to enhance students' ability to write and speak effectively. Students deepen their understanding of the parts of speech, which leads to a greater comprehension of the elements that make up sentences. The study of complex sentences and their usage is a cornerstone of the program. The effective use of such enhances the students' critical thinking skills and ability to craft meaningful paragraphs.

Vocabulary: The study of vocabulary comes from assigned readings and *Vocabulary Workshop*. Students complete various exercises to assist them in learning word meanings, as well as in studying analogies and word families, in identifying synonyms and antonyms, and in choosing the correct word through the use of context clues and inference.

Spelling: Students are held accountable for the correct spelling and part of speech of each vocabulary word. In addition, all final drafts of student work are to reflect correct spelling.

Collaboration/Public Purpose: Sixth-grade students collaborate with fifth-grade students on a film project relating to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. After reading *The Circuit*, students express their feelings in letters to its author, Francisco Jiménez, regarding the problems of migrant workers in the U.S. In addition, students work to better understand the injustices encountered by those who work in the fields to produce food for our tables. A brief study is given to wages earned by laborers and prices charged in stores. *The Circuit*, as well as the summer reading *Esperanza Rising*, introduces the reality of having no medical care due to finances. Consequently, for a number of years, students have also collected soda can tabs to raise both funds and awareness for a Shriners' Children's Hospital that provides free care to children. Students have recently begun a "Soles for Soul" sneaker collection.

## **SEVENTH-GRADE ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS**

The seventh-grade English curriculum focuses on the theme of culture, identity, and the search for self through a varied and rich collection of short stories, poems, plays, and novels. Students expand their understanding of the world and themselves; consequently, many units lend themselves to public purpose and allow for students' involvement with the world at large. Over the course of the year, students build upon their foundations of literary analysis and enhance their ability to discuss and write about literature. With a primary focus on the writing process, often driven by the literature, students learn to write for a variety of purposes and audiences. Vocabulary and grammar instruction serves to strengthen the students' ability to communicate their thoughts clearly and effectively.

Reading: Students are exposed to a variety of literary genres, including short stories, plays, poetry, and novels. Students read literary selections that have included *The Outsiders*, *Twelve Angry Men*, *I am Malala*, *Flying Lessons and Other Stories*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Through literature students are able to analyze the forces that motivate characters and enhance their ability to identify main ideas and make inferences about the works; recall information; locate, identify, and discuss plot, theme, characterization, symbolism, setting, and atmosphere; and be familiar with poetic devices and terminology including simile and metaphor, rhyme scheme, meter, and alliteration.

Writing: Throughout the year, students write for a variety of purposes and audiences to more ably express their ideas through the written word. They practice formulating and defending a thesis in a literary essay. By the end of the year, students understand the steps of the writing process and the use of effective transitions, and they are able to revise and edit their work for clarity of expression.

Grammar: Students enhance their understanding of the parts of a sentence and focus on employing the rules of grammar and mechanics to their written work.

Vocabulary: Vocabulary drawn from the literary texts and from workbook exercises emphasizes synonyms, antonyms, and parts of speech, as well as use of context clues to establish meaning.

Spelling: While spelling is not a formal unit, students are expected to use, but not rely on, the spellcheck function on their computers. Together, the study of spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and writing mechanics aims to improve students' ability to derive meaning from what they read and to strengthen their written expression.

Collaboration/Public Purpose: Students work with fifth-grade students and the Middle School Drama Department, collaborating in discussion and in performance of scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In connection with *I am Malala*, students research women's rights and access to education and medical care in the Middle East, as well as communicate with organizations that address these issues.

## **EIGHTH-GRADE ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS**

The eighth-grade course in Language Arts emphasizes five major skills: the reading, understanding, and interpretation of literature; extensive writing; the mechanics of English: grammar, usage, vocabulary, and spelling; critical thinking skills; and listening skills.

Reading: The literature that students read includes a variety of enlightening books from both the classic and modern genres. Much of the literature chosen emphasizes humanistic themes and values, helping students to understand the world and to respect people who are different from themselves. The reading encourages both written and oral reactions to its themes and ideas, as interesting, thought-provoking material stimulates thinking and sparks exciting class discussions. Outside reading is always encouraged. We hope that each student grows to appreciate the beauty and diversity of life and humanity through the books we share.

Texts: Eighth-grade texts have included *Of Mice and Men*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Lord of the Flies*, *The Giver*, *Brown Girl Dreaming*, and *Inherit the Wind*. Students also read classic and contemporary stories and poetry from various sources.

Writing: Clear, effective writing is the most powerful tool students can acquire. The main objective of the writing program is to teach students to write clearly and concisely, thus allowing them to communicate confidently and logically as they strive to incorporate creativity with their own personal writing style. With many models of good reading and writing, we hope to inspire students to write often and without effort.

Students who read, write better, and students who write, read more. The more students are exposed to graceful sentences and rich language, the easier it is for them to create such in their own writing. Good writing takes hard work, and eighth-grade students write regularly both in class and at home, gathering ideas and responding to their reading. Students learn to organize and shape their work, write multiple drafts, practice peer and self-editing, and revise with care and thought.

The eighth-grade writing program includes specific strategies and activities for developing complex sentences, outlining, writing paragraphs and essays, and revising and editing. Our goal as writing teachers is to help students discover their own style of writing, thus making them independent, confident writers who enjoy words and are willing to take risks with language. When students leave the eighth grade, it is our wish that they realize and appreciate the magic and power of writing and the exciting uses of language.

Students write in class at least once a week, using the assigned literature as springboards for their piece or specific writing prompts designed to elicit personal responses. During writing periods, students also learn how to manage timed writing assignments. Throughout the year, students practice writing for different audiences and purposes: to inform, to persuade, to express an opinion, to reflect, and to entertain. In addition, the use of a multiple paragraph outline for formal essay writing is reinforced continually so that students have an organized framework from which to argue a thesis statement with specific examples and quotations from the literature studied.

Grammar: Formal grammar is an important part of the eighth-grade course. A clear and thorough understanding of the fundamental structure of English serves to sharpen students' power of analysis, to clarify and strengthen their writing, and to help students appreciate the beauty and structure of the English language. A student's awareness of grammatical principles and their names (parts of speech, phrase-clause work, punctuation, usage) helps in both beginning drafts and subsequent corrections and suggested revisions. Our grammar workbook is *Grammar for Writing*.

Vocabulary: Vocabulary study is from *Vocabulary Workshop*, which uses the following exercises to reinforce weekly word lists: completing the sentence, finding synonyms and antonyms, selecting the right word through context clues, and working with analogies.

Spelling: Students are held accountable for correct spelling in all of their final drafts. While there is no formal spelling program in the eighth grade, teachers address specific spelling issues that recur in students' writing.

## **HUMANITIES**

The purpose of the study of the past is to help individuals understand themselves and their relationship to history and culture through the study of human experience. The Humanities Department curriculum provides opportunities for a student to investigate many areas of this experience: intellectual, aesthetic, religious, philosophical, political, economic, social, and psychological.

History courses introduce students to the techniques of investigation through the study of both primary and secondary sources. All courses stress the development of students' abilities to express themselves clearly and logically, both verbally and in writing. We use art, literature, and music to enrich student understanding. Middle-school history courses emphasize age-appropriate skill development of organization, note taking, and writing as part of an interdisciplinary focus on these abilities across the division.

### **FIFTH-GRADE 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 the humanities are 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 was the ancient world similar to ours?

Using many supplements to *Ancient Civilizations Through the Renaissance*, our primary text, the skills we work on during this exploration of ancient societies include:

- 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 the concepts of a topic sentence, body, and conclusion
- 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
- learning geography and the use of maps
- developing research skills through the completion of a significant research project.

