



Winchester Thurston School

2008 – 2009 Middle School Curriculum Overview

Mission

The Winchester Thurston Middle School inspires future leaders by holding students to high standards and challenging them through a rigorous curriculum. The knowledgeable and supportive faculty understands and responds to the unique needs of adolescents, fostering in each student a sense of confidence, ethics, responsibility, and respect for others.

Academic Life

The school day begins at 8:15 a.m. and ends at 3:07 p.m. It includes seven class periods that meet on a rotating schedule. Every student takes language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, a modern language, art, physical education, and performing arts (dance, drama, and music).

Electives

Academic electives run on a trimester schedule, and students are required to select at least one elective per trimester. Performing arts electives in chorus, orchestra, and dance ensembles run for a full academic year. In addition, time is built into the weekly schedule for study halls to encourage students to prepare assignments, review class notes, and complete homework.

Progress Reports and Grades

The Middle School runs on a trimester system with one set of examinations in June. Parents receive progress reports from each subject teacher in the middle of each trimester and a final grade report at the end of each trimester. On the progress report, Middle School teachers summarize the trimester activities and address each student's specific strengths and areas that require improvement. Interim reports may be sent home at any time to alert parents of student progress and performance.

To maintain a place in good standing, a student must earn a minimum of a C- average for the year with no more than one D and no Fs per trimester. If a student does not meet these standards after a trimester, a letter of concern will be sent home and a parent-teacher conference will be held to determine a course of action. The student's work will be carefully monitored for the following trimester. A student may be placed on academic probation if substantial effort and progress has not been made. At the end of the year, appropriate recommendations will be made for the following year.

Student Life

Middle School offers many extracurricular activities including student government, competitive team sports, class trips, community service, performing arts, and student publications.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Each student will develop a strong foundation in English through extensive experience with the language arts of writing, speaking, and reading. In writing, we stress precision and organization in order to foster strong writing skills and analytical thinking. Students express their ideas orally through discussion and presentations; they also come to value the exchange of ideas produced by discussion. We practice literary analysis on a variety of texts chosen because they offer young adolescents a chance to view the world from perspectives other than their own. Finally, it is our hope that through writing, speaking, and reading, the students will begin a process of self-exploration and discovery that will guide them on their journey through Middle School.

FOUNDATIONS OF LANGUAGE. This course is designed to strengthen language acquisition and writing skills by providing a strong background in grammatical structures, vocabulary, and writing styles. Students will gain a working familiarity with the nomenclature of grammar (parts of speech, syntactical patterns, and mechanics) that is helpful for the advanced studies of English and other world languages. They will also explore and master various types of writing (narrative, compare and contrast, persuasive, etc.). *Sixth-grade requirement.*

SIXTH-GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS. The sixth-grade curriculum concentrates on developing mastery of reading, writing, and speaking, with a focus on fluency, exploration, individual development, and literary analysis. There are literature units on folk tales, science fiction, poetry, and drama. In addition to directed units, the class follows a workshop approach in which the students choose their own reading selections from a library of books recommended by the teacher. Self-selected reading at the student's own pace increases motivation and allows for the inevitable variety in the reading level of sixth-grade students. The skills of vocabulary development, language mechanics usage, grammar, and dictionary use are integrated into the class. The writing component focuses on mastery of expository and creative writing skills, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, sentence combining, and paragraph development. Among the texts used in class are *The Writer's Companion*, *A Wrinkle in Time*, *The Miracle Worker*, and a vocabulary development series.

SEVENTH-GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS. The seventh-grade curriculum, like the sixth-grade curriculum, integrates literature, grammar and usage, and writing. Students study literature that portrays young adolescents' rites of passage and self-discovery. Students engage in literary analysis focusing on conflict, characterization, plot, theme, figurative language, and symbolism. Through this, students learn not only to make connections to their lives but also to engage in the intellectual work of transforming opinions into critical arguments using texts as supporting evidence.

An independent reading component requires students to read self-selected novels at their own pace. Vocabulary is derived from the literature units; contextual and dictionary skills are emphasized. Students continue to refine the expository paragraph by writing about character development, conflict, and theme. Creative writing is taught through drama, poetry, historical fiction, and self-selected writing projects. Throughout the year, grammar instruction focuses on developing coherent, more complex sentence structure with precise, mature word choice. Among the books used are *My Brother Sam is Dead*; *A Break With Charity*; *The Giver*; *Much Ado About Nothing*; and *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*.

EIGHTH-GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS. During the year, students reinforce skills learned in sixth and seventh grade and begin to look toward the kinds of assignments required of them in Upper School. The year is organized around several thematic units: internal and external "expectations," gender stereotypes, social justice, and Shakespeare. As the year progresses, assignments focus more heavily on analysis. In addition to completing assignments in which they must plan, draft, revise, and edit, students practice timed writings in preparation for the kinds of essay tests that become increasingly important in the Upper School. The study of grammar and usage, modeled in the selected readings, helps students to make their writing clear and precise. Likewise, vocabulary words are learned in the context of selected readings and augmented with a formal program. Students continue to do creative and personal writing. In addition to traditional library research skills, students learn how to locate, evaluate, and cite sources on the Internet. Among the books used in class are *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Raisin in the Sun*, and *Elie Wiesel's Night*. Students also read self- and teacher-selected poetry and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

MATHEMATICS

The Middle School mathematics program seeks to develop students' knowledge of mathematical content and processes through the investigation of interesting problem situations. Our primary curriculum is the *Connected Mathematics Project (CMP)*, which is the only Middle School curriculum judged to be exemplary by a panel of mathematics and science experts selected by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education (1999). Using this curriculum, students solve problems; observe patterns and relationships; make, test, and discuss conjectures generalizing these patterns and relationships; and apply the mathematics they learn. The instructional model used emphasizes the need for students to make sense of the mathematics they are learning and using. In particular, students are expected to continue to master and use mental arithmetic and estimation skills.

