



## Course Overviews for Grade Eight

Updated SEPTEMBER 2018

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Humanities (World History and Geography) – Grade 8	Page 1
English (Language A) – Grade 8	Page 2
Mathematics – Grade 8	Page 3
Integrated Science – Grade 8	Page 4
Languages – Grade 8	Page 5
Visual Arts – Grade 8	Page 6
Vocal Music – Grades 6-8	Page 7
Instrumental Music – Grades 6-8	Page 8
Theatre Arts – Grade 8	Page 9
Physical Education/Health – Grades 6-8	Page 10
Design Technology – Grades 6-8	Page 11
Digital Media Storytelling – Grade 8	Page 12

## Humanities (World History and Geography) – Grade 8

(This course is offered in English, French and Spanish—see Languages for details.)

### Course Overview

Information literacy skills are woven into each unit. This course aims to enable students to:

- study history from an international viewpoint and to be familiar with the history of all the different regions of the world during the period 1500-1800 C.E.
- develop understanding of, respect for, tolerance of different cultures, beliefs, traditions
- develop an understanding of and an ability to apply historical method, including an understanding of different historical interpretations
- understand the dynamic nature of geography, i.e., to be aware of the processes of the physical world and the interrelationship between physical and human geography
- understand the limitations that locations, climate, soil, and ecosystems impose on economic and social development
- develop a sense of curiosity and wonder about the world and its peoples
- develop an interest in and concern for global issues

### Course Content/Units of Study

Each topic includes a guiding question. For example, Japan is examined through the following question: How did isolationism lead to short-term gains and long-term problems for Japan? The focus of the content is on the following:

- China: geography; history; Mongol Empire; Ming Dynasty; Ming decline
- Japan: geography; history; Tokugawa Shogunate; European contact; art and culture
- Mughal Empire: India's geography; religion and society; growth and development of the Mughal Empire: government, society, art; European contacts
- Ottoman Turks: beliefs and practices; growth/decline of Ottoman Empire; Golden Age of Suleyman
- European Voyages of Exploration: Medieval contacts and concepts of world; Spanish and Portuguese exploration; voyages of exploration
- America at the Time of the European Conquest: Aztecs, Incas and Spanish conquest; consequences for Europe, Africa, America; the slave trade
- Renaissance: geography; changing perspectives; Italy; art and architecture; humanism and literature; science and technology
- Migration as a throughline throughout the curriculum
- Cultural trips to France and Peru/Spain as enrichment of the Humanities curriculum

### Assessment

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks, including projects, quizzes, tests and class participation. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7 – Excellent, 6 – Very Good, 5 – Good, 4 – Satisfactory, 3+ and below – Failing. Assessment is divided into formative (30%), summative (50%) and class participation (20%). Assessment criteria developed by the MS Humanities Department are used in evaluating major assignments. Informal ongoing assessment takes place in every class.

### Resources

Ivnerel, Martin, and Benjamin Villemagne. *Histoire-géographie, 5e: [nouveaux Programmes 2016]*. Paris: Hatier, 2016. Print.

Spielvogel, Jackson. *Viaje en el tiempo*. Columbus, OH: Glencoe/McGraw Hill, 2006. Print.

Spielvogel, Jackson J. *World History: Journey Across Time*. New York: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 2008. Print.

## English (Language A) – Grade 8

### Course Overview

The theme for grade 8 is *Agency*; our throughline is *How can I help?*

### Essential Questions:

- How do we **explore** a work of literature for insight and enjoyment?
- What personal, textual, and global **connections** can we make to literature?
- How can reading and writing about the world help us to **empathize** with others?
- How do we **create** effective communication through written and oral expression?

In grade 8 English, students develop reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills through formative learning opportunities. They demonstrate an understanding of content, organization, style and language in summative assessment. Assignments range from formal essays to journal writing, dramatic performance to small-group presentations, and informal class conversations to formal discussions.

Our study of literature includes short stories, fiction, poetry, graphic novels, and drama. We use the writing process to create vignettes, literary essays, argumentative writing, flash fiction, and poetry. We engage in class discussions and oral presentations to learn to effectively present our interpretations of literature. We study grammar in the context of the reading and writing we do.