Interdisciplinary activities have included reading historical novels in conjunction with Language Arts and completing a unit on ancient Greece that cuts across the fifth-grade curriculum.

## SIXTH-GRADE HUMANITIES

The sixth-grade Humanities course combines the study of history, geography, current events, and study skills. In the first part of the year, in conjunction with Language Arts classes, 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 semester-long project in which the students create their own country.

Using supplementary materials and our core text, *My World History*, students then 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. Often, 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 other disciplines. The program then 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 may include independent research, organizational charts, oral reports, plays, speeches, videos, podcasts, digital slide shows, and the creation of a newspaper or book. Formal current events discussions take place once a rotation, and we look for ways to continue these conversations with a larger audience outside the classroom. These discussions are based on articles found in *The New York Times* and other sources. Students go on field trips to support and enhance their learning, visiting such destinations as the Islamic Cultural Center in New York and the Cloisters.

The skills we work on throughout the year include the following:

- 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 paragraph and in a multi-paragraph essay
- ability to develop and write clear, multi-paragraph essays
- ability to take clear and accurate notes from a 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, artwork, and graphs.

## SEVENTH-GRADE 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. Using various supplemental materials in addition to our core text, *My World History*, students 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 are integrated into the curriculum. As seventh grade is the first year in which the laptop is a fully integrated 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 digital slideshow
- 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.

## **EIGHTH-GRADE HUMANITIES**

The eighth-grade Humanities course is titled United States History. Its main goal is to give students an appreciation for and an 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 to the present. 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 continue to explore new ways to utilize the laptop as an instrument in their learning, particularly with regard to thoughtful Internet research. Building on the seventh-grade experience, students will continue to read and take notes from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including our core text, *America: History of Our Nation*. They 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 that they need for the World Civilizations course in the Upper School:

- 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 and secondary sources
- developing a thesis to begin a three-to-five-page research paper with
- proper documentation of resources
- becoming literate in finding and assessing information
- preparing for cumulative exams.

## **MATHEMATICS**

The Middle School mathematics program serves as a bridge between the heterogeneous groupings of the Lower School and the multiple levels of subject instruction of the Upper School. In each class, teachers provide students with opportunities to communicate mathematically through participation in discussions and problem solving sessions, and work progresses at a pace designed so that all students can learn at a comfortable rate and find success. Technology enhances every class, with SMARTBoards, iPads, graphing calculators, and laptops providing students with various methods of

acquiring mathematical knowledge and discovering its applications. The Middle School program strives to develop a solid foundation in mathematics and a lifelong love for learning. As a result, students develop a curiosity about the mathematical world around them. Teachers evaluate student progress and adjust the program as necessary. In addition to traditional forms of assessment, teachers evaluate involvement, creativity, and eagerness for mental challenge.

### **FIFTH-GRADE MATHEMATICS**

The fifth-grade Mathematics program is a continuation of Singapore Math, the program used in the Lower School. Students work to master computation with whole numbers, fractions, and decimals, and improve their understanding of number sense, place value, estimation, fractional equivalents, and percents. Throughout each unit, importance is placed on acquiring problem solving strategies through independent and group work. Students strive to develop organizational skills and appropriate study habits. Quizzes and tests, as well as class performance and participation, are used to assess students. 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/decimal/percent equivalents
- percent of a quantity
- perimeter and area of rectangles
- geometry, including measurement of angles, classifying triangles and quadrilaterals, and sum of angles of triangles and quadrilaterals.

### **SIXTH-GRADE MATHEMATICS**

Sixth-grade Mathematics focuses on student mastery of computation skills while introducing complex problem solving and pre-algebra concepts. Sections are differentiated based on ability to allow students to explore topics at their “just right” level and at a suitable pace. In all sections, various study skills applicable to math are presented throughout the year, and the production of organized and accurate solutions is emphasized. Problem solving strategies are discussed within each unit as students examine a wide variety of word problems. Students should demonstrate reasonable mastery of the following topics by the end of the year:

- number theory and decimals
- fractions
- integers
- pre-algebra topics including expressions and equations
- percents, ratios, and proportions
- business math - discount, sales tax, etc.
- geometry
- measurement.

### **SEVENTH-GRADE MATHEMATICS**

Math in the seventh grade is offered in three distinct levels: Pre-Algebra, Advanced Pre-Algebra, and Honors Pre-Algebra. Students are enrolled in the class that will allow them to sharpen their mathematical skills and proceed comfortably onto the next level of mathematics, with a degree of challenge that is suitable to the level.

### **PRE-ALGEBRA**

The central objectives of Pre-Algebra are to build upon the student's comprehension of basic mathematical concepts, introduce fundamental concepts of algebra, and deliver the curriculum at a pace that allows each student the time to comprehend and process the material. Building each student's foundation of knowledge is a major point of emphasis, as is increasing each student's confidence in his/her mathematical abilities. While the bulk of the curriculum centers around topics that students have seen previously, new topics are also introduced.

## **ADVANCED PRE-ALGEBRA**

The central objectives of Advanced Pre-Algebra are to continue the study of arithmetic in a theoretical framework, to develop more sophisticated techniques in problem solving, and to introduce the fundamental concepts of algebra. Throughout the course of the year, students build upon their mathematical foundation and develop their algebraic skills so that they are prepared to move into Algebra I in eighth grade. Students also are expected to demonstrate academic independence and require limited teacher support.

## **HONORS PRE-ALGEBRA**

The central objective of the Honors Pre-Algebra course is to learn techniques for solving various types of problems that encourage students to discover solutions to problems. The students in the Honors program will move more quickly through the material and will be responsible for understanding by using basic algebraic concepts and skills rather than with the help of a tutor. By the end of the year, Honors students should master problems based on arithmetic, and algebra, with considerable emphasis on word problems.

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 and graphing of linear equations
- operations with monomials and polynomials
- basic forms of factoring with algebraic expressions
- perimeter, area, volume, and surface area.

## **EIGHTH-GRADE MATHEMATICS**

Math in the eighth grade is offered in three distinct levels: Introduction to Algebra 1, Advanced 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, with a degree of challenge that is suitable to the level.

## **INTRODUCTION TO ALGEBRA I**

Students in the Introduction to Algebra 1 level will cover a traditional Algebra 1 curriculum, which builds on the skills the student acquired in Pre-Algebra. The emphasis will be on developing students' ability to work with integers and variables and to enhance their critical thinking skills. Upon completion of this course, students may enter Geometry or Advanced Geometry. For some students, retaking Algebra 1 will be the best option.

## **ADVANCED ALGEBRA I**

The Advanced Algebra 1 course is the completion of the Algebra 1 program begun in the seventh grade, through quadratic functions. The text offers exposure to all of the concepts and operations involved in any Algebra 1 course. This course is not as theoretical in nature as the Honors course but does give students a solid understanding of Algebra 1 and a strong foundation on which to build. Students must be highly motivated and have strong mathematical skills. At the end of the eighth-grade year, the students will have completed a full Algebra 1 course and may enter Geometry at the advanced level.

## **HONORS ALGEBRA I**

The Honors Algebra 1 course is the completion of the Algebra 1 course begun in Honors Pre-Algebra. The text offers a thorough and challenging exploration of the concepts and operations involved in a demanding Algebra 1 course and concludes with a unit on conics, an Algebra 2 topic. This course requires technical skill and speed, 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 will have completed a rigorous Honors Algebra 1 program, and those who are ready will 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 both linear and quadratic equations
- operations with integers
- operations with rational and irrational numbers and expressions.
- exponents
- inequalities
- operations with polynomials
- factoring by all methods
- graphing both linear and quadratic functions
- systems of equations and inequalities.

## SCIENCE

### FIFTH-GRADE SCIENCE

The fifth-grade Science program places an emphasis on solving problems in a scientific manner that employs observation and inference. Hands-on experiments and activity-based lessons help to foster the development of critical thinking. Resources include textbooks such as Scott Foresman's *Earth Science* and Pearson's *Interactive Science*, as well as materials that are drawn from a variety of sources.

