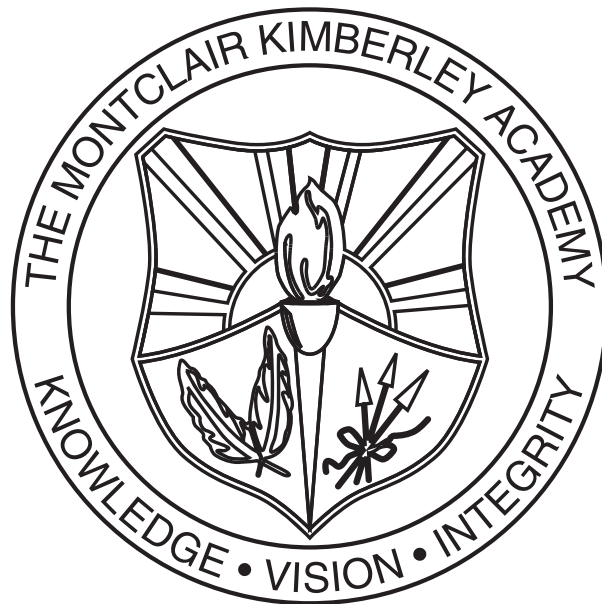


MONTCLAIR KIMBERLEY ACADEMY



2018-2019

MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM GUIDE

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MONTCLAIR KIMBERLEY ACADEMY

MISSION STATEMENT

MKA's challenging, engaging and innovative academic program provides a vibrant and transformative education. Our faculty's deep and genuine understanding of our students as individuals and as learners fosters their ethical development, intellectual growth and personal success. MKA's diverse, collaborative and inclusive community inspires students to lead lives of noble character, purpose and distinction.

Evidence of our mission is found in the Knowledge, Vision and Integrity of our students and our alumni:

KNOWLEDGE:

- Academic excellence
- Intellectual independence
- Love of learning

VISION:

- Personal engagement with the world
- Understanding of human complexity
- A sense of humility and compassion

INTEGRITY:

- Strength of character
- Responsibility as a citizen and leader
- An honorable and generous life

MKA MIDDLE SCHOOL

PHILOSOPHY

The aim of Montclair Kimberley Academy Middle School is to help young adolescents become self-reliant learners who strive for academic excellence by engaging their intellectual curiosity and enthusiasm for learning in a challenging and supportive academic program. By providing opportunities for students to learn independently and from peers with different strengths, skills, backgrounds, and perspectives and for them to assume leadership roles through varied curricular experiences and activities, we seek to develop young adolescents of ethical and moral excellence.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

We believe that. . .

- Every child in our community should be respected and honored.
- A young adolescent's positive social/emotional development is essential to his or her success as a middle-level learner.
- Every Middle School child must have an adult who knows him or her well and who serves as advocate and primary contact with the family.
- A child's education is a shared responsibility of student, family, school and community.
- The academic program must challenge all students to achieve growth in knowledge and in the skills of speaking, listening, and thinking.
- Our Middle School academic program must be designed to meet the needs of young adolescents with varying interests, abilities, and experiences.
- We must provide support and guidance for students to work towards learning goals, while fostering their independence as young people.
- We must help students learn how to learn, instructing them in important learning strategies, such as organization and time management.
- Our academic program must offer experiential learning opportunities that create bridges to students' life experiences.
- Our academic program must encourage students to explore interests and develop strengths through learning experiences that link academic disciplines.
- Our program must provide effective transitions between the Primary School and the Upper School.
- Service to school, community, and others is an essential part of our program that builds upon young adolescents' emerging sense of social awareness.

THE LOWER HOUSE

Fourth and fifth grade students comprise the Lower House of the Middle School. The Lower House follows the elementary school model where students learn and travel primarily with their homeroom groups. All Middle School students begin and end their day in advisor groups. Students' homeroom advisors are core content area teachers who teach their advisees in at least one subject and get to know them in small, advisor group settings. Students' activity is centered in one "home" hallway, exclusively dedicated to fourth and fifth grade students, where their language arts, math, and social studies classes meet. Students travel in groups to their science, world language, fine and performing arts, health, and physical education classes. All fourth and fifth grade students share recess and a Lower House lunchtime.

INTEGRATED ETHICS

Ethics and character development are integrated into all areas of school life from the classroom to the playing field. With our school seal ("Knowledge, Vision, Integrity") and Character Standards (see page 35) serving as the foundation for this education in character, students are taught both explicitly and implicitly. More specifically, our goal is to provide all of our students with the opportunity to examine their own identity and character development as they learn to lead by example.

Advisor Program

The advisor program focuses on the development of the social and emotional learning of our students. It allows students to build an essential foundation for academic and personal success by developing the self-awareness, empathy, and good character needed to make responsible decisions and create positive relationships with others.

Advisor groups meet at the beginning and end of each day. They also meet once a week for advisor lessons and activities, which fall under the categories of: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

The advisor is the principal contact between the school and a student's family. The primary roles of the advisors are to: be attentive to the academic, social, and behavioral development of their advisees; be an advocate and resource for students; and provide a comfortable forum in which to discuss age-appropriate issues.

Community Engagement

Community Engagement is an important part of the lives and learning of all Middle School students. Through the advisory program, and guided by MKA's Culture of Integrated Ethics, students develop their awareness of the world and what role they can play in fostering positive change through engaging with the community and becoming involved through service. The students in each grade level work together to find a focus, or sometimes foci, for their community engagement. Fourth and fifth grade students learn about the environmental impact of paper waste, and the importance of companionship for senior citizens and the needs of senior communities. Upper House students have recently chosen to address the rights of our country's veterans and inequities between genders. Using what they have learned, students engage in already established community engagement programs or create their own community engagement projects to address a specific area of inequity or need within the community.

All grades participate in collective community engagement initiatives, such as the Thanksgiving Food Drive for the Human Needs Food Pantry in Montclair; the annual Faculty-Student Basketball Game, which raises funds for local and global charities of the student body's choosing; and the Fleming 5k, which raises money for Special Olympics New Jersey and another charity of the 8th grade class's choosing.

Technology Integration

MKA's commitment to preparing students for academic excellence and the development of good character includes its 1:1 Laptop Learning Initiative that provides each student with a laptop. At each grade level, teachers integrate technology as a learning tool to help students develop their skills and their understanding. Teaching and learning in a 1:1 environment furthers the school's mission to equip students with both the technological fluency and the digital citizenship necessary to promote and sustain learning and to foster leadership in the 21st century.

Students have a broad range of opportunities to acquire computer skills in their academic classes. For example, they focus on problem solving as they learn computer skills and apply those skills to research and writing assignments, or they work collaboratively to learn multimedia skills for creating movies and podcasts. They gradually acquire a repertoire of tools from which they can make effective choices to help them accomplish tasks or learning goals in any context. Throughout the year, Lower House students receive direct instruction to learn the fundamentals of digital citizenship, communication, literacy, and security in order to become responsible and productive users of digital technology.

CLASS OVERNIGHT TRIPS

In addition to a variety of field trips that supplement the curriculum, fourth and fifth grade students, accompanied by their teachers, participate in a special, grade-level overnight trip each year. This trip is designed to encourage collaboration among classmates and to foster the mutual respect required for team building. Students camp in cabins, enjoy outdoor team-building activities, and learn about the natural environment. These experiences are among the most memorable for Lower House students because, as they learn and work together, they learn more about their classmates, their teachers, and themselves.

FLEX OFFERINGS

Students have the opportunity to participate in a variety of offerings during Flex period, which occurs four times per ten-day cycle. They can practice with a special performing group, develop their leadership skills, explore areas of interest ranging from current events to coding, or simply devote extra time to processing their learning in study hall. Because each offering meets once or twice per cycle, students are able to participate in as many as four.

HOMEWORK

Homework contributes to effective learning by providing opportunities to prepare, practice, and extend skills, and to apply ideas creatively. Completing homework assignments also helps students learn responsibility and time management. Fourth grade students have homework four times a week and only occasionally on weekends. Fifth grade students are assigned weeknight homework and the equivalent of a weeknight assignment over the weekend (with the exception of monthly “nothing-due-on-Monday weekends”). Teachers coordinate assignments so that students should be able to complete work for all subjects in 45 to 90 minutes. Teachers post assignment sheets, course work, and homework to Moodle, an interactive, web-based site that enables students to check homework, organize their workload, and interact digitally through blogs and forum postings.

PROGRESS REPORTING

Communication between parents and teachers takes place throughout the year. Advisors contact parents on a monthly basis to share successes and discuss any concerns about students’ lives at school. At the first trimester interim, advisors write an advisor comment that focuses on the student’s start to a new school year, primarily from a social/emotional perspective. To review students’ social/emotional and academic progress, parents annually participate in two, scheduled conferences with the advisor(s). Parent-advisor conferences are scheduled in the fall and late spring. Parents receive formal trimester progress reports from the teachers in each subject that include a checklist and/or narrative elaborating on the student’s strengths and weaknesses. In the second trimester, narratives in language arts and mathematics are replaced with detailed rubrics on which teachers indicate student progress in areas assessed.

EXTENDED ABSENCE POLICY: HOME STUDY AND TUTORING

Should a student experience an extended absence from school, MKA faculty, under the supervision of the Assistant Head of Campus, provide assignments for the student. MKA faculty complete the assessment of work assigned on a Home Study. The Head of Campus must approve any exception to this policy.

A student absent from school for an extended period of time due to medical reasons may be eligible to apply for home tutoring support through Essex County Educational Services. A doctor’s note verifying the diagnosis and estimated length of absence must accompany an application for tutorial support. Tutors may not be available in all disciplines. When available, county educational services may provide tutors for two hours each week per discipline for a maximum of 60 school days.

In the event of a lengthy medical absence – generally exceeding 60 school days at one time or in aggregate – a student may be asked to withdraw from MKA. The Head of Campus will consider cases on an individual basis.

