

The Middle School Curriculum Guide, 2015-2016

The Design of the Middle School Curriculum

Our Middle School philosophy of education is put into practice by organizing the curriculum around the following principles:

- a holistic view of education through which we aim to develop a well-balanced person with artistic, intellectual, physical and social skills;
- an interdisciplinary perspective which emphasizes the link between the subjects at each grade level;
- an intercultural awareness that leads students to value people's differences;
- a greater emphasis upon mastery of life-long learning skills, such as research and communication skills, rather than on mastery of a pre-ordained body of knowledge; and
- the complete integration of information technology skills into the academic program.

Instruction is organized by the following subjects: the study of literature and of the fundamental skills of communication (via English), the study of a second modern language (French), the Social Studies (including History and Geography), a hands-on Science program (integrating biological, physical, earth and technological sciences), Mathematics, the Arts (the fine arts, music, and theater), Physical Education, and Technology. In the academic subject areas, our curriculum is designed to meet the standards currently established by the most demanding state and professional organizations in the United States, as well as preparing students for the option of the International Baccalaureate Diploma program. Technology skills and digital citizenship expectations are seamlessly integrated in all facets of the curriculum. Students are expected to demonstrate a sound understanding of digital media to communicate and work collaboratively, locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically use information from a variety of sources with creative thinking. Students also think and reflect about the choices they make in the cyber world, themes include: safety, behavior, balance and the possibilities of technology. Students will also learn about the care and maintenance of their laptop computers. Please refer to the link: *The ASP Middle School Laptop Program Handbook (on our website)*.

The Advisory Program

Interpersonal Relations

As developing adolescents mature, they are learning new and increasingly complex social roles. While this can lead to a growing richness in one's life, there are also obstacles along the way. Advisory aims to assist students in taking on these new roles in a secure and healthy way. It can provide a social support group in which the student can stretch, explore, and take risks. It is a forum for discussing matters such as friendship, becoming aware of stereotypes we may hold about others, and one's changing relationship with peers and parents.

A key outcome at the beginning of the year is for each student to feel solidly part of the Advisory group and of the grade level team. This revolves around the shared experiences that take place during the Outward Bound trips. One not only feels that one belongs to the group; one learns how to work successfully with others. These experiences will continue to be points of reference throughout the year,

and will be built upon through other shared experiences: coming together during our weekly assembly, taking field trips (from planning through debriefing stages); and celebrating holidays.

Advisory can also be a place where students receive specific social skills training and learn to develop strong communications skills. ASP has adopted the International Counseling Standards, PK-12th grade. Please click on the [link](#) and refer to pages 36-49 for more information:

Identity

As Middle School students grow so rapidly, both physically and psychologically, they are likely to explore a variety of different roles and to question: Who am I? There is a gradual transition from being my parents' child to being Me. Hence, Advisory aims to guide students in taking on genuine roles that are both healthy and fulfilling.

Part of the process of developing a clearer identity may involve a degree of doubt or uncertainty. The program aims to support the student in developing a positive self-concept. One way this is done is by assisting students in learning to identify their talents and abilities.

Another part of this process is answering the question: What do I believe in? Advisory assists students in understanding their personal values and in developing a better understanding of ethical norms. Much of this education will focus on the three key values that the ASP community strives to live by: *respect, responsibility and honesty*.

Intercultural Understanding

Our Middle School community includes people from many different cultures – languages, religions, races, ethnic groups, etc. Not only do we aim for each student to develop a sense of tolerance for those who are different, we aim for each student to explore this internationalism and learn as much as they can about similarities and connections between different cultures: to celebrate **and embrace** diversity. Advisory may lead students to explore a bit more about our planet's human geography, and to engage in cultural research. The program will aim to identify and challenge cultural stereotypes.

One approach to improving this understanding is by having students share the various aspects of their culture with their classmates and becoming more aware of how culture can have an impact on how they interact with others.

In addition, there is a specific focus on helping students adjust to French culture. This is particularly important for new students at the beginning of the year.

Community Membership and its Responsibilities

What are the different communities to which I belong? What responsibilities do I have to these communities? These are two questions explored in Advisory. For many students, living in France will be their first experience outside their native country, and Advisory will help them understand their responsibilities as residents in this country. But the program will also assist students in understanding their broader civic responsibilities in whatever country they happen to be living in. Sometimes, this awareness will also be aroused by the discussion of current events. Apart from learning one's civic responsibilities, Advisory seeks to lead each student to learn one's responsibility to serve the community.

Each Advisory also elects one member to sit on the Middle School Student Council and the Advisory group gets regular reports of the Council's discussions and plans. The Council coordinates the student-led activities throughout the year that serve both the school community as well as international charitable causes.

School Culture and Academic Success

What does it take to be a successful student at ASP? This is a key concern for every student, particularly if one is new to the school. Advisory aims to provide the guidance students need in order to succeed.



An important part of being a successful student is becoming organized: using the Agenda effectively, organizing a locker, and learning to manage time well. In addition, students are made aware of the responsibilities the school gives them, such as making up for missed work during an absence.

Success also involves self-awareness, which includes knowing your strengths and weaknesses as a learner, your own learning style and 'what works for you'.

Advisory also involves conferencing with each student to discuss teacher evaluations such as Progress Reports and Report Cards. In addition, it is a place where students engage in reflection and self-evaluation, along with setting goals for the next term.