To take full advantage of the richness of this curriculum, students are required to have a graphing calculator. The calculator used will be the TI-73. Appropriate use of technology is stressed.

MATH 6. This course emphasizes inquiry and discovery of mathematical ideas through investigation of rich problem situations. Content includes number sense and reasoning with and about numbers, with focus on rational numbers and integers; geometry and measurement (2-D); and introduction to algebraic reasoning using tables, graphs and symbolic representations. The following CMP units will be covered during the year:

- Bits and Pieces II – Understanding Fraction Operations
- Bits and Pieces III – Computing with Percents
- Covering and Surrounding – Two-dimensional Measurement
- Variables and Patterns – Introduction to Algebra
- Accentuate the Negative – Understanding and Using Negative Numbers
- How Likely Is It? – Probability

MATH 7. This course continues to emphasize inquiry and discovery of mathematical ideas through investigation of rich problem situations. Content includes number sense and reasoning with and about numbers, with focus on rational numbers and integers; ratio, proportion, and percent; geometry and measurement (3-D); statistics and probability; and algebraic reasoning, emphasizing linear relationships. The following CMP units will be covered during the year:

- Stretching and Shrinking (similarity with congruence as a special case)
- Comparing and Scaling (rate, ratio, proportion, percent, and proportional reasoning)
- Accentuate the Negative (understanding and using negative numbers)
- Moving Straight Ahead (linear relationships expressed in words, tables, graphs, and symbols)
- Filling and Wrapping (3-D measurement)
- What Do You Expect? (probability and expected value)
- Thinking with Mathematical Models (introduction to functions and modeling)

INTRODUCTION TO ALGEBRA. This course continues to emphasize inquiry and discovery of mathematical ideas. Content focuses primarily on algebraic reasoning, with the goal of helping students make a smooth and successful transition to Algebra 1 in ninth grade. This class uses a variety of resources, including CMP units and a traditional pre-algebra textbook, and covers the following mathematical topics:

- Measurement
- Using rational numbers (fractions, decimals, percents)
- Using variables
- Patterns leading to addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division equations
- Problem-solving strategies

- Coordinate graphs and equations
- Simplifying linear expressions and solving linear equations.

ALGEBRA. This course continues to emphasize inquiry and discovery of mathematical ideas through investigation of rich problem situations. Content focuses primarily on algebraic reasoning and covers the four major topics of first-year algebra: patterns and variables, linear functions, non-linear functions, and systems of equations. The following CMP units will be covered during the year:

- Thinking About Mathematical Models (introduction to functions and modeling)
- Looking for Pythagoras (Pythagorean theorem, slope, area, and irrational numbers)
- Growing, Growing, Growing (exponential growth)
- Frogs, Fleas, and Painted Cubes (quadratic growth)
- Say It with Symbols (equivalent expressions and solutions of linear equations)
- Shapes of Algebra (linear systems and inequalities)

In addition, some curricular units from a more traditional algebra curriculum will be covered.

AAG MATH. A small group of students who meet the selection criteria will be invited to participate. The goal is to cover the essential material from Algebra and Geometry in two school years. Students who complete the curriculum successfully should be prepared for Pre-calculus in Upper School.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Awareness of the world around us is the primary goal of the social studies curriculum, which emphasizes current events and the political process on a global scale. Research-oriented units are designed to encourage independent and cooperative learning and help each student gain the skills of being a historiographer through the use of primary source material.

SIXTH-GRADE WORLD CULTURES. This world geography course expands students' knowledge of the world in which they live to include the peoples and cultures in the countries of the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Students begin with a research unit on conflict resolution that focuses on role models from around the world. A thorough map-skills program reinforces the development of important geographic understanding. Students explore the physical geography of the earth (land forms, climates, and vegetation) in order to understand its interrelationship with culture as each region of the world is studied. An awareness of current events is fostered. Students work both independently and cooperatively in groups. The course emphasizes writing skills. An important underlying theme is the encouragement of open-minded attitudes so that differences between people of the world are recognized and appreciated.

SEVENTH-GRADE AMERICAN HISTORY. This survey course examines America as a nation, from its earliest days to the end of the nineteenth century. The class highlights particular themes and time periods rather than using a purely chronological approach. Emphasis on reading critically and with understanding is an integral part of this course. Students learn to make sense out of history and study the social and cultural developments of the time period. For the first three months of the year, students are involved in a colonial simulation in which they experience what it was like to settle and run a colony in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century America. Students create their own laws and develop their economies while communicating with the King of England. Research projects, map exercises, chronology, communication (both oral and written), and analysis of primary source material receive special attention. To further understand the events of the past, the entire seventh grade travels to Williamsburg, Virginia, to experience our colonial heritage first-hand. This course not only exposes the students to historical trends but also prepares them for their eventual role as citizens in a democratic society.