Fifth graders examine various aspects of earth and space science, such as geologic time, plate tectonics, meteorology, oceanography, and astronautics. Students develop their understanding of renewable and non-renewable energy sources that are used to meet the demands of our growing population's appetite for energy and resources. Fifth graders consider significant environmental and ethical issues through a process designed to enhance their understanding of each individual's role in creating a just, peaceful, and sustainable earth. A simulation that challenges students to plan and purchase healthy meals within a budget follows a study of the basics of good nutrition.

During the year students will develop their skills in the following areas:

- using supplies and materials safely and appropriately
- formulating hypotheses
- making and recording observations
- organizing and interpreting data
- supporting conclusions with evidence
- contributing to group projects
- preparing a long-term assignment
- communicating scientific information
- participating in a student-led discussion.

### SIXTH-GRADE SCIENCE

Sixth-grade Science employs an approach to learning that is multimodal and inquiry based. Students build on their understanding of the scientific process and methodology through 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.

Using the IALS (Issues & Life Science) curriculum as an important guide, students investigate real-life events in which they confront choices related to the environment and explore ethical issues surrounding clinical trials on living things.

Unit topics include “Micro-Life and Water,” “Body Works,” and “Studying People Scientifically.” Where appropriate and beneficial, students practice using a variety of lab equipment and electronic devices to collect, analyze, and communicate scientific information and data.

During the year, students develop their skills in the following areas:

- making and recording observations
- using the metric system of measurement
- organizing and interpreting data

- supporting conclusions with appropriate evidence
- designing simple experiments
- making appropriate use of equipment and supplies
- constructing models
- researching topics using credible sources of information
- contributing to group projects
- communicating scientific information orally and in writing.

Occasionally, topics of timely and unusual interest may be included with the planned curriculum in order to take advantage of the freewheeling curiosity of students at this age.

## **SEVENTH-GRADE SCIENCE**

In seventh-grade Science, students continue to strengthen and practice their scientific process skills, which include the following:

- making and recording observations
- formulating hypotheses
- designing experiments and identifying experimental variables
- making metric measurements
- organizing and constructing data tables
- constructing graphs
- recognizing patterns and interpreting data from graphs
- drawing conclusions and supporting them with appropriate data
- making inferences and applying concepts
- carrying out lab practices properly and safely.

These skills will be carried out and practiced throughout the units of “Ecology and the Environment,” as well as “Cells and Genetics.” Through hands on experiences, students begin to understand the complexities of how ecological and biological systems work. With this systems approach to learning, students analyze parts of systems, interactions between elements of a system, and begin to gain a deeper understanding of how the living and non-living worlds are interconnected.

Seventh graders participate in a yearlong program called “Trout in the Classroom.” Students are placed on trout teams, each having a specific job in caring for and raising brook trout from eggs to fry. Some of the responsibilities include managing ammonia, pH, nitrate, and nitrite levels. An end of the year field trip results when surviving trout are released into a stream approved by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

The Sunrise Garden, a name given to our middle-school garden, is used as an outdoor lab/classroom. An easily accessible outdoor lab not only allows students to make direct connections to the content taught throughout the year, but it also builds a sense of community.

## **EIGHTH-GRADE SCIENCE**

### **INTRODUCTORY PHYSICAL SCIENCE**

The eighth-grade Physical Science course allows students to explore the development of evidence for an atomic model of matter and the relationship that matter and energy share in the universe. Through the results of their own experimentation and guided reasoning, students learn about the scientific method, laboratory safety, and measurement. They learn about the macroscopic properties of matter, classifying it, and understanding how it can be separated into simpler substances. Learning separation techniques leads students to investigate the changes that matter can undergo in the context of the law of conservation of matter and energy. Students distinguish between elements and compounds, continuing to the atomic level to study the development of the modern atomic model and the historical construction of the periodic table. Students use the periodic table as they investigate chemical bonding, chemical reactions at the molecular level, and macroscopic observations. To understand the relationship between matter and energy, students learn some of the physics of motion and forces, as well as study energy and the laws of thermodynamics that control the energy exchange in our universe.

The course improves reasoning and realistic problem-solving skills and encourages communication by requiring individual students to take part in the cooperative learning process. Students learn the importance of careful observation and the need for accuracy in lab work. Communication and collaboration by students also teaches them about the collective nature of the scientific process.

By the end of the year, all eighth-grade students should have good proficiency with the following science skills:

- making and recording observations
- recording and organizing data on paper and on the 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 physical science laboratory equipment.

### **HONORS INTRODUCTORY PHYSICAL SCIENCE**

Honors Science has a similar purpose to 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. In addition, students in the Honors course look deeper at radioactivity to more clearly rationalize the idea of an atomic model of matter. Students in the Honors course are also exposed to a more in-depth look at molecular structure.

### **SCIENCE RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT (Two-trimester course, T1 and T2)**

Take STEAM to the next level in this independent, competitive elective. Don't just learn science, DO science! In this course, students conduct original research through an independent study and discovery process. Students may follow a *research-track* conducting basic research, or a *development-track* where they will develop a tool that solves an engineering problem and learn about patenting and marketing their technology. Students may then compete for a slot to represent RCDS and showcase their work at the Tri-County Science and Technology Fair or the regional Invention Convention and others. This elective requires permission from the Science Department Chair and Science Research Teacher.

### **MODERN LANGUAGES:**

#### **FRENCH, MANDARIN CHINESE, AND SPANISH**

The ability to communicate effectively with others on a global scale is essential. In keeping with the School's mission, the Modern Languages Department strives to maximize our students' potential for being well informed and globally minded individuals who are sensitive to and respectful of diverse cultures. The study of another language is a joyous, lifelong journey, and we aim to instill a love of languages that inspires students, stimulates their curiosity, broadens their view of the world, and enhances their creativity. The Department's program challenges our students to reach their maximum potential within a nurturing and supportive environment.

We consider immersion crucial in developing fluent communication skills and in facilitating an innate sensibility toward other cultures. From the beginning, teachers and students interact in the classroom almost exclusively in the target language, and students are exposed to regional variations in pronunciation, vocabulary, and idioms. Middle School classes are paired with Upper School Oral Proficiency Interns, students trained in the Rassias method, who lead engaging oral drills for additional practice with vocabulary and grammar as directed by the classroom teacher. We monitor our students' progress through observation, participation, performance in activities, and on written, aural, and spoken assessments. Special care is given to follow a developmentally appropriate progression that leads to ever-increasing confidence and skill in the language.

## **FIFTH-GRADE FRENCH AND SPANISH**

As students progress into the fifth-grade Modern Languages program, they continue to build upon their previous learning in French or Spanish and to develop their receptive and expressive language skills while expanding their connections to and appreciation of the people, traditions, and cultures of French and Spanish-speaking countries. Students' grammatical awareness increases as they speak, read, and write in the target language. They are exposed to grammatical terms and concepts, start to understand the elements that make up sentences, apply the agreement rules of articles, nouns, and adjectives, and practice verb conjugation patterns while building on a vocabulary base that includes autobiographical information and terms related to sports, school, friends, numbers, weather, feelings, and emotions. Students engage in diverse learning experiences that combine speech and action, including musical, verbal, visual, kinesthetic, or game-based activities, as well as reading, storytelling, drawing, producing skits, and using interactive digital tools. Both French and Spanish classes use the Symtalk method of magnetic symbol cards, which help students to create increasingly complex sentences and paragraphs. Teacher-created materials such as songs, rhymes, short stories, and games are also important components of the fifth-grade experience. Fifth-grade French and Spanish classes meet twice in a six-day cycle for forty-five minutes each period.