FOURTH GRADE

LANGUAGE ARTS

Reading and Writing Workshops

The fourth grade language arts program focuses on the five critical and interrelated experiences of reading, literary response, composition, language skills, and rhetorical skills such as discussion and presentation. MKA's workshop approach is informed by our partnership with The Reading and Writing Project of Teachers College, Columbia University.

Reading Workshop uses a mini-lesson approach. As part of their targeted instruction, teachers often read aloud selections from novels, poetry, and short stories to model reading strategies for students. One of the most critical reading strategies that fourth graders use is making personal connections between their own life experiences and the book. The importance of using the strategies of pre-reading, close reading, and re-reading is also emphasized throughout the reading process. For Reading Workshop, students choose their own books at their independent reading level and keep a log of their required reading nightly. Students also read in book clubs during the year. Vocabulary is taught as a reading strategy – looking for contextual clues to discover meaning – and reinforced in individual and small-group work. Whole-class readings include *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*, *How Tia Lola Came to Stay*, and a selection of Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales, part of the MKA Core. Students learn to form opinions and gather meaning from a variety of nonfiction texts in addition to novels. Students gather facts, explore text features, and learn to separate facts from opinions.

During Writing Workshop, students use the steps of process writing to hone their skills in a variety of structures and genres, including realistic fiction, memoir, poetry, and feature article. Teaching the writing process begins with mini-lessons about collecting seed ideas and using pre-writing skills. As they develop their work, students incorporate the craft and structure of mentor pieces in their own writing through multiple revisions and the editing process. Grammar is embedded in Writing Workshop through differentiated mini-lessons that teach common patterns and basic rules of punctuation. Parts of speech and parts of a sentence are taught as discrete units of study. Use of laptops during the writing process helps to facilitate drafting and proofreading. Final drafts of all completed projects are celebrated with publishing parties that allow students to share their work with their peers. Applications such as Google Docs, Word, iMovie, and GarageBand offer varied formatting and multimedia options for the written word.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Communities on the Move: Understanding the History of America, Migration, and Immigration

In social studies, students explore the geography of the United States to gain an understanding of how it impacts civilizations. Examining primary source materials, analyzing maps, and utilizing Internet and library research skills all help students gain understanding of various geographical regions.

Fourth grade students begin with a study of map skills and the geography of the five regions of the United States in order to lay the foundation for the timeline approach to our year. Through a study of human migration and Native Americans, students work collaboratively, focusing on the Native American people and how basic needs and geographic factors influenced their movement and cultures. A study of Colonial America follows to highlight the next steps of our nation's history. Following a brief overview of the American Revolution, fourth grade students explore industrialization and the Great Wave of Immigration through a variety of experiences.

Field trips to Ellis Island and the Lower East Side Tenement Museum highlight the study of the Great Wave of Immigration and give further depth of understanding to students' reading of "The New Colossus," the poem inscribed on the Statue of Liberty and a work of the MKA Core. Students supplement learning gathered from these trips with primary and secondary source research, both in the library and online, to assume the persona of an Ellis Island immigrant of the period. Drawing on all their learning, students write diary entries, pack an immigrant's suitcase, and prepare a skit about the journey to America.

MATHEMATICS

Everyday Math

The core of the K–5 math program is the recently revised, research-based, *Everyday Mathematics 4* program. The spiral curriculum enables students to achieve mastery by revisiting topics in a variety of contexts over time. The goal of the math program is to develop computational fluency and to help the students become confident, effective problem solvers. Students are introduced to abstract mathematical concepts through real-life experiences.

Fourth grade students build their number sense. They explore addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division methods. Additionally, they develop an understanding of fraction equivalence and perform addition, subtraction, and multiplication of fractions. While studying measurement and geometry, students convert units and apply formulas to compute the area and perimeter of geometric figures.

Children deepen their understanding of mathematics and practice reasoning skills through Open Response and Reengagement lessons. The first day of these two-day lessons provides the opportunity for students to solve a challenging problem that involves more than one possible strategy or solution. On the second day, students reengage with the problem by examining and discussing their own and other students' solutions to deepen their understanding of the mathematical content and practices involved. Students then revise their own work from the first day of the lesson. They draw upon their mathematical understandings, ask good questions, and communicate their mathematical thinking.

SCIENCE

Emerging Scientist: Investigating Earth Systems, Magnetism, and Electricity

In fourth grade, students engage in their learning as scientists in ways that mirror real-world science. Fourth grade science capitalizes on students' natural curiosity. Students learn about the world around them by developing the skills of science—observing, recording data, asking testable questions, and reflecting on their thinking. Students use scientific and technological tools in a meaningful way as they engage in the scientific process.

Student scientists begin the year by exploring the relationship between land and water. Students create models using soil and water to determine how water impacts and shapes land. These young scientists then apply what they have learned about land and water interactions and the scientific process to design, build, and test various dams with the goal of controlling the flow of water and preventing flooding.

After delving into earth systems, fourth grade scientists focus on magnetism and electricity. They explore the behavior of magnets by comparing how magnets interact with different materials. Finally, students learn about conductors, insulators, and simple electrical circuits.

WORLD LANGUAGE

French and Spanish: Building Communication Skills

In fourth grade world language classes, students develop basic communication skills through immersion in the target language. Study enhances students' ability to understand the language and retain basic vocabulary. Language acquisition is reinforced through repetition, teacher modeling, and gesturing. Students sing, dance, listen to music, and participate in a variety of interactive, hands-on activities and language games. Multimedia tools are frequently used to provide visual and auditory support to engage and instruct students. Students develop communication skills and explore culture as they learn about the countries where the target language is spoken.

HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Self-Awareness and Decision-Making

Fourth grade health study, embedded in science class, provides a foundation for personal growth and education about the skills needed to maintain and achieve a healthy lifestyle. Our wellness-based approach emphasizes concepts that help students make connections between who they are, what they feel, and the world around them.

Students participate in a variety of physical education units designed to develop physical literacy and a positive attitude toward learning lifetime skills. During class time, students are encouraged to take risks, build character, and set goals. These concepts allow for a smooth progression from skill building to game play, which inspires critical thinking and decision-making opportunities. Our curriculum also promotes common vocabulary to understand the body's muscle groups while moving through space.

LIBRARY

The library program provides essential foundations for students to collaborate and thrive in a rapidly changing world. Please see the library section on page 32 for a detailed description of the program for students in grades four through eight.

FINE & PERFORMING ARTS: LOWER HOUSE

Our process-oriented curriculum provides all children, regardless of natural ability or interest, with the opportunity to express themselves in new and different ways through the arts. During quarterly classes in art, dance, theatre arts, and music, students gain appreciation for the joy, beauty, and wonder of the arts and discover their own limitless potential for creative expression.

All fourth grade students participate in Chorus and may also elect to participate in Concert Band or Strings. All groups rehearse during school as a full ensemble, and group lessons for both strings and band instrumental sections take place after school. Fifth grade students may choose Chorus, Concert Band, or Strings. As in the fourth grade, all three groups have full rehearsal during school, and the string and band instrumental sections have group lessons after school once a week. The chorus and bands each participate in a winter and spring concert, and the strings participate in an annual performance at Carnegie Hall. The Concert Bands and Strings also participate in the Music in the Parks Festival each May.

QUARTERLY CLASSES

Art

The fourth grade art course focuses on the basic elements of art, such as shape, line, color, texture, and form. Using a variety of materials, students are encouraged to be creative in problem solving and to express themselves through art while they learn how to discuss their projects and ideas with others. In addition to their work as artists, students learn to speak the "language of art" as well as to examine works of contemporary art and great artists of the past. The fifth grade curriculum includes MKA Core artist Alexander Calder, whose work is accessible to this age group through its playfulness and the simple shapes and colors that define it. In creating works based in the style of Calder's famous "Circus," students are introduced to kinetic art and contour line drawing. In addition, in connection with social studies, students create two-dimensional projects based on Greek mythology. Both fourth and fifth grade students periodically display selected work throughout the school.

Dance

Student dancers are engaged in an interactive exploration of the vocabulary, principles, and elements of many dance styles. Fourth and fifth grade dancers are introduced to the genres of ballet, modern, jazz, lyrical, and hip-hop dance and to ethnic dance, presented in cultural and historical context. The classes focus on student development of kinesthetics, body awareness, technical ability, spatial expressiveness, and personal creativity.

Music

Through both instrumental and vocal music, students in grades four and five develop the building blocks for appreciating music from a wide variety of world cultures. As they sing and play xylophones, percussion instruments, and keyboards, students learn music notation, two-part harmony, rhythm, and solfège. Fourth grade students examine *Peter and the Wolf* by Sergei Prokofiev, part of the MKA Core. During this study, students become acquainted with orchestral instruments and themes. In fifth grade, students explore how composers communicate with an audience through the artistry of the performer. Instruments are used to guide students in developing their musical skills. Students expand their knowledge and use of musical manuscripts and complete the course by crafting and performing their own original musical composition.

Theatre Arts

Why do we tell stories? What does it mean to remember? What makes storytelling artistic? How can the theatre tell artistic stories? Fourth grade students ask themselves these questions to create a space for things to happen in theatre arts. They explore the tools of an actor: the voice, the body, and the imagination. They then do a series of exercises in which they create unique characters and engage in short improvisations. Skills and content are interwoven in the creation of a theatrical piece based on this study. The fifth grade theatre curriculum directly relates to students' study of ancient Greece and Greek mythology. Aristotle's "Poetics" is the jumping off point as students dive into Greek theatre and the first actor, including the use of dance and vocal performance on stage, choral speaking, and mask work. Student work focuses on dramatic structure and the fundamental tools of storytelling in the West: beginning, middle, end, inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

FIFTH GRADE

LANGUAGE ARTS

Reading and Writing Workshops

The fifth grade language arts program continues the fourth grade focus on the critical and interrelated experiences of reading, literary response, composition, language skills, and rhetorical skills, such as discussion and presentation. MKA's workshop approach is informed by our partnership with The Reading and Writing Project of Teachers College, Columbia University.