EIGHTH-GRADE AMERICAN HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT. This course focuses on twentieth century America from the Great Depression until the present day. Particular attention is paid to World War II, the Cold War, the civil rights movement and recent American history. During each unit, students discover how important people and events shaped our nation. The course focuses on political, cultural, and social movements. During each unit, students study the workings of our democracy to gain knowledge of how different leaders defined their roles in the system. Attention is paid to each branch of the government and its role in twentieth-century America. Class discussions, hands-on activities, collaborative work, and independent research make up the daily life of the course. Students are asked to get involved in their learning process and to immerse themselves in the time period that they are studying. Skill work focuses on reading comprehension, writing skills, oral communication, research techniques, and analysis of primary documents for discussion. Students will examine issues related to leadership, fairness, equality, and how/why society dictates what is right versus wrong. Current and historical events will be used as examples to stimulate discussions. Students will be expected to debate issues and to create their own individual code of ethics based on issues and concepts discussed in class.

SCIENCE

Science is a hands-on program. The general goals for students include learning in a laboratory setting, communicating information in the form needed (tables, graphs, or words), recognizing the fragility of our environment and the need for responsible decision making in the application of scientific advancements, and

developing a curiosity about the world around us. Each grade level will study topics of earth science, life science, physical science, and ecology.

SIXTH-GRADE SCIENCE. The sixth-grade science course takes a hands-on approach to help students develop science process skills, a knowledge and understanding of various science concepts, and a positive attitude toward science and life-long learning. The classes are most often characterized by students performing investigations on the topic at hand with lab partners. Students understand concepts first through exploration and discovery. Example units include Introduction to Chemistry, Protists and Microorganisms, Ecology, Fossils and the Earth's History, and Natural Disaster—Tornado. Units in each grade expand and amplify concepts and topics from prior years.

SEVENTH-GRADE SCIENCE. This course continues the science department's laboratory emphasis as students begin to formalize the inquiry method. Students conduct experiments to answer a question and communicate their procedures, data, and conclusions in table, graph, and paragraph formats. Example units include Weather and Meteorology, Astrobiology (life on other worlds), Animal Form and Function, the Human Body, and Genetics. Units in each grade expand and amplify concepts and topics from prior years.

EIGHTH-GRADE SCIENCE. This course is designed to encourage students to investigate and broaden their understanding of the areas studied, as well as to develop important critical and investigatory skills crucial in later science courses. Students are introduced to current scientific literature and learn to assess its validity. Development of organizational skills is stressed, and assignments are geared to enhance students' higher-level thinking skills and conceptual understanding of the course material. Example units include Oceanography and Marine Biology, Astronomy and Deep Space, Rocks and Minerals, Plate Tectonics, and Pseudoscience. Units in each grade expand and amplify concepts and topics from prior years.

MODERN LANGUAGES

The goals of the Middle School modern languages program are to develop skills in grammar and proficiency in conversation, reading, and writing and to prepare students for language study continued in the Upper School.

SIXTH-GRADE FRENCH/SPANISH. Students may continue with their study of Spanish or begin studying French. These courses will offer the students their first formal exposure to Spanish and French language. Students will also become familiar with the Spanish- or French-speaking worlds as they develop their basic skills in grammar and conversation. The class concentrates on the development of the four language skills in the following

order: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Emphasis is placed on communication. Evaluation is based on daily assignments such as grammar and vocabulary drills, reading of short dialogue, written and oral comprehension exercises in class, frequent short quizzes, and tests. Students learn the geography of French- and Spanish-speaking countries and study the cultural differences in family style, school system, holidays, and food. Class activities engage students in real-life communication situations. Through role playing, reports, skits, and games, students learn to function in the culture of their target language.

SEVENTH-GRADE FRENCH/SPANISH. The seventh-grade curriculum completes the second part of Level I language study. While reviewing skills learned in sixth grade, students increase their fluency in conversation, reading, and writing. They learn to communicate in a more sophisticated manner with the usage of the immediate future tense. Students continue their study of French or Hispanic cultures.

EIGHTH-GRADE FRENCH/SPANISH. The eighth-grade curriculum completes the last part of Level I language study. While reviewing skills learned in sixth and seventh grades, students increase their fluency in conversation, reading, and writing. They learn to communicate in a more sophisticated manner by using the immediate past, immediate future, and imperative tenses. Students continue their study of French or Hispanic cultures.

SIXTH-GRADE CHINESE This course is designed to introduce students to Chinese language and culture. Focus will be on learning to read and write Chinese, beginning with elementary forms and building on that foundation. Students will also become familiar with Chinese culture, geography, and history.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

Middle School students become versed in the Microsoft Office Suite, including Word (word processing), PowerPoint (presentation production), Excel (spreadsheet), and Publisher (desktop publishing). Students are introduced to and instructed in the proper use of the Internet, email, digital camera and scanner. Efficient use of Internet search engines and Web site validation skills are practiced. Each student maintains a network folder and is required to use a login and password to access the network and his or her saved files. Computer projects may include:

- WT Web site navigation
- Newspaper production
- Research project
- Logo programming
- Digital photography
- Digital video editing
- PowerPoint presentations

- Projects with direct connection to the rest of the Middle School curriculum

When supervised by an adult, computers in the labs and the libraries are available for student use. All Middle School faculty are encouraged to incorporate use of technology in their courses and do so through use of the Middle School lab and wireless laptop carts.

