



**MIDDLE SCHOOL
CURRICULUM GUIDE
2017-2018**

As a member of the Princeton Day School community, I will pursue excellence in scholarship and character. I will try to be trustworthy, kind, honest, and fair; give my best in and out of the classroom and on the playing field; be respectful of myself, of property, and of all members of our community; take responsibility for my actions; maintain a sense of humor.

Welcome to the Middle School at Princeton Day School, a lively and engaging place for students in grades 5 through 8. Our goal is to create a culture where students feel safe, valued, celebrated and known.

The quote above is on a plaque in the Middle School, and it truly captures what we strive for here at Princeton Day School. In the Middle School at PDS, we encourage our students to be involved in activities both in and out of the classroom. We encourage them to take risks and value their own voice in the classroom. We believe in giving students opportunities to make mistakes, and then learn from them in a caring and supportive environment. In addition, we place great emphasis on keeping a growth mindset. We want students to view effort as the key to success; to keep focused on continued—life-long—growth; and to keep trying even though they may experience setbacks.

Class sizes are kept small, and teachers, students, and parents work very closely together. Dedicated and talented faculty foster clear, thoughtful communication between home and school, forming a partnership that values educational excellence.

At Princeton Day School, we teach skills and knowledge, but also, more critically, we teach our students how to think and learn. Our Middle School teachers serve as role models and instill life skills, such as character, teamwork, creativity, ethics, resilience, curiosity, time management—all that is needed for a successful school career and, ultimately, a fulfilling life.

Please explore these pages and contact us if you have any questions. We would be delighted to speak to you and tell you more about the Middle School at Princeton Day School.

Sincerely,

Renée Charity Price
Head of Middle School

Highlights of the Middle School Program:

Advisory Program: The Middle School advisory program nurtures students during the transformative time of early adolescence by providing them the tools necessary to ethically navigate and balance the diverse emotional, social, and academic worlds in which they live.

Every student is matched with a faculty member who becomes their advisor for one school year. The advisee to advisor ratio is approximately 8:1. Students meet with their advisor and other students in their advisory group every morning and also in longer advisory sessions where character, balancing academics and extracurricular activities, stress management and other topics are explored. Advisors are a source of guidance and support and an excellent contact for parents.

Focus Assembly: Once each 7-day cycle, the entire Middle School gathers for a Focus Assembly featuring several 8th Grade students who deliver a Focus Speech about an important personal experience. From 5th grade on, students know that one day, they'll have their turn. The students work closely with their English teacher and advisor to develop ideas and deliver poised, and often moving, speeches that bring the community together. Parents and family members often attend to hear these remarks. Announcements and also occur at Focus so students stay informed, and Focus Notes are emailed to families so they can talk to their children about Middle School happenings.

Athletics: Our Middle School program promotes participation, providing interested students an interscholastic sports program appropriate for sixth, seventh and eighth graders. Our goals are to teach fundamental skills and strategies, develop a sense of team and to foster responsibility and commitment.

Fall

Girls: Cross Country, Field Hockey, Tennis, Soccer

Boys: Cross Country, Soccer, Football (Middle School only)

Winter

Girls: Basketball, Volleyball, Ice Hockey, Fencing, Squash

Boys: Basketball, Ice Hockey, Fencing, Squash

Spring

Girls: Lacrosse, Softball, Skating, Track & Field (Middle School only)

Boys: Lacrosse, Baseball, Tennis, Skating, Track & Field (Middle School only)

Mini-Course Week: Every year in mid-February, daily course work is set aside for a special, one-week interdisciplinary experience. Students choose from a menu of cultural, scientific, and historical studies with courses such as the Amish Experience, Gettysburg, Chocolate Immersion,

New York, New York, and Top Chef. They spend the week in focused, experiential study, visiting museums, farms, research institutes, and historical parks to learn firsthand about their subjects. Mini-Course Week is a signature Middle School program.

Da Vinci Program: The Da Vinci Program is a new and innovative program with courses on a wide range of subjects, including robotics, sustainability, coding, and service learning, that aims to engage students as the captains of their own learning. Each Middle School student will take courses that they choose in which they take risks, explore individual passions, develop new interests, and use multiple disciplines to solve problems and create original solutions.

Bridges: The Bridges Program prepares our seventh graders for a successful and balanced experience transitioning from childhood to adolescence and young adulthood. By providing guidance and mentorship from trained student leaders from the senior class, middle schoolers will make connections, establish relationships and will be able to observe from their older peer leaders those behaviors that we believe to be important in the cultivation of the whole student.

As another aspect to the global health and wellness curriculum at the Princeton Day School, the Bridges program provides a safe and non-judgmental venue for discussion of topics important to youth today. It will serve as a platform for discussing such topics as: personal character, social responsibility and good decision making through the context of school community, social norms, family dynamics, peer pressure, the internet and social media, sexuality, relationships and substance abuse.

Bridges teams will meet during the DaVinci period on Day 4 from September 2017 until the end of March 2018.

Activities: Students can choose from a range of additional activities such as Robotics, Chess, Food and Garden Club, Spelling & Geography Bees, Jazz Band, the 8th Grade Yearbook.