Books for the required nightly reading are self-selected to meet individual students' interests and reading levels. During reading conferences with the teacher, the reader designs individualized reading goals, enabling students to analyze their progress, choose aspects of literature that are of interest to them, and select focused reading strategies. Vocabulary is taught to the whole class as a reading strategy – looking for contextual clues to discover meaning – and reinforced in individual and small group work. When reading, students make inferences, support theses, and search for theme-related clues. They learn that universal themes can be used as key concepts for understanding their personal lives and the world around them.

Assigned literature includes *Song of the Trees*, *Number the Stars*, *Seedfolks*, *Tuck Everlasting*, and *D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths*, which contains the myths that comprise one element of the MKA Core. Students also continue to explore a variety of literary genres through literary circles, such as short fiction, historical and realistic fiction, and fantasy. Literature serves as a launching point for writing assignments, which take the form of personal narrative, expository essay, persuasive letter, and biography.

In response to read-alouds, students are asked to write down seed ideas from their personal experiences, which generate the basis for their own stories. Select literature and examples of student work are used to model good writing by providing examples of figurative language, effective dialogue, and appropriate use of grammar, syntax, and paragraphing. Students write one biography book report and present one biography book talk. Fifth grade students complete their drafting process and are given frequent and specific instruction to improve their revising and editing skills through mini-lessons and feedback during individual conferences. Students continue to learn spelling rules and common patterns through practice, and they take responsibility for mastery in their own writing. Building on the foundation established in fourth grade, grammar study includes parts of speech, parts of a sentence, and punctuation rules.

The students' progress in reading and writing is broken down into smaller parts and formally assessed through continuums that are sent home once a year. In addition, a formal Writing Challenge assessment measures writing efforts in fifth grade (and again in seventh grade). The MKA Writing Challenge establishes criteria for qualities of good writing, and students assess their progress and set personal writing goals based on these standards.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Geography and Society: Exploring the Origins of Civilization

Fifth grade students examine the origins of civilization and culture to explore and answer questions about Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Meso-American cultures. They apply their understanding as they analyze Mesopotamian art to gain insight into the culture of Sumer and examine the origins of law in Hammurabi's Code, part of the MKA Core.

In conjunction with their study of ancient Egypt, students choose a topic of interest for a thesis-driven research paper. They create essential, guiding questions that scaffold note taking, and they conduct a research process to answer those questions, including a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to examine murals, mummies, and other artifacts. They then explore the culture and government of ancient Athens and enjoy a feast of Greek delicacies. Finally, studying the Aztec, Inca, and Maya provides a closer look at the native cultures of Central and South America. Students gain an understanding of how ideas, practices, and technology spread in similar ways in different parts of the world.

MATHEMATICS

Everyday Math

The core of the K–5 math program is the recently revised, research-based, *Everyday Mathematics 4* program. Fifth grade lessons are arranged to take advantage of previously learned concepts and skills and to build on them throughout the year. Students expand their computational work by applying the four operations to larger numbers, fractions, and decimals. Through a variety of games and tasks, the students engage in daily practice to develop fluency with computation. They further their study of geometry to more specifically classify polygons and to calculate volume.

Students continue exploring line plots and coordinate grids. They create graphs on coordinate planes to visualize numerical patterns and represent real-world problems. Additionally, the students collect, organize, and interpret data.

Problem solving is a key component to the curriculum. Students explore problem-solving strategies through real-life problems. A special emphasis is placed on providing convincing arguments and understanding the reasoning of others as students engage in solving two-day, open-response problems.

SCIENCE

Understanding Your World: Matter, the Water Planet, and Our Food Systems

Fifth grade student scientists continue to focus on understanding the world around them as they begin the year studying the chemistry of matter. They answer the question, “What is the difference between a mixture and a solution?” By using different methods to separate mixtures and solutions, they learn about concentration, homogeneous and heterogeneous mixtures, and solubility. Students build on this understanding as they learn about chemical reactions. During this unit, students use the knowledge they have gained to plan scientific investigations.

Students then build on their understanding of matter by investigating the Water Planet. They learn about phase change and apply those concepts to developing an understanding of the dynamics of weather and water cycling in Earth’s atmosphere. Students investigate the water cycle with a focus on fundamental concepts, such as density, convection, and differential heating of soil and water. Finally, students conclude the year by examining their ecological footprint through the lens of what they eat, and have hands-on experiences growing and cultivating food. During this unit, students make observations about fruits and vegetables from different farms around the world and learn about how industrial, local, and organic food systems worked historically and work today. Additionally, the garden curriculum ties in with the language arts curriculum and multicultural education. Students read *Seedfolks* by Paul Martin and take a field trip to an urban garden in Newark.

WORLD LANGUAGE

French and Spanish: Expanding Communication and Expression

Fifth grade language students build on the foundation created in fourth grade by expanding their writing and reading skills. Thematic units provide students with an exciting context for acquiring vocabulary and simple grammar. Students use a variety of technology tools and applications to practice what they are learning in the class and demonstrate their understanding and mastery of vocabulary and basic grammar skills. They readily initiate oral expression in the target language and are able to answer simple questions and follow instructions. They read short passages related to the thematic units and practice writing grammatically correct sentences. Culture is infused in classroom activities that familiarize students with customs, cuisine, and fashion. At the end of fifth grade, students decide if they will enroll in Chinese 1A, French 1A, or Spanish 1A in sixth grade.

HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Growing and Changing

Fifth grade health focuses on the physical, social, and emotional stages of development during puberty. Students use vocabulary and concepts taught in fourth grade to help them make connections with new strands of self-awareness and identity. Students work on implementing strategies and techniques to strengthen their self-confidence and self-worth, allowing them to practice refusal skills, uphold personal values, and handle peer pressure. This course relies on a strong partnership between home and school. Teachers send home an outline at the beginning of the course, and parents are encouraged to discuss class topics with their children at home. Special games, projects, and discussion of current events further strengthens how the students see themselves and how they relate to the world around them.

Students participate in a variety of physical education activities designed to develop a positive attitude toward general fitness and physical literacy. During class time, students are encouraged to try new things and have fun while learning and improving their sports skills. Sportsmanship is the goal of each class game, and competition is not stressed. Skills emphasized include: flexibility, coordination, muscular strength, muscular and cardiovascular endurance, speed, agility, power, reaction time, balance, and large and small locomotor skills.

LIBRARY

The library program provides essential foundations for students to collaborate and thrive in a rapidly changing world. Please see the library section on page 32 for a detailed description of the program for students in grades four through eight.

FINE & PERFORMING ARTS

Please see page 9 for an overview of the Lower House Fine and Performing Arts curriculum.

THE UPPER HOUSE

Students in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades comprise the Upper House of the Middle School. They are organized by advisor groups and travel throughout the school on individualized schedules. The students follow a ten-day schedule in which all major academic subjects meet eight times per cycle. Daily Collaborative Work Periods afford them the opportunity to meet with teachers and work with peers.

INTEGRATED ETHICS

Ethics and character development are integrated into all areas of school life, from the classroom to the playing field. With MKA's school seal ("Knowledge, Vision, Integrity") and Character Standards serving as the foundation for this education in character, students are taught both explicitly and implicitly. More specifically, our goal is to provide all of our students with the opportunity to examine their own identity and character development as they learn to lead by example.

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Advisor groups meet at the beginning and end of each day. They also meet once a week for advisor lessons and activities, which address topics such as: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

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Community Engagement is an important part of the lives and learning of all Middle School students. Through the advisory program, and guided by MKA's Culture of Integrated Ethics, students develop their awareness of the world and what role they can play in fostering positive change through engaging with the community and becoming involved through service. The students in each grade level work together to find a focus, or sometimes foci, for their community engagement. Fourth and fifth grade students learn about the environmental impact of paper waste, and the importance of companionship for senior citizens and the needs of senior communities. Upper House students have recently chosen to address the rights of our country's veterans and inequities between genders. Using what they have learned, students engage in already established community engagement programs or create their own community engagement projects to address a specific area of inequity or need within the community.

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Technology Integration

MKA's commitment to preparing students for academic excellence and the development of good character includes its 1:1 Laptop Learning Initiative that provides each student with a laptop. At each grade level, teachers work to use technology as a learning tool that develops students' skills and their understanding. Teaching and learning in a 1:1 environment furthers the school's mission to equip students with the technological fluency and digital citizenship necessary to promote and sustain learning and to foster leadership in the 21st century.

In all academic disciplines, students use technology to learn in a variety of contexts, from using webs for brainstorming and organizing ideas to collaborating with classmates and teachers on forums and blogs. Students refine their skills using computer applications as productivity and learning tools to write, edit, and revise their written work; to graph data; and to present information in creative, dynamic ways that demonstrate understanding of important ideas.

Global Experience

At the Middle School, MKA's Global Experience offers language students an invaluable and enriching immersion experience and enhances their course of study. Seventh and eighth grade students may participate in world language trips linked to their study of French or Spanish. All traveling students go on educational excursions to important historical and cultural sites and attend language school.

CLASS OVERNIGHT TRIPS

During the first two months of school, each grade level takes an overnight class trip that encourages collaboration, team building, and students' learning about one another and themselves. Sixth grade and seventh grade students travel to a camp where they stay in cabins or dorms and participate in a series of outdoor and team-building activities. Eighth grade students extend their studies of Colonial America with a three-day, research-based trip that immerses them in the colonial life of Williamsburg, VA.

FLEX OFFERINGS

Students have the opportunity to participate in a variety of offerings during FLEX period, which occurs four times per ten-day cycle. They can practice with a special performing group, develop their leadership skills, explore areas of interest ranging from current events to coding, or simply devote extra time to processing their learning in study hall. Because each offering meets once or twice per cycle, students are able to participate in as many as four.

HOMEWORK

Homework contributes to effective learning by providing opportunities to prepare, practice, and extend skills, and to apply ideas creatively. Completing homework assignments also helps students learn responsibility and time management.