Problem Solving and Decision Making

Advisory aims to help students understand the responsibilities they have as Middle School students and to look ahead to the responsibilities they will be taking on as adults.

An important part of this is learning to make the right choices in problematic situations they may now be facing, such as confronting moral dilemmas, facing peer pressure, and managing interpersonal issues. Students are thus given a chance to anticipate their options, role-play how they might handle these situations, and weigh the consequences of different possible responses.

The groups also explore future adult responsibilities our students will eventually have, such as managing time, money, and work. This might also include, for example, discussion of their interests, and skills and exploration of various types of careers.

The Core Academic Curriculum: French

French at ASP is a core academic course, which means that every student is expected to participate in the program. The program is divided into 4 distinct levels, using the [ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines](#). In order to meet their individual needs, students are assessed for what they know and are able to do in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Novice I and II, Intermediate I and II, Advanced I and II and Francophone. These courses are designed to help students become more comfortable and autonomous in the language, as well as enjoy and appreciate the culture of this country. Francophone is a course for native and near native speakers where all aspects and expectations are in French.

The different French courses have many themes that align with interdisciplinary units.

Please click on this link for ASP's Modern Language Proficiency Levels.

Novice I & II

This course is a context rich environment that uses many cues to stimulate a student's understanding. In each grade, teachers stimulate students to actively learn French through field trips, exposure to local cultural events, simulations of real life situations: dialogues, role playing and acting out skits.

For listening, speaking and reading, students develop basic knowledge and communications skills in situations such as describing people and objects, counting, finding their way, expressing their needs and preferences, getting information, accepting or refusing offers, answering the telephone, filling out forms, and learning everyday vocabulary. This is done in a natural and idiomatic manner through reciting dialogues, role-playing, games and other exercises. Authentic documents and materials are used, including video clips, maps, pictures and songs.

For writing, students learn French spelling and grammar rules by writing short sentences linked to their oral activities along with completing workbook exercises. The grammatical content includes: the verbs *être* (to be) and *avoir* (to have), regular and several irregular verbs; the genders; possessive and demonstrative adjectives; and pronouns. Along with the present tense, there is an introduction to the past and future tenses.



Cultural competence is integrated into the teaching of the language and includes recognizing and respecting French cultural customs, and acquiring some basic geographical and historical knowledge of the country, especially via Paris and its monuments.

Materials used include extracts from textbooks and exercise books, video documents, extracts from the press, and songs and poems that reinforce the development of vocabulary and the understanding of grammar.

Intermediate (I & II)

Students continue to develop their language skills through a context rich environment that uses many cues to stimulate a student's understanding. In each grade, teachers stimulate students to actively learn French through field trips, exposure to local cultural events, simulations of real life situations: dialogues, role playing and acting out skits.

For listening, speaking, and reading students develop an improved ability to communicate in French by working on more complex situations and structures, such as getting to know people, facing new situations, expressing opinions, etc. They will continue to be exposed to authentic documents, dialogues and excerpts from television presentations.

For writing, students will themselves write dialogues, poems, and short articles/essays. There will be further development of the basic verb tenses.

Cultural competence will involve more extensive preparation for their grade level field trips by studying related historical background, stories and legends, films, songs, etc.

Materials used include extracts from textbooks and exercise books, video documents, extracts from the press, and songs and poems that reinforce the development of vocabulary and the understanding of grammar.

Most students require two or more years to successfully move through the Intermediate levels in order to meet French language proficiencies to become an Advanced French learner.

Advanced I & II

Advanced-Level builds on students' autonomy in the French language and focuses on deepening their academic proficiency. At this level, classes are conducted exclusively in French. For listening and speaking, students will conduct interviews, create and interpret stories, interpret texts, and make oral presentations based on press articles. For reading, students will work on press articles, short stories and excerpts from novels. For writing, they will prepare summaries of articles, short paragraphs about their short stories, reports on results of interviews that they have conducted, and reports on books they have read. Grammar will focus on the correct use of gender with nouns and their adjectives, and the more extensive conjugation of verbs. In addition to strengthening their use of the basic verb tenses already studied, they will be introduced to the conditional and subjunctive.

Cultural competence will involve more extensive preparation for their grade level field trips by studying related historical background, stories and legends, films, songs, etc. Students will deepen their exposure to French and European traditions, such as carnivals and seasonal celebrations. Current affairs will also be followed and students will discuss wider historical topics

Students at this level are exposed to a greater variety of texts, grammar books and authentic documents from the press, video clips, songs, poems, as well as short stories/novels/comic books to reinforce vocabulary, grammar structures and spelling.

Francophone

Students at this level are native speakers who need to continue developing their academic language. Students develop skills such as comparing, classifying, synthesizing, evaluating, and inferring. Academic language tasks are more abstract and mimic a mainstream French class. Students work on literary and other texts with the aim of extending their vocabulary and perfecting their syntax. They will also approach these texts with an appreciation of them as works of literature and/or with the aim of developing a critical



perspective on different types of narratives: realistic, historical, science fiction and fantastic. They also analyze textual tone through the study of excerpts from major authors. Their written skills are enhanced by learning how to introduce the narrative sequence in their essays and to employ a more formal style.

Cultural competence is developed largely through the study of important French writers, though the course may also extend what is being studied in interdisciplinary units.