LIBRARY PROGRAM

The goals of the library program are to promote life-long learning through library use and to provide materials that complement and enrich the school's curriculum. These materials represent various viewpoints and ethnic backgrounds, stimulate new interests, and promote recreational reading among both students and faculty. The collection is comprised of books, magazines, videotapes, and electronic resources. Instruction in efficient and thorough use of library resources is integrated throughout the school curriculum.

RESEARCH

SIXTH-GRADE RESEARCH. The research unit introduces sixth-grade students to the WT libraries. The unit is taught within the context of the social studies class and is the culminating project for the "Making Choices" unit. The librarian and the social studies teacher work together with the students to choose and narrow a topic, locate appropriate materials, take notes paraphrasing the author's words, prepare a formal outline and bibliography, and prepare and present an oral report. The final presentation is a "Living Museum" monologue of three to five minutes, produced under the guidance of the language arts teacher, in which the student assumes the identity of a significant figure who has dealt with conflict through peaceful means. Performance is evaluated by the social studies teacher and the librarian.

SEVENTH-GRADE RESEARCH. The research unit incorporates multiple disciplines. The students meet with the librarian and the social studies teacher during the social studies period with the purpose of producing an oral presentation on an American history topic that focuses on a specific event of their choice and its significance to the time period in which it occurred. This class builds on skills learned the previous year and includes a trip to the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and the use of print and electronic resources. The final project includes an oral report, three to five minutes in length, in which each student presents a time capsule containing objects that represent the student's chosen event. The written components must be completed using a word processor. Both the oral report and the written components are evaluated by the social studies teacher and the librarian.

EIGHTH-GRADE RESEARCH. The students engage in an interdisciplinary research project with the purpose of refining skills while producing a written research report using materials from our school and community libraries. The students may choose a topic of interest. We visit the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and students must use both print and electronic resources, implementing the correct citation format for each. The use of in-text citation and the creation of “annotated works cited” are introduced. The final project includes both a three- to five-page persuasive essay and a free choice creation component. All written work must be completed on a word processor.

PERFORMING ARTS

Grounded in the National Standards for Arts Education, the Middle School performing arts curriculum is designed to assist students in developing the vocabulary, skills and attitudes necessary for a high level of accomplishment and a deep level of understanding and appreciation of music, dance, and theater arts. Students in sixth grade take one trimester each of dance, drama and music. Students in seventh and eighth grade take one trimester each of music and drama, and may elect further study in dance. In addition, the performing arts department provides many opportunities for ensemble performance in instrumental and vocal music, dance, and musical theater.

DANCE IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

DANCE 6 - DANCE “FUN”DAMENTALS. All sixth-graders take Dance “Fun”Damentals class two times per week for a trimester. Classes will extend the kinetic playfulness learned in the Lower School and begin to explore various genres of dance including ballet, musical theater, tap, jazz, social dance, hip hop, and modern dance. Students will increase cardiovascular endurance, flexibility, strength, rhythm, coordination, balance and body awareness/comfort while investigating the cultural value of dance.

DANCE 7 - Strength, Flexibility and Coordination Through American Dance

Seventh-graders meet two times per week for a trimester. This course is an introduction to American dance and to national and local American dancers. Students will continue to work on proper technique, including alignment, strength, flexibility, coordination, and kinesthetic awareness while incorporating different dance styles. All students will research the historical background of American dance and view selected works from the Dance Video Archives, gaining an understanding and appreciation of the cultural value of dance.

DANCE 8 - Culture, Coordination and Creativity Through Dance Technique

Eighth-graders meet two times per week for a trimester. Classes will study expert dancers and choreographers of various styles through video observation. Styles will include musical theater, classical, percussion dance, swing dancing, jitterbug, MTV music video, and many others including the popular *Dancing With the Stars* and *So You Think You Can Dance*. Students will learn proper technique and will experiment with a variety of dance styles, learn skills, and create their own choreography. Goals and objectives include increasing physical strength, improving rhythm and coordination, developing body awareness/comfort, gaining an understanding of conventional dance steps, investigating the cultural value of dance, and developing an appreciation for the performing arts.

DRAMA IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL.

DRAMA 6. Sixth-graders take drama classes two times per week for a trimester. The purpose of this class is to explore several aspects of drama production through audition, rehearsal, and performance. Acting skills will be developed through individual and group exercises, games, and activities. Work on monologues, scenes, skits, and improvisations will provide further opportunity for exploration. Emphasis will be placed on building confidence and imagination, learning basic theater terminology, and developing sensory memory.

DRAMA 7. Seventh-graders take drama classes two times per week for a trimester and deepen their understanding of character development, culminating in a fully staged presentation of small group scenes. The purpose of this class is to explore several aspects of drama production through audition, rehearsal, and performance. Acting skills will be developed through individual and group exercises, games, and activities. Work on monologues, scenes, skits, and improvisations will provide further opportunity for exploration. Students continue to develop skills from sixth grade and deepen their understanding of character development. Stage movement, gesture, storytelling, and scene development are all a part of the seventh-grade drama curriculum.