## **FRENCH**

### **SIXTH-GRADE FRENCH**

In sixth-grade French, students deepen their understanding of all aspects of the language and culture by actively engaging with French in a variety of ways, including skits and presentations. Over the course of the year, sixth-grade French students perform their skits for other French classes in both the Lower and Upper Schools, as well as for French-speaking members of the school community. Students continue their exploration of cultures and traditions of the francophone world beyond France. Students' confidence and proficiency develop through conversations, songs, reading, and writing. Classes meet daily and are conducted in French. 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. The core text is *Discovering French*, and several short readers with companion audio CDs are added to the textbook throughout the year in order to practice aural comprehension and reading skills, as well as to enrich vocabulary.

By the end of the year, sixth-grade students should be able to demonstrate reasonable proficiency as they:

- participate in an immersion environment by communicating in French with their classmates and instructor
- understand and apply the concepts of masculine and feminine forms and agreements
- conjugate and use regular “-ER” verbs in the present tense, as well as several common irregular verbs
- introduce themselves, their friends, and family orally and in writing
- talk and write about their schedules and favorite activities
- explain what they have (possessions), how old they are, what they like to do
- use context clues to aid in aural and written comprehension.

### **SEVENTH-GRADE FRENCH**

In seventh-grade French, students review, refine, and enrich previously acquired skills, adding verb conjugations and new verb tenses as they continue to improve oral/aural proficiency. Classroom communication takes place in French. Daily practice in listening, reading, speaking, and writing enhances students' confidence and ability to communicate in French. Seventh-grade students are encouraged to compare and contrast French and American cultural habits, such as school menus, clothing catalogs, movies, and exhibitions. Throughout the year, students work on multimedia projects and presentations that allow them to demonstrate their grammatical and oral skills and the ability to use the Internet for research. Students watch several DVDs, including *Monsieur Batignole* in French with English subtitles. This film ties in with the seventh-grade Social Studies curriculum on the Holocaust. As this viewing takes place toward the end of the year, it helps to review all the grammar and most of the vocabulary studied during the course of the year. The core text is

*Discovering French*. Additional reading practice, as well as inspiration for original skits, comes from readers such as *PB 3 et les légumes* and *Le rêve de Sophie*.

By the end of the year, seventh-grade students should demonstrate reasonable proficiency as they:

- participate in an immersion environment by communicating in French with their classmates and instructor in brief conversations on familiar topics
- understand and apply the concepts of gender, singular and plural forms
- conjugate and use correctly "ER" verbs, "IR" verbs, "RE" verbs, as well as several irregular verbs
- understand and write in the present, *passé composé*, and immediate future tenses
- write short dialogues and paragraphs with the proper sentence structure
- comprehend and respond to beginner level readings.

## **EIGHTH-GRADE FRENCH**

Students in eighth-grade French strengthen all four language skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing - through a variety of activities including working with dialogues, writing short biographies and creative pieces, and reading short stories. 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. Eighth-grade French students study the *passé composé* and the *imparfait*, reflexive verbs in the present tense, and demonstrative adjectives. They perfect their use of the future tense and negative and affirmative command forms of regular and irregular verbs. Emphasis is placed on the use of direct and indirect object pronouns with all verb tenses. Vocabulary comes largely from a variety of readings in the core text, *Discovering French*, and includes such topics as weekend activities, going camping with friends, traveling, and ordering at a restaurant. *Les Misérables* and *Les Choristes* are two feature films that students view in French with English subtitles.

Each year, the entire eighth grade participates in a language field trip to New York City during which students visit an exhibit or cultural event related to the language they study, including, when possible, a docent-guided experience in the target language. Students then enjoy lunch in an ethnic restaurant where they interact with wait staff in the language they study.

Successful completion of eighth-grade French enables students to enter Level 2 in the Upper School. Placement approval for Level 2 Honors courses requires a year-end average of 90 percent or higher. Students appropriately placed in Level 2 Honors show motivation, maturity, responsibility, and hard work, and they make consistent efforts to use solely the target language in class. They display excellence in the four main language skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing - and meet all commitments in a timely manner.

## **MANDARIN CHINESE**

### **SIXTH-GRADE MANDARIN CHINESE**

The Mandarin Chinese program begins in sixth grade. Classes meet daily and emphasize listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing (both handwriting and computer writing). Students are introduced to the important links between language and Chinese culture and gain proficiency and confidence through target language activities, including songs, skits, and dialogues. Opportunities for creative expression in Chinese include projects such as taking on the role of a tour guide for a popular tourist attraction in Beijing and presenting the site to classmates, and group work such as restaurant role-play scenarios. The core text is *My First Chinese Reader*, supported by the character practice book *Chinese Treasure Chest*.

By the end of the year, sixth-grade students should be able to demonstrate reasonable proficiency as they:

- respond to instructions in the target language
- hold simple conversations on topics such as school, family, food, possessions
- recognize and write at least 110 characters
- read short texts with simplified Chinese characters
- use the Pin Yin system in computer writing.

## **SEVENTH-GRADE MANDARIN CHINESE**

The Mandarin Chinese program for seventh grade builds on previously acquired skills and develops students' proficiency in listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing (both handwriting and computer writing) of the Mandarin Chinese language. Classes are taught almost entirely in the target language, and students are encouraged to express themselves in Chinese. Daily practice in listening, reading, speaking, writing and cultural awareness continues with the use of DVDs, websites, songs, and presentations, which enhances students' confidence and ability to communicate in Chinese. Grammar and vocabulary related to sports, clothing, pets and animals, transportation, asking for and giving directions, weather, shopping, body parts, and making comparisons form the major content of the seventh-grade course. The core text is *My First Chinese Reader*, supported by the character practice book *Chinese Treasure Chest*. Students engage in several creative projects that allow them to put to immediate use the concepts presented in class. For example, following the annual seventh-grade trip, students write journal entries in Chinese using related grammar and vocabulary to describe their hotel, meals, and sites visited. Seventh-grade students also research one of China's 56 ethnic groups and present their projects to their classmates. During the unit on weather, students create and present forecasts.

By the end of the year, seventh-grade students should demonstrate reasonable proficiency as they:

- ask questions and respond to oral commands given by the instructor in Chinese
- hold basic conversations and read simple texts on a variety of topics, including clothing, activities, comparisons, and transportation
- add to the number of Chinese characters they can recognize and write
- use the Pin Yin system in computer writing
- comprehend and respond to beginner-level readings.

## **EIGHTH-GRADE MANDARIN CHINESE**

Students in eighth-grade Mandarin Chinese continue to strengthen all five Chinese language skills - listening, speaking, reading, writing, and computer typing - through a variety of activities including working with dialogues, watching DVDs in Chinese with subtitles in Chinese or English, writing creative pieces, and reading short stories or newspaper articles that highlight Chinese culture and traditions. Projects include a presentation on a favorite character from one of the movies viewed and a travelogue in Chinese that sums up students' experiences during the eighth-grade class trip. Grammar and vocabulary studied relate to real-life situations such as eating in a Chinese restaurant, describing one's home, making phone calls, extending invitations. Students learn Chinese measure words and increase their skills in dictionary use. The core text is *My First Chinese Reader*, supported by the character practice book *Chinese Treasure Chest*.

Each year, the entire eighth grade participates in a language field trip to New York City during which students visit an exhibit or cultural event related to the language they study, including, when possible, a docent-guided experience in the target language. Students then enjoy lunch in an ethnic restaurant where they interact with wait staff in the language they study.