### Texts:

*The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros

*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon

*Romeo & Juliet* by William Shakespeare

*Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi

Selected short stories poetry

### Assessment

A grade 8 English semester grade is a combination of participation, formative, and summative assessments.

The following weighting is used to determine the final grade:

- 70 percent for summative assessments
- 15 percent for formative assessments
- 15 percent for class participation

## **Mathematics – Grade 8**

*(Mathematics 8 and Mathematics Advanced are offered in grade 8.)*

### **Course Overview**

This course aims to:

- have students begin to study mathematics in a more formal, precise and abstract way
- expand problem solving through a systematic algebraic and graphical approach
- guide students in developing the ability to think abstractly
- encourage students to investigate why procedures work, and to compare and contrast problem- solving techniques

### **Content / Units of Study**

Topics explored over the course of the year include:

*Linear Equations:* Students will learn to represent linear relationships in various forms, to use linear equations to model situations in the world, and solve systems of equations.

*Exponents and Polynomials:* Students discover and apply exponent rules. They learn to simplify algebraic expressions using exponent rules and the distributive property.

*Quadratics:* Students learn to factor quadratic expressions, to solve quadratic equations, and to use these skills to graph quadratic relationships.

### **Assessment**

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks, including classwork projects, quizzes, and tests. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values:  
7 – Excellent, 6 – Very Good, 5 – Good, 4 – Satisfactory, 3+ and below – Failing.

Informal ongoing assessment takes place in every class.

Students are expected to complete their homework every day; time is devoted in each class to reviewing, checking and discussing homework. Completing homework conscientiously is very important for success in math class.

Summative assessments, including tests are given at the end of each unit. They are always announced well in advance and coordinated with other classes.

## Integrated Science – Grade 8

### Course Overview

In grade 8 Integrated Science, students continue a fully integrated approach to learning in science (Biology, Physics, and Chemistry) through content that will prepare them for their grade 9 science choices. The topics of study connect and overlap with one another, much like the different science disciplines do. In grade 9, students will move to stand-alone science subjects.

Emphasis will be placed on scientific and mathematical reasoning using a combination of lab skills, technological tools, problem solving, communication and collaboration.

The aims of the grade 8 Integrated Science course are to:

- develop practical and analytical skills related to science
- communicate scientific ideas effectively
- promote an understanding of chemistry within our world
- incorporate math and engineering in design of systems
- introduce upper school sciences to help students understand the specialties

### Content / Units of Study

This is the third year of a three-year MS course program, reinforcing the study of science as an integrated body rather than separate subjects. The course is roughly divided into six units:

Digestive System	Study of mechanical and chemical digestion, parts of the digestive system, and gastrointestinal illnesses
Disease & the Immune System	Types of pathogens; patterns of infection; case study on current/relevant pathogens; immune system & inflammatory response; disease prevention
Matter & Metals	Separation of matter; mathematical analysis and composition of matter; changes between states; malleability and shape changes. Electronic arrangements; metallic bonding; alloys and ores
Non-metals & Polymers	Covalent and ionic bonding; understanding of chemical reactions through algebraic equations; strengths of materials; plastics and recycling
Light, Electromagnetic Spectrum, & the Eye	Properties of waves; features and uses of the different parts of the spectrum; color; ray diagrams using mirrors and lenses; structure of the eye.
Sound & the Ear	Production of sound; structure of the ear and decibel levels.

### Assessment

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks, which include projects, tests, quizzes and class participation. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7 – Excellent, 6 – Very Good, 5 – Good, 4 – Satisfactory, 3+ and below – Failing. Assessment criteria developed by the MS Science Department are used in evaluating major assignments. Informal assessment is ongoing in every class.

## Languages – Grade 8

The language program in grade 8 focuses on written and oral communication. The more advanced courses put emphasis on reading and interpreting literature in the target language. Enrichment activities enhance the academic program throughout the year.

There are language options in the elective block as well. Students in the Advanced program may take Spanish or French Enrichment, which in grade 8 focuses on service learning/social entrepreneurship in the target language, or they may continue to take Chinese as an additional language.

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks, including projects, quizzes, tests and class participation. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7 – Excellent, 6 – Very Good, 5 – Good, 4 – Satisfactory, 3+ and below – Failing.