Literary texts include *L'oeil du loup* by Daniel Pennac and *Contes et Légendes de Paris* (Grade 6), *Les Précieuses Ridicules* by Molière and *Vendredi ou la vie sauvage* by Michel Tournier (Grade 7), *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo (Bibliolycée Hachette); short stories by Guy de Maupassant (Grade 8).

The Core Academic Curriculum: The EAL* Program for Non-Native Speakers

*English as an Additional Language

ASP is proud to serve a large population of students from different national, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, and we strive to respect, value, and celebrate our diversity.

While the language of communication and instruction at ASP is primarily in English, many of our students come from a variety of linguistic backgrounds. For the numerous students who are developing English language proficiency, we offer a comprehensive "English as an Additional Language"(EAL)program.

It is through this program that many non-native English speakers acquire the level of English needed to communicate effectively and successfully in social and academic situations.

Our Aim

As a program committed to excellence in EAL education, the EAL program will provide each EAL student with the English language support they need to be socially and academically successful while valuing home culture and native language development.

Placement Procedures

All new students, whose mother-tongue is other than English, are assessed by the EAL team to determine their English language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The results of these assessments determine students' placement within or out of the EAL program.

Students may progress to a higher-level EAL class (or exit the program entirely) at any time during the school year, depending on the level of proficiency they achieve in relationship to the EAL standards and benchmarks. When students exit the EAL program, they are monitored and may receive additional support.

How it works

To reach our goal, students participate in a graduated, supportive immersion program based on a whole-community approach to learning. This means EAL students attend grade-level classes and receive specific English support both within and outside the classes based on individual needs and proficiency levels. As a student gains more mastery in English, as demonstrated in classroom achievement, he or she becomes more independent of EAL services. To exit the EAL Program, a student must demonstrate a proficient level of English language ability as demonstrated in grade-level activities and standardized language testing.

To complete a balanced academic life, add to the socialization process, and enhance language learning students of English are encouraged to take part in extra-curricular activities offered throughout the year at ASP.

The Core Academic Curriculum: Grade 6

The Sixth Grade establishes the transition from the largely self-contained classes of the Lower School to the team-oriented approach of the Middle School. Students are increasingly guided toward making more choices and taking on a greater sense of responsibility.

Advisory offers a safe place where students can more closely share with others and grow together as independent learners. The key Advisory themes include: adjusting to middle school, *bienvenue à Paris*, developing student skills, respecting diversity in our school and our world, self awareness, friendship, conflict resolution, respecting our environment, maturing, and making healthy choices.

The sixth grade program is designed to take advantage of the many opportunities for learning outside the classroom here in France. In September, students go off to the Savoie region for a week of Outward Bound team-building activities with their classmates and teachers. The sixth graders make several day trips in the Paris area throughout the year, including a walking tour of the Latin Quarter. All trips are carefully aligned with curricular goals in one or more academic subjects.

Social Studies 6 explore various world civilizations from the fall of the Roman Empire to the European Renaissance, with emphasis on Western Europe and especially France. Which factors help civilizations thrive? Which lead civilizations to decline? We explore these essential questions while learning about European, Arab, Chinese and African civilizations during the years 500 - 1500. The program challenges students to think both creatively and critically, to understand events in history, and to become active global citizens. Considerable emphasis is placed on developing social studies skills such as research, presentation and writing. Through projects and field trips, students begin to develop a more personal appreciation of history.

English 6 guides students towards increasingly abstract thinking through a formal study of literature that includes analyzing plot structure, character development, conflict, setting and theme. At the same time, students learn to appreciate and value the beauty of the writer's craft.

Works for classroom discussion include various poems and short stories, *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster, a dramatized version of *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, and *The Great Gilly Hopkins* by Katherine Paterson. As a link to the Social Studies program, sixth graders study a selection of medieval and Renaissance literature, including prose versions of Shakespeare plays. Vocabulary study occurs within the context of the chosen literature.

The writing aspect of the 6th grade English program focuses on the building blocks of expository essays through strengthening the Six Traits of Writing: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and spelling/punctuation conventions. Using the writing workshop model, students engage in the critical steps of brainstorming, drafting, revising, individual conferences with the teacher and peers, and self-evaluation.

Students maintain an individual blog based on their personal experiences and interests; this format gives them the opportunity to explore issues relevant to their own lives, publish their writing for an authentic audience, and connect with each other in a public forum.

Sixth graders also engage in ongoing independent reading for which they prepare oral and artistic and projects that demonstrate creative thinking skills as well as mastery of literary concepts. Finally, a variety of formal and informal speaking activities compose an integral part of the English program including speeches, debates, and small group discussions.

Science 6 – The Middle School Science Program at ASP is a series of integrated courses focusing on the important concepts of earth, life, and physical sciences and the use of that knowledge to make decisions about real-world problems. The science curriculum promotes learning that is useful and relevant and is approached through experiential, hands-on learning.

Grade 6 Science, The Nature of Earth, introduces the concepts of matter and energy in order to explain physical aspects of the earth, such as the minerals in its crust, earth's continual supply of freshwater, and



the atmospheric conditions of weather, and how they come together to create the cells that form the basis of life on the planet.

Special projects include various an on-line birthstone poster project, designing and building an insulating coffee mug, creating a severe weather report, and constructing a model of the cell.