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

## **SPANISH**

### **SIXTH-GRADE SPANISH**

In sixth-grade Spanish, students deepen their understanding of all aspects of the language and culture by actively engaging with Spanish in a variety of ways, including skits and presentations. Over the course of the year, sixth-grade Spanish students perform their skits for other Spanish classes in both the Lower and Upper Schools, as well as for Spanish-speaking members of the school community. An in-depth presentation of students' family trees is an annual event. Students continue their exploration of cultures and traditions of Spanish-speaking countries. Students' confidence and proficiency develop through conversations, songs, reading, and writing. Opportunities for creative written and oral expression are numerous and include work with VoiceThread, an interactive collaboration tool that allows students to

write and record responses to visual and written prompts. Classes meet daily and are conducted in Spanish. The core text is *Santillana Español*.

By the end of the year, sixth-grade students should be able to demonstrate reasonable proficiency as they:

- participate in an immersion environment by communicating in Spanish with classmates and instructor
- use basic vocabulary introduced throughout the course (topics such as school, family, clothing, colors, telling time, dates, descriptions of people, and numbers)
- correctly apply concepts of gender and number agreement and possession
- introduce themselves, their friends, and family orally and in writing
- talk and write about their schedules and favorite activities
- use context clues to aid in aural and written comprehension.

## **SEVENTH-GRADE SPANISH**

In seventh-grade Spanish, students review, refine, and enrich previously acquired skills, adding verb conjugations and new verb tenses as they continue to improve oral/aural proficiency. Classroom communication takes place in Spanish. Work on listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills as well as cultural awareness continues with the use of DVDs, websites, songs, short readers, and oral exercises. Students prepare projects on a variety of topics including pastimes, sports, and interpretations of stories that have been read and discussed in class. Students also create their own menus and perform skits in a restaurant setting. Throughout the year, short stories from the anthology *Realidad y Fantasia* are discussed and analyzed in class. Students act out scenes to enhance their ease of expression and write plot summaries to develop their writing skills. They also work on multimedia projects and presentations to demonstrate their growing grammatical and oral skills as well as the ability to use the Internet for research. Work on pronouns coincides with similar study in the Language Arts curriculum. The core text is *Así se Dice*.

By the end of the year, seventh-grade students should demonstrate reasonable proficiency as they:

- participate in an immersion environment by communicating in Spanish with classmates and instructor in brief conversations on familiar topics
- understand and apply the concepts of gender, singular and plural forms
- form and use the present and immediate future tenses of regular and many irregular verbs
- write short dialogues and paragraphs with the proper sentence structure
- comprehend and respond to beginner-level readings
- properly substitute direct object pronouns in a sentence
- use large numbers and comparative forms.

## **EIGHTH-GRADE SPANISH**

Students in eighth-grade Spanish strengthen all four language skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing - through a variety of activities including writing and performing dialogues and news broadcasts, participating in role playing activities, such as acting out trips to a doctor's office and emergency room, watching DVDs in Spanish and answering related comprehension questions, and reading short stories. Students write brief essays related to their readings as well as on topics that include notable Hispanic figures and traditions from around the Spanish-speaking world. Annual service projects offer eighth-grade students the opportunity to interact with Spanish-speaking members of our local community. Students gain proficiency in the use of the present, present progressive, past, and immediate future tenses of regular and irregular verbs, negative and positive commands, and reflexive verbs. They also continue to work on direct and indirect object pronouns, demonstrative adjectives and pronouns, and affirmative and negative words. The core text is *Así Se Dice*, and the reader *La Gran Aventura de Alejandro* offers rich cultural and vocabulary enrichment in an entertaining and accessible format.

Each year, the entire eighth grade participates in a language field trip to New York City during which students visit an exhibit or cultural event related to the language they study, including, when possible, a docent-guided experience in the target language. Students then enjoy lunch in an ethnic restaurant and interact with wait staff in the language they study.

Successful completion of eighth-grade Spanish enables students to enter Level 2 in the Upper School. Placement approval for Level 2 Honors courses requires a year-end average of 90 percent or higher. Students appropriately placed in Level 2 Honors show motivation, maturity, responsibility, and hard work, and they make consistent efforts to use solely the target language in class. They display excellence in the four main language skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing - and meet all commitments in a timely manner.

## **CLASSICS: LATIN**

### **SIXTH-GRADE LATIN**

The Latin program begins in sixth grade. The primary goals for the sixth-grade program are to develop understanding of the elementary structure of the language, leading to facility in reading basic Latin; to expand English vocabulary through the study of Latin derivatives; and to develop appreciation for the world of the ancient Romans, an area that students have already and will continue to explore in social studies courses. Regular reinforcement of previously introduced grammatical concepts and vocabulary words is a part of every class; as students become comfortable with that knowledge, integration of the material into the reading of connected Latin prose becomes a regular feature of class time, as well. The discipline of translation, with its focus on the function of every word, teaches the student as much about the workings of the English language as it does about Latin. The continuing saga of the Roman family, as narrated by the stories in the textbook, gives students a unique perspective on Roman life for young people of the first century AD.

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

- basic Latin grammar, including identification of subjects, direct objects, predicate nouns and adjectives, verb agreement, noun cases, and prepositions
- reading of basic Latin prose for comprehension and grammatical parsing
- translation of basic Latin prose into accurate and coherent English
- basic Latin prose vocabulary of approximately 200 words, with appropriate derivatives in English
- basic elements of Roman history and culture, and their relationship to the modern world.

### **SEVENTH-GRADE LATIN**

In seventh grade, the Latin program focuses primarily upon the continued acquisition of fundamental language skills: mastery of vocabulary and forms, grammatical analyses, production of accurate and precise translations from Latin to English, reading passages of Latin prose for comprehension, word derivation, and correct pronunciation of Latin words. Forms, grammatical structures, and vocabulary words are introduced, reinforced through a variety of in-class activities and assignments, and finally assessed in various ways. Vocabulary building develops continually through repetition in reading and through regular memorization. In order to add a contemporary spirit and vitality to an ancient language, Latin is read aloud daily, and composition (translating English into Latin) becomes an emphasis of instruction.

Daily practice in the detailed analysis of Latin sentences and the study of Latin derivations provide skills essential to the understanding of the workings 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 on the nature of the Roman world, such as project-based learning about the Trojan War, Greek and Roman gods and goddesses, and mythology.

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

- fundamental concepts that make up the structure of Latin and the application of these to English
- parts of speech and the structure of Latin sentences
- noun endings of the first three declensions
- adjectives of the first two declensions
- noun/adjective agreement
- verbs of all conjugations (including irregulars) in the present, imperfect, and future tenses (active voice), as well as their infinitives and imperatives

- prepositions, and which cases govern them
- comprehension of Latin sentences and passages
- translations of Latin sentences and passages into accurate and coherent English grammatical analyses
- approximately 400 Latin vocabulary words, along with relevant English derivatives
- increasingly detailed elements of Roman history and culture, and their relationship to the modern world.

## **EIGHTH-GRADE LATIN**

In eighth grade, the Latin program continues the acquisition of language skills begun in Grades 6 and 7. By the end of eighth grade, Latin students have completed Latin I. The course's primary areas of focus are mastery of grammatical forms and vocabulary/relevant derivatives, grammatical and syntactical analyses, and translation and comprehension skills. Forms, grammatical structures, and vocabulary words are introduced, reinforced through a variety of in-class activities and assignments, and finally assessed in various ways. Vocabulary building develops continually through repetition in reading and through regular memorization. Correct Latin pronunciation is emphasized, and students continue to practice composition (translation of English into Latin) in order to make this ancient language present and vital. 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, such as project-based learning about Roman coins and various historical and mythological courses of study. Through this integrated program, each student gains an understanding of the Latin language within the context of Roman civilization and can make relevant connections to our contemporary world.

Successful completion of eighth-grade Latin enables a student to enter Latin 2 in ninth grade.