Assessment criteria developed by the MS World Languages Department are used in evaluating major assignments. Informal ongoing assessment takes place in every class.

<b>EIGHTH GRADE LANGUAGE OPTIONS OVERVIEW</b>		
<b><i>Target Second Language</i></b>	<b><i>Humanities</i></b>	<b><i>Other Language Options</i></b>
<b>French A-Advanced</b> for advanced and native speakers 5 periods	in French 5 periods	Students can opt for the LearnServe French Enrichment class or they may continue learning Chinese as an elective option.
<b>French B</b> for students with at least two years of French instruction 5 periods	in English 5 periods	Students can opt for the LearnServe French Enrichment class or they may continue learning Chinese as an elective option.
<b>Spanish A-Advanced</b> for advanced and native speakers 5 periods	in Spanish 5 periods	Students can opt for the LearnServe Spanish Enrichment class or they may continue learning Chinese as an elective option.
<b>Spanish B-Intermediate</b> for students with at least two years of Spanish instruction 5 periods	in English 5 periods	Students may continue learning Chinese as an elective option.
<b><i>Target Third Language</i></b>	<b><i>Humanities</i></b>	<b><i>Note</i></b>
<b>Chinese B-Intermediate</b> for those with at least two years of Chinese instruction 5 periods	in English or target second language, depending on French or Spanish placement 5 periods	Students must also be enrolled in either French or Spanish. Chinese B is taken in the elective block.

## Visual Arts – Grade 8

### Course Overview / Content

The Visual Arts program in grade 8 is organized around three major emphases:

#### Knowledge and Understanding

*Visual Expression:* In grade 8, the emphasis moves from two-dimensional works to three-dimensional works. Approaches to learning are emphasized and students are encouraged to move beyond their initial ideas to be open-minded thinkers who take risks with their work. The year begins with exploring the cube and expands from there to investigate other three-dimensional forms. In addition, theories of perspective are studied from the Renaissance to David Hockney's new ideas on how perspective works in the real world.

#### Application

*Technique:* In grade 8 students explore how materials dictate methods of construction using card, clay and plaster. Students study the effect of surface design by applying designs to card and clay cubes. The skills involved include measuring, cutting accurately, gluing, constructing clay using slabs, glazing and handling clay safely. From there the students move on to subtractive sculptural techniques by carving plaster, focusing on overall design; the importance of negative space; and safe carving practices.

Students progress from a cube to a box and apply their understanding of three-dimensional form to the creation of a personalized object about self, showing both the public and private person.

#### Reflection and Evaluation

*Oral Presentation:* Students participate regularly in group critiques; they present their artwork by describing the piece and how it solved the problem presented. They are asked to state how the work succeeded and what they might do differently next time. The use of technical and objective language is expected.

### Assessment

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7 – Excellent, 6 – Very Good, 5 – Good, 4 – Satisfactory, 3+ and below – Failing.

Assessment criteria developed by the Visual Arts and Design Department are used in evaluating major assignments. Teachers and students use grading rubrics and written reflections to assess work at the end of each unit.

Informal ongoing assessment takes place in every class.

## Vocal Music – Grades 6 to 8

### Course Overview

Vocal Music provides students with the opportunity to learn about the societal, historical, aesthetic, and cultural importance of music by way of experience and studied repertoire. The course also gives students a working knowledge of musical language, theory, and terminology. Each grade level also explores musical elements outside of concert repertoire, such as musical theatre, music technology, music listening, and musical identity.

Aims of the course in grades 6-8 are to:

- Instill in each student an understanding of and appreciation for music
- Train students to use proper and professional performance practices
- Expose students to a variety of music genres, styles, time periods, etc.
- Draw connections between music and our own lives
- Encourage students to be lifelong participants in music

### Content / Units of Study

Units of study include guidance through musical concepts, thoughtful listening and analysis, and creative opportunities. Depending on grade level, students will also explore music in theatrical contexts, music technology, and musical identity. Some units of study include singing technique; music theory; and listening and analysis.

Fundamental elements in this course include:

- Music literacy and notation
- Sight-reading
- Music theory
- Vocal techniques - as a soloist and as a member of an ensemble
- Cultural, historical, and aesthetic elements of music
- Music listening and analysis
- Writing about music
- Performance practices

### Assessment

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks, including projects, quizzes, tests and class participation. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7 – Excellent, 6 – Very Good, 5 – Good, 4 – Satisfactory, 3+ and below – Failing.