Math 6 - In Math 6, instructional time will focus on four critical areas: (1) connecting ratio and rate to whole number multiplication and division and using concepts of ratio and rate to solve problems; (2) completing understanding of division of fractions and extending the notion of number to the system of rational numbers, which includes negative numbers; (3) writing, interpreting, and using expressions and equations; and (4) developing understanding of statistical thinking. Instruction is highly differentiated using technology integration, small group instruction and project-based activities. Please click on this [link](#) for the Middle School Mathematics Brochure for more information.

The Core Academic Curriculum: Grade 7

Seventh graders, entering their teenage years, are in the middle of their Middle School experience. Our goal is to provide them with the skills and confidence that will ready them for the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional challenges of adolescence. A key aim is to enable them to further develop their unique sense of self and to be recognized both as individuals and as members of the group.

In Advisory, the teachers create a program that provides security and support for students' personal development, as well as structure and encouragement that will foster their academic achievement. The key themes are: communications, teamwork, service to the community, tolerance and intercultural awareness, respecting the environment and resisting peer pressure. Other topics arise as needed; for example, time management skills may form an Advisory unit if a group needs help in organizing and prioritizing assignments.

Early in the year, seventh graders are introduced to Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences. Work on this continues throughout the school year in Advisory and provides the structure for the end-of-year student-led conferences with their parents.

A series of trips enhances the program throughout the year. In September, seventh grade students and teachers spend an intensive week together at an Outward Bound team-building course in the Lake District of northern England.

Two sample interdisciplinary units:

Revolutions-- This unit spans the disciplines and culminates in a learning fair wherein the students work in teams and groups to present their answer to the essential questions: *What is Revolution? How does a revolution begin? What are the outcomes of revolution?* Their work can take such diverse forms as filmed skits, debates, poster or model presentations and *PowerPoint* presentations.

Inventions – Once again, all disciplines are involved. Failed and successful inventions alike are investigated along with the various motivations that drove the inventors. The unit culminates with a Living Wax Museum of inventors, and other activities in the core curricular area.

Social Studies 7 focuses on the development of democracy in America from 1607 to the present, while also investigating parallels in France and other countries. The major themes are: *History* – what is it and who writes it, and how might it be useful: *Democracy* – the characteristics, beliefs and foundational ideas of democratic governments; *Immigration* – the immigrant experience, why people immigrate, and why governments do or do not allow immigration; *Revolution* – complete changes in political and other systems; *Civil Liberties – Struggles for Equality*, what are civil liberties and how this relates to democracy in general, the experiences of women, minorities, and everyone interested in individual rights; *Inventions* -- this unit considers progress and how technological innovations can/have provoked "progress for mankind." Throughout the course, current world issues are discussed in the context of these themes, with the aim of leading students to make



connections between the past, present, and personal experiences. There is an emphasis on study through inquiry and discourse, and the development of sophisticated research and synthesis skills. Whenever possible, the themes are taught in coordination with the other subjects.

English 7 is designed to help 7th graders become more proficient writers, more effective speakers, and more critical readers than they are today. Achieving competence in written and verbal communication is acquired through the mastery of many individual skills.

This class will provide practice in the areas of grammar, usage, mechanics, word analysis, vocabulary acquisition, sentences patterns, and paragraph/essay development. Building on last year's foundation, the Six Traits of Writing approach continues to provide the framework for learning to write. Students will learn to develop a writing process that includes awareness of audience, planning, feedback, and revision. Writing genres emphasized this year include fictional and autobiographical narratives, interpretations of literature, persuasive compositions, summaries, and blogging.

Literature is the heart of the English program, as good literature stimulates the imagination, promotes accurate observation, and demonstrates the power of words. Literary comprehension and analysis will be emphasized through short stories, poems, plays, and essays that we read. In addition to the summer reading of *Home of the Brave* by Katherine Applegate, core works will most likely include the novels *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, *Animal Farm* by George Orwell and *City* by Clifford D. Simak.

Throughout the year, students are also encouraged to read broadly according to their individual interests. Students become increasingly aware of differing learning styles through independent book projects that provide opportunities to integrate their talents in art, drama, and technology.

Math 7 - In Math 7, instructional time will focus on four critical areas: (1) developing understanding of and applying proportional relationships; (2) developing understanding of operations with rational numbers and working with expressions and linear equations; (3) solving problems involving scale drawings and informal geometric constructions, and working with two- and three-dimensional shapes to solve problems involving area, surface area, and volume; and (4) drawing inferences about populations based on samples.

Math 7 Accelerated* - This course differs from the non-accelerated Math 7 course in that it contains content from Introduction to Algebra. While coherence is retained, in that it logically builds from the 6th Grade, the additional content when compared to the non-accelerated course demands a faster pace for instruction and learning. Content is organized into four critical areas, or units. The Mathematical Practice Standards apply throughout each course and, together with the content standards, prescribe that students experience mathematics as a coherent, useful, and logical subject that makes use of their ability to make sense of problem situations. Prerequisite: B- or higher in Math 6 or similar course and teacher recommendation.

**Accelerated Program* - Based on the idea that content will compact 3 years of content into 2 years (Math 7, Introduction to Algebra and Algebra I will be compacted into Math 7 Accelerated and 8th Grade Algebra I). Please click on this [link](#) for the Middle School Mathematics Brochure for more information.