Community Service: Middle School has a community service focus, and recent partnerships have included children and education, hunger, and the elderly. Advisors work with students to design meaningful experiences for students every year. Some recent projects have included leading food drives, and reading to children at Homefront; creating “Kissing Pillows” for service men and women overseas; learning about and supporting the prevention of childhood diseases, such as leukemia and juvenile diabetes; and helping Lower School students in the PDS community.

Middle School Curriculum:

Health & Wellness:

The Middle School Health and Wellness program seeks to empower our students to successfully navigate the ever-changing environment we live in by promoting a healthy physical, mental, and social lifestyle. Students in each grade level study a developmentally appropriate curriculum. The curriculum revolves around a number of core topics: stress and study skills, sexuality, substance use and abuse, social media, and sustainability.

Health educators, mental health personnel, and fitness, yoga, and movement instructors will work in conjunction with speakers from our greater community to share important information in their areas of expertise. The multimodal curriculum includes subjects such as the environment, nutrition, and safety. It is our hope that providing students with this developmentally appropriate and clinically pertinent learning will inform their decision-making and provide the skills they need to build a productive and healthy foundation for living.

Physical Education:

Fifth Grade

All 5th grade students participate in a comprehensive physical education program five classes out of each seven-day cycle. The goals of the program are: to encourage physical activity through the introduction of individual sports, team sports and skating; to improve each individual's overall fitness level; and to have fun while encouraging cooperation and good sportsmanship.

Sixth to Eighth Grade

The sixth through eighth grade physical education program is offered each season, and students participate in the course during the PE/Athletics period of the school day. Students engage in a variety of physical activities throughout the season that meet the needs of a range of skill and fitness levels. Key components of the program include individual and team sports, cooperative games, and fitness training.

Humanities:

Fifth Grade

Students examine the organizing question "What are the elements of culture?" by creating unique cultures in each Humanities class. These become part of a project-based archaeology experience in which students excavate and analyze the representative artifacts of each class's culture. This first hand understanding is used to examine the civilizations of China, Greece and Rome, continually comparing different cultures and searching for themes that connect the modern world to our ancient studies. Students are equally encouraged to experiment with multiple genres of writing, both as readers and writers.

Sixth Grade

Students examine world history from the fall of Roman civilization through Medieval Islam to the Renaissance. The organizing questions of the class are: "How do people interact with their environment?" and "How do people communicate their ideas and beliefs?" Students compare cultures and civilizations and analyze their influence upon contemporary ideas, customs, beliefs and institutions. They are also encouraged to experiment with multiple genres of writing, both as readers and writers.

English:

Students in grades 7 and 8 work to strengthen reading, writing, and public-speaking skills. In addition, students engage in regular grammar and vocabulary building activities. Each course is built around an essential question.

In seventh-grade students ask: "How do stories affect and change us?" The short story collections *Introducing the Short Story*, *Crazy Loco*, *Thirteen*, extensive poetry units, a storytelling program, and a year-end public speaking unit provide rich and engaging opportunities for students to find answers.

Eighth grade students ask: "How does literature help us understand ourselves and others?" Through the texts *Twice Toward Justice*, *Of Mice and Men*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *Little Worlds* (short stories) students are challenged to examine their own world in relation to the experiences of others.

Key Goals and Strategies:

Literature Assessment

- Daily discussion (both whole-class and small-group) to examine aspects of literature: plot, setting, character, symbolism, irony, theme, etc.
- Quizzes on reading
- A variety of written responses to texts: analytical essay, journal response, fictional story, personal essay
- Written responses to independent reading each term
- Focus on independent thinking, making connections between texts and life, notetaking, listening and discussion skills
- Regular opportunity for revision of written work

Writing Goals

- Develop ability to communicate effectively in essays, poetry, narrative, etc.
- Develop ability to respond thoughtfully in writing to literature and life situations
- Refine and deepen use of sophisticated writing techniques: analogies, figurative

language, vivid imagery, etc.

- Opportunities to publish writing in literary contests outside of school curriculum

Writing Genres

- Formal writing to include original short story, poetry, memoir, expository essay, and personal essay
- Emphasis on writing process: drafts, conferences, revision and editing
- Informal writing in response to or preparation for reading and discussion
- Writer's Notebook: reflective pieces, "seed" pieces for development, responses to literature, connections to own experiences

Poetry

- Integrated into literature units
- Developing sophistication of figurative language: metaphor, images, etc.
- Refinement of listening skills through frequent reading aloud of student poems
- Student poetry lessons throughout the year, based on the PDS Garden, outdoor spaces, and Imagine the Possibilities poets
- Publication of poems from all students in WHIMS, the PDS Middle School writing magazine

Speech

- Frequent reading aloud in class, enactment of drama and narrative when appropriate
- Oral presentations with emphasis on speaking and presentation skills
- Increasing sophistication in class discussion skills and analysis
- Extensive storytelling and public-speaking instruction and practice in grade 7