DRAMA 8. Eighth-graders take drama classes two times per week for a trimester. The purpose of this class is to explore several aspects of drama production through audition, rehearsal, and performance. Acting skills will be developed through individual and group exercises, games, and activities. Work on monologues, scenes, skits, and improvisations will provide further opportunity for exploration. Students develop and present original scripts and begin studying technical and design elements. Eighth-grade drama students also complete a major project on an aspect of theater history of their choice: Shakespearean theater, ancient Greek theater, or multicultural theater.

MUSIC IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

MUSIC 6. Sixth-graders take music classes two times per week for a trimester. The sixth-grade music curriculum focuses on the basic elements of music. Students learn by listening to recorded music, studying and creating basic rhythm patterns, and through written material and activities based on the textbook. These materials will be augmented by listening to outside music sources in the classical, jazz, and rock genres for timbre, texture and form identification. Students will be introduced to composing using our state-of-the-art electronic MIDI stations. A unit examining the function of song in American musical theater focuses on "The Music Man." Students use problem-solving skills to accomplish authentic musical tasks throughout the trimester: creating (composing, improvising, and arranging music), performing (singing and playing music), and responding (analyzing, interpreting, and critiquing music and musical performance). In addition, students expand their knowledge of musical contexts (personal, social, cultural, and historical), aesthetics, and the creative process.

MUSIC 7. Seventh-graders take music classes two times per week for a trimester. The seventh-grade music curriculum looks more deeply at the elements of music learned in the sixth grade, examining the development of music in an historical context. Students will continue exploring the compositional process on our state-of-the-art electronic MIDI stations, completing a short original piece. A unit examining the function of song in American musical theater focuses on "Bye Bye Birdie." Students use problem-solving skills to accomplish authentic musical tasks throughout the trimester: creating (composing, improvising, and arranging music), performing (singing and playing music), and responding (analyzing, interpreting, and critiquing music and musical performance). In addition, students expand their knowledge of musical contexts (personal, social, cultural, and historical), aesthetics, and the creative process.

MUSIC 8. Eighth-graders take music classes two times per week for a trimester. The eighth-grade music curriculum continues to expand on the understanding of the elements of music, looking through the lens of composer, performer, and critic. Students will study some of the important musical styles that have grown out of our nation's unique cultural perspective, including folk songs, classical music, popular music, jazz, and American musical theater (students study the musical *West Side Story*). In addition, students will consider other musical voices in a study of world music. Finally, students will begin to explore their unique musical voices, creating their own musical compositions using our state-of-the-art electronic MIDI stations. Students use problem-solving skills to accomplish authentic musical tasks: creating (composing, improvising, and arranging music), performing (singing and playing music), and responding (analyzing, interpreting, and critiquing music and musical performance). Students expand their knowledge of musical contexts (persona, social, cultural, and historical), aesthetics, and the creative process.

MIDDLE SCHOOL MUSICAL. The Middle School musical is exciting for the entire Middle School community. All students are encouraged to audition as performers on stage and volunteer as members of the production crews backstage. This musical is a team creation that blends drama, song, and dance with elements of scenery, costumes, and technical design. Auditions for on-stage performers are held in early September. Crew opportunities, including scenery, costumes, props, publicity, lighting, sound, and stage crew, are announced in October. Students who are interested in participating in the Middle School Musical are strongly encouraged to join a performing arts ensemble.

VISUAL ARTS

The primary function of the visual arts program is to nurture a student's capacity to make expressive forms. Instruction, discipline, and direction are fundamental in the development of this ability. Students use the elements of art to develop a visual literacy by viewing the works of a particular artist, artistic period, or culture, and using the art as inspiration.

SIXTH-GRADE ART - Composition. Students in sixth grade focus on elements of composition as they create two- and three-dimensional works of art using a wide variety of media. Projects are inspired by the work of various twentieth century and ancient artists as students explore personal expression of ideas and stories. Both individual and group work is included in the curriculum. Hand-on learning is supplemented by gallery visits, lectures, discussions, critiques, videos, and various writing assignments.

SEVENTH-GRADE ART - Line. Students in seventh grade focus on line and methods of mark-making as they create two- and three-dimensional works of art using a wide variety of media. Projects are inspired by folk art traditions of colonial Americans, Latin Americans, and twentieth-century artists. Both individual and group work is included in the curriculum. Hands-on learning is supplemented by gallery visits, lectures, discussions, critiques, videos, and various writing assignments.

EIGHTH-GRADE ART - Color and Pattern. Students in eighth grade focus on the use of color and pattern in the visual arts as they create two- and three-dimensional works of art using a wide variety of media. Local art exhibitions, a museum study trip to Washington, D.C., and the work of various contemporary artists inspires student work. Both individual and group work is included in the curriculum. The act of creation is supplemented by museum visits, lectures, discussions, critiques, videos, and various writing assignments.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education contributes to the total well-being of all students through their participation in activities designed to meet their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs. Unlike other curricular areas, physical education is the only one to satisfy these needs primarily through physical movement. The role of physical education is to foster cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength and endurance, lifetime skills, sports-related skills, stress management techniques, safety consciousness, and standards of fair play through activities and sequential learning experiences that are unique to our domain. Through developmental consultation, the students will acquire the knowledge and principles of human performance that will enable them to effectively select and practice lifetime fitness.