Generally, students have homework every night. While it is difficult to provide an accurate measure of the time it will take each child to complete homework on any given night, the following is a guide for the time students should spend on homework each night: Sixth grade students should expect to spend one- and one-half to two hours; seventh and eighth grade students usually spend between two and two- and one-half hours.

These estimates should be taken into consideration when planning a child's extra-curricular activity schedule. Students can complete some homework during study halls and collaborative work periods (CWP) when they have access to their teachers and peers. Moodle, an interactive, web-based course management system, allows students to organize their workload by checking posted assignments, accessing class materials and notes, and interacting digitally in support of their learning.

ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE

Students experiencing academic difficulty are encouraged to ask for extra help from their teachers. Students may meet with teachers during collaborative work periods (CWPs), recesses, or after school. Teachers are available daily until 3:30 p.m. to work with students.

ACADEMIC REPORTING

Communication between parents and teachers takes place throughout the year. Advisors contact parents on a monthly basis to share successes and discuss any concerns about students' lives at school. At the first trimester interim, advisors write an advisor comment that focuses on the student's start to a new school year, primarily from a social/emotional perspective. To review students' social/emotional and academic progress, parents annually participate in two, scheduled, parent/student conferences with the advisors. During the first conference, students participate with their parents and share goals they have set. Students lead the year's second parent/student conference.

Each year, parents receive a minimum of three academic reports from the school. Upper House students receive trimester report cards with letter grades. At the interim of the second and third trimester, all students receive narrative comments from each teacher to give parents a more precise view of how their children are performing and the next steps students need to take with their learning. In addition, teachers write narrative comments at the end of the second and third trimesters for students whose grade average has gone up or down a full letter grade, or is D+ or below. These additional academic reports are designed to provide both students and parents with prescriptive suggestions for improving their learning.

HONORS RECOMMENDATION PROCESS—EIGHTH TO NINTH GRADE

Students moving to the Upper School will have access to a full complement of honors-level courses designed specifically to inspire students in subject areas they are passionate about and committed to intellectually. Teachers use an Independent Learner Rubric to assess students' ability to engage in and take initiative for their learning. A minimum grade is required in each discipline, and discipline-specific criteria are used to measure students' strengths and abilities in each content area.

ACADEMIC PROBATION

At the end of each quarter, the Assistant Head of Campus reviews sixth, seventh, and eighth grade report cards and identifies students with two or more grades below C- for academic probation.

When a student is placed on academic probation, the Assistant Head of Campus will send a letter to the student's parents or guardians and to the advisor notifying them that the student is on probation. While on academic probation, the student must attend an after school study hall for one hour on Tuesdays and Thursdays. On these days, students on sports teams will miss practices and away games without penalty. They will be allowed to participate in home games.

The academic probation policy is different for sixth grade students at the end of the first quarter. Rather than being placed on academic probation, the student and the advisor will meet with the Assistant Head of Campus. The advisor will communicate the seriousness of the situation to the parents or guardians. In subsequent quarters, sixth grade students on academic probation will attend the after school study hall.

If a student is on academic probation a second quarter during one year, the Head of Campus addresses the situation with the student and the parents or guardians. A student on academic probation after fourth quarter will start the following school year on academic probation.

EXTENDED ABSENCE POLICY: HOME STUDY AND TUTORING

Should a student experience an extended absence from school, MKA faculty, under the supervision of the Assistant Head of Campus, provide assignments for the student. MKA faculty complete the assessment of work assigned on a Home Study. The Head of Campus must approve any exception to this policy.

A student absent from school for an extended period of time due to medical reasons may be eligible to apply for home tutoring support through Essex County Educational Services. A doctor's note verifying the diagnosis and estimated length of absence must accompany an application for tutorial support. Tutors may not be available in all disciplines. When available, county educational services may provide tutors for two hours each week per discipline for a maximum of 60 school days.

In the event of a lengthy medical absence—generally exceeding 60 school days at one time or in aggregate—a student may be asked to withdraw from MKA. The Head of Campus will consider cases on an individual basis.

ENGLISH

The English curriculum is a spiraling one, with many topics revisited during the middle school years. Five critical and interrelated experiences provide the structure for study: response to literature through individual and group activities; reading self-selected works; rhetorical skills, such as discussion and presentation; composition; and the study of language patterns, including spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and usage. In the first half of the year, vocabulary is taught as a reading strategy that involves inferring meaning from contextual clues in the literature. A variety of teacher-created, online games address different learning modalities. In the second half of the year, students in grades six through eight learn Greek and Latin roots in their vocabulary study.

In addition to the literature that students read and discuss with the class, students are required to read self-selected, independent reading books, and teachers recommend both classical and contemporary literature as well as nonfiction. The workshop approach to the teaching of reading continues throughout the grades, and mini-lessons specific to each genre help students practice targeted reading skills.

Students experience the connection between reading, writing, and speaking each day. Prewriting activities, such as informal writing in journals and notebooks, help students explore new ideas, focus thinking, and spark discussion. Students use the writing process to generate original thinking in the form of personal narratives, memoir, short fiction, poetry, letters, interviews, news articles, editorials, and formal essays. All aspects of the writing process, including using multiple drafts for revising and editing, holding conferences with peers and the teacher, and publishing, help students develop ownership of their pieces. Students share and celebrate their final pieces in a variety of ways, including bulletin board displays, class books, dramatic performances, iMovies, podcasts, and multimedia projects. Their writing may also be published in *Voices & Visions: Art & Writing from the Middle School*.

A formal assessment of written work, the MKA Writing Challenge, measures prompt-driven writing in the fifth and seventh grades. It establishes criteria for qualities of good writing, and students assess their progress and set personal writing goals based on these standards. All teachers in the English Department collaborate to evaluate students' essays in relation to six criteria: topic development, organization, word choice, details and support, style and voice, and grammar and mechanics. In addition, teachers are informed by the results of the CTP4 testing in the fourth, sixth, and eighth grades to identify and address both individual and class strengths and weaknesses in writing and reading.

In the Upper House, the grammar curriculum focuses on parts of speech, parts of a sentence, punctuation, and usage. There is a well-articulated scope and sequence for each grade that allows students to be able to identify how words, phrases, and clauses function within a sentence. The goal is for students to make the connection between a mastery of specific grammar topics and improved sentence writing. Students use materials created by their teachers as well as online sources to supplement their contextual study of grammar and writing mechanics.

SIXTH GRADE

Reading for Evidence and Writing with Voice

Entering sixth grade students choose from a list of four novels that explore the theme of family relationships and identity. Students also independently choose and read books from various genres throughout the year, and teachers monitor their progress through reading conferences and writing activities. Students learn a variety of reading strategies through the class texts, which include *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*; *The Giver*, part of the MKA Core; and *The Extraordinary Cases of Sherlock Holmes*. In particular, students learn to annotate the texts for particular aspects of character development in a variety of ways, which leads to a deeper understanding of conflict and theme. The range of genres, including realistic and dystopian fiction, 19th century mystery, and poetic memoir, offers the students different narrative structures for telling a story. The poetry unit begins with excerpts from *Brown Girl Dreaming*, a memoir written in verse; continues with other modern poets; and concludes with the poems of Robert Frost, another part of the MKA Core. During this unit, students have the opportunity to pick their own independent reading memoir written in verse and analyze and annotate it for deeper understanding.

Students explore the fundamentals of good paragraph writing, including main idea and supporting details, and they learn to develop effective leads and conclusions. Sixth grade writing includes personal narrative; literary essays; a personal essay modeled after the NPR radio series, *This I Believe*; book reviews on students' independent reading; and poetry writing through the creation of a chapbook. Grammar experience with parts of speech, parts of the sentence, and punctuation helps students to construct better sentences in their writing, with more attention to voice. Vocabulary units are culled from the literature during the first half of the year and from a Greek and Latin roots workbook for the latter half.

In addition to learning formal writing skills, students develop their creativity through projects, such as a web-based research project on the Civil Rights era to support reading historical fiction; a multimedia collaboration to demonstrate understanding of the mystery genre; and debates to help students analyze a story, support their ideas with evidence, and build rhetorical skills.

SEVENTH GRADE

Reading for Character and Writing for Impact

Entering seventh grade students choose from a list of four novels that explore a coming-of-age theme, which informs much of their work in both reading and writing throughout the year. Students begin the year with a unit of short stories, ranging from classics to young adult fiction, for the pleasure of a great tale well told and the study of literary elements. They continue exploring the coming-of-age theme through Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, part of the MKA Core. In reading this classic text, students focus on character development and theme. In addition, students read poetry, including works of Pablo Neruda, another MKA Core selection. They also study poems of direct address, ranging from contemporary poetry back to the 17th century. The poetry unit concludes with a study of Shakespeare's sonnets that enhances students' comfort with Shakespeare's language before encountering it in play form. This knowledge aids them in reading and performing a scene from Shakespeare in class, and then staging a major, grade-wide production of one of Shakespeare's plays (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Richard III*).

Students' study of the writer's craft through classics and contemporary young adult short fiction culminates in writing an original short story. A study of expository writing then informs a literary essay written in response to *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Students continue to hone their skills in writing clear, focused paragraphs and gain expertise in forming thesis statements supported by textual evidence. Throughout the year, students write journal responses in Moodle, Evernote, or Google Classroom in order to process what they are learning and thinking and to propose, test, and reflect upon strategies for learning new reading and writing skills. Grammar topics include prepositional phrases, complements, and the rules of punctuation. For the unit on punctuation, students are required to identify the rules for commas, semicolons, and colons that apply to each sentence in an assessment. Vocabulary is culled from the literature during the first half of the year and supplemented by a Greek and Latin roots vocabulary workbook for the latter half.

In addition, a formal Writing Challenge assessment measures writing efforts in seventh grade (and again in eleventh grade). The MKA Writing Challenge establishes criteria for qualities of good writing, and students assess their progress and set personal writing goals based on these standards.