Vocabulary

- Literature-based lists with quizzes to assess knowledge of meaning, spelling, usage
- Graphic organizers to increase connections to specific words
- Literature terminology: plot, character, conflict, theme, climax, denouement, irony, etc.
- Revision of written work for accurate, appropriate vocabulary

Mechanics

- **Spelling**
 - Literature-generated lists; spelling rules reviewed, strategies implemented as needed
- **Grammar**
 - Goal of transferring underpinnings of grammar and structure to aid in writing; mechanics assessment of each writing piece
 - Review of parts of speech and structure of sentences
 - Periodic quizzes: parts of speech, parts of sentence

History:

This two-year course examines the history of the United States with the purpose of teaching students the historical narrative, perceptions of national identity, and the importance of a citizen's role in a democratic society. Academic skills taught are: close reading, historical research, analysis and evaluation of evidence, thesis-based writing, and oral presentation and argument. Life skills emphasized are: collaboration, empathy, development of a growth mindset, and executive function (planning, organizing, responsibility).

In Grade Seven the content encompasses the growth of the US from European exploration through Reconstruction.

In Grade Eight we examine the US during the 20th century, and supplement our study with an examination of the rise of totalitarianism and its impact upon society.

Mathematics:

For more information on our math course pathways for students in grades 5-12, please see our website, under curriculum.

Fifth Grade

The emphasis of the fifth grade course is on numerical reasoning, where whole number, decimal, and fraction concepts and computations are learned. In preparation for the following year's pre-algebra course, students are introduced to the order of operations, simple equation-solving, and the use of variables. Measurement and geometry are also studied as students find the area and perimeter various polygons. Throughout the course, problem-solving strategies are expanded and practiced and the students frequently apply ideas of mathematics to the science program.

Resources:

- Prentice Hall Mathematics Course 1
- Supplemental materials for enrichment
- State and national mathematics competitions

Key Goals for Students:

- To review and increase mastery of arithmetic processes using whole numbers, decimals, and fractions
- To receive an introduction to basic geometric ideas and employ measurement skills
- To build a background of information and experiences to prepare for future math study
- To improve math literacy
- To develop confidence and proficiency applying effective problem solving strategies

Sixth Grade

Pre-Algebra 6

The sixth grade Pre-Algebra program introduces topics that lay the groundwork for future algebraic studies as well as revisiting topics seen in previous years of math class with more depth and sophistication. Students focus more on algebraic and geometric modeling as well as learn more advanced computation with negative numbers and powers. Our program successfully prepares students to start their formal study of Algebra in 7th grade, at which time all students begin a two-year program and complete Algebra 1 by the end of 8th grade. Our goal is to provide a rich experience that provides our students the best opportunity to gain a strong understanding of and appreciation for the material. We will cover a wide range of topics including: positive and negative numbers, basic solving equations, number theory, rational numbers, ratio and proportion, percents, and two and three dimensional geometry.

Resources:

- Prentice Hall Mathematics Course 2
- Supplemental materials for enrichment
- State and national mathematics competitions
- Honors: Discovering Mathematics; Singapore Math Program

Key Goals for Students:

- To gain useful familiarity with vocabulary and concepts of algebraic and proportional reasoning
- To review and increase mastery of arithmetic processes using fractions, decimals, and integers
- To experience a substantial preview of geometric ideas and apply equation-solving techniques to geometric objects in two and three dimensions
- To build a background of information and experiences to prepare for future math study
- To gain an understanding and appreciation of math's place in the world by constant word problems and teaching methods designed to see how the numbers play out in real world situations
- To use the calculator appropriately

Seventh and Eighth Grade

Algebra

This comprehensive two-year Algebra I course covers all the traditional Algebra I topics in depth and is supplemented by special units, developed by PDS faculty, which extend and enrich these topics and which provide a challenging review of arithmetic processes. Extending the Algebra 1 course time frame to two years enables the students to engage in mathematically rich investigations to build deep understandings and ensures that topics are aligned appropriately to

the student's cognitive development. The result is a richer course of study in Algebra and a level of understanding that has served our students well as they have progressed in the study of higher levels of math and science.

Resources:

- Algebra 1, Holt McDougal
- Graphing calculators
- Supplemental materials for enrichment and review
- State and national mathematics competitions
- Honors: Algebra 1: McGraw-Hill

Key Goals for Students

- To gain a thorough understanding and mastery of the processes for solving and modeling solutions of linear and quadratic sentences (equations and inequalities) and systems of sentences
- To gain an appreciation of the relevance and importance of algebra in the real world and learn how and when to apply algebraic skills to investigate real-life situations
- To use graphing calculators appropriately
- To gain familiarity and basic manipulative skills with matrices, exponential expressions and equations, polynomials, functions, and quadratic and rational equations
- To build a background of information and experiences to prepare for future study in the areas of Geometry, Calculus and Statistics
- To review and extend skills with arithmetic processes

Computer:

Fifth and Sixth Grade

The Middle School has a 1:1 iPad program that is integrated throughout all classes in the division (for more information, please see our webpage on the iPad program in the Middle School). For this course, basic hardware operations and software skills are emphasized. Classes promote creative writing using word processing software, and problem solving using data-analysis software. Students also investigate research and networking options via the Internet.

