

Middle School Curriculum Guide

ENGLISH

The Middle School English curriculum takes students through a hierarchical foundation of skill development in the areas of critical reading, analytical writing, vocabulary acquisition, academic argument, and the study of grammar, punctuation and usage. There are two categories of classes in the English department: Language Arts and English. All Middle School students take an English course each school year.

English 6 consists primarily of reading and vocabulary skills. Teachers place a strong emphasis on in-text annotations to both teach and assess understanding of literary concepts. Students are often required to verbalize their analysis of the text, both in small groups and in whole-class discussions. Teachers introduce literary terminology and concepts in English 6, and students apply these concepts to demonstrate understanding of assigned text. Teachers in English 6 and English 7 use a cross-curricular approach, engaging students in reading that relates to their World Cultures curriculum. Teachers are actively seeking diverse multicultural and global literature to incorporate into the Middle School curriculum.

English 7 and English 8 build upon the skills in English 6. Students continue to develop complex textual analyses using annotations and other evidence-gathering techniques. Beginning in English 7, students are taught formal discussion expectations through a structured rubric. During graded discussions, students present their opinions to the class. They then respond to classmates and teacher prompts. Using the discussion rubric, teachers assess students based on their ability to use multiple examples from the text to support their viewpoints. Teachers also assess vocabulary, organization, and poise during graded discussions. Within all of these academic areas and more, teachers use educational technology (iPad apps), where appropriate, to enhance student learning. In this way, multiple discourse skills are addressed. In addition to this method of assessment, English 7 and English 8 teachers rely heavily on writing performance to guide instruction and planning. Middle School English teachers have worked together to develop standard rubrics for use in Grades 6, 7, and 8, respectively. These rubrics build on each other, becoming more complex and nuanced. Teachers continually adjust rubrics based upon student performance and needs, as well as feedback from their cohorts in the English department. Teachers work with their colleagues across curricula and subject areas, but they would like to continue to foster more collaboration. Revision is imbedded in the writing process and is incentivized through score improvements after final drafts are graded. Writing is the lynchpin of grammar instruction in English 7 and 8.

Students who do not enroll in a World Language class in 7th or 8th grade take Language Arts 7 or Language Arts 8. These classes provide a greater foundation in grammar, mechanics, and writing instruction.

In all Middle School English/Language Arts courses, students complete a variety of formative and summative assessments. Formative assessments provide students and teachers the opportunity to apply learning and evaluate growth. Teachers use the results of formative assessments to implement change in curriculum and modify instruction. Concurrently, teachers use summative assessments to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of curriculum and set long-term goals. Teachers strive to provide a wide variety of formative and summative assessments in order to reach the myriad interests and learning styles of students.

MATHEMATICS

The Oak Hall Middle School Mathematics Program sequence is as follows: Math 6, Advanced Pre-Algebra 6, Math 7, Advanced Pre-Algebra 7, Pre-Algebra (for Grade 8 students not ready for Algebra), and Algebra 1. Students are placed in the course that best suits their current level and are re-evaluated each year based on the results of the year, assessment test scores or a teacher readiness designed test, to ensure correct placement the following school year. Each course covers a vast range of topics including number sense, equation solving, geometric concepts, and real-world applications. Teachers emphasize efficient and flexible problem-solving strategies, recognizing different learning styles, to promote creative and critical thinking skills. Students are assessed through various methods including daily class/homework assignments, note taking journals, iPad activities, group and individual projects, periodic quizzes, and chapter tests. The results of these assessments guide lesson plans.

Math 6 focuses on the tools needed as the students progress through the Oak Hall Math Program. Integer operations, equation and inequality solving, statistical analysis, data displays, two-dimensional geometry, real world application for mathematical skills, and multiple-step problem solving are some of the major topics covered in this course.

In Advanced Pre-Algebra 6 and 7, students will be introduced to algebra concepts and a review of arithmetic algorithms. The course emphasizes the concepts necessary to be successful in Algebra I and II with an emphasis on critical thinking and problem-solving.