EIGHTH GRADE

Reading for Self-Discovery and Writing for Action

Entering eighth grade students choose from a list of four books that explore the themes of belonging, acceptance, and identity. During the year, they read texts that investigate themes of identity and the journey to self-discovery as metaphor through contemporary and classic texts, such as *A Separate Peace*; literature of the Harlem Renaissance, including the poetry of Langston Hughes (from the MKA Core); *The Odyssey* (MKA Core); and the War unit, which explores narrative nonfiction from soldiers and journalists, including Rorke Denver, Chris Hedges, Sebastian Junger, and Dexter Filkins. The latter unit culls nonfiction and short fiction from the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to study the impact of these conflicts on the humanity of the individual soldier.

Throughout the year, students learn reading strategies to help them understand nuances of both whole-class books and self-selected, independent reading, including fiction and nonfiction. During the nonfiction unit, students read challenging texts, such as Jon Krakauer's *Where Men Win Glory: The Odyssey of Pat Tillman*, Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Rachel Simmons' *Odd Girl Out*, and Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn's *Half the Sky*, to name a few. Conferring with the teacher supports students' progress with reading, writing assignments, projects, and other activities and assessments, often through a shared notebook. The class Moodle site or Google Classroom provides an arena for blogs and forum discussions among peers. Students use laptops to create audio and video projects during the unit on *The Odyssey*.

Eighth grade students learn to write in a variety of genres, including the literary essay, feature article, poetry, personal narrative, and formal response to literature. All students keep journals, which are used as tools to enhance the writing experience. When doing nonfiction reading and writing, students research journalistic topics and write a feature article for publication, which often raises students' awareness of social justice issues and the need for social action. Students also research the Harlem Renaissance before studying the poetry of Langston Hughes, which may include a walking tour of Harlem. The unit culminates in students writing original poems based on "Theme for English B." During the War Unit, students keep journals and compare specific characters and passages from *The Odyssey* to modern warfare and the mythological hero's journey to the experiences of contemporary soldiers in combat.

Grammar topics include noun, adjective, and adverb clauses, and the rules of punctuation. For the unit on punctuation, students are required to identify the rules for commas, semicolons, and colons that apply to each sentence in an assessment. Vocabulary is culled from the literature during the first half of the year and supplemented by a Greek and Latin roots workbook for the latter half.

Students attending the Upper School may be recommended for English 1, Critical Reading and Writing, or English 1 Honors.

SOCIAL STUDIES

The Middle School social studies curriculum is focused on continually answering essential questions, such as “How and why do people and societies change?” and “How do people’s beliefs and values systems affect the way they live?” Geography study addresses five themes: location, place, region, movement, and the interactions between humans and the environment. At each grade level, students use these frameworks to examine various civilizations and cultures. Students are taught not only how to acquire historical knowledge by examining primary and secondary sources, but also how to identify the larger patterns, trends, and ethical issues that exist throughout history and throughout the world. The social studies curriculum encourages students to fruitfully engage in dialogue with others about current and historical events. Students participate in conversations to raise their level of awareness of local and global issues and learn how to carry on discourse with those who represent a variety of opinions and life experiences.

Each year, students study the modern geography of one region of the world relevant to their areas of inquiry. The study of the MKA Core and Founding Documents helps students understand the roots of modern political thought and their responsibilities as citizens of the United States and of the world community.

Throughout the social studies program, students develop research skills, including information gathering, use of Internet resources, note taking, organization, and synthesis of information. They learn the importance of clear, accurate, written expression and documentation of evidence. To demonstrate understanding, students create a variety of products, including historical essays, diaries, oral presentations, maps, and multimedia slideshows.

SIXTH GRADE

Bureaucracy and Belief: Examining the Early Civilizations of Rome, the Middle East, India, China, and Japan

Sixth grade historians immerse themselves in an exploration of arts, culture, economics, religion, and politics in representative ancient societies. The sixth grade curriculum aims to instill empathy and understanding of all cultures by encouraging students to develop the skill of productive dialogue. Students use numerous online and print sources, including the text *National Geographic World History: Great Civilizations* and its multimedia website.

Students learn about the Empire of Islam and explore the impact of Islam in the world today, including a survey and analysis of related current events. They study the Israelites beginning with stories from the Torah and contextualizing the Israelites through the lens of religion. A unit on ancient India introduces students to the rich history and culture of the Near East, including an introduction to Hinduism and Buddhism. Students research and write a diary of Roman life to demonstrate their understanding of the Roman Empire, explore the impact of the emergence of Christianity, and analyze reasons for the fall of the Empire. They examine the cultures in the ancient Far East as well, including a look at feudal Japan until the opening of its borders in the 19th century. Their exploration of the social structure, art, and lifestyle of Medieval Japan helps students to frame their understanding of the history that is still deeply rooted in Japanese culture today. A study of China covers the enormity of the ancient dynasties, as well as the religious traditions of Daoism and Confucianism. The sixth grade MKA Core study of the Silk Road helps students understand the patterns of migration of materials and ideas. Students write thesis-driven research papers on the Silk Road that examine the validity of its label and explain its impact on the development of culture throughout the ancient world.

SEVENTH GRADE

Contact and Merging of Cultures: Examining Europe, Africa, and the Americas

Why does the contact of cultures have both intended and unintended consequences? Seventh grade historians examine the steps a society must achieve to build a civilization, as well as the reasons for its success or demise. They spend the year exploring the “golden ages” of some of the Atlantic border areas and begin by establishing a firm foundation in geography skills. Students learn about the roots of the mighty West African civilizations of Ghana and Mali. Their journey begins in Europe with the Middle Ages and transitions to the rebirth of learning and culture in Italy, followed by its spread throughout the rest of Europe. Seventh grade students focus on the European Renaissance in connection with the grade-wide Shakespeare project. As part of the MKA Core, students learn about the impact of the printing press and the increased spread of information. They then focus on the causes and achievements of the resulting Reformation and Scientific Revolution. As they look at art, religion, government, society, philosophy, and innovations of that time, they prepare for a thought-provoking research project. Classes focus on the skills and organizational techniques that are necessary to plan, research, write, and revise a research paper. In the spring, the students put their cultural knowledge on display by creating a Renaissance Fair.

Following the research project, students shift geographically to the golden civilizations of the ancient Americas. They study the impact of the Age of Exploration generated by the European Renaissance on the pre-Columbian people. Students continue to use the online versions of the *National Geographic World History: Great Civilizations* textbook as they build skills, such as nonfiction reading strategies, note-taking methods, use of graphic organizers, and organization of materials.

EIGHTH GRADE

Nation Building: Understanding Citizenship and its Roots from Colonial America to 1860

Eighth grade social studies makes history come alive by asking students to experience history on a daily basis. Students are encouraged to think about the past and not just to memorize it—to understand that they are the products of past generations and have a responsibility to continue that legacy through responsible and active citizenship. Students experience history through a multitude of resources, including primary sources; art; literature; movies; music; personal interviews with experts during a trip to Williamsburg, Virginia; and a textbook with rich, online resources, *American Vision*.

Course work begins with examining the lenses with which we view history, specifically Native Americans and the European settlers during early contact. Classes then examine the diversity of the 13 colonies and move to the French and Indian War so that students can understand the specific causes of the American Revolution. Students view and discuss key sections of the film “1776” to better understand the titanic issues that led to the writing of the Declaration of Independence (part of the MKA Core), which united the nation, yet also forged the causes for our cataclysmic Civil War. Following study of two 17th and 18th century philosophers to understand the foundations of the American mindset, students must choose the philosophy of either Thomas Hobbes or John Locke to represent their own beliefs on the nature of man. Later, students write a eulogy describing the failures of the Articles of Confederation that led to its replacement by the Constitution. Students represent various states in their own Constitutional Convention to propose a workable government for the country.

Studying the first presidential administrations, students decide if the ideas of Alexander Hamilton or Thomas Jefferson would work best for the new nation. This analysis also helps student to decide where they stand politically today. While studying sectionalism and expansion, students use these analyses as a basis for examining the series of major causes for the Civil War.

With their constitutional understanding as a foundation, students study civics to become aware of the current U.S. political system and their potential to foster change. They have the chance to argue key Supreme Court cases and to serve as justices for their peers. Students apply what they have learned throughout the year about the benefits and responsibilities given to them as citizens of the United States by identifying a civic problem, examining potential solutions, and implementing a plan to bring about change in their own communities.

Students attending the Upper School may be recommended for Early World History or Early World History Honors.

MATHEMATICS

Through their study of mathematics, students learn how to apply mathematical concepts to the real world. Projects and differentiated instruction provide students with opportunities for exploring math concepts that ensure they are both appropriately challenged and comfortable with learning math.

The mathematics program in the Upper House provides students with two sequences of study. Sixth grade students take Math 6 or Pre-Algebra. Students in grade seven may take Pre-Algebra, Algebra 1A (the first half of Algebra 1), or Algebra 1. All students complete their study of Algebra 1 by the end of Middle School, and some students complete Geometry. Students are appropriately placed in math classes by their math teachers according to their math background and achievement.

Students learn how to use a variety of computer applications (e.g., Excel, Geometer's Sketchpad, and GeoGebra) to aid in their learning of mathematical concepts. Beginning in Algebra 1, students learn to use graphing calculators to enhance understanding.

MATH 6

Sixth grade math students expand and practice problem-solving skills through real-life situations and hands-on STEM investigations. These problems explore rates, ratios, proportions, percentages, geometric concepts, and also include non-routine problems. Students continue to develop numerical reasoning, working deeper with integers, fractions, decimals, exponents, and prime and composite numbers. In preparation for Pre-algebra and Algebra 1A, students are introduced to order of operations and simple equation solving, and they work on a coordinate plane.

Students will be recommended for Pre-Algebra or Algebra 1A in seventh grade.