Science 7 – The Middle School Science Program at ASP is a series of integrated courses focusing on the important concepts of earth, life, and physical sciences and the use of that knowledge to make decisions about real-world problems. The science curriculum promotes learning that is useful and relevant and is approached through experiential, hands-on learning.

Grade 7 Science integrates Physical, Earth and Life sciences with Math, Technology and Engineering. The units: Earth's Spheres (Atmosphere, Biosphere, Lithosphere, Hydrosphere); Physical Science (Chemistry, Force and Motion) and Engineering are taught around the central themes of Earth Systems; Food and Agriculture; Sustainable Environment; and Energy and Earth Resources. As students learn to think and act like scientists, they use scientific knowledge and skills to solve problems while conducting activities that simulate real-world issues related to the central



themes. Special projects include: a field study of rocks and glaciation in the Lake District, England, during the annual residential Outward Bound trip; designing vegetable gardens and selling the produce; designing a cardboard chair; an investigation of the intertidal zone at the Sillon beach in St. Malo; and a visit to the Tidal Energy Plant - Rance, France.

The Core Academic Curriculum: Grade 8

As emerging young adults, eighth graders need to be prepared for high school, with its greater academic demands and its need for more developed organizational and study skills. The eighth grade teachers work closely with their colleagues in the Upper School to ensure this gradual transition. Relative to sixth and seventh graders, eighth graders are given increasing opportunities to take responsibility and are expected to become more autonomous.

In September, the students and teachers travel to the Lake District of northern England to spend an intensive week together at the Outward Bound program, where encountering personal challenges is combined with strengthening team-building skills.

The Advisory program, throughout the year, helps students to become more independent learners, more involved members of their community, and more global thinkers. The key themes in eighth grade Advisory are: empathy, tolerance and multicultural understanding, community service, group dynamics and team building, and personal reflection. These themes are developed with challenging activities that are built into the program, such as producing a theme-linked Digital Citizenship PSA video, creating and presenting a children's storybook, celebrating cultural diversity through festive lunches throughout the year and working collaboratively to petition UNESCO for support of getting a UNESCO site listed as "tentative" to become a permanent site.

Field trips animate these connections in such ways as: exploring Paris at the time of *la Belle Époque*, discovering the critical perspective of the Twentieth Century artist at the Musée d'Orsay, and appreciating the global role of the United Nations through a visit to UNESCO headquarters. The year ends by bringing closure to the three years of Middle School through an extended trip to the great Greco-Roman sites in Provence – a reflection on 2000 years of civilization.

Social Studies 8 takes a thematic approach to studying imperialism, industrialism, and globalization. Students will be required to actively engage in historical thinking, to raise questions and to gather evidence in support of their arguments. Students will develop skills in chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research, and presentation. They will use these skills to develop and express their understanding of how perspectives shape views of the past and behavior in the present, continually making connections across space and time. These skills will be developed through a classroom structure built on a variety of formative and summative assessments, including research and analysis, writing, collaboration, and technology integration. In addition to a largely Project-Based Learning format students will partake in debates, seminars, and on-going personal reflection on the concepts explored and personal growth undertaken.

English 8 is linked to the Social Studies program and involves the study of different literary genres. The course commences with short stories whose themes relate to the global issues covered in gr. 8 Social Studies. The short story unit exposes students to such differing styles as those of Toni Morrison, Douglas Adams and Shirley Jackson. Following the short stories unit will be the first novel, John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, in which values and ethics will be the key ideas under discussion. Students will be exposed to analytical writing in both of these units along with narrative writing.

Poetry will be introduced after the novel and both classical and contemporary poems will be studied. The classical poetry will be Shakespearean sonnets to introduce the students to Shakespearean English and appreciate such timeless themes as love, betrayal and jealousy. Modern poetry will relate back to themes from Gr. 8 Social Studies and such esteemed poets as Maya Angelou, Langston



Hughes, Sherman Alexis and Billy Collins will be studied. In this unit, students will improve both their analytical writing, creative writing as well as their presentation skills.

Beyond poetry, students will read their first play, Philip Pullman's adaptation of *Frankenstein*. This play introduces students to the gothic genre and the power of a play to convey major themes in life such as the concept of what is evil. The course will end with a final novel, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* by Mark Haddon. This novel introduces students to the global ideas of difference and acceptance. Independent reading and vocabulary building will also be required with regular reporting on these endeavors. Throughout the year, students will develop their reading, writing and presentation skills and will develop an appreciation of a variety of written art forms which will prepare them for the rigors of high school English.

Science 8 - The Middle School Science Program at ASP is a series of integrated courses focusing on the important concepts of earth, life, and physical sciences and the use of that knowledge to make decisions about real-world problems. The science curriculum promotes learning that is useful and relevant and is approached through experiential, hands-on learning.

Grade 8 Science enhances the concepts that focus on the analysis of the physical universe as a system. The three units are Ecological and Evolutionary Science, Applied Sciences-Human Impact on Earth's Systems and Earth in Space-Interactions and Implications. Special projects include a major composting project, the Environmental Issues Film Festival and a field trip to the Grande Galerie de l'Evolution in Paris.

Ecological and Evolutionary Sciences explores the relationship between the living and non-living materials that make up earth's biosphere, the exchange of energy in those relationships and the physical and chemical changes those materials go through over time. In **Applied Sciences-Human Impact on Earth's Systems**, we explore how science interrelates with technology, society and the environment by understanding the benefits and costs of scientific advancement and the impacts of resource use. In **Earth in Space-Interactions and Implications** we explore the relationships of stellar phenomenon and their implications for life on earth.