The physical education curriculum will enable students to:

- Improve personal fitness (muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and cardio-respiratory and cardiovascular conditioning) according to ability level.
- Develop fundamental motor skills for stress reduction and participation in lifetime activities or sports.
- Experience a wide range of physical activities that will enable each individual to make informed choices about selection and level of involvement.
- Observe and maintain high standards of safety and fair play.

ATHLETICS. The athletics department, working to meet the developmental needs of students in each age group, strives to promote participation, competition and fair play, responsibility, and acquisition of skills. Middle School students are encouraged to join one interscholastic sports team per season. Team offerings for girls include field hockey, cross country, soccer, basketball, and lacrosse. Offerings for boys include soccer, basketball, cross country, and lacrosse. In addition, Middle School students are encouraged to participate in non-competitive, instructional clinics in swimming, tennis, golf, and fencing.

HEALTH

Seventh-grade health classes address stress and stress management and students learn to identify common stressors and their effects on the body. Students are introduced to healthy ways to deal with stress and are taught specific techniques to reduce stress levels when necessary. They then engage in a dialogue on substance abuse that focuses on prescription and over-the-counter drugs, their use and abuse, and the reasons they are prevalent in our society. The term concludes with a unit on prejudice and harassment in which students explore its history in our society and its effects within a school environment.

Eight-grade health classes explore the dynamics affecting adolescent relationships and then progress to a substance abuse unit in which students learn to identify and understand the effects of the class of drugs commonly called “club” or “designer” drugs. Students also learn about nutritional issues and the causes and effects of eating disorders common to both adults and adolescents.

ELECTIVES

Students must take an ensemble for an entire year and/or one elective each trimester.

FIRST TRIMESTER

PROGRAMMING WITH ALICE (6, 7, 8). This is an introductory course for learning to program with animation. Students create animation projects using Alice, a software package for creating animation in small virtual worlds using 3-D models in Pixar and Disney animation styles. The emphasis of this course is learning to manipulate animated figures to create stories at a level that meets students’ interests and programming abilities and challenges them to try new things.

ROBO CHALLENGE 1 (6, 7, 8). This course is simple but stimulating. Students build machines with Lego blocks, gears, and motors and then connect those machines with wires and an interface box to a computer that speaks a dialect of Logo. Using a few simple commands, motors are turned on and off and their direction reversed. Thinking skills and logical problem-solving are emphasized. *This class is limited to 12 students.*

ACADEMIC GAMES (6, 7, 8). This class will focus on having fun learning with academic games. We will prepare for the semi-annual Knowledge Master Open, as well as learn some of the games from WFF ‘N PROOF publishers such as WFF ‘N PROOF and EQUATIONS.

MATHCOUNTS (6, 7, 8). The focus is on mathematical content necessary to successfully compete in the regional MathCounts competition held each February. Math topics include computational shortcuts, number theory, probability and statistics, patterns in geometry and algebra, solving equations and simplifying expressions, and problem solving strategies. This class is best suited for students who have a strong interest and ability in math and would like to explore problems not typically seen in the regular math classroom.

THE GLOBAL SCHOOL HOUSE (7, 8). As a class, students will be paired with an international school to help solve an emerging global issue outlined in the book *High Noon 20/20*. This interdisciplinary, team-taught elective incorporates an experiential curriculum by partnering with another school in the world. As an extension of the NAIS

Challenge 20/20 program, students will tackle a real world problem and learn about cross cultural communication as citizens of the world working together in a global community. Possible topics may include water deficits, global infectious diseases, and global warming.

LEADERSHIP (7, 8). What makes someone a good leader? What is leadership? How do you become a leader? Students will explore the answers to these questions and more as they discover the importance of leadership and its role in society. The course will examine fundamental components of leadership and discuss the elements that historical figures possessed to make them effective and great leaders. Students will be expected to develop a personal definition of leadership in addition to researching a great leader of their choice and sharing their findings with others.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE (6, 7, 8). Are you are interested in making a difference about issues that impact the environment and you? For instance, why doesn't Pennsylvania have a bottle bill to recycle plastic bottles and aluminum cans? What can we do about the 8 billion pounds of non-biodegradable plastic bags and wraps enter the waste stream every year? As a group we will discuss the issues that are important to middle school students, and find out how to be advocates to promote a cause to improve our environment.

STUDY SKILLS (6). The development of strong organizational and study habits is essential to the success of Middle School students. This course will provide incoming sixth graders with tips, techniques, and suggestions to help them identify personal goals and strategies. Students will be presented with study skills cards and organizational practices.

MOCK TRIAL (6, 7, 8). *(must enroll in all three trimesters)* This elective offers students a chance to develop public speaking skills through the excitement of a mock trial. Students will spend time exploring various debate and public speaking techniques and analyzing basic court procedure. The culminating event will be a mock trial based on the Pennsylvania mock trial materials. Some activities in this elective will vary based on the number and grade level of students enrolled.