In addition to assigned homework, quizzes, and projects, students are informally assessed on a daily basis. Students are primarily assessed on participation. This includes singing in class, being respectful of the ensemble, contributing thoughtfully to class discussions, and putting forth clear effort towards rehearsing concert repertoire.

## **Instrumental Music – Grades 6 to 8**

### **Course Overview**

The aim of Instrumental Music is to instill in each student an understanding and appreciation of music that will enable him or her to be a lifelong participant in music. The course provides all students an opportunity to express themselves musically on a chosen instrument for serious music study and recreational playing, developing music reading and playing skills and allowing for a variety of instrumental ensemble experiences.

### **Content / Units of Study**

Over the course of the three years of Instrumental Music, students will:

- learn and apply proper playing techniques on chosen instrument
- read and play a variety of music in a progression that exposes them to more complex musical concepts, including a wider playing range in different key signatures, and more complex rhythmic patterns and meters, form, dynamics, stylistic ornaments and interpretation
- play major, minor and chromatic scales and arpeggios
- read and play independent parts as members of an ensemble
- sight read
- identify composers and their historical era
- identify historical music eras and various styles
- prepare for winter and spring concerts

### **Assessment**

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7 – Excellent, 6 – Very Good, 5 – Good, 4 – Satisfactory, 3+ and below – Failing.

Assessment criteria developed by the Performing Arts Department are used in evaluating major assignments.

Informal ongoing assessment takes place in every class.

Students are formally assessed on their preparation for class, their progress in playing proficiency, various homework and project assignments, class participation, performance exams, quizzes on theory and history, and concerts.

## Theatre Arts – Grade 8

### Course Overview

Our guiding philosophy across the theatre arts curriculum is how do we create and tell compelling stories through performance? Students will gain a general knowledge of world theatre and dramatic processes.

**Essential Questions** guiding the course are:

- How do we establish an effective ensemble?
- How do we show not tell when devising and presenting stories onstage?
- How do we create effective and interesting stories?
- How do we analyze and perform Greek Theatre text?
- How do we begin to approach scripts and performance through the lens of Stanislavski?

### Content / Units of Study

- **Ensemble-work** – Students will engage in theatre activities that allow them to explore and gain the skills required to effectively work together as an ensemble to create theatre.
- **Storytelling through adaptation** – Students will adapt anecdotes and fairy tales for the stage to learn the essential elements of effective story and how to bring stories to life.
- **Improvisation** – Students will engage in short-form and long-form improv in the style of *Whose Line Is It Anyway*, Upright Citizens Brigade, and Second City.
- **Greek Theatre** – Students will gain an historical background on Greek Theatre, the base for all of Western Theatre. They will take a closer look at one Greek play and perform an excerpt from the play.
- **Monologue-work** – Students will be assigned monologues from modern plays. They will explore Stanislavski acting methods and apply those to their performance of their monologues.

### Assessment

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks, including projects, quizzes, tests and class participation. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7 – Excellent, 6 – Very Good, 5 – Good, 4 – Satisfactory, 3+ and below – Failing. Assessment criteria developed by the Performing Arts Department are used in evaluating major assignments. Informal ongoing assessment takes place in every class.

Performance Projects – 50%

- Understanding Concepts: demonstrate an ability to articulate practices and methodologies.
- Application: ability to develop and advance use of materials/investigation; developing personally unique methodologies.

Quizzes/Written Work/Reflection – 20%

- Critical awareness: reflection; ability to analyze own/ others' work objectively and use the appropriate vocabulary.

Participation – 30%

- Growth and personal engagement: individual initiative, preparedness and participation; appropriate behavior and use of materials.
- Assessment tools include participation, journal entries, performances, written assignments, self and peer review.

## **Physical Education/Health – Grades 6 to 8**

### **Course Overview**

Students in grades 6-8 take three hours of Physical Education and one hour of Health per 8-day cycle.

The aims of our physical education courses are to develop physically fit, emotionally aware, and socially adept individuals who are comfortable taking risks and thriving in a globally-complex environment. Through inquiry and with an emphasis on personal responsibility, we create learners who have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to enjoy and embrace a lifetime of healthful physical activity.