PRE-ALGEBRA

Pre-algebra students begin the upper-level mathematics sequence by working with variables to develop key mathematical skills, including order of operations, powers, and square roots. The study of patterns evolves from recognizing, describing, and making generalizations from patterns. Students extend their understanding of the number system to include integers, rational and irrational numbers, and negative exponents. Problems based on the powers of ten and scientific notation provide ample opportunities to use scientific calculators, required for this course.

Students explore the link between verbal models and symbolic algebraic models and use these models to solve multi-step equations and inequalities. They make connections to geometry as they use formulas and variables to describe the perimeter and area, surface area, and volume for various geometric figures. Further solidifying the relationship between algebra and geometry, students examine transformations in the coordinate plane.

Students learn to read about and understand new math concepts and skills, write about them thoughtfully, and apply them to real-life problems. Using their knowledge of ratios, they build scale models of a room in their house and explore statistical analysis through an individual statistics project based on real-world data collected from the Internet.

Students in sixth grade Pre-Algebra will be recommended for Algebra 1A or Algebra 1 in seventh grade. Students in seventh grade Pre-Algebra will take Algebra 1 in eighth grade.

ALGEBRA 1

Students extend the depth of their algebraic understanding in Algebra 1. In this course, students learn the algebra of linear equations and inequalities, including probability concepts with algebraic fractions, and focus on graphing techniques, including the use of the graphing calculator. Students investigate the properties of systems of equations, polynomials, and square roots. They study curvilinear functions, represented by exponential growth and parabolas, in the context of contemporary applications in science and personal finance. Students explore how to collect and analyze data for independent and dependent variables and determine best fit lines and their equations in order to make predictions. Testing those predictions leads to an analysis of other variables involved.

Eighth grade Algebra students may be recommended for Geometry or Geometry Honors at the Upper School.

ALGEBRA 1A

Algebra 1A begins with helping students transition from thinking and working arithmetically *with* numbers to thinking algebraically *about* numbers. Students are introduced to and begin practicing algebraic language theory, particularly how to read and translate the symbolic and theoretical language of algebra into mathematical statements that describe relationships. Of equal value are the analytic, relational, and qualitative reasoning skills students develop that enable them to think abstractly—and logically. This material reflects key concepts presented in sixth grade Pre-Algebra and Math 6, but with a more purposed and differentiated approach to engage all learners. This course then progresses through the various topics in algebra, such as solving multi-step equations and inequalities; understanding real and rational numbers; simple and complex fractions, rates, ratios, and proportions, and direct variations; finding slope and rate of change; and graphing linear equations and functions; and solving and graphing linear inequalities. Students learn to write linear equations and inequalities in standard, slope intercept and point-slope form. In addition, this course engages students in using manipulatives as well as technology to inspire learning and comprehension.

Algebra 1A students are prepared for the Algebra 1B course.

ALGEBRA 1B

Algebra 1B begins with a review of concepts learned in Algebra 1A before moving on to more in-depth, abstract, algebraic concepts. Students further develop skills learned in Algebra 1A, such as recognizing patterns, describing relationships, and formulating mathematical statements, but move beyond these skills by developing algorithms and applying algebraic properties to solve mathematical statements. Students graph absolute value equations and inequalities; solve systems of linear equations and inequalities, examine exponential properties of multiplication and division, exponential growth, and decay functions; solve quadratics using factoring and the quadratic equation; and receive an introduction to the Pythagorean theorem and its converse. This course continues to use manipulatives and technology to inspire learning while seeking to engage all learners.

Algebra 1B students may be recommended for Geometry or Geometry Honors at the Upper School.

GEOMETRY

Geometry begins with an introduction to the terms and methods through which the field of Euclidean geometry was developed, and students use these fundamental building blocks throughout the year to derive powerful theorems and develop an understanding of geometric concepts. They learn to compose formal proofs for the first time by using the paragraph, indirect, and analytic formats, in addition to the traditional two-column form. Composing formal proofs promotes an understanding of the rigor required when working in a deductive system. Students apply Algebra 1 skills to solve challenging problems in a geometric context. Topics studied include triangles, quadrilaterals, circles, and other polygons; congruent and similar figures; parallel and perpendicular lines; area, volume, and surface area; and trigonometry. Students explore conic sections and the geometry of different shapes of ice cream “cones” to determine which one holds the most ice cream. Students enjoy testing their mathematical calculations with a real ice cream treat.

This course is at the same level as the Geometry Honors course offered at the Upper School. Students attending the Upper School may be recommended for Algebra 2 or Algebra 2 Honors.

SCIENCE

Intended to address the unique characteristics of Middle School learners, the Upper House science program engages student scientists in their learning through experiments and observations. Students study the relationships between force and motion, earth and space, energy and the atmosphere, organisms and their ecosystems, and the behavior of matter. To better understand these natural phenomena, students build on their prior knowledge and experience to apply problem-solving strategies in new contexts and develop their ability to make predictions, explore relationships, discover patterns, and generate explanations about their observations. Working both independently and collaboratively on challenging tasks, students have many opportunities to design experiments, test procedures, collect and analyze data, use data to support conclusions, and communicate findings using the scientific principles they study in class.

Throughout the Middle School science program, students use the MKA Science Process Rubric to guide them as they perform authentic research and experience the world of science firsthand. Eighth grade students apply the skills they have developed during the Middle School years in conducting a term-long, independent, research project of their own design: researching a topic, generating a question and a hypothesis, designing an experiment, conducting an investigation, analyzing data, and developing a conclusion. This process culminates in sharing their findings with the school community.

Technology plays a critical role in students' scientific experiences. Students use a wide variety of technological tools to gather, record, communicate about, and report data and experimental results. Students often share their models and insights through class presentations using multimedia tools.

SIXTH GRADE

Earth in Space & Forces and Motion

Students begin the year with a study of the Sun-Earth-Moon system, which taps into students' natural curiosity about the solar system and gives them an opportunity to perform a series of hands-on activities that enrich their understanding. Students investigate the motion of the Earth and Sun as they analyze patterns in shadow data in order to understand the reasons for seasons. Through extensive use of models and simulations, students learn about lunar phases and solar and lunar eclipses. The unit ends with students researching a celestial object of interest to learn more about how our solar system is organized and where there may be life beyond our planet.

Following their exploration of Earth in space, students study forces and motion to understand the nature of forces and how forces affect the motion of objects. Learning from experimentation, students explore elastic, frictional, and gravitational forces. Building on these concepts, students begin to develop an understanding of the relationship between forces, energy, and motion. As a culminating experience, students apply what they have learned about forces and motion to design, build, and test various mousetrap car configurations with the goal of producing a specified motion.

SEVENTH GRADE

Diversity of Life & Populations and Ecosystems

Students begin the year honing their laboratory skills by making precise measurements and using proper equipment. Students study the diversity of life and develop an understanding of the structure-function relationships in living organisms. Students first explore the common characteristics of all living organisms and then learn how cells function as the basic unit of life. Through extensive microscope work, students study individual plant and animal cells as well as microscopic organisms, such as protists. Students also conduct in-depth investigations of several key structure-function relationships in cells.

Seventh grade scientists explore the components of ecosystems in depth. Students begin with an examination of the individual within an ecosystem and expand to consider the ecosystem as a whole. They investigate the biotic community and the abiotic environment by looking for patterns as they analyze data. Through experiments and activities that model predator/prey relationships, students explore energy transfer.

Students come to understand genetics as the science of heredity, a function of all living things that both maintains and transfers the code for reproducing life with similar traits from generation to generation. Students learn the basic genetic mechanisms that determine which traits individuals will express in a population, and they learn to explain how organisms inherit features and traits from their parents. Finally, students begin to learn about adaptations and evolution in connection with their study of populations and ecosystems.

EIGHTH GRADE

Exploring the Chemistry of Matter & Independent Research

Students explore key chemistry concepts as they work to understand the nature of matter—its properties, composition, and structure. This understanding is fundamental to explaining many scientific phenomena and provides a key foundation for students to develop their own independent research projects during the eighth grade year. Students begin the year by reviewing safety and practicing their laboratory skills. They examine real-world situations that help them to develop an understanding of chemical interactions including: elements, the periodic table, atomic structure, chemical bonding, gas laws, phase changes, heat transfer, chemical reactions, and acids and bases. As they develop their understanding both individually and collaboratively, they use their acquired knowledge to answer real-world questions. Throughout their studies, students use the MKA Science Process Rubric to guide their laboratory investigations and analyses.

As a culmination of their Middle School science experience, eighth grade students apply their understanding of science and the scientific process to conduct an independent, research project of their own design. Students choose a research topic based on their interest and apply the scientific method in order to create a procedure to solve a problem that they have identified. Using the MKA Scientific Process Rubric as a guide, students act as scientists as they research to create a testable question, develop a hypothesis, design an experiment, collect and analyze data, and present their results and conclusions in writing and through oral presentations to an audience of peers and adults in the community.

Students attending the Upper School may be recommended for Biology 1, Biology 1 Honors, or Biology 1 Science Research Honors.

WORLD LANGUAGE

In Upper House world language classes, students explore language through themes of interest to them in a collaborative, interactive environment. Students are immersed in a communicative approach that fosters mastery of four key skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The spiraled curriculum, interwoven with technology tools to enhance learning, ensures that students revisit and gradually build on previous knowledge and skills. They focus on themes from daily life, including family, friends, school life, and town living, and learn grammar in a contextual setting that conveys meaning.

To encourage fluency and authentic assessment in the modern world languages, students practice listening to a variety of podcasts from many different countries (with many different accents) to improve their listening comprehension. They practice speaking using a wide variety of technology applications, and they share peer reviews using podcasts and Google Docs.

Students in all world language classes learn to read for understanding, using specific strategies to improve their reading comprehension and fluency. Most of the reading selections they encounter are culturally based and relate directly to the countries where the language of study is spoken. To improve their writing in the world language, students practice writing frequently—developing short paragraphs first and short essays by the time they reach eighth grade. Technology applications also help students to organize and present their writing. As they engage in the writing process, students use feedback from the teacher and peers to revise, refine, and edit their work.