Math 7 builds on the skills learned in Math 6. Students expand on their knowledge of multi-step equation/inequality solving, real-world mathematics application, geometric transformations, basic trigonometry, three-dimensional geometry, and probability. Students also complete individual and group projects covering geometric constructions and data analysis/displays that employ various learning styles.

The purpose of Pre-Algebra is to improve and expand the mathematical thinking skills of each student. Topics include properties and operations within the real number system, proportional reasoning with similarity, rates and ratios, algebraic expressions, equations and inequalities. Additionally, students use statistics and sampling to make inferences about data. An overriding objective is to foster a constructive problem-solving attitude in students so that they will become more confident and tenacious in applying mathematical concepts. We emphasize the importance of identifying the question as a critical first step in the problem-solving process. We explore various methods that could be used for solving real-life issues involving mathematics.

Algebra 1 is an Upper School level course that provides formal development of the algebraic skills/concepts. The emphasis at this level is a thorough grounding in the methods of mathematical expression and connections found among different theories. The concept of function and function notation is emphasized. The course study includes operations with polynomials, solving/graphing linear equations/inequalities, linear systems, exponential properties/functions, quadratics, and radicals. Real life applications are stressed with emphasis on representation and various methods for solving the problems. Geometry is traditionally an Upper School course and Middle School students take the class with Upper School students. This year, due to enrollment a Middle School Geometry class is being taught in Middle School using Upper School curriculum.

Students who take Algebra I in the 7th grade matriculate to either Geometry or Geometry Honors in the Upper School.

SCIENCE

The Middle School science curriculum follows the sequence of Earth/Space Science, Life Science, and Physical Science. Additionally, all 6th grade students take a year-long STEM class as a core part of the curriculum. Elective STEM classes are offered to 7th and 8th grade students. Teachers emphasize mastery of the scientific method through regular inquiry-based labs and hands-on activities that require students to collect accurate data, properly display that data in hand-drawn and computer-assisted tables and graphs and analyze and draw conclusions based on collected data. Multiple methods of assessment are used, including unit tests, lab logbook documentation, peer-to-peer evaluations, debate and seminar performances, and individual and group projects.

During grade 6, students study different topics in earth and space science including mineralogy, meteorology, astronomy, geology, and oceanography. Students use their knowledge of the properties of minerals to identify unknown samples. Students utilize the scientific method to create procedures and collect data. Students practice public speaking and create models. Students combine creative writing and science.

In Grade 7, students learn about the natural world by discovering the characteristics of living organisms and how scientists have classified them. During this year, the classes participate in many observational studies, dissections, and inquiry-based labs. Students learn about the basic structures in plant and animal cells and the basic needs of living organisms. The classes end the year with an overview of the basic functions of the body systems and how all of the systems work together to maintain homeostasis.

Physical Science is studied during Grade 8. This year begins with a survey of physics topics including motion, forces, work, simple machines, and energy. The second semester covers chemistry topics including matter, states of matter, gas laws, periodic table of elements, chemical bonding, and chemical reactions. Several times a year, engineering projects are assigned. Physical Science requires students to apply scientific knowledge and research to solve various challenges.

A year-long STEM class has been added to the core curriculum in the 6th grade. Some of the units in this class include CAD design, structures & engineering, game theory, coding, food science, wood shop, and rocketry & robotics. In the 7th and 8th grade, students may enroll in semester long STEM elective courses. These classes are designed to encourage innovation and design with the use of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

The Middle School Advanced Math & Science Program is available to qualified students who want both an additional challenge and an accelerated curriculum. The sequence for the program is as follows:

Advanced Math and Science Program

Oak Hall Middle School offers a multi-level Math and Science Program of advanced options. These options give faculty, students, and families more flexibility when determining the best academic pathway for students in Math and Science during the middle school years. Placement determinations are made based on assessment data, student passions and interests, and teacher recommendations.

