

## **PERFORMING & VISUAL ARTS EDUCATION: AN OVERVIEW**

Friends Academy Middle School is a rich and diverse environment. Middle School is a powerful time for students to attain new knowledge and to begin to blend that knowledge with a greater understanding of oneself and how to function in the larger world. During the middle school years students begin to connect current and historical events and develop an understanding of the larger themes that weave through our world. This intense growth and development is supported and enhanced by a strong education in the arts. At Friends Academy, we have made a serious commitment to arts education as a core piece of our Middle School curriculum. Students receive ongoing education in Music, Visual & Digital Arts, Theater, and Dance. This arts education curriculum is designed to support the cognitive, physical, character and social/emotional development of our students, as well as teach specific knowledge and techniques in each artistic discipline.

### **Students participate in the classes listed below:**

6th grade Vocal Music (Voice Class and Chorus)

6th grade Instrumental Music (Band and Orchestra)

6th grade Integrated Arts (Visual Arts, Digital Arts, Theater, Dance, Spoken Word)

7th grade Instrumental and Vocal Music (Orchestra, Band, Chorus)

7th grade Theater

7th grade Visual Arts

7th grade Dance (This class is an elective in Winter I & II through the PE curriculum)

8th grade Instrumental and Vocal Music (Orchestra, Band, Chorus)

8th grade Inter-disciplinary Arts (Visual Arts, Digital Arts, Theater)

8th grade Dance (This class is an elective in Winter I & II through the PE curriculum)

### **Opportunities Outside of the Classroom Structure**

There are four music concerts during the year, several art shows, and a play, all of which share the student's growth and progress with the larger community. Our extensive arts curriculum explodes during our Arts Celebration – a break from the traditional routine when the Middle School comes together as a whole community to celebrate the arts. Students have the opportunity to choose between participating in the Middle School Play and engaging in a series of Art Workshops presented by guest artists and Friends Academy Arts Faculty. The play or musical is often an original piece created by members of our community, and final rehearsals happen during Arts Celebration. Students, who chose to participate in the workshops during Arts Celebration, experience such diverse

artistic opportunities as African dance, Hip Hop, stand-up comedy, poetry, filmmaking, and many other options.

Another way students can get involved in the arts outside of the classroom is the Middle School Jazz Program. The Jazz Program meets one day a week after school and offers students an opportunity to learn the basics of Jazz performance, as well as an opportunity to play in an ensemble. Students perform in the March concert.

Friends Academy's Music Curriculum is aligned with the state and national standards for music education. We are members of the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA). Each year, students have the opportunity to attend a solo festival to have their level of playing constructively evaluated based on prescribed NYSSMA standards by an independent adjudicator. Students prepare a solo, memorize a defined number of scales, and perform a sight-reading selection before the adjudicator. Students who have played for two years should be able to be evaluated on a Level One. More advanced students can move on to higher levels, the most advanced being a Level Six. Evaluation in NYSSMA solo festival can lead to nomination for all-county, all-state and all-eastern participation. Participation in NYSSMA is not mandatory.

## **Course Descriptions**

### **6th grade Vocal Music (Voice Class and Chorus)**

All students in 6<sup>th</sup> grade participate in voice class and sing as a chorus. Students learn vocal techniques, including how to navigate the physical changes that happen to the voice as students mature. Musical language is emphasized with practice in reading music as well as a greater understanding of dynamics, harmonies and other elements of music. Students perform in two concerts and as they prepare for concerts they have the opportunity to learn diverse repertoire, and the skills needed to work in an ensemble.

### **6th grade Instrumental Music (Band and Orchestra)**

All students participate in Band or Orchestra. Through the act of becoming proficient on an instrument, students develop the fine and gross motor skills, as well as the auditory, and cognitive skills needed to play an instrument. In addition they receive regular training in music theory. Eighteen times a year students participate in conservatory training. These are small group lessons on their specific instrument.