Seventh Grade: STEM & Flight

In this course, students research, design, analyze, and simulate the forces of aerodynamics for flight in both virtual and physical environments. Through a virtual 3-D modeling process, students learn the critically important science, technology, engineering and math that lives just below the surface of creating an object capable of flight. Finally, students build the actual gliders they simulated virtually, thereby "connecting the virtual to the physical" and completing the full engineering design process. The course culminates in an exciting exhibition air show.

Eighth Grade: Graphic & Web Page Design

In this course, students will take up the challenge of the graphic designer to create a web site that communicates ideas clearly, reflects aesthetic values, and provides the viewer with an interactive experience unique to the web medium. The techniques and value of incorporating audio, video, and animation into web pages will be explored.

Science:

Fifth Grade

Students investigate a wide range of topics in our laboratory-based program, learning the basic tenets of the scientific method: skillful observation, devising accurate tests, recording data and making inferences. Course content includes earth history, evolution, electricity, magnetism, measurement and rocketry.

Sixth Grade

Life Science: Sixth graders continue using the scientific method in hands-on lab activities. Problem-solving investigations are performed in cooperative teams. Course content includes microscopy, cells, human body systems and plants.

Seventh Grade

Earth Science: Seventh graders learn to look at the earth as a dynamic system. Course content includes astronomy, geology, natural disasters, oceanography, meteorology and the origin and evolution of the universe.

Eighth Grade

Physical Science: Eighth graders are introduced to physical chemistry. This is primarily a laboratory course; concepts are reinforced through experimental work. Course content includes chemical concepts, the Law of Conservation of Mass, characteristic properties and the particulate model of matter.

Sustainability:

The PDS 6th grade Sustainability course begins by imbuing students with an appreciation of, and hopefully a love for, the natural world, in the belief that this is the first step towards becoming its stewards. Students explore our local world, the PDS campus, unlocking some of the more intriguing relationships among species at different times of year. Thus rooted, students investigate the roles that we as humans play in the natural world, with a focus on how we might use our understanding of the dynamic web of species and natural processes to at least mitigate negative impacts and possibly foster positive interactions towards a sustainable future for not just our species, but as many as possible.

Languages:

Foreign language study broadens and intensifies in middle school. Fifth graders study either French or Spanish. In 6th grade, students continue to study French or Spanish, and they are also introduced to Latin during the first four weeks of school. The goal is twofold: to reinforce their command of grammar through the presentation of basic concepts of Latin grammar (which will be useful for their grammar acquisition in English, French or Spanish); and to introduce them to a language that they can choose to study full time in 7th grade. In seventh and eighth grade, students focus on one language exclusively, studying Latin, French or Spanish. Each year the language department successfully integrates students new to PDS at each grade level.

Spanish 1

The course begins with a quick introduction to the most basic aspects of the Spanish language. We read a short story that introduces new grammar and vocabulary within each unit. Students study sentence structure and learn how verbs are conjugated in Spanish. One of the main goals for level one is for the students to reach a mastery of the present tense. Additionally, students become proficient with irregular stem changing verbs and are introduced to the present progressive and present perfect tenses. In level one Spanish there is an emphasis on Spanish culture and students learn about various aspects of daily life in Spain. Level one is an immersion-based course, meaning there is little to no use of English. Towards the end of the year students should be moderately conversational.

Spanish 2

This level focuses on the culture of Mexico. Reading skills are developed via guided readings of legends with the goal of reaching an ever-increasing degree of independent or paired reading. The texts recycle prior vocabulary while also introducing new words. Oral skills are developed in the context of responses to the readings, the presentation of scripted versions of legends and the performance of student-generated dialogues. Writing skills are developed in the context of responses to written texts and in retellings of stories we have read. Listening comprehension develops as a result of instruction primarily in Spanish. Mastery of the interrogatives is stressed so that participants can have question and answer exchanges that flow in a variety of directions; teacher to student, student to student and student to teacher. Grammar topics emphasize identifying parts of speech, the formality and plurality of subject pronouns, continued practice of present tense and present perfect verb conjugations, the formation of commands and the identification and use of direct, indirect, reflexive and reciprocal pronouns.

Spanish 3

Spanish 3 is an immersion course that recycles the material learned in Spanish 1 and 2, while introducing new grammatical structures through the study of the clash of cultures between the “old” (Spain) and “new” (Central and South America) worlds. In class, we build upon the four basic skills (speaking, listening, writing and reading) of the previous courses, and move on to mid-proficiency level in these areas. Students are expected to stay in the target language and are

introduced to the preterit and imperfect tenses. Core culture and civilization of the Spanish-speaking world are essential components of this course: we watch videos, listen to and learn songs, and study Hispanic history and geography. Making connections between our life experiences and the Spanish-speaking world is also an important component of the course. Group and pair work in the classroom is essential to acquire new concepts and improve oral skills.