Students embark on cultural explorations of the French-, Spanish-, and Chinese-speaking worlds and explore historical as well as global perspectives. On a daily basis, students explore connections between the language they are studying and the culture that it shapes.

*A minimum of 5 students may be required to offer any of the language courses below.

FRENCH & SPANISH LEVEL 1A (*Sixth and Seventh Grades*)

Level 1A students learn to express themselves on familiar themes, both orally and in writing. Students build a working vocabulary through continuous exposure to new words, learning in the target language, and frequent collaboration with peers. Through dialogues, mimes, acting out scenarios, word games, and creating presentations, students build their fluency with the language. They learn to orally describe themselves, family, school life, and leisure activities. Students learn the building blocks for writing in a world language—nouns, adjectives, and verbs—through modeling, pattern making, and kinesthetic games. Basic reading strategies include identifying cognates to deduce meaning and examining punctuation to determine context. Level 1A is the equivalent of the first half of a high school Level 1 language course; by the end of the year, students are able to carry on a limited conversation and write in clear, concise sentences.

FRENCH & SPANISH LEVEL 1B (*Seventh and Eighth Grades*)

Students in Level 1B are able to describe the details of their daily routines, such as going to places in town and describing activities around the house, with increased fluency and are expected to sustain their thoughts both orally and in writing. They continue to expand their vocabulary base by learning words and expressions related to cooking, city and country life, household tasks, and pastimes, such as shopping and eating out. While they develop their listening and oral skills, they increasingly focus on reading comprehension and writing skills. Reading short stories reinforces basic reading strategies. Students develop an awareness of sentence structure and an increased understanding of grammar and its complexities through the writing and editing process. Students regularly engage in collaborative tasks that promote practice, revision, and retention and enable them to better correct themselves. Technology tools engage students and broaden their exposure to the target language. The MKA Core unit of study for Spanish 1 is on Frida Kahlo and her far-reaching impact on Mexican culture. The French MKA Core unit of study is a focus on city life as represented in French Impressionism. By the end of the year, students can express themselves both orally and in writing using the present tense and one of the past tenses. They will have completed a high school Level 1 course and will be prepared for the Level 2 class.

FRENCH & SPANISH LEVEL 2 (*Eighth Grade*)

Level 2 French and Spanish students move beyond pattern responses to expressing their own ideas in the target language. Exchanges between students and with the teacher reinforce learning through reading, writing, speaking, and listening practice that enhances vocabulary and grammar concepts. Through a variety of innovative and engaging exercises, including creating iMovies, commercials, interviews, art critiques, and multimedia presentations, students practice retrieving vocabulary that they have learned and processing more complicated grammar concepts. Regular writing projects enable students to describe and narrate events in a variety of verb tenses. Students write and edit work on a continuous basis. Culturally based reading units provide students with opportunities to hone their reading strategies to enhance comprehension. By the end of the year, students are able to demonstrate fluency at a higher level and show mastery of the present and two past tenses. Students in this class complete half of the Level 2 Upper School course and are generally prepared to enter an Upper School Level 2 Honors class.

CHINESE LEVEL 1A (*Sixth and Seventh Grades*)

Through a wide variety of interactive activities such as web-based practice and technology-infused projects, students focus on increasing oral fluency with particular attention to acquiring accurate tone and pronunciation. Students learn vocabulary and grammar that enable them to speak about themes such as the classroom, self-description including family and friends, and daily routines. The pinyin system of the romanization of the Chinese characters is used at first to introduce students to reading. Students begin to read and write simplified Chinese characters. Chinese culture, geography, and history are important components of the course and are taught through video clips, readings, and projects. By the end of the first year of Middle School study, students should be able to engage in a simple conversation and write using simplified Chinese characters. Level 1A is the equivalent of the first half of a high school Level 1 language course.

CHINESE LEVEL 1B (*Seventh and Eighth Grades*)

Students continue the study of Chinese they began in the Level 1A class. They learn vocabulary related to day-to-day activities and the natural world, and they study a more advanced sentence structure. Students continue to develop their skills through interactive activities and technology-infused projects; they focus on increasing oral fluency with particular attention to acquiring accurate tone and pronunciation. In learning to read, they use the pinyin system of the romanization of Chinese characters. They continue to read and write simplified Chinese characters and write simple sentences about such topics as weather, clothing, hobbies, and sports. Students study culture, geography, and history through video clips, readings, and projects. Students who complete Level 1B will have completed the equivalent of a high school Level 1 language course and will be prepared for the Level 2 class.

CHINESE LEVEL 2 (*Eighth Grade*)

Level 2 Chinese students focus more on interactive communication in real life. A variety of innovative and interactive activities create an authentic language environment to prepare students to comprehend and engage with native speakers in daily conversations. Regular writing and reading practice incorporates theme-based topics, including ordering food, shopping, travel, etc. and helps students to expand vocabulary, internalize more complex grammatical constructions, and enhance comprehension. By the end of the year, students are able to demonstrate a higher level of fluency and are generally prepared to enter an Upper School Chinese Level 2 Honors class.

FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS

Through their fine and performing arts study in a variety of art forms, students have varied opportunities to develop self-expression and self-discipline as well as to take creative risks. Sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students participate in semester-length courses chosen from among the core arts disciplines of visual art, dance, music, and theatre arts, as well as media art. To supplement students' development as artists and performers, yearlong courses offer Upper House students a range of performance opportunities as well as Film Production and Art Studio. The choruses and bands each participate in a winter and spring concert, and the strings participate in an annual spring performance at Carnegie Hall.

Sixth through eighth grade students are also eligible to participate in the select groups of Jazz Band and Chamber Singers, which meet during Flex time and are open by audition to those at an advanced level. Select Strings, open by audition to advanced strings players in all Middle School grades, meets regularly. All of the select groups and many of the yearlong music performance groups travel to and participate in the Music in the Parks Festival in May.

MKA's fine and performing arts department offers students the opportunity for groups from the Middle and Upper Schools to collaborate on performances and shows. The Studio Art Program, the Jazz Band, and the Strings Program all have spring performances or shows that depend on the combined efforts of Middle and Upper School students. These collaborations provide Middle School students with the opportunity to work with Upper School mentors and role models as they experience the kinds of opportunities that lie ahead for them.

Upper House students can also participate in a play at each grade level. The sixth grade play is open to any interested sixth grade student as an after-school activity in the winter season. The seventh grade Shakespeare play production is part of the English curriculum and also relates to the study of the Renaissance Period in social studies. Students are invited to be involved in many aspects of the play—both backstage and onstage. The eighth grade play involves a select group of eighth grade students who are enrolled in the Performance Ensemble and work as cast and crew members to produce the show as part of their fine and performing arts semester-long course in the fall.

Semester Courses (classes meet three times per cycle)

ART (Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades)

Sixth grade students learn to express themselves through drawing, collage, and painting as they focus on the principles of art, such as repetition, emphasis, and rhythm, as well as study the basic elements of art, such as color, line, and shape. Students routinely examine examples of contemporary art and great artists of the past. The focus of the seventh grade is drawing. Students learn to represent three-dimensional images on a two-dimensional surface. In conjunction with the seventh grade study of the Renaissance in social studies, students learn to draw using perspective. Focusing on conceptual art, eighth grade students are encouraged to take chances with their art and explore unconventional ways of expressing their ideas. Students are exposed to many of today's elite artists and have the chance to discuss their works intelligently with classmates using a refined art vocabulary. Class critiques for every project help students to celebrate the strengths of their work and plan for revisions. Students periodically display selected work throughout the school.

DANCE (Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades)

Middle School dance explores the dynamic fundamentals of dance choreography and varied techniques of classical ballet, modern, jazz, Latin, Caribbean, tap, and hip-hop dance. Students examine four fundamental elements of choreography—design, dynamics, motivation, rhythm—and explore the historical importance of each. Students develop and perform engaging, original choreography projects and have the opportunity to self-assess by viewing their projects on video. In addition, all sixth grade students focus on *Revelations*, a MKA Core study, by Alvin Ailey. Students who sign up for two quarters of dance perform their own choreographed dance for the school.

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART (*Eighth Grade*)

Focusing on conceptual art and graphic design, students are encouraged to take chances with their art and explore unconventional ways of expressing their ideas. The majority of the projects are three dimensional. Students create work inspired by an introduction to the works of contemporary artists and graphic design firms. They have the opportunity to participate in informed discussions about these works and develop the skills to participate effectively in class critiques, which are held for every project. Selected student works are periodically displayed around the school.

MEDIA ART (*Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades*)

In this course, students study basic techniques for manipulating and creating digital images and movies, with an emphasis on the elements of design and the principles of composition. Students practice these skills using Adobe Photoshop, a powerful tool for manipulating and creating digital art; iStopMotion, an iPad app for creating stop motion films; and iMovie software for film editing. Over the semester, students practice self-critique in written artist statements and group critique as a class.

MUSIC TECHNOLOGY (*Sixth Grade*)

Students create music through exploration of different types of music technology software. They use GarageBand to create songs that incorporate core musical ideas such as rhythm, harmony, melody, and form. Students also learn basic keyboard playing skills to assist them in their final composition project.

MUSIC THROUGH THE YEARS (*Seventh Grade*)

In this course, students are introduced to the history of music theory for different genres of music. As students take a journey through the development of music, they complete assignments and projects where they create original music using the styles that are representative of popular hits from various eras.

SONGWRITING (*Eighth Grade*)

This course explores the fundamentals of songwriting. Students learn and use music theory and technology to analyze the structural elements of songwriting. They apply the structural elements to their own original compositions. Students present their compositions to their classmates for student-led critiques to improve their songwriting skills.

CREATING MUSIC SCORES (*Eighth Grade*)

Students learn basic music theory and the palette of sounds, rhythms, and textures musicians use to create an original composition. Students use these tools to create their own original music. Through use of a music notation and score writing program on their laptops, students can both see and hear a final version of their composition.