### **6th grade Integrated Arts**

This yearlong class includes visual arts, digital arts, theater, spoken word and dance. Specific skills, concepts and experiences are explored individually within the context of each discipline, and an additional focus is placed on the commonalities, intersections

and interaction between the disciplines. The overarching goal of Sixth Grade Integrated Arts is to develop within each student a deep and abiding appreciation of the holistic nature of the arts and the role the arts play in their lives. The students are asked to stretch their imaginations and become divergent thinkers. They learn to think outside of the box, develop critical examining skills, and explore ways to describe, analyze and interpret art and the world around them.

### **7th grade Instrumental and Vocal Music (Orchestra, Band, Chorus)**

7<sup>th</sup> grade is combined with 8<sup>th</sup> grade for vocal and instrumental music. This allows the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students an opportunity to work in large ensembles and experience the excitement that goes along with creating BIG music! Feeling your part of the whole, listening, synchronicity, and the repertoire itself all rise to a new level of challenge. In vocal music students understand the specifics of their developing voices and how they make music. They develop their technical and expressive skills with support and guidance. Eighteen times a year students participate in conservatory training. These are small group lessons on their specific instrument.

### **7th grade Theater**

Students explore how to effectively communicate a story to an audience through their physical, vocal and imaginative choices. Seventh Grade Theater focuses primarily on storytelling, with each student conceiving of and writing his or her own original play. Students then act in each other's pieces, bringing to life the characters and stories each has written.

### **7th grade Visual Arts**

Seventh Grade Visual Arts is primarily a drawing curriculum. Students are introduced to the fundamentals of drawing from a fine arts perspective with an emphasis on value. The majority of the work is done in a sketchbook and students learn the value of a sketchbook as a skills-building tool.

### **7th grade Dance**

This class is an elective in Winter I & II through the PE curriculum. It meets twice a week. The curriculum focuses on developing skills as a mover and understanding a variety of movement styles. There is emphasis placed on making choices as a mover and understanding your own body and how it works. Students are coached to create a supportive working environment, and they develop an understanding of the importance of a positive environment and of peers who give and receive support as each person takes risks and learns new things.

### **8th grade Instrumental and Vocal Music (Orchestra, Band, Chorus)**

In the 8<sup>th</sup> grade there is a particular emphasis placed on understanding the voice as an instrument and skill building on a band or orchestral instrument. This dual approach allows students to understand themselves as music makers in a variety of ways. It also supports their growing understanding of their own physical and cognitive abilities, and supports character development, as they become leaders in ensembles. Eighteen times a year students participate in conservatory training. These are small group lessons on their specific instrument.

### **8th grade Inter-disciplinary Arts (Visual Arts, Digital Arts, Theater)**

Visual Arts, Digital Arts and Theater are taught as an interdisciplinary class in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In Visual and Digital Art, students are introduced to a broad range of media. They study the elements and principals of design through sequential projects. In this year the use of the sketchbook broadens to include its' use as a planning tool and to gather resources and develop ideas. In the theater portion of this class students explore how to effectively communicate a story to an audience through their physical, vocal and imaginative choices. Part of the semester is spent writing and performing autobiographical monologues. Teaching these classes interdisciplinarily allows focus on each student's individuality as an artist and allows them to explore how their artist's voice is developed and expressed through a variety of mediums.

### **8<sup>th</sup> grade Dance**

This class is an elective in Winter I & II through the PE curriculum. The class meets twice a week. The curriculum focuses on developing skills as a mover and understanding a variety of movement styles. There is emphasis placed on making choices as a mover and understanding your own body and how it works. Students are coached to create a supportive working environment, and they develop an understanding of the importance of a positive environment and of colleagues who give and receive support as each person takes risks and learns new things. This class meets with the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and for the 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the class there is additional emphasis placed on how to be a leader and how to set the tone in a group environment. This involves large concepts such as focus and work ethic, and small but significant concepts such as walking into the room with a positive attitude and communicating appropriately with your peers.