Spanish 4

The highest level of Spanish in our Middle School starts with a quick review of the main grammar points and verb tenses studied in previous years: present, reflexive verbs, commands, present perfect, preterit and imperfect. The class is conducted entirely in Spanish, and students are expected to stay in the target language for the entire class period as they continue to develop their language skills through research, oral presentations, readings, story writing, documentaries, music, and even a soap opera! All the used oral and written materials are authentic and guide students through an exploration of important cultural topics relevant to the Hispanic world. The future and the conditional tenses, as well as an introduction to the subjunctive mood, are presented in this course and applied in meaningful contexts. Placement for the Upper School is done in the spring and depends on each student's command of the language.

French 1

Students learn to communicate using everyday vocabulary, elementary grammar and basic syntax. Through individual, paired and group exercises, we encourage students to express themselves in typical situations and everyday activities. Students are involved in meaningful interactions from the start. Topics include, among others: everyday classroom interaction, the family, pastimes and telling time. Students learn conjugation in the present tense with regular as well as irregular verbs, concept of noun gender, and adjective agreement. Since culture is an essential component of the curriculum, students are exposed to short readings and activities infused with cultural aspects of both the French and Francophone worlds.

French 2

At this level, students continue to expand their knowledge of vocabulary, verbs tenses (such as the future tense *futur proche* and a quick introduction to the past tense *passé composé* with *avoir*) and moods (such as the imperative), and general communication. Topics include, among others: school schedules, pastimes, places, the weather and food. The emphasis is on advancing and integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Students read a short story to enrich the full immersion in the French language. Projects are also a part of the curriculum, used to link students' interests with aspects of contemporary French and francophone cultures. A film and songs reinforce essential vocabulary, cultural knowledge and listening comprehension.

French 3

At this level students continue to expand their knowledge of vocabulary, grammatical structures of intermediate difficulty (such as the past tense *passé composé* with *être* and *avoir*, expressing quantity and using partitive articles), and general communication. The emphasis is on advancing and integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Students read short authentic texts and are asked to perform skits and songs. Projects are also a part of the curriculum, used to link students' interests with aspects of contemporary French and francophone cultures and to practice researching information online. Films, songs, and other media reinforce vocabulary, linguistic structures, cultural knowledge, and listening comprehension.

French 4

At this level students continue to expand their knowledge of vocabulary, grammatical structures of intermediate difficulty: conjugation and usage of the two past tenses *imparfait* and *passé composé*, object pronouns, reflexive and pronominal verbs, comparative and superlative adjectives, and general communication. The emphasis is on advancing and integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Students read more authentic texts, and are asked to write narratives with past tenses and speak extemporaneously. Projects and media are used as in French 3 but at higher levels of sophistication. French 4 allows students to prepare for a transition into Upper School French II or III. Placement for the Upper School is done in the spring and depends on each student's command of the language.

6th grade – Latin Component

Students are introduced to the basic foundations of Latin as they spend some time making connections to their chosen Romance language. Students also get a taste of the daily life of the ancient Pompeians prior to the eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

Latin 1

This class focuses on the foundations of Latin grammar, vocabulary, and structure. Using Unit 1 of the Cambridge Latin series, students follow the Caecili family in ancient Pompeii, just before the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. In Unit 2, they explore the worlds of Roman Britain and ancient Alexandria. The class fully grasps the daily lives of these ancient people and learns to appreciate their influence on our modern world. Through daily translation and immersion in reading Latin, students focus on the first three declensions of nouns and the indicative active system of verbs. Students are also introduced to adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns. Finally, students make vast connections to English vocabulary through Latin root words.

Latin 2

This class aims to broaden the students' foundations beyond the basics of Latin. After finishing up Unit 2 of the Cambridge Latin series, students complete their learning of the five declensions of nouns and the indicative mood of verbs. Through daily translations, students continue to learn

about the lives of the ancients, focusing on medicine, superstitions, holidays, and mythology. Students learn about the earliest foundations of Rome, the ancient kings, and strive to understand the transition to Empire and Republic. Further connections are made to various Romance languages and English vocabulary.

Performing Arts

Theater

The study of Theater Arts is introduced in Middle School. All Middle School students experience Theater class for one term during each of their four years. Classes are process oriented, geared toward affording the development confidence, flexibility, adventurousness, and collaboration. Performance opportunities include the Fall Play, open to students in grades 5-8, and the Eighth Grade Musical, a class project produced each Spring.

Fifth Grade

This course introduces students to the study of theater arts. Using storytelling, mime and movement activities, make-believe, and guided improvisation, the course offers students experiences in the realm of imagination and creativity. It provides the foundation for further study in the development of the language of theater, and establishes the environment particular to the theater classroom.

Sixth Grade

In the sixth grade course we focus on communication and collaboration through activities involving creative choices for physical movement and verbalization. Improvisation and play are key components to the beginning part of each class followed by collaborative projects and challenges toward the latter half of the hour. We begin to explore acting and creating characters using scripts, learning how an actor approaches a role and develops it for performance.

Seventh Grade

The seventh grade course is a more intensive exploration of acting and scene study. Using scripts specifically geared toward the middle school actor, students experience the development of characters for the stage, designing their own set, blocking and direction through collaborative work with other members of their group. The final project also involves creative writing as the students write their own, original monologues using themes relevant to live as a middle school student.