The Mathematics program includes accelerated courses. Please click on this [link](#) for the Middle School Mathematics Brochure for more information.

Introduction to Algebra - In Introduction to Algebra, for 8th graders, instruction will focus on three critical areas: (1) formulating and reasoning about expressions and equations, including modeling an association in bivariate data with a linear equation, and solving linear equations and systems of equations; (2) grasping the concept of a function and using functions to describe quantitative relationships; (3) and analyzing two- and three dimensional space and figures using distance, angle, similarity and congruence, and understanding and applying the Pythagorean Theorem. Math 7 combined with this course is equivalent to the Math 7 Accelerated course.

8th Grade Algebra I - The fundamental purpose of 8th Grade Algebra I is to formalize and extend the mathematics that students learned through the end of seventh grade. The critical areas, called units, deepen and extend understanding of linear and exponential relationships by contrasting them with each other and by applying linear models to data that exhibit a linear trend, and students engage in methods for analyzing, solving, and using quadratic functions. In addition, the units will introduce methods for analyzing and using quadratic functions, including manipulating expressions for them, and solving quadratic equations.

Students understand and apply the Pythagorean Theorem, and use quadratic functions to model and solve problems. This course differs from High School Algebra I in that it contains content from Introduction to Algebra. While coherence is retained, in that it logically builds from the Accelerated 7th Grade, the additional content when compared to the high school course demands a faster pace for instruction and learning. For Algebra I for Grade 8, a scientific calculator with *exponent* and *radical* functions will be useful. *Prerequisite:* B- grade or higher in a Math 7 Accelerated or similar course and teacher recommendation.

The Middle School Specialist Curriculum

Middle School is a time for students to develop new interests, discover hidden talents and explore new subjects. With each new experience, middle school students develop confidence in their skills and abilities and develop a sense of who they are, and who they would like to become.

The diverse specialist courses are designed to expose Middle School students to a wide range of non-academic experiences that are athletic, creative, intellectual and social. These not only help them to discover their own unknown strengths, and develop new ones, but also lead them to appreciate the diverse skills and talents of their peers. In the nine specialist periods each week, students will be experiencing many of the courses listed below, especially if they opt for more of the short courses rather than the yearlong courses.

Required Specialist Courses

Drama Discovery - Theatre is a dynamic, collaborative and live art form. Practical involvement with theatre demands discipline, creativity and a wide range of skills. It encompasses the taking of risks, the building of confidence and encourages discovery through play, energy and imagination.

Exercises explored build confidence and skills. The aim of the course is for students to learn how to imagine, create and communicate their ideas through performance. It is about self-expression, self-discovery, and communication. (Two periods per week; one term each for grades seven and eight, unless the student is taking the Ensemble Theater elective)

Health - This trimester-long course is for 7th and 8th graders and addresses issues that arise as children transition into adolescence. Both courses are designed to help students understand the social, emotional, and physical dimensions of health and to help guide them in formulating their values and making responsible decisions. Some topics in the 7th grade course, Healthy Living, include promoting healthy eating habits, positive interpersonal relationships, finding happiness and using meditation as a practice of self-reflecting, calming the mind, and staying in the present moment. Some topics in the 8th course, Making Good Choices, include taking healthy risks, how to deal with peer pressure, managing stress, sexual health. The course requires active student participation during group discussions; several (in class) group projects, and use of Web 2.0 Tools. The ultimate goal is for students to feel good about themselves and comfortable with other people, to help control tension, anxiety, and to meet the demands of life while maintaining a positive outlook. (Two periods per week for one term)

Physical Education - The goal of the Physical Education program is to provide all students with the knowledge and skill development required to lead a physically active lifestyle. There are a variety of activities throughout the year, offered in three different 'menu' choices. Each menu has a mix of core areas including physical fitness, soccer and dance, whilst giving two or three different activities for students to choose from each year. These tailored classes empower students to be aware of opportunities for physically active, develop their fitness and learn a variety of new sports.

The main areas of focus throughout each activity are personal-social responsibility, sportsmanship, skill acquisition, fitness and conceptual knowledge. These are all developed through challenging activities that are aligned with the national standards. Activities throughout the grade levels include: basketball, soccer, volleyball, dance, orienteering, kinball, games-making, badminton, rugby, and physical training. In addition, all students participate in the President's Youth Fitness Program test three times per year. The focus of testing is for students to monitor their personal fitness levels and to progress individually towards their fitness goals in a structured program. (All students, three periods per week; yearlong)

Elective Specialist Courses

Visual Arts Courses - Students are required to take at least two terms of Visual Arts courses, but they can decide whether, and how many times, they wish to take any one of them.