ART INSPIRED BY THE CARNEGIE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBIT (7, 8). Students will create original artworks in different media inspired by works seen at the Carnegie International exhibit, "Life on Mars." The exhibit consists of works made by 40 artists from 17 different countries. The overall theme relates to how we as humans think about and relate to the universe.

Students will view the exhibit and will participate in related discussions/ visits. The works created from this class will be installed in various locations around the school campus. A

public exhibition reception will also be held to celebrate the completed works. *This class is limited to 10 students.*

FAR EAST ANIMATION (6, 7, 8) Explore the history of the Far East through animation. Students will view a variety of animations and anime films from China, Korea, and Japan to compare and contrast. The course will take a closer look at film production and political influences, how the creators were influenced by the historical events of their countries, and the messages the artists were trying to convey.

STUDIO ART (6, 7, 8). Students explore various projects intended to enhance their visual skills and drawing abilities, such as line drawings, shaded drawings, cartoons, scale, and perspective drawings. Students use a variety of drawing media for in-class and take-home assignments to create a portfolio for the trimester. Students' observational skills are developed through the exploration of subjects such as still life, landscape, and the human form as well as through the creation of original pieces. Students are encouraged to develop an expressive style and explore their own creativity.

SECOND TRIMESTER

ENGLISH FESTIVAL (6, 7, 8). *(must enroll both second and third trimester)* Students in this elective will prepare for and participate in the annual English Festival sponsored by the Western Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English. Most of this elective will focus on reading and analyzing the five books chosen by the WPCTE for 2009. On the day of the competition, the student will engage in activities based on the reading they have done. These activities include reenactment of scenes from the books, trivia competitions, artistic expressions of the books, and more. Students will also have the opportunity to prepare for and participate in individual activities related to the event.

MATHCOUNTS (6, 7, 8). This class focuses on mathematical content necessary to successfully compete in the regional MathCounts competition held every February. Math topics include computational shortcuts, number theory, probability and statistics, patterns in geometry and algebra, solving equations and simplifying expressions, and problem solving strategies. This class is best suited for students who have a strong interest and ability in math and would like to explore problems not typically seen in the regular math classroom.

ACADEMIC GAMES (6, 7, 8). This class will focus on having fun learning with academic games. We will prepare for the semiannual Knowledge Master Open as well as learn some of the games from WFF 'N PROOF publishers such as WFF 'N PROOF and EQUATIONS.

DIVERSITY AND MULTICULTURALISM (7, 8). This course will explore the complex meaning of diversity and

students' roles in a diverse society. Students will begin to understand how each individual's background and experience contributes to a rich and diverse learning environment. Focus will include the study of the differences that set us apart and the similarities that we share and which bring us together as a community. Students will study the following aspects of diversity: cultural, social, economic, geographic, gender, religious, physical ability, and family life. The course will be primarily discussion based and will offer opportunities for self reflection. Videos will also be used to provoke discussion. Grades will be based on class participation, a journal, and a quiz.

ASIAN STUDIES (7, 8). Who is on the other side of the world? What cultures make up more than 20% of the world's population? This course will provide a survey of Southeastern Asian cultures primarily through the study of history, literature, geography, custom, and art. Students will have the opportunity to learn about and compare cultures as they explore the similarities and differences found in each.

GREAT CLASSICS (6, 7, 8). Do you love to read and want to broaden your horizons? In this elective we will discover various types of literature beyond the current best selling titles. We will explore some authors and their books that are considered classics of literature. Various authors that may be considered include Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, H.G. Wells, Louisa May Alcott, and George Orwell, to name a few. The choice will be made by the class!

THE ART OF EAST ASIA (6, 7, 8). Where did the design for Darth Vader's costume come from? How is the samurai sword made? These are a few of the many discoveries the students will make when viewing a variety of art and artifacts from China, Korea, and Japan. The course will highlight artwork from the seventh to fifteenth centuries and will ask the students to participate in a variety of activities, including a traditional tea ceremony. It will give the students a sense of how art has influenced our lives.

HANDMADE JOURNALS AND BOOK MAKING (7, 8). The students will learn techniques for creating hand-made journals and books using a variety of techniques and materials. Students will work with guided instructions and will have time for experimental, independent work.

MOVIE MAKING (6, 7, 8). Students will get an opportunity to create their own animation through Windows Movie Maker. They will be introduced to a variety of ways to capture digital data through audio recorders and video and digital cameras. With this collection of information the students will learn how to import it, edit information, add video clips, create video effects, and more! Each student will have his or her own unique animation that can be viewed anywhere.

WRITING INTENSIVE (7, 8). This elective offers students a chance to work on strengthening basic technical and organizational aspects of their writing in a smaller setting and is offered to students primarily through teacher referral. This class will include language mechanic issues such as punctuation and sentence structure as well as exercises in organizing writing. Lessons will be organized around the theme of journalism, and students will produce a newspaper.