Eighth Grade Electives

Theater Class

The eighth grade theater elective is an intensive acting course. Performance based and process

oriented, this elective course provides interested students the opportunity to further develop their skills and technique as actors. The course offers students experiences in creating characters for the stage, developing scenes for performance, and producing one-act plays.

Eighth Grade Musical (co-curricular)

Each spring semester, all 8th grade students launch a full-scale musical production. A culminating experience for the class, the 8th Grade Musical is a long-standing PDS tradition. Students may act, sing, dance, serve on the tech crew, or perform in the pit orchestra.

Fall Play (extra-curricular)

The Fall Play is an opportunity for students in grades 5-8 to experience the process of theatrical production. Participation is open to any who are interested and able to commit to the rigorous after school rehearsal schedule. An audition is required in order to cast the play, but all who are willing to make the commitment are included.

Dance

Sixth Grade

6th graders are in for a treat as we add a movement class to the current performing arts curriculum in the middle school. In this class, we look at dance through a broader lens than is offered in most dance studios. Students will learn the basic movement building blocks for creating their own dances and will be able to build both short and sophisticated phrases as well as full-length dances by the end of the term. Students will try dances of a variety of cultures such as Native American hoop dancing, social dances from India and “everyday” dances of Tanzania, as well as put them into a larger context of how these connect to a larger global community. “If you can walk you can dance” is our motto so that all students can participate without fear. For those most enthusiastic about getting up on stage, a performance opportunity will be held in the spring.

Music

The Middle School Music program builds upon the foundations established in Lower School, but helps prepare students for more specialized programs as they mature.

Throughout their Middle School careers, students explore improvisation and composition, musical form and design, and develop sight-reading skills in their general music classes. Choir, Orchestra and Band are also an integral part of the program, and all students in the fifth and sixth grades are required to participate in one of the ensembles. Seventh and Eighth grade students can also participate in the advanced ensembles. Private individual lessons are available for an additional fee (please see description below).

General Music

The Middle School general music course curriculum is designed to have students experience music in a way that is different from how they approach it in the performing ensembles. In the ensembles, students address the discipline of learning an instrument or using their voice. They focus on executing their parts as they prepare for a concert. The prime creative force is the composer while the ensemble is tasked with interpreting and performing the composer's work. The general music classes counterweight the ensembles by having the students assume the role of composer and improviser. The main emphasis is on student creation and discovery.

Fifth Grade

Fifth grade students explore the “what” and “how” of music. Students learn rhythm, melody and harmony. These core foundations of music are explored through movement, playing instruments (Arabic and African percussion, boomwhackers and xylophones), active listening lessons, Noteflight composition software and a plethora of games and competitions to reinforce what is taught.

Sixth Grade

The 6th grade music class uses percussion and ukuleles as performance and composition tools. Students experience these instruments in both individual and group settings. The main goal is for the students to develop an understanding of theoretical music concepts and structures. Through the use of audiation students are able to internally conceive their own musical ideas and bring them to light on the instruments. Class instruction is accomplished by giving the students a fundamental framework upon which they build their own ideas. They also analyze the works of major composers and performers to find inspiration for their own works. Students perform their works individually and in groups.

Seventh Grade

Music technology is the primary focus of the seventh grade class. Students use the iPad and the app GarageBand as their primary means to create music. They also spend the majority of their time in the MIDI computer lab where they get to hook up their iPad to hardware such as MIDI controllers. They learn the fundamental building blocks of popular music such as beat, chord progression, bass line, and melody. They use these components to arrange familiar pieces and also compose their own originals.

Eighth Grade Music Electives

8th Notes – Select Vocal Ensemble (Fall semester only)

The 8th Notes is a select vocal ensemble geared toward students who are looking to further their vocal development and music literacy. In addition to school concerts, this ensemble is frequently asked to perform at community events. Meeting more frequently than other Middle School Choral Ensembles, the Eighth Notes' repertoire is generally of a more contemporary nature, and

is chosen to challenge students as they advance as choral musicians.

iBand (Spring semester only)

This course allows the students to build on the fundamental concepts of music composition learned in the 7th grade music technology class. Students will have the opportunity to compose, perform, and record music that uses acoustic, electric, and electronic instruments in both group ensembles and individually. The iPad will be used as a compositional tool and also as a performance instrument. Students will also work extensively in the MIDI lab to create their works. Many genres of music will be examined historically and theoretically. Examples include the influence of the blues on popular music or classical music's influence on film sound tracks. The knowledge gained will be used to create new student works. Students will also learn to incorporate other forms of media such as videos with their compositions.

Concert Ensembles

The Middle School offers many opportunities for students to perform in an ensemble. Whether you are a straight out beginner or an advanced player, we have a place for you. There are multiple choirs, orchestras, and bands to suit the needs of every student. Fifth and Sixth grade students are required to be a member of an ensemble of their choice. Seventh and Eighth grade students can elect to be in one of the advanced ensembles.