By the end of the eighth-grade program, students should demonstrate mastery of the following skills/areas of study:

- all five declensions of nouns and three declensions of adjectives
- all six tenses of verbs in four conjugations, in both active and passive voices, plus five irregular verbs (indicative mood)
- present infinitive and the imperative of verbs of four conjugations and of five irregular verbs
- personal, possessive, reflexive, demonstrative, indefinite, interrogative, and relative pronouns/adjectives
- comprehension of Latin sentences and passages
- translations of Latin sentences and passages into accurate and coherent English
- grammatical analyses
- approximately 750 Latin vocabulary words
- 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 English
- derivation of English vocabulary from its Latin source
- elements of Greek and Roman history and culture, and their relationships to the modern world.

## **ART**

### **FIFTH AND SIXTH-GRADE 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 from diverse cultural backgrounds. Two-dimensional projects may include drawing, painting, collage, mixed media, photography, and printmaking. Three-dimensional projects include papier-mâché, clay construction, and found objects. Most projects are based upon visual motivation: videos, reproductions, still life, nature, the manmade environment, and figure and perspective studies. In addition to studying design and technique, students are

encouraged to explore and 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 artwork is displayed frequently in the Middle School. Two school-wide art exhibits are held each year in the fall and in the spring.

### **FIFTH-GRADE 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.

### **SIXTH-GRADE 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.

### **SEVENTH AND EIGHTH-GRADE ELECTIVES**

#### **MIXED MEDIA SCULPTURE (T1, T2, or T3)**

In Mixed Media Sculpture, students will explore how to combine a broad range of materials and techniques to create three-dimensional sculptural forms. Students will learn various ways of constructing and assembling the materials to communicate themes and ideas in their work. They will study historical and contemporary artists who work in sculpture and mixed media. Students will develop skills in shape, form, space, and texture in additive, subtractive, assemblage, mobile, and mixed media sculptural forms. Students work in a variety of materials including, but not limited to, oil clay, fire clay, plaster, wire, tape, papier-mâché, wood, plastic, and found materials.

#### **DESIGNOLOGY (T1, T2, or T3)**

We live in a visual culture, one in which ideas and information are communicated through increasingly sophisticated visual media. Have you ever driven by a billboard or seen an advertisement and said to yourself: "Wow, that's really cool!" Do you want to understand what makes these – and other – images so visually compelling? Well, here's your

chance! In this course, you will develop an understanding of basic design elements and the way designers use these elements to create images that are engaging, compelling, and stay in your memory. Through a variety of assignments, you will experiment with typography, composition, form, and texture to explore how designers actually design. We will use Adobe software and other equipment to create our work.

### **DRAWING (T1, T2, or T3)**

This course is an introduction to drawing techniques and materials. Students will learn to use line, value, color, gesture and perspective in their drawings. They will draw from observation, pictorial references, imagination, and emotion. Materials used include, but are not limited to, charcoal, pencil, ink, collage, colored pencils, oil pastel, and markers. Students will explore the concepts of realism and abstraction along with the traditional still life, landscape, and portrait.

### **CERAMICS (T1, T2, or T3)**

The Ceramics course 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 through a series of exercises to discover what clay can and cannot do. At this stage, the physical process is emphasized more than the final results. Students explore various hand-building techniques such as coiling, pinching, and slab construction. Later in the course, they embark on more ambitious and more inventive projects, which may be representational or abstract, functional or nonfunctional. In addition to reflecting on their own work, students are exposed to the works of other sculptors and ceramic artists from various cultures and time periods. Although most of the projects involve hand-building techniques, students are also introduced to the throwing wheel and have the opportunity to practice basic throwing techniques.

### **PAINTING (T1, T2, or T3)**

Students will explore the use of watercolors, acrylics, tempera, cold wax, and other wet mediums. They will paint from observation, pictorial references, imagination, and emotion. They will also explore traditional subject matter to include still-life and landscape painting. Students will be exposed to periods in art history from surrealism to impressionism along with learning about contemporary artists.

### **DIGITAL ART WORKSHOP (T1, T2, or T3)**

An increasing number of artists are creating artworks using digital media. In this course, students will explore the worlds of digital photography and video to create innovative artworks of their own. Students will learn the basics of Adobe's Photoshop and Lightroom, Apple's iMovie, and other digital special effects as they respond to theme-driven projects. These projects can be realized by utilizing one or more media. For example, students could create a fantastical landscape in Photoshop and then film themselves in the space using a green screen. Or they could transform a series of photographs into a short, animated movie. Or they may explore ideas of identity through self-portraiture using either still images, video footage, or both. The broad goal is for students to become comfortable using various digital art-making technologies to give visual form to their ideas.

### **SHOP I: BASIC BUILDING AND DESIGN TECHNIQUES (T1 and T2, or T3)**

This is the entry level course for the Middle School shop program, in which students learn to design and develop ideas, draft plans, sketch or draw them on paper, and then construct, assemble, and engineer their designs. Students in this class can choose to follow a preexisting plan at their appropriate skill level, or they may elaborate, alter, re-think, or re-design an existing shop project to suit their own individual interests, creativity, and imaginations. In this course, the emphases are on conceptual development, paper planning, drafting/sketching/drawing, proper tool choice and usage, power and hand tool instruction for both wood and other building materials. For students who are also enrolled in classes that utilize 3-D printing as part of the curriculum, the potential to design and create objects that are made in collaboration with the 3-D printing systems will also be explored where appropriate. Color finishing and painting techniques may be possible if there is time and opportunity to do so, but much of that work happens in Shop II. This is a two-trimester course (fall and winter)

for students wanting a longer, sequential experience with Shop II, or a one-trimester course (spring) for students wanting a shorter one-time experience.

### **SHOP II: CONTINUING AND ADVANCED COLOR TECHNIQUES (T1 and T2, or T3)**

This class will primarily focus on the artistry and color finishing techniques that beautifully enhance projects in a more complete, personal, and creative way. Once finished with their Shop I projects, students in Shop II will explore multi-media color finishing, full color decorating, faux finishing, wood burning, texture and sponge painting, drawing and hand painting decoration. Wood, foam core, sculpting foam, paper, papier-mâché, or canvas board painting techniques will also be explored. Students should have successfully completed a project in Shop I that they can bring to a more complete and advanced state of finish in Shop II. However, for students who have not completed a Shop I project, but who are interested in learning the specific skills taught in Shop II, several simple projects will be offered, and those students will be expected to complete one for use in the Shop II class. For students who are also enrolled in classes that utilize 3-D printing as part of the curriculum, the potential to design and create objects that are made in collaboration with the 3-D printing systems will also be explored where appropriate. This is a two-trimester course (fall and winter) for students wanting a longer, sequential experience after Shop I, or a one-trimester course (spring) for students wanting a shorter one-time experience.

### **THREE-DIMENSIONAL DESIGN AND FINE SCALE MODEL MAKING (T1 and T2, or T3)**

This class focuses mainly on the design and building of three-dimensional scenic dioramas, architecture, or other types of fine scale models. Samples of projects and suggested assignments will be available for students to choose from, but input from the students will also be encouraged and included whenever possible and appropriate. Real or imaginary subjects will be equally welcome. Students will explore all aspects of planning and constructing small multi-media scenic dioramas, architectural or structural fine scale models. They will explore foam sculpting and shaping, wood cutting, shaping and assembly, special scale model scenery applications, painting and multi-media finishing techniques, wood burning and basic soldering. Advanced special effects such as lighting, sound, smoke, or other specific visual enhancements may be added if time permits. Specialized fine scale modeling hand tools, power tools, and construction techniques will be explored, demonstrated, and utilized throughout the assignments. For students who are also enrolled in classes that utilize 3-D printing as part of the curriculum, the potential to design and create objects that are made in collaboration with the 3-D printing systems will also be explored where appropriate. This is a two-trimester course (fall and winter) for students wanting a longer, sequential experience, or a one-trimester course (spring) for students wanting a shorter one-time experience.