Grade Level	Math Sequence	Science Sequence
6	Advanced Pre-Algebra 6	Advanced Earth Science 6
7	Pre-Algebra 7 Algebra I	Advanced Life Science 7 Advanced Physical Science 8*
8	Pre-Algebra 8 Algebra I Geometry Honors	Advanced Physical Science 8 Biology Honors

SOCIAL STUDIES

The Middle School social studies sequence begins with World Cultures 6. This class focuses upon the evolution of eastern cultures and includes the examination of their histories, physical geographies, and cultural development. The following year, students explore western civilization in World Cultures 7. The geographic division of east and west into two separate yearlong courses allows for greater depth and comparative analyses. Eighth graders study American history from the first encounters between Europeans and Native Americans through the Reconstruction Era. As students progress through the sequence, the assignments and intellectual challenges increase in difficulty. The Middle School social studies experience culminates with a four-day excursion to Georgia and Tennessee to visit historical sites.

The fundamental aims of the Middle School social studies program in grades 6 through 8 are instilling in students a passion for learning, fostering their sense of connectedness to the world in which we live, and developing skills necessary for success in their future scholastic endeavors. Since passion for learning grows when learning is fun, many in class curricular activities are designed to allow students to enjoy positive social interactions. A sense of connectedness to the world grows when students find relevance between their course of study and their lives outside of school. Therefore, students complete regular reflective writing assignments in which they are asked to express an opinion, draw a conclusion, make an inference, defend a point of view, relate the past to the present, or apply information.

One of the most important skills necessary for academic success is critical analysis, or critical thinking. The source method serves as one of the tools for developing this skill. Students are frequently presented with a copy of a primary source document related to our current unit of study. Another important skill is learning from a textbook. In order to develop this skill, techniques for active reading are modeled and practiced in the classroom on a regular basis. Other important skills, which are addressed on a regular basis include: observing proper etiquette while interacting with peers and teachers; finding ways to participate effectively during various types of classroom activities; developing and maintaining an effective organizational system for class work and class materials; and effectively utilizing various iPad applications to produce and digitally transmit written work.

WORLD LANGUAGES

In the Middle School our focus is on equipping students for the transition from introductory material to a course of study which will prepare them for proficiency at the upper levels. The Introduction to Foreign Languages course in Grade 6 is designed to give students a feel for the basic principles of Chinese, Latin, and Spanish. Students in this class are exposed to the basic vocabulary and cultural legacies of all three languages. The goals of this class are to provide our students with a better understanding of language and culture in a global world and to help them select a language for future study.

In Grades 7 and 8, students complete a two-year sequence in Chinese, Latin, and/or Spanish that prepares them for Level II in Grade 9. All three languages focus on cultural heritage in addition to the acquisition of language skills. In Spanish, a strong emphasis is placed on using the language in practical situations. The Chinese curriculum emphasizes word recognition and conversational aspects of the language while introducing basic writing principles and simple words to ease the process of learning non-alphabetical words. The Latin curriculum is based on a traditional approach, placing a strong emphasis on reading the language at sight. In all three languages, students are guided in learning with various internet resources and other technological aids, including online practica, iPads, and buzzer (quiz wizard) games. All three languages provide enriching opportunities for students to grow outside of the classroom. Spanish, Latin, and Chinese students maintain a very active and successful competition schedule.

FINE ARTS

The Fine Arts curriculum provides students in the Middle School with robust opportunities in Music, Theater, and Visual Arts. In the 6th grade, each student takes music, theater, and art on a rotating wheel. The following are descriptions of each course:

Art 6 is meant to further develop artistic skills following Lower School art. Students will be introduced to media and ways of making art. We will learn and use the elements and principles of art and design to plan visual projects. Painting and Drawing, and 3-D projects are part of this hands-on studio practice daily. Students will learn new skills and focus on art production of items that can be a keepsake of their time at Oak Hall.