Concert Choir

Concert Choir provides fifth and sixth grade students a chance to sing in a choral ensemble. Students are introduced to Folk musics from a wide variety of cultures, and sing in many languages, genres and styles. Students start the year singing in unison and in canon, and end the year singing in two or more parts. Choir members begin to sight sing, and are asked to analyze the music they perform. This choir meets three days each cycle and performs throughout the school year.

Chorale

Chorale provides seventh and eighth grade students a chance to sing in a choral ensemble. Students continue to sing Folk musics from a variety of cultures, and sing in many languages, genres and styles. As they engage with more challenging repertoire, sight reading increases with difficulty and students are asked to take on more responsibility for their learning. Repertoire is generally sung in three or more voice parts. This choir meets three days each cycle and performs throughout the school year.

Discovery Band

Discovery Band is the perfect ensemble for fifth and sixth grade students with no previous study on a woodwind, brass or percussion instrument. Instruments offered are Flute, Clarinet, Saxophone, Trumpet, Trombone, Baritone, and Percussion. The class meets three times per cycle

in which students rehearse as a full ensemble and also receive sectional instruction. Students present at least two concerts during the year.

Expedition Band

Expedition Band is an intermediate ensemble for the advanced fifth and sixth grade student with at least one year of experience on a woodwind, brass, or percussion instrument. The class meets three times per cycle in which students rehearse as a full ensemble and also receive sectional instruction. Students perform in at least two evening concerts and participate in school assemblies throughout the school year.

Odyssey Band

Odyssey Band is an advanced ensemble for to the seventh and eighth grade student with at least two or more years of experience on a woodwind, brass, or percussion instrument. The class meets three times per cycle in which students rehearse as a full ensemble and also receive sectional instruction. Students perform in at least two evening concerts and participate in school assemblies throughout the school year.

Allegro Strings

Allegro Strings is a small group of dedicated students who wish to begin learning the Violin, Viola, Cello or Bass. The class meets three times per cycle and is available to all fifth and sixth grade students. Students participate in at least two concerts during the school year.

Sinfonia

Sinfonia is an ensemble made up of students with prior experience on the Violin, Viola, Cello or Bass who want to perform in a large ensemble and continue to develop their playing technique. The class meets three times per cycle in two sections - a 5th/6th section and a 7th/8th section. Students perform in at least two evening concerts and participate in school assemblies throughout the school year.

Extra-curricular Opportunities:

Jazz Band

This extra-curricular ensemble is open to interested students in grades 6-8 who have studied their instrument for at least one year. Students must participate in the curricular band, choir, or orchestra classes to be eligible. This ensemble meets after school one day per week throughout the school year.

Chamber Players

Chamber Players is an ensemble for advanced string students of the Middle School. They rehearse before school once a week. Students perform two concerts per year and participate in the 8th grade graduation ceremony.

Private Lessons

Princeton Day School has an outstanding adjunct music faculty available to students for private lessons. Lessons are scheduled once a week at a mutually convenient time for student and teacher. Lessons are available for the following instruments: piano, voice, guitar, all string, woodwind, brass and percussion instruments. Rates and policies for private music lessons are found in the FAQ and Private Lesson Contract. If you have any questions, please contact Tomasz Rzeczycki.

Visual Arts:

Fifth Grade

Art

The essential question for 5th graders is “what are the different ways that artists can work from observation and imagination.” These elements are the building blocks in all types of art and the first element that is explored is space, soon followed by line and shape. Value, color, and texture appear later in the work. Students find that observing negative as well as positive space in design and drawing is very important in making progress in these skills. After practicing their contour drawings, fifth graders look for dark and light values in a dramatically lit still life and they draw it with conté crayon using shading. Experiments in color mixing build on drawing skills as students begin their still life paintings. To transition from observational work to imaginary work, the class makes a stop to explore Surrealism. Drawings from the imagination are the basis for the lesson involving ceramic sculpture. Each student will design an original creature and will write about the environment or ecosystem to which it has adapted using the model from nature which has been studied in science. Finally, students will make a sculpture of the imaginary creature from clay.

Woodworking

This course is an introductory level course in the field of woodworking and design. Students are introduced to project layout, basic hand tools, basic power tools, construction techniques, and finishing processes. Each student will design and complete a three-dimensional clock, and other projects including bridge building and a Derby Dash.

Sixth Grade

Art

The sixth grade essential question is “how is an artist’s work influenced by the culture and time in which he or she lives.” Flat and illusionary space will be the focus of the study. A wonderful example of art in which the image is intentionally flat is seen in Islamic tiles. In conjunction with their study of Islam in Humanities, each sixth grader will design a pattern based on an Islamic

diagram, which will be transferred to a ceramic tile. The Western tradition of creating the illusion of depth in art, which was perfected during the Renaissance, informs the work of the sixth graders as they make small watercolor paintings where they will use wet on wet, wet on dry, and dry on dry painting techniques in landscape. They will be inspired by seeing reproductions of the extraordinary watercolors of Homer and Delacroix among others. Figure drawing exercises create an awareness of realistic proportion as students base drawings on real people. The culminating sixth grade art experience is a tempera painting using perspective, figure drawing, and recently learned painting techniques. Sixth grade students will study many artists, and travel to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts or another nearby museum to see an exhibition.