THEATRE ARTS (*Sixth and Seventh Grades*)

Sixth grade learns the Stanislavski system and uses it to stage improvisational scenes, A/B scenes, and scripted work. Seventh grade begins with a review (or introduction for new students) of the Stanislavski system. The teacher uses short scenes to evaluate students' acting skills. Students choose two skills to work on. They begin this work through a lesson on situational improvisation. In the last two-thirds of the semester, the class is divided into groups and dives into devised theatre, a type of theatre making that calls on all the skills of the theatre artist: creativity, dramaturgy, research and collecting source material, collaboration, listening, writing, designing, and, finally, performing their original piece for the class.

PARTICIPATORY ART AS SOCIAL ACTIVISM (*Eighth Grade*)

Looking through both historical and contemporary lenses, this course explores how art has been used as a tool for social activism. Students directly experience art, specifically theatre, that has been used for thousands of years to affect society, voice concerns, and change the direction of culture and government. As they learn these new tools, they have the opportunity to create their own piece of socially active art either by themselves, in pairs, or small groups. The semester will end with an in-class sharing of the work.

Yearlong Courses (classes meet three times per cycle)

ART STUDIO (*Seventh and Eighth Grades*)

This course goes beyond the general art curriculum to develop students' drawing and painting skills through a variety of media and techniques. Students explore great artists and significant movements of the past and work collaboratively to create work based upon these influences. Students must submit an art portfolio with three to five pieces of work to be considered for participation in this class.

CHORUS (*Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades*)

Students continue to build their musicianship through performance of a varied, choral music repertoire that includes two-, three-, and four-part harmonies. Beginning in sixth grade and continuing through eighth grade, students also learn and practice solfège skills to enable them to read, audiate, and sing basic music passages by sight with pitch identification and accuracy.

CONCERT BAND (*Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades*)

Students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade continue to build on the basics of instrumental and ensemble playing skills established in fourth and fifth grade. They explore more complex rhythms, advance their skills on their individual instruments, and perform more intricate ensemble music.

For an enhanced performance experience, the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades combine forces as one Concert Band for performances. The three grade levels rehearse together once per cycle during Flex time. After the spring performances, all Concert Band students explore alternate forms of composition, work on sight-reading skills, and learn basic music theory.

FILM PRODUCTION (*Seventh and Eighth Grades*)

Students work collaboratively to make films by writing screen plays, creating storyboards, learning how to film scenes, and polishing their final videos in the editing process. They practice these skills using iMovie and iStopMotion, an iPad app for creating stop-motion films. Students also study professional films and develop an understanding of how to communicate a vision to an audience.

STORYTELLING THROUGH MOVEMENT (*Sixth Grade*)

This course covers the elements of choreography and how to assemble them to tell a narrative story. Students explore a variety of dance genres and styles to gain an understanding of the core elements, principles, and concepts of dance. Students apply these understandings to create improvised movement with an emphasis on communicating ideas, feelings, and stories.

RHYTHM & DANCE (*Seventh and Eighth Grades*)

Rhythm and counting are a crucial part of every dancer's life. Students learn various, characteristic rhythms through a diverse selection of music, including classical, jazz, folk, progressive, alternative, Afro-Caribbean, and swing. The class also explores the dance genres of ballet, modern, tap, lyrical, modern, ballroom, and hip-hop. Students concentrate on specific performance skills using a range of dance techniques and engage in an in-depth study of the process of creative expression through choreography. When creating their own dance combinations, they identify and use the musical rhythms and dance genres studied. Students develop original choreography projects and have opportunities to perform throughout the year.

STRINGS (*Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades*)

Violinists, violists, and cellists study traditional classical music for string instruments by Vivaldi, Bach, and other classical composers. They further their skills by playing various genres of music arranged for strings ensembles that span from traditional to contemporary. For an enhanced performance experience, the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades combine forces as one Strings Ensemble for performances. The three grade levels rehearse together once per cycle during Flex time.

HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The health curriculum seeks to support and help Middle School students make healthy lifestyle choices by analyzing situations and exploring the concept of living a balanced life. Students receive accurate, developmentally appropriate information under the umbrella of wellness and participate in carefully guided discussions. They learn how to evaluate different aspects of daily life and relationships, develop skills to deal with adversity, and discover key components to managing stress.

SIXTH GRADE HEALTH

Implementing Healthy Lifestyle Choices

Through the different layers of wellness, students learn how body systems are affected by stress, positive and negative mindsets, and changing emotions. They learn that meditation, mindfulness, and proper nutrition can improve energy and focus. The goal of looking at the body systems through different strands of wellness is for the students to learn that social, emotional, and mental habits are all connected and key to the overall well-being and balance of a person's life.

SEVENTH GRADE HEALTH

Factors That Influence Risky Behavior

Students begin to understand why people engage in risky behavior and implement strategies to stay in control. Much of the focus is designed to examine some of the hurdles of adolescent behavior and thinking while also helping students seek alternative solutions to unhealthy situations. Students discuss the nature of addiction and the consequences of substance abuse. They define the term "drug" and learn about the physical, psychological, and social effects. Students discuss and examine other important issues, including decision-making, peer pressure, and how to self advocate and ask for help.

EIGHTH GRADE HEALTH

Creating Healthy Relationships and Understanding the Human Reproductive System

Students in eighth grade learn about the physical, social, and emotional changes that occur during puberty. They focus on understanding the anatomy and physiology of the reproductive systems, puberty, relationships, fetal development and birth, sexually transmitted diseases, and abstinence and other contraceptives. Through ongoing, small-group discussions, students gain insight into and develop an understanding of the human body. Their web-based research for a presentation on sexually transmitted diseases also provides a foundation for discussion.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Upper House students develop confidence as they pursue fitness, work together, learn game strategies, and practice good sportsmanship. They begin classes with general and specific warm-ups, followed by instruction in fitness and the skills of a particular sports unit. Students improve skills by participating in drills, scrimmages, and modified games in team sports, such as team handball, soccer, baseball, volleyball, lacrosse, flag football, basketball, softball, and field and floor hockey. They are encouraged to maintain a positive attitude toward general fitness, try new things, and have fun while learning and improving their sports skills. As a result, each class game focuses on sportsmanship, and competition is not stressed. Individual sports, such as tennis, badminton, and handball, also help students develop hand-eye coordination.

Students use FitnessGram, which describes a student's current fitness level and prescribes strategies and activities for strengthening specific areas. Fitness exercises, such as jumping rope, aerobics, and use of exercise machines, help students to build stamina and flexibility. Students work to develop flexibility, coordination, muscular strength and endurance, cardiovascular endurance, speed, and large and small locomotor skills through jumping, jogging, running, sprinting, galloping, throwing, catching, punting, and dribbling with feet and hands.

ATHLETICS PROGRAM

Upper House students may develop athletic skills by playing on an extracurricular athletic team. The program emphasizes individual student growth, so all interested players participate on either an “A” or a “B” team. Teams practice after school daily during the appropriate season and include: soccer, field hockey, football, cross country, tennis, swimming, basketball, ice hockey, fencing clinic, lacrosse, softball, and baseball.

LIBRARY

The library provides essential foundations for students to collaborate and thrive in a rapidly changing world. Librarians collaborate with classroom teachers to instill in students a passion for reading and to provide an integrated and interdisciplinary information literacy curriculum. The library program plays a unique and complimentary role in students’ literacy development as it both supports the classroom reading curriculum and helps students develop their reading identities. Students explore a wide variety of literature through independent choice and read-alouds, readers’ theater, and book talks that bring stories to life. Librarians empower students by helping them develop strategies for independently selecting books to check out and take home. The library program also supports students’ reading and information literacy development through classes in fourth and fifth grades and integrated, interdisciplinary research projects in fourth through eighth grades. Guided by the MKA Research Cycle, a framework for honing information literacy skills, students develop a toolkit of skills to aid strategic research through brainstorming, questioning, searching and evaluating, taking notes, organizing and synthesizing, revising, and publishing. The library collection supports student interests, offers a global glimpse of people and cultures, and provides different text formats. The combined use of Destiny (mka.follettdestiny.com), the online collection management system, and LibGuides, a digital library platform (libguides.mka.org/mslibrary), expands online access to the library’s collections.

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CHARACTER STANDARDS FOR THE MKA COMMUNITY

ALL MEMBERS OF THE MKA COMMUNITY STRIVE TO
ACT, SPEAK AND THINK IN WAYS THAT ARE:

RESPECTFUL

We act with civility in our relations with others while still valuing ourselves. We are conscious of the world around us, and we recognize the worth of all we have and treat it accordingly.

FRIENDLY

We demonstrate good will and compassion in our relationships with others. We understand that in order to have friends we must be friends and treat all with understanding, loyalty and respect.

RESPONSIBLE

We fulfill obligations and complete tasks to the fullest of our ability, and we are accountable members of our community. We volunteer our assistance when called upon and budget our time, efforts and resources sensibly.

CONFIDENT

We uphold a positive image of ourselves regardless of the way others perceive us. We recognize our potential and challenge ourselves to improve the talents and skills we possess. We are able to take pride in our work, while remaining humble and accepting criticism. We express our opinions freely without fear of the judgment of others and always speak up when we see acts of injustice.

TEMPERATE

We balance all aspects of our lives. By devoting personal attention to academics and personal commitments, we maintain moderation. While welcoming relaxation, we exert self-control and strength of will when faced with temptation and challenge.

FAIR

We cultivate an environment where all students may act and speak without the fear of prejudice, intolerance or judgment. We recognize and seek to understand the differences between individuals in the community. While recognizing these differences, we also value the inherent equality among all.

INFORMED

We rely not only on our own experiences to make decisions, but we also actively seek a more thorough understanding of the world. With our knowledge, we envision a more peaceful and empathetic society.

HONEST

We understand the value and necessity of being true to ourselves, as well as others, and we are sincere in words and actions. We take pride in the authenticity of our own work and ideas, and we have the courage and integrity to take responsibility for all of our actions.