## **COMPUTER SCIENCE**

Computer technology is one of the defining forces of the twenty-first century. New devices and programs create exciting opportunities for growth and development. Our students need experience with computing to succeed in all aspects of their education and professional lives. Our courses are designed to provide students with a wide introduction to fundamental computer skills and an introduction the greater science of computing.

### **FIFTH-GRADE 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 storytelling 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.

## **SIXTH-GRADE 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.

## **SEVENTH AND EIGHTH-GRADE ELECTIVES**

### **ADVANCED ROBOTIC DESIGN (T1, T2, or T3)**

Using the latest LEGO Mindstorms EV3 system and complementary Resource Kits, students engineer robots using instructions and/or their imaginations, expanding their hands-on exploration of robotics and utilization of the Design Thinking process and digital fabrication tools such as 3D printers and the laser and vinyl cutters. Students design and program robots starting with LEGO’s Design Engineering Projects, culminating in the creation of their own unique robot or machine. Students will make aesthetic or functional attachments or field elements with the goal of integrating 3D printed or 2D laser cut models with their robots.

### **INTRODUCTION TO PROGRAMMING (T1, T2, or T3)**

Using the block-based programming language known as Scratch, students create and explore programs such as interactive games, animations, puzzles, simulations, quizzes, and music and art presentations. Students explore physical computing aspects of programming by adding Makey Makey circuit boards to their Scratch programs, extending programming through the creation of interactive interfaces made with conductive materials. Students then take their programming knowledge further by exploring Processing, a highly visual, interactive, and text-based language based on Java. This course prepares students well for programming courses in the Upper School.

### **FABulous (Two-trimester course, T1 and T2)**

Embark on a makerspace exploration using a Design Thinking approach that will empower you to develop prototypes through the lenses of expression and imagination. Learn how to utilize 2D and 3D design tools for digital FABrication, and further develop your ideation with programming. This class cycles through the tools of our new makerspace, allowing you to learn and develop skills so that you become accustomed to the makerspace and learn what tools to use for a given problem, empowering you to expand your understanding and application of digital and artistic mediums and processes.

### **WEB DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT (T1, T2, or T3)**

The Internet has dramatically changed the way the world works. The exciting and dynamic power of the Internet delights, informs, and entertains us every day. This elective will introduce you to designing and building your own websites and launching them on the Internet. We will study successful websites and games to learn how they work, learn web and game programming skills, and complete several projects based on students' interest.

## **DRAMA AND DANCE**

The Drama and Dance Department’s mission is to create diverse theatrical performances that engage the RCDS community. Drama and Dance students are shown that creativity has a place in this world. Students actively move, speak, sing, think, and feel during their curricular and extra-curricular drama and dance experiences.

## **FIFTH-GRADE DRAMA**

The function of drama in the fifth grade is for every student to have access to the basics of theater performance. Through a variety of improvisation exercises and scenes, students will work on building characters and telling clear and interesting stories. Students will also repeatedly practice being supportive and constructive audience members.

## **SIXTH-GRADE DRAMA**

The class will be broken down into two units: Acting and Stagecraft. In the acting unit, students explore warm-ups, theater games, improvisation, and a variety of scenes. Following the acting unit, the students will have the opportunity to learn the art of stagecraft. With hands-on learning, students will discover the function of lighting design, plan and develop the sound design for a scene, as well as build and create sets and costumes. This semester-long class will culminate in a presentation of scenes that incorporate all technical elements learned in the course.

## **SEVENTH AND EIGHTH-GRADE ELECTIVES**

### **INTRODUCTION TO IMPROV (T1, T2, or T3)**

The objectives of this course are to discover the fundamentals of improvisational comedy, improve storytelling skills, learn techniques to think quickly, and to be more creative. This spirited, fun course is designed for any student who wants to learn the essentials of good scenic improvisation and improve teamwork and communication skills. Through coaching, warm-up exercises, creative performance games, and basic short-form scene-work, you will learn how to be more spontaneous, trusting, and cooperative and how to listen in a fun, creative atmosphere.

### **INTEGRATED PERFORMING ARTS (Two-trimester course, T1 and T2) – Music and Drama/Dance**

Integrated Performing Arts is an exploration of the combined disciplines of music, dance, and theatre arts. The first trimester will focus on choral and musical theatre repertoire in preparation for a winter concert. Additionally, students will study drama and dance techniques through classes by learning choreography, acting, and song interpretation. The second trimester will focus on bringing all three disciplines together for their annual musical production. By exploring these three unified crafts, students will experience a well-rounded education in the performing arts.

### **TECH THEATER (Two-trimester course, T1 and T2)**

Tech Theater is an introductory class designed to educate seventh and eighth grade students on the backstage world of theater. Students will learn skills in conceptualizing a three-dimensional design, building props and scenery, and basic scenic painting techniques. Projects for Tech Theater will be showcased in our very own RCDS drama productions. Students taking Tech Theater will be eligible to work on the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade musical, assisting with the load-in process and running stage crew!

### **GOOD MORNING RCDS PRODUCTION (T1, T2, or T3)**

In the *Good Morning RCDS* Production Class, students will become the core team behind the production of the RCDS Middle School's smash hit morning show. This team will learn on-camera journalism techniques necessary to anchor and to create weekly segments. Students will work on voice projection, eye contact, comedic timing, as well as annunciation. Along with developing on-camera skills, this class will have the responsibility of being the creative force behind the pre- and post-production of each weekly morning broadcast. Students will generate ideas for episodes, write scripts, arrange and light sets, film episodes, and learn the ins and outs of the video editing program Final Cut Pro. Whether you are interested in being on camera or behind the scenes, you will acquire the skills necessary to make *Good Morning RCDS* happen.

### **THEATRE WORKSHOP (T1, T2, or T3)**

This class is designed to inspire the student who wishes to develop a love and appreciation for the theatre. In Theatre Workshop, students will build on the skills learned in 5th and 6th grade drama to engage in a more serious relationship

with text and character. Classes are structured to provide the student with a creative outlet and to produce well-rounded performances. Creative dramatics and scene study will be explored with the intent of helping students interpret a character's motivations, as well as ensemble work and stage presence.

### **INTRO TO SCENIC DESIGN (T3 only)**

From artistic concepts to technical drawings, students will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the process of designing a set for a production. This course covers numerous topics including script analysis, conceptualization, historical architecture, color and texture, and 2-D and 3-D renderings using CAD (Computer-aided design).

### **MUSICAL THEATRE (T3 only)**

Musical Theatre is a non-performance based exploration of musical theatre styles both old and new. The course will allow students to gain knowledge about the history of musical theatre through acting exercise, learning choreography, and interpreting stories. Through daily class practice, students will experience what it takes to create a musical number and how to fully envision its production on stage. Beyond these performance techniques, students will investigate creative concepts in the musical theatre world.

## **MUSIC**

### **FIFTH-GRADE MUSIC**

The fifth-grade Music program is structured in order to provide all students an experience 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 a variety of choral repertoire. In band, students are introduced to a band instrument with both small-group lessons and larger band rehearsals. They work from a beginning method book, developing a solid skill base to perform elementary band music on their selected instrument. All students participate in several major concerts during the school year.

### **SIXTH-GRADE INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC**

Sixth-Grade 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 (in small groups and larger band rehearsals), a band method/technique book and appropriate repertoire, students will continue to develop a solid skill base to interpret and perform band music at an advanced beginner level. Grading is based on the student participation and overall performance. Participation in the private lesson program is strongly recommended. Members of the Sixth-Grade Intermediate Band are expected to perform in two major concerts, scheduled in January and May of each school year.