- **Ceramics** - As an introduction to working with clay, this class begins with making pinch pots and then following the complete ceramics cycle in which clay is formed, decorated, fired, glazed and then fired again. Students go on to use the coil-building technique to make larger, more involved pieces as well as throwing on the potter's wheel. They then move on to individual projects or themes ranging from sculptures to traditional cups and bowls. (Two periods per week per term)
- **Studio Art** - The three terms are divided into units of drawing, three-dimensional design and painting

Students develop and acquire artistic skills while exploring different techniques in a wide variety of mediums. Fall trimester emphasizes drawing. Students gain new skills in expressing themselves through observation and imagination. The different drawing media that students use during this trimester include: graphite, charcoal, pastels, marker and scratchboard. Winter trimester focuses on sculpture and multi-media design. Students work with clay, plaster, paper mache, wire, fabric and recycled objects. Spring trimester is devoted to painting and color theory. During this class, students experiment with ink, watercolor, tempera, and acrylic paint. Projects entail working in the studio as well as outdoors. Each trimester students also acquire knowledge of historical and contemporary artistic movements from around the world. Students can choose to take Studio Art for one, two or three trimesters. (two periods per week per term)

Music Courses - Students are required to take at least one term of music per year. Students may be able to choose more than one at a time.

- **MS Band** - this course is ideal for any students who already play a concert wind band instrument. This includes woodwind, brass and percussion but no strings. Piano players will be accepted if they are prepared to use their skills on mallets or percussion instruments. This course will be a great introduction to a wide variety of musical styles, and will help to develop skills such as warming up, tuning and ensemble playing. Enthusiasm and teamwork are essential. Concert performances take place twice a year. There is also a chance to audition for the annual European MS Honor Band Festival. There will also be exciting solo and ensemble opportunities both inside and outside of school. (two periods per week; year long)
- **Training Band** - this is a new course being offered to grade 6 and 7 students who would like to learn a band instrument. This could be your first ever instrument or it could be a change from another instrument such as piano. You do not need to read music to take this course. The program aims to prepare students for joining a concert wind band – on woodwind, brass or percussion instruments – after their first year of playing. It is also a unique opportunity for students to enjoy learning about, and making, music alongside others. A variety of appropriate musical instruments are available for rental on an annual basis. Please speak to a music teacher for further details. (Two periods per week, yearlong.)
- **Percussion Ensemble** - this course is an exciting adventure through the world of percussion music. These instruments are some of the oldest in the world and exist, in some form, within every human society. Students will explore how percussion instruments work and how different styles of music are shaped by their cultural and material origins. This is a great way to develop an open-minded appreciation of many styles from across the globe, through a very “hands-on” experience. (Two periods per week)
- **Vox Populi (7&8) and Con Amici (Gr 6)** - These two choral ensembles are ideal for improving confidence and stage presence. Students need not have any vocal experience to join either group, but enthusiasm, commitment and a willingness to learn are essential given that singing in a choir is a ‘team sport’. Vocal technique is developed along with an appreciation of different musical styles from rock, jazz, and gospel to a bit of Mozart and some 20th century sounds. Throughout the year students work on developing their musical literacy and aural perception to support their maturing vocal and performance skills. The December and April concerts are a celebration of what we learn, and opportunity for solos and small group performances may be given

throughout the year. Qualified students may audition for the AMIS European Honor Choir festivals held each year. (Two periods per week – yearlong)

- **Guitar for Beginners** - this course is for those students who have not played guitar before. Basic instrument knowledge and skills in melody and chord playing using tablature, standard notation and chord diagrams, along with various strum patterns are introduced. Solo and group performances are offered. Students exit the course with an understanding of music notation and fundamental guitar performance skills. (Two periods per week for one term)
- **Making Music With Garage Band** - This introductory course affords the students insight into musical creation through hands-on experience composing and arranging music using digital audio production techniques. The students use MIDI keyboard-equipped Macintosh workstations to learn basic concepts of melody, harmony and rhythm through exercises tailored to the level of each class. No prior music background is required. (Two periods per week for one term)
- **Piano for Beginners** - this course is for those students who have not played keyboard before. Focus is on posture, coordination, correct finger technique, developing security in pitch and rhythm reading and playing using both hands effectively. Students exit the course being able to demonstrate fluency and accuracy in solo performance and reading music on both treble and bass staves with confidence. (Two periods per week for one term)

Theatre Courses- For students interested in exploring theatre beyond Drama Discovery, (a one trimester course described above in the required specialist course section), students may opt to take a yearlong course, Ensemble Theatre:

- **Ensemble Theatre** - Theatre is a dynamic, collaborative and live art form. Practical involvement with theatre demands discipline, creativity and a wide range of skills. It encompasses the taking of risks, the building of confidence and encourages discovery through play, energy and imagination. It offers the opportunity to engage actively in the creative process, transforming ideas into action as inquisitive and productive artists. Working both individually and collaboratively, as part of an ensemble is an emphasis. Through creative collaboration students learn to support their peers, develop a sense of responsibility to the group, and appreciation of the critical role-played by each in helping the each reach their creative potential. The course moves thru three major areas and aims that will enable students to:
 1. Understand and explore the various contexts of theatre and how these can inform practice
 2. Understand and engage in the processes of transforming ideas into action
 3. Develop and apply theatre production, presentation and performance skills, working both independently and collaboratively(Two periods per week; yearlong)

Technology Courses – All of the core technology skills are taught in the regular academic program as students are doing projects throughout the year. These include increasing levels of mastery of *Word*, *Excel*, and *PowerPoint*, as well as increasingly sophisticated use of search engines. As a result, the courses listed below are options, which are designed to provide creative challenges and to develop new skills.