The health program aims to explore physical, social and emotional health topics to broaden students knowledge and awareness. Connections to students adolescent development enhance interest, understanding, and inquiry, leading students toward mindfulness regarding their healthy lifestyle. The ultimate goal is to facilitate the development of healthy attitudes and to increase students' knowledge of critical issues they are facing as adolescents.

### **Course Content/Units of Study**

In physical education, students may have the opportunity to participate in the following units while at WIS. These units may not be offered each year due to facilities availability and weather constraints. They include cooperative games, badminton, basketball, flag football, soccer, volleyball, team handball, weight training, Ultimate Frisbee, physical education and technology, conditioning, dance, self-defense, and yoga.

In Health, topics covered will include, but not be limited to, puberty, healthy relationships, self-esteem/body image, diet and nutrition, digital citizenship, peer pressure, and bullying, character education, addictions/drugs and alcohol, and sleep.

### **Assessment**

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7 – Excellent, 6 – Very Good, 5 – Good, 4 – Satisfactory, 3+ and below – Failing.

Assessment criteria developed by the Physical Education/Health Department are used in assessing major assignments. Students in Health receive a pass/fail grade.

Informal ongoing assessment takes place in every class.

## **Design Technology – Grades 6 to 8**

### **Course Overview**

Students in grades 6-8 may take Design Technology for one semester as an elective option. Students undertake a variety of challenges and projects, which involve some or all of the five phases of the design cycle: investigate a problem, design a solution or a product, plan the steps through which that solution will be created, create the product/solution, and then evaluate the entire process.

These challenges and projects are specially set so as to encourage the student to use and extend knowledge acquired in science, math, and other courses. While working through the challenges and projects, students learn a variety of techniques, which enable them to work confidently with a wide variety of materials.

### **Content/Units of Study**

In order to learn about the design cycle, grade 8 students will research, design, plan, construct, test, and evaluate a spaghetti tower. Then, given a challenging set of design specifications, they will design and construct a vertical, free-standing marble maze. This project is particularly long and complex and will take most of the semester.

### **Assessment**

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7 – Excellent, 6 – Very Good, 5 – Good, 4 – Satisfactory, 3+ and below – Failing.

Assessment criteria developed by the Visual Arts and Design Department are used in evaluating major assignments.

Students are often assessed formatively in terms of their “work in progress.” Students are primarily graded on the quality of their work during the design process, as well as how productively, efficiently and safely they work in class, and how well their product performs up to the specifications of a particular project.

Most projects culminate with self-assessment, allowing students to reflect on what went well with the design/construction process and what did not.

## Digital Media Storytelling – Grade 8

### Course Overview

An introduction to storytelling with media, featuring digital media tools and techniques with a focus on journalism and understanding the online news environment. In this hands-on course, students will produce and publish their own audio, video, design, and photo content. Some projects might be suitable for publication in the Middle School News sections of the International Dateline (the school newspaper). Students will conduct interviews, gather information, and hone research skills. Students will also learn editing and media production using writing, photography, video, audio, and coding/programming. Additionally, students will maintain a blog as an online portfolio and complete a final project exploring a digital media topic of their choice.

Students will learn to create media according to accepted journalistic standards and will also engage in producing video, podcasts and other means of communicating digitally.

The course is primarily project-based, with students taking on assignments with the purpose of getting them published or broadcast online.

### Contents / Units of Study

Students will focus on the following topics:

- basic principles of journalism
- digital media skills such as photography, audio recording/editing, video production
- design and coding basics
- high-quality production
- digital publishing
- independent/exploratory projects

### Assessment

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7 – Excellent, 6 – Very Good, 5 – Good, 4 – Satisfactory, 3+ and below – Failing.

Assessment criteria developed by the Visual Arts and Design Department are used in evaluating major assignments.

Students are often assessed formatively in terms of their “work in progress.” Students are primarily graded on the quality of their work during the design process, as well as how productively and efficiently they work in class, and how well their product performs up to the specifications of a particular project.

Most projects culminate with self-assessment, allowing students to reflect on what went well with the production process and what did not.

**WIS** WASHINGTON  
INTERNATIONAL  
SCHOOL