### **SIXTH-GRADE VOCAL MUSIC**

Members of the Sixth-Grade Chorus take on more challenging two and three-part music. Meeting both in small groups and as a larger ensemble, students learn challenging repertoire in several languages and musical styles, such as folk, pop, Broadway, and classical music. They sing two major concerts each year, in addition to shorter performances within and around the school community. Students are evaluated based on their participation and overall performance.

## **SEVENTH AND EIGHTH-GRADE ELECTIVES**

### **INTEGRATED PERFORMING ARTS (Two-trimester course, T1 and T2) – Music and Drama/Dance**

Integrated Performing Arts is an exploration of the combined disciplines of music, dance, and theatre arts. The first trimester will focus on choral and musical theatre repertoire in preparation for a winter concert. Additionally, students will study drama and dance techniques through classes by learning choreography, acting, and song interpretation. The second

trimester will focus on bringing all three disciplines together for their annual musical production. By exploring these three unified crafts, students will experience a well-rounded education in the performing arts.

### **CONCERT BAND** (Full Year, *with the ability to concurrently take other electives*)

In Concert Band, students with prior instrumental knowledge on wind or percussion instruments will work as a dedicated ensemble to explore and perform music from a variety of styles and genres, including, but not limited to, contemporary music, film music, pop music, and traditional band repertoire. Band members practice important 21st century skills, such as working as a team member and collaborating with their peers as they approach new challenges, along with expanding musical knowledge and developing proficiency on their chosen instrument! Students will have opportunities to perform at formal and informal concerts throughout the school year. Those who participate in Concert Band are eligible to participate in Middle School Jazz Band. Participation in the private lesson program is strongly recommended.

### **SONG FACTORY** (T1 or T2)

Have you ever wanted to create and produce your own original songs? Use your song as a ringtone? Here's your chance to unlock your inner creativity and musical talent! You and your musical partners will learn how to structure and create original song lyrics, with melodies and chords, alongside learning ukelele to accompany yourself. You will then put it all together into a GarageBand recording, adding rhythm and other effects to make a final, professional-sounding recording to share with the world! No singing or instrumental experience is necessary.

### **THE SIDE NOTES** (T3 only)

If you like to sing and would like to make music with others who like to sing, then come join The Side Notes, the course designed for anyone who enjoys singing in a group. Melody? Harmony? High? Low? Middle? Wherever you're comfortable, there's a place for you. We'll perform some of your favorites, old and new. No prior singing experience necessary.

## **LIBRARY SKILLS**

### **FIFTH-GRADE LIBRARY**

This class is designed to help make students comfortable using the Middle and Upper School library for their academic and recreational needs. Through various activities, they develop an understanding of the organization of materials in the library and of the different types of materials available. In an investigation of a topic of their own choosing, they begin to become independent searchers of information. They develop a familiarity with a process model called the Big 6, which can be used to guide them in solving any information need. Activities are often coordinated with other parts of the fifth-grade curriculum. Sharing about literature makes up another important segment of library time.

### **SIXTH-GRADE LIBRARY**

Sixth-grade students meet for Library Skills once a cycle. The class emphasizes media literacy and digital citizenship, focusing on search strategies for print and online information seeking, evaluation of websites using a specific six-step model, advertising in all places and in all formats, and various aspects of ethical online behavior including personal consequences of online decisions. Whenever possible, Internet skills are taught within the context of science or social studies subject matter as a frame of reference.

### **7/8 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. Integrating the skills in this way also allows students to practice the skills repeatedly through the school year and apply those skills to different subject areas.

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 eighth-grade curriculum. Technology issues, such as copyright, plagiarism in the digital age, safety, privacy, digital responsibility, the “digital divide,” and our role in the Internet community are investigated.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION and ATHLETICS**

### **FIFTH AND SIXTH-GRADE PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

The Fifth and Sixth-Grade Physical Education program continues the learning progression from the student’s Lower School experience. The curriculum emphasizes team, individual, and lifetime sports. Refining and building upon sports skills remains a focal point, as well as fostering responsibility, self-expression, positive social interaction, cooperation, and teamwork toward a unified goal.

Students are exposed to a variety of team sports and physical fitness activities. Boys and girls meet separately each day of the week. The program emphasizes good sportsmanship and stresses 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.

### **SEVENTH AND EIGHTH-GRADE PHYSICAL EDUCATION / ATHLETICS**

The Middle School Physical Education program provides a strong base of fundamental and sport-specific skills in preparation for the Upper School program. In Grades 7 and 8, students choose whether to join an interscholastic team or to participate in a PE class (dance or sports conditioning) for a given season.

The Physical Education program emphasizes good sportsmanship. The development of sound skills and overall athletic ability is a main objective of the Physical Education program. As with the fifth and sixth-grade program, the program's overall goals, however, stress that ability alone does not constitute the well-rounded athlete. The program provides interscholastic opportunities for three seasons. For many students, the seventh and eighth-grade program 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 Athletic Association League. RCDS teams will, on average, play one game each week of the season. Interscholastic teams/classes meet Monday through Friday, 2:10 – 3:20 p.m.

**Eighth-grade student-athletes may try out for a position on an Upper School varsity team. Once your student-athlete has all of the necessary New York State paperwork completed, has passed all the components of the New York State fitness test, and has gone through tryouts, the coach will assess the athlete’s position on the team. It is RCDS policy that the eighth-grade student-athlete must be in good standing academically, be a good citizen in the Middle School, and have the skills to secure a starting position on the team.**

**Seventh-grade students may not try out for a position on an Upper School varsity team.**

### **TEAMS BY SEASON**

<b>Fall</b>	<b>Winter</b>	<b>Spring</b>
Cross Country	Basketball	Baseball
Field Hockey	Fencing	Lacrosse
Football	Ice Hockey	Softball
Soccer	Squash	Tennis
	Wrestling	

Dance and Sports Conditioning classes are offered each season.

## **SPECIAL PROGRAMS**

### **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. RCDS is 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.

### **STUDY SKILLS**

From Grades 5 through 8, students will begin to develop, practice, and implement healthy and effective study skills habits. An emphasis will be placed on executive function skills including but not limited to organizing, planning and prioritizing, time management, metacognition, and self-regulation. In addition, we will teach students how to self-advocate and learn various strategies on how to study and plan for different types of assessments. The goal is to help students become independent learners, as well as to help them make efficient and effective use of their study time when by themselves or when part of a group.

### **FIELD TRIPS**

Both day and overnight trips change from year to year and are coordinated to enhance the curricular program.

### **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 fifth grade, students will explore the topics listed below through activities and group discussions. All discussions are 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. Sixth-grade SEEK builds on the knowledge and skills that students began acquiring in fifth grade. The units being discussed may be the same as those of the fifth-grade curriculum; however, Grade 6 students will be able to process the information at a deeper level. The goal of the seventh-grade SEEK program is to help students learn the skills that will assist them in navigating academic and social situations that arise. Students in seventh grade are at a pivotal point in their lives as they enter their teenage years. The eighth-grade SEEK curriculum builds upon and augments the skills, activities, and topics covered during the program in Grades 5, 6, and 7. The eighth-grade program also serves as an opportunity for students to share concerns and information about adolescent issues, ranging from peer interactions to school responsibilities.

### **SELECTED SEEK 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)  
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

## **SERVICE LEARNING/COMMUNITY SERVICE**

### **Service Learning Periods**

Throughout their Middle School years, students learn about the five stages of service learning, the ethics of service, and the role of youth as change agents in the community and world. Students complete reflective personal inventories that enable them to more effectively put their own skills and interests to use in working in partnership with community organizations.

A number of community blocks are dedicated to service learning each year. Students and advisors may elect to work on teams that research, plan, and implement a different project. The teamwork culminates in student-driven direct service, advocacy, or activism projects in the community.

### **Eighth-Grade Program**

All eighth graders spend a series of service days in either the fall or the spring doing service learning projects at different sites.