- **Computer Graphics** - this is a basic orientation to the concepts and tools of graphic design. Students will use graphic manipulation tools such as Adobe Photoshop Elements to manipulate digital photographs, integrate graphic elements, and create original visual products. Special emphasis will be placed upon the artistic principles of visual design. (Two periods per week for one term)

- **Robotics** - this course will introduce students to the fundamentals of simple robotics. Using Lego Mindstorm's NXT, students will write sophisticated programs, assemble robots, and work collaboratively to solve problems and overcome challenges. (Two periods per week for one term)
- **Digital Publications** - in this course, students will write, design and produce a digital school newspaper which will include movie reviews, featured articles, student surveys, comic strips, cartoons, and interviews highlighting middle school news, trends and events. Students will learn digital publishing and reporting skills. (Two periods per week for one term.)

Other Elective Courses

- **Brainteasers** - this course is designed to challenge students' minds with strategy games, puzzles and brainteasers. Students will enjoy expanding their thinking and problem solving skills with hands-on activities, games and group challenges. (two periods per week for one term)
- **Writer's Workshop** - this course is required for all 6th grade students. The course functions as a complement not only to the 6th grade English program but also to the writing component of other 6th grade subjects. Students engage in a variety of writing tasks that support their learning across the curriculum such as "how-to" process writing, summaries, lab reports, and persuasive essays. Using the workshop model of brainstorming, outlining, drafts, peer- and self-editing, 6th graders develop their skills in understanding audience/purpose, adopting the style and format appropriate to the writing task. (two periods per week per term)
- **Debate** - for the student interested in world issues, this is an exciting course. Do countries have the right to pollute the air and oceans? Should people be free to immigrate wherever they want? These are the kinds of issues that students may choose as topics, which they will then research; decide what stand they will take, and finally debate in opposing teams. They will also be introduced to the workings of the United Nations: student will investigate current issues before the U.N. and learn to understand these issues from the perspectives of different countries. (two periods per week)
- **History through Film** - this course will examine the 20th and 21st century focusing on culture and society. You will critically analyze the major events of this time period and how film creates a window into the cultural and social issues of the time. You will also learn the foundations of film theory and technique in the spirit of IB film. (two periods per week per term)
- **Spanish A (Discovery)** - This course is an introduction to Spanish language, culture and traditions. This discovery course will include language study and engaging activities. Students in this course may receive a Rosetta Stone log-on and password to access continuing learning online from home for added study. (two periods per week for one term.)

Evaluating Student Achievement

A student's achievement in the different subjects is evaluated in a variety of ways. In doing so, a teacher will consider different criteria, some of which reflect overall school standards, and others which reflect the teacher's specific goals for the course.

The principle assessment criterion considered is the level of mastery of knowledge and skills. This is carried out in a variety of ways that reflect, at least partly, the variety of ways that we learn. This may include: oral work, written work (coursework, essays, problem-solving, tests, projects, etc.), and practical work (knowledge of or use of an apparatus, recording of changes, identification of a problem, construction of a hypothesis, evaluation and analysis, forming conclusions). However, other criteria may include creativity demonstrated, personal initiative taken, class participation, completion of regular homework assignments, and punctuality in submitting assignments. Evaluation can also consider the extent to which a student demonstrates the ability to work independently, as well as to work cooperatively with classmates.

Teachers guide students to engage in reflective self-analysis about themselves as learners and as people in

the broader sense. Our goals are:

- that all students understand their personal learning styles, including recognizing their strengths and weaknesses;
- that at the end of each term, students look both backwards and forwards by assessing how well they have met their past goals and by setting new ones;
- that students set goals that are appropriate for their individual ability and needs; and
- that they take personal responsibility for meeting these goals.

The marking system is based on a system of letter grades for most courses: A = consistently meets the standards; B = usually meets the standards; C = sometimes meets the standards; D = rarely meets the standards; F = fails to meet minimal standards. For each of these descriptors, teachers may add a + or - to indicate where the student stands within the band.

Report cards are produced for each subject in early December, mid-to-late March, and late June, at the end of each of the three terms. These provide a curriculum outline for the past term's work and then give a summary evaluation using a letter grade (A, B, C, D, F). They also include narrative comments from the teacher on notable aspects of a student's work. All grade and report card information is available through an online grading system.

Academic Probation may be instated when a student has received a report card with F in an academic subject, or two or more grades of D. This is a mandate for urgent improvement. In such situations, the Advisor and the Guidance Counselor may play a key role in guiding that student to better achievement. Sustained academic probation indicates that a student is in danger of not being promoted to the next grade, or that the student may be misplaced being at ASP.

Standardized tests are taken each fall and again in spring by our Middle School students: The MAP Test, Measures of Academic Progress, is computerized, adaptive achievement tests in mathematics, reading and science. Given twice a year, MAP Test results provide teachers with data about a student's individual academic growth and progress. Teachers use this data to inform and plan instruction to meet the needs of their students. Test results are not used to determine placement in classes. More information about MAP Tests is available prior to testing events.

Awards are given at the end-of-year closing ceremonies. These include:

- the *Academic Excellence Awards* – to the student in each grade with the highest average grade in the five academic subjects;
- the *Service Award* – to the student who best demonstrates the qualities of dependability, generosity, initiative, and commitment to the group, and
- the *Director's Award* – to the student who has strived to excel in every aspect of the MS program: academics, sports and the arts.
- The *Perseverance Award* – to the student in each grade who has worked hard and made great strides in their personal growth and learning.

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