THIRD TRIMESTER

CREATIVE WRITING (6, 7, 8). This elective allows budding writers the chance to write and share their stories and poems! Taught in workshop style where students work on pieces of their choice guided by the instructor, the class will include creative writing exercises, visits from professional writers, and practice in giving constructive feedback. The members of the class will also help in publishing a collection of student work. *This class is limited to 10 students.*

MOSAICS 101 (6, 7, 8). Students will explore the process of making mosaics using several techniques. Individual projects will be made in various sizes based on assigned themes. Students will create functional and non-functional mosaics using various glass and ceramic materials. Local mosaic artist Laura Jean McLaughlin will visit the class to demonstrate her mosaic techniques. *This class is limited to 10 students.*

WEB DESIGN (6, 7, 8). Students will use the Internet and the most current research tools to gather information that relates to their academic interests, hobbies, or personal strengths. They will also use this information to create research reports or electronic portfolios using word processors, HTML editors, and a variety of graphic tools. The final product will be suitable for posting on the Internet as a resource for other students. This elective is intended to be an introductory class.

ETHICS IN AMERICAN SOCIETY (6, 7, 8). This course will provide students with the language and tools to use when faced with ethical dilemmas. Knowing that practice builds confidence and skill, students will be asked to address ethical issues that they face on a daily basis as they pose and create their own ethical questions.

ASIAN LITERATURE (6, 7, 8). Students will learn about Asian culture, history, and society through literature. The course will incorporate texts that reflect a variety of genres including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and philosophy. Areas of study will include Japan, China, and Korea.

ROBO CHALLENGE 2 (6, 7, 8). *Prerequisite: Robo Challenge 1.* This is the second course in the robotics sequence in the Middle School.

ACADEMIC GAMES (6, 7, 8). This class will focus on having fun learning with academic games. We will prepare for the semiannual Knowledge Master Open as well as learn some of the games from WFF 'N PROOF publishers such as WFF 'N PROOF and EQUATIONS.

JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT (7, 8). Students are enrolled in two Junior Achievement courses: Economics for Success and Global Marketplace:

JA Economics for Success explores personal finance and students' education and career options based on their skills, interests, and values. JA Economics for Success is a series of six activities recommended for students in grades six, seven, and eight.

JA Global Marketplace is designed to provide practical information about the key aspects of the global economy, what makes world trade work, and how trade affects students' daily lives.

ZINES (6, 7, 8). It is all about you! Do you have a story to tell and want everyone to hear it? Then you need to create your own 'zine. The 'zine is one of the oldest forms of printmaking and has been used as a tool to communicate various ideas since paper was invented. In this course students will create their own unique "magazine" that highlights information or a story they would like to share with the community. Through printmaking techniques, computer application, and a variety of mixed media, students will have several copies of their unique book ready to sell to the public.

DIGITAL MEDIA (6, 7, 8). This elective will introduce students to Adobe Photoshop. Students will learn how to graphically enhance their digital images through a variety of bitmap and image manipulations. Through the variety of filters, layering, and various other tools Photoshop offers, the students will be able to create original artwork, correct color, and retouch and composite scanned images.

PERFORMING ARTS ENSEMBLES

(Year-Long Commitment)

MIDDLE SCHOOL CHORUS (6, 7, 8). The Middle School chorus is open to all Middle School students who are interested in being a member of a vocal ensemble. Students will learn music of various styles, languages and time periods as they prepare to perform in the winter and spring WT concerts and in other outside performances. Participation in scheduled dress rehearsals and performances is required of all Middle School chorus members.

SIXTH-GRADE DANCE ENSEMBLE (6). The sixth-grade dance ensemble is open to all sixth-grade students who are interested in performing. The ensemble meets two times during a 10-day cycle. Class time will be spent creating and rehearsing dance pieces and learning combinations and routines to be performed in various showcases

throughout the school year. Previous experience is not necessary. Students will be placed in pieces appropriate to their ability. Participation in scheduled dress rehearsals and performances is required of all dance ensemble members.

SEVENTH-GRADE DANCE ENSEMBLE (7). The seventh-grade dance ensemble is open to all seventh-grade students who are interested in performing. The ensemble meets two times during a 10-day cycle and provides students with at least two opportunities to perform throughout the year. Class time will be spent developing and rehearsing various dance works chosen by the instructor. Students will use the development of these pieces to learn vital dance skills including partnering, performance qualities, and technique. Students will be placed in pieces appropriate to their ability. Participation in scheduled dress rehearsals and performances is required of all dance ensemble members.

EIGHTH-GRADE DANCE ENSEMBLE (8). The eighth-grade dance ensemble is open to all eighth-grade students who are interested in performing. The ensemble meets two times during a 10-day cycle. Class time will be spent creating and rehearsing dance pieces and learning combinations and routines to be performed in various showcases throughout the school year. Previous experience is not necessary. Students will be placed in pieces appropriate to their ability. Participation in scheduled dress rehearsals and performances is required of all dance ensemble members.

MIDDLE SCHOOL ORCHESTRA (6, 7, 8). The Middle School orchestra is open to all Middle School students who are currently taking lessons on a musical instrument and are interested in performing as a member of an ensemble. Although the focus of our rehearsals is to prepare for our winter and spring performances, fundamental musical terminology, music reading, interpretation, expression and beginning improvisation will be included. Classical, folk, jazz, and contemporary music are incorporated in our endeavor to make the music-making experience a positive, enjoyable and memorable one. Participation in scheduled dress rehearsals and performances is required of all Middle School orchestra members.