Drafting & Design

This course introduces students to the study of problem solving and design. Students learn to read blueprints, draw three-dimensional objects, design tree houses, and construct models of their designs. Students become familiar with the terminology, tools, and classroom setting used in the field of Architecture. Projects include designing and creating the Roller Coaster Craze, and the Tower of Doom.

Seventh Grade

Art

The first weeks of the 7th grade term will be devoted to the experimentation with the monotype, linoleum, and embossed collagraph printmaking processes. Students will explore, through their own work, the essential question for seventh grade, which is “from what aesthetic points of view can art be created and appreciated.” In their first two final assignments, they will choose two of the printmaking media that they learned for the creation of their assignments. The first is formalism. In this type of art, the design qualities are the top priority. They are more important, in this assignment, than subject matter or meaning. This work can be abstract, representational, or nonrepresentational as students appropriate a section from the work of a recognized artist and modify it to suit their formalist needs. The second is expressionism, in which the student seeks to depict no objective reality but rather the subjective emotions and responses that will be elicited by a list of titles of artworks by well-known artists. The third is realist. Places, events, people, and objects are depicted as the eye sees them, as objective reality of the external world.

Engineering

This course is a problem solving design based course. Students combine the use of hydraulics, math skills, and basic woodworking skills to solve a given task. Students are paired together to design a project that can move a dowel across a testing board from one existing color to another. This project needs to be able to grasp the dowel, lift it over a barrier, and reach minimum and maximum distances. Water is used as the power sources and syringes are used as the mechanisms.

Eighth Grade Electives

Drawing: The Self-Portrait

Drawing exercises designed to encourage students to see and then draw relationships among lines, shapes, spaces, and values precede work on the self-portrait. Because drawing a self-portrait from a reflection in a mirror can be an overwhelmingly difficult task, the method of using a photograph was adopted to make this a more manageable project for 8th graders. Each student is encouraged to participate in the setting up of lighting effects, props, poses, and costumes for the photo. This is one of the activities that encourages the young artists to confront the essential question for 8th grade, “what are the implications in an artist’s shift between the observer and the observed in a self-portrait.” The student becomes totally immersed in drawing and acquires the skills through which eventually the most appropriate means of expression is discovered for each individual.

Woodworking

This class is meant to refine students’ knowledge of woodworking and furniture design. We will explore form vs. function, positive and negative space and spatial relationships. Students will design their own pieces of furniture and learn about ergonomics and design composition. This class meets four times a week or 15 weeks. Over the duration of the course, students will complete three major projects.

Ceramics

This introductory course in ceramics will cover all of the basic skills needed to create with clay. Wheel throwing and a variety of hand building techniques will be demonstrated and practiced. Through both technical and creative exercises, each student will understand the properties and working methods of the material, as well as its vast range of possibilities. Investigations into historical and contemporary design accompany this malleable journey. This studio environment emphasizes creative problem solving skills and encourages the spirit of invention.

Architecture

The 8th grade Architecture elective is an intensive course in design. Students’ skills in construction, print reading skills, scale, and proportion are developed throughout the term. Once the students have grasped these skills, they begin to explore and create models of their own design. A final project is required. It will include their structure on a plot of land fully landscaped.

Graphic & Web Page Design

In this course, students will take up the challenge of the graphic designer to create a website that communicates ideas clearly, reflects aesthetic values, and provides the viewer with an interactive experience unique to the web medium. The techniques and value of incorporating audio, video,

and animation into web pages will be explored.

Grading:

At the close of each trimester teachers prepare written comments that include a teacher narrative and a two-part checklist. The first section of the checklist consists of items, such as class preparation and homework completion, designed to give the specific feedback that helps children learn how to become better students. The second section is similar, but contains items specific to each department, such as vocal fluency in language or computational accuracy in math.

Fifth and sixth grade students receive three levels of achievement grades:

Satisfactory (S) 80-100%

Needs Improvement (N) 70-79%

Unsatisfactory (U) 69% and Below

Parents are notified as soon as possible, usually in the form of a written interim report, if the teacher expects that a student will receive a Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory grade. When a fifth or sixth grade student receives two or more Unsatisfactory grades during a given trimester, it is viewed as an indication that the overall quality of the student's work is insufficient, and the student may be placed on academic probation depending on the situation.

Seventh and eighth grade students receive the traditional letter achievement grades as follows:

A+ 98-100%

A 93-97%

A- 90-92%

B+ 87-89%

B 83-86%

B- 80-82%

C+ 77-79%

C 73-76%

C- 70-72%

D+ 67-69%

D 63-66%

D- 60-62%

F 0-59%

Parents are notified as soon as possible, usually in the form of a written interim report, if the teacher expects that a student will receive a grade below 80%/C+ or below. When a seventh or eighth grade student receives two grades of D+, D, or D-, or one grade of F during a given trimester, it is viewed as an indication that the overall quality of the student's work is insufficient, and the student is usually placed on academic probation.

NOTES: