Eighth-Grade Curriculum

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**English (MS810):** In eighth grade English, students continue to develop their skills in grammar, composition, literature study, reading comprehension, and vocabulary, as they are introduced to more complex concepts in these areas.

Writing assignments stem from personal experiences as well as literature study. Writing instruction helps students to build skills and strategies for all parts of the writing process as they write paragraphs, essays, and creative pieces that stretch them to develop and communicate their ideas more effectively. Grammar instruction is incorporated into the study of writing, and it addresses more complex concepts such as phrases, clauses, sentence structure, and common writing errors. Students use grammar concepts to enhance their written communication.

Through their study of both classic and contemporary texts, students develop critical thinking, reading comprehension, and vocabulary skills as well as the ability to effectively analyze and discuss literature. Students are encouraged to use each text as a springboard for discussion and examination of our world, human nature, and themselves. Throughout the year, they build on their previous knowledge of literary elements as they are encouraged to develop and defend original interpretations of class texts using textual evidence.

**Advanced English (MS811):** This course is designed for highly motivated students who have demonstrated superior performance in English in writing, reading, grammar, and vocabulary. The course moves at an accelerated pace, and students complete the English 8 curriculum outlined above as well as delving deeply into additional challenging material. Students will develop their skills in critical thinking, literary analysis, discussion, and written expression by examining a variety of literary texts and crafting a number of challenging writing pieces. Students are expected to maintain at least a strong B average to remain in the class.

**Algebra I (B-MS202; G-MS200):** This course is designed to help students develop the fundamentals of algebra. It includes studies of the real number system, simple linear equations and inequalities, systems of equations, graphing first-degree equations and inequalities in one and two variables, operations with and factoring of polynomials, applications problems, and
integral exponents. In addition, this course provides an introduction to trigonometry and functions. The students use graphing calculators to record and display data and to explore the concept of functions and their graphs. In a single-gender setting, students gain an understanding of basic algebraic concepts that will enable them to continue their study of Algebra I or begin a course in geometry in ninth grade. Students who complete the course with an 85 average or above and pass the spring exam will be placed in Geometry. Students who fall below an 85 average and/or fail the spring exam will either move to Upper School Algebra 1 or may be required to do summer work at the discretion of the teacher in order to be eligible for Geometry.

**Advanced Algebra I (B-MS206; G-MS204):** This fast-paced course provides a rigorous study of first year algebra concepts in a single gender setting. Students in this course are expected to think critically and master problem solving that includes: working in the real number system; operations with and factoring of polynomials; first- and second-degree equations in one and two variables; quadratics; systems of equations; graphing first-degree equations and inequalities in one and two variables; irrational numbers; and integral exponents. In addition, students in this course conduct a thorough investigation of trigonometric and quadratic functions, rational expressions and functions, and radical expressions and functions. The students use graphing calculators to record and display data and to explore the concept of functions and their graphs. Advanced Algebra I students complete projects that demonstrate the application of algebra concepts in a “real world” setting. Students who complete the course with an 85 average or above and pass the spring exam will be placed in Honors Geometry. Students who fall below an 85 average and/or fail the spring exam will either move to Geometry or may be required to do summer work at the discretion of the teacher in order to be eligible for Honors Geometry.

**Geometry Honors (MS207):** This fast-paced course focuses on important geometric facts, proofs using deductive reasoning, the integration of algebra and geometry, and applications of geometry. During the year the student will learn the properties of parallel lines, circles, and triangles, parallelograms, and other polygons. These properties will be used to study coordinate geometry, congruency, similarity, right triangle trigonometry, perimeter, area, surface area, and volume. Throughout the course the student will use skills learned in algebra.

**Physical Science (B-MS832; G-MS830):** This course focuses on the composition and behavior of matter in order to answer two fundamental questions, 'What is everything made of?' and 'Why do things happen' (questions taken from A Framework for K-12 Science Education 104). Topics studied include properties of matter, atomic theory, physical versus chemical changes, force, motion, work, and energy. Emphasis is given throughout the course to the use of metric measurement, various methods of data collection and analysis, cross-cutting science concepts, and the practices of science. Incorporation of technology, and real world applications are implemented as well.

**Advanced Physical Science (MS831):** This course is designed for students who are interested in a more challenging and fast-paced science course. Students will be expected to complete full lab write-ups each semester in addition to completing an individual yearlong project. Students
must be able to keep up with the increased demands placed on them and maintain at least a strong B average. This course will also incorporate more advanced level math work into the topics of study.

Civics (MS850) Civics helps students understand how government is directly involved in their lives. Through collaborative opportunities, skill-based instruction, and interdisciplinary projects, 8th grade students further develop academic independence. Civics students learn to think critically by engaging in discussions of current events, public speaking exercises, group simulations, research challenges, and class debates as they work to answer the overarching question: How can we develop our civic voice and best participate as informed citizens?

Chinese IB (MS452): Chinese in the second year continues to focus on the fundamentals of developing listening and speaking skills, learning and using an increasingly sophisticated vocabulary set, and learning how to write another 100–120 characters. Activities will include group projects, skits, society/culture study through current events and short film and television excerpts, and continuing to build individual character notebooks. As in the first year of Chinese, native Chinese speakers will regularly contribute to class by bringing in traditional arts and crafts and by working with the students regularly on Chinese calligraphy.

French IB (MS404): The second year of French study is a continuation and completion of French I. This class focuses on expanding vocabulary and acquiring new grammar competencies through the four skills areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Class activities incorporate authentic texts such as newspapers, advertisements, magazines, songs, and videos, semi-authentic texts such as novels and children’s stories, as well as teacher-prepared texts. In writing and speaking, students focus on the three modes of communication: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. Students continue to work both individually and collaboratively, with class participation remaining an essential part of the class. This course is a preparation for French II coursework in the Upper School. There is also an emphasis on the diverse cultures of the Francophone world.

French II (MS405): The second level of study emphasizes continued development of listening and reading skills, with increased attention given to the development of speaking and writing skills. Class activities incorporate authentic texts such as newspapers, advertisements, magazines, songs, and videos, semi-authentic texts such as novels and children’s stories, as well as teacher-prepared texts. All basic level II grammar concepts are introduced, including the passé composé and the imperfect tenses. More complicated texts are introduced to further enhance students’ reading skills and to develop their analytical skills in the target language through discussions and written compositions. There is also an emphasis on the diverse cultures of the Francophone world. Class discussions and grammar explanations are most often conducted in the target language.

French II Advanced (MS407): The advanced section covers all of the topics included in the regular level while providing more in-depth work at an accelerated pace. Many concepts are extended and developed more completely. Class discussions and grammar explanations are most often conducted in the target language. Class activities incorporate authentic texts such as newspapers, advertisements, magazines, songs, and videos, semi-authentic texts such as novels
and children’s stories, as well as teacher prepared texts. More complicated texts are introduced to further enhance students’ reading skills and to develop their analytical skills in the target language through discussions and written compositions. All basic level II grammar concepts are introduced, including the passé composé and the imperfect tenses. There is also an emphasis on the diverse cultures of the Francophone world.

**Latin I (MS461):** The first year of Latin is an introduction to the reading of the Latin language. This course will emphasize Latin grammar (five noun declensions and all six tenses of verbs in the active voice and indicative mood), syntax, vocabulary, and English derivatives, so that each student can successfully translate and comprehend Latin passages. First-year Latin is also designed to acquaint the student with Roman life, history, and mythology. Study of Latin continues with Latin II in the Upper School.

**Latin IB (MS462):** After a review of the first year of Latin, students move into a new approach. Oral Latin and more reading are the focus, as the goal is a more fluid comprehension of the structure of language. Writing complete sentences in Latin helps students to realize how the endings of Latin words convey the meaning. Some classes take place almost entirely in Latin, much like modern language classes function. Further vocabulary and derivative work encompasses review, application in context, and some new words. The passive voice of verbs is introduced in present, imperfect, and future tenses. Study of Latin continues with Latin II in the Upper School.

**Latin IB Advanced (MS463):** Second-year Latin is a continuation and completion of first-year Latin; new material builds upon the old. After an extensive review, more complex elements of Latin syntax and grammar (verbs in the passive voice, participles, and comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs) are introduced and implemented. Work with vocabulary and English derivatives continues, and more emphasis is given toward translation and understanding of the written language. This class is a preparation for honors course work in the Upper School, culminating in Advanced Placement Latin literature courses.

**Spanish IB (MS424):** The second year of Spanish study is a continuation and completion of Spanish I. This class focuses on expanding vocabulary and acquiring new grammar competencies through the four skills areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Class activities incorporate authentic texts such as newspapers, advertisements, magazines, songs, and videos, semi-authentic texts such as novels and children’s stories, as well as teacher-prepared texts. In writing and speaking, students focus on the three modes of communication: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. Students continue to work both individually and collaboratively, with class participation remaining an essential part of the class. This course is a preparation for Spanish II coursework in the Upper School. Culture is fully integrated into the class.

**Spanish IB Advanced (MS426):** This advanced section covers all of the topics included in the regular level while providing more in-depth work at an accelerated pace. This class focuses on expanding vocabulary and acquiring new grammar competencies through the four skills areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Class activities incorporate authentic texts such as newspapers, advertisements, magazines, songs, and videos, semi-authentic texts such as novels
and children’s stories, as well as teacher-prepared texts. In writing and speaking, students focus on the three modes of communication: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. Students continue to work both individually and collaboratively, with class participation remaining an essential part of the class. More grammar explanations will take place in the target language than at the non-advanced level. This course is a preparation for honors course work in the Upper School. Culture is fully integrated into the class.

**Spanish II Advanced (MS427):** This advanced course mirrors the Spanish II Honors course offered in the Upper School. Class discussions and grammar explanations are most often conducted in the target language. Class activities incorporate authentic texts such as newspapers, advertisements, magazines, songs, and videos, semi-authentic texts such as novels and children’s stories, as well as teacher-prepared texts. More complicated texts are introduced to further enhance students’ reading skills and to develop their analytical skills in the target language through discussions and written compositions. All basic level II grammar concepts are introduced, including the preterit, the imperfect, the future, and the subjunctive tenses. Culture is fully integrated into the class.

**Physical Education/Health (B-MS890; G-MS892):** This course promotes the use of specialized skills in sport and fitness activities. Emphasis is placed on applying movement concepts and principles to real-life situations. A working knowledge of rules and game strategies is developed through participation in a wide variety of activities. Students will accept responsibility for their own personal fitness and actively pursue life-long physical activity to meet their own needs. In addition, current health topics will be covered. Students will participate cooperatively in physical activity with classmates and collaborate to solve problems by analyzing causes and potential solutions. Health topics include nutrition, body awareness, safety, cyber bullying, and awareness of alcohol and drugs.

**Fine Arts and Computer Courses**

**Year-Long Courses**

**Band (MS885):** In this year-long course, students learn basic skills on their individual instruments. Great emphasis is placed on the proper use of breath, rhythm reading, posture, and individual practice habits. Advanced exercises and repertoire designed to emphasize the importance of developing musicianship are used on a daily basis. All students perform in a holiday concert, the Spring Prism Concert, and the Music in the Parks Festival. In addition, select eighth grade band members participate in the eighth grade jazz band. Students are encouraged to take private lessons in addition to their class instruction and many pursue All-State membership.

**Chorus (MS881):** In this year-long course, singers are viewed as “choral artists” who develop skills in singing, music reading, and aural training. Students will study a varied and diverse repertoire. This carefully chosen literature will broaden student’s perspective of the world, strengthen musical skills, and build self-confidence. Choral singing helps the young artist make a significant step towards discovering what it means to be in community. Students will come to understand that the shared efforts of each person will create a product much greater than the sum of the individual talents. Performance opportunities include a Lessons and Carols Service,
singing for chapels, a spring concert, and/or musical. Students have the opportunity to audition for Honor Choirs and GMEA All-State Chorus. Applied Voice Lessons are encouraged, but not required for MS students participating in a choral ensemble. The Applied Lessons program offers lessons for an additional fee, with registration at the beginning of each semester.

**Dance (MS809):** This year-long course is a continuation of techniques and exploration of dance for students who participated in the seventh grade dance class. For new students or those who are highly motivated to join the class at this level, admission is possible by permission of the instructor. Students will delve deeper into jazz, ballet, and modern dance with emphasis on form and technique as well as process. All students in this class will participate in both the fall and winter dance concerts.

**Drama—Introduction to Acting (MS804):** This is a year-long course open to any eighth grade student serious about studying the craft of acting. Any interested student must apply and receive prior approval by the drama instructor. (See Mr. Ekholm, Room 307). Students will be trained in audition technique, scene study, stage combat, choreography, and singing for auditions. All students will be expected to audition for and be involved in the Spring Musical. This includes some mandatory after school rehearsal and performance. Guest professionals are brought in from time to time to work with the students to share their experiences and expertise. Students in this class may also have opportunities to present their work through scene presentation or videos created during class.

**Orchestra (MS889):** In this year-long course, the eighth grade string orchestra class is the most challenging orchestra class offered in the Middle School. In addition to the continuing development of instrumental facility, students learn more about music history and music theory and an emphasis continues to be placed on technique, scales, and sight-reading. Students will also develop composition skills. The chamber orchestra performs various styles of music, but concentrates on music in the classical tradition. Many students also participate in small chamber ensembles. The orchestra performs numerous concerts throughout the year, including a winter concert, the String Spectacular in early spring, and the Music in the Parks Festival. Performances in chapel and for the community are also part of the orchestra’s calendar. Students are encouraged to take private lessons in addition to their class instruction and many pursue All-State membership and other extracurricular orchestra experiences.

**Digital Design: Programming, Robotics, and Game Creation**
This year-long course is designed to develop skills in computational thinking, design, problem solving, and programming. This course exposes students to computer science concepts and practices that build critical thinking and problem solving skills required for computer programming and game design. Included in the course are computer languages, including Scratch, HTML, CSS, JavaScript and NXT. Students will create a variety of artifacts, including games and 3D objects using different computer languages, progressively adding to the complexity of work as they become more familiar with the environment. Students will also construct and program LEGO Mindstorms EV3 robots to autonomously solve problems.
Design & Production (MS800): This year-long class will serve as an introduction to most aspects of technical theater, with a strong emphasis on hands-on learning. Most classwork will be in carpentry and lighting, with some study of makeup, hair, and sound as needed for productions. Students will be encouraged to work backstage on the Middle School productions, but will also be given the opportunity to help create the Upper School productions during in-class work time.

Visual Arts (MS814): Participation in this year-long visual arts course is by application only as class size is limited to 20 students. It is designed for the serious visual arts student and will focus on developing a strong foundation in visual arts. Students will study Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, Ceramics, Digital Photo, Printmaking, and Mixed Media - as well as studying art history within the context of each project created in the year. Students will be evaluated on skill level, classroom time management, as well as process and product. In addition, students will keep online journals about reflecting intentional choices within their process and will exit the class with an online portfolio of their work.