Art 7 is a foundational art course that is designed to give students a better understanding of a variety of rich, unique and diverse cultures around the world. Each creative project begins by examining the history, geography, culture, religion and political developments of various cultures around the globe. Projects are also designed to help students gain an appreciation and understanding of the unique art forms and aesthetics of these different cultures while realizing how connected they are to our own.

In Art 8 students will explore creative projects using a variety of media for self-expression. Projects and skills taught will enable students to create a personal art and prepare for Upper School Visual Art courses. Students will work in a cooperative and safe environment, and care of equipment and materials will be part of daily studio routine. Use of art terminology and a greater control of tools will be emphasized. Students will use paint, textiles, and other media to create keepsakes with new skills learned in class. Hands-on studio practice daily will be the focus of art production of items that students that can be a keepsake of their time at Oak Hall.

6th grade students participate in Performing Arts for one quarter of the year. Each quarter includes an introduction to theatre vocabulary and acting terminology as well as dramatic structure. A variety of improvisation exercises are introduced based on the work of Viola Spolin. Students are also instructed in the basics of creating characters. Students work alongside their peers and with the instructor to build self-confidence, and fundamental theater skills. The skills learned in this class will be showcased during the final performance, open to the public, at the conclusion of the quarter. Additionally, students enrolled in Performing Arts during the first two quarters will have the opportunity to compete at the Florida Junior Thespian Festival in December.

7th grade students are offered Performing Arts on a semester basis. This course will simultaneously broaden and deepen the student's performing arts experience. The semester continues to expand student improvisation skills by introducing more complex Viola Spolin exercises and introductory Augusto Boal activities. Students engage in a deeper collaborative process with scene partners in order to analyze text and make character choices based on their findings. Students work alongside their peers to develop artistic relationships and learn to creatively collaborate in order to positively affect both process and product. Additionally, students will engage in beginning Process Drama, developed by Dorothy Heathcote and Cecily O'Neill, in order to explore a wide range of themes and ideas. The skills learned in this class will be showcased during a final performance, open to the public, at the conclusion of each semester. Additionally, students enrolled in Performing Arts during the fall will have the opportunity to compete at the Florida Junior Thespian Festival in December.

8th grade students are offered Performing Arts on a semester basis. Throughout the year, continued Viola Spolin and Augusto Boal activities broaden the students understanding of creation and collaboration in addition to nurturing a constant creative thought process. Students are instructed on how to properly score a script in order to identify beats and performance vocabulary is reviewed and expanded. Acting exercises developed by Uta Hagen and Constantine Stanislavsky will form the foundation of this class. Students will work alongside the instructor and their peers in order to create nuanced character work stemming from original and published

material. Students will continue to focus on exploring issues and ideas through Process Drama, working alongside the instructor and their peers to develop an understanding that art is a form of communication from the past, for the present, and to the future. The skills learned in this class will be showcased during a final performance, open to the public, at the conclusion of each semester.

In 6th grade music students will explore fundamentals of instrumental/vocal music performance. During class they will get an opportunity to play on any instrument they want including woodwind, brass, strings, and percussion! Eventually they will choose an instrument (or voice) of concentration for the quarter and begin learning how to read notes and rhythms. The quarter culminates with a performance in front of a large audience at one of our flagship concerts. Classes will also get the opportunity to record in a studio environment.

In 7th grade, music students will begin, or continue to study an instrument/voice of their choosing with concentration on the fundamentals of tone production, rhythmic awareness, sense of pitch, reading notes and rhythms throughout the year. All students will participate in the pep- band first semester and perform at varsity football games. There will be several performances through-out the year for students to showcase their work in front of packed audiences.

8th grade music students will continue to work on an instrument (or voice) of their choosing, developing fundamental and advanced musical techniques. All members of the ensemble will perform with the pep-band at varsity football games during the fall semester. In addition, there will be several concerts throughout the year for students to showcase their work. Eighth grade music students also join our Upper School musicians for a performance in Orlando during the Spring Semester.