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MIDDLE SCHOOL ACADEMIC PHILOSOPHY

At St. Paul’s School for Girls, we understand that middle school is a time of significant change and growth for adolescents. Girls are developing intellectually, physically, emotionally, and socially, and SPSG provides a joyful, supportive, and challenging environment to nurture their independence and voice.

In partnership with parents, SPSG works to help girls grow into creative and self-confident critical thinkers. Our approach to middle school focuses on the individuality of each student in order to foster her confidence and success in and out of the classroom. An experienced and dedicated faculty supports and guides students to think, create, question, and communicate. The skills of leadership and self-advocacy, critical in twenty-first century global education, are encouraged and strengthened every day. Ever mindful of best practices, SPSG’s Middle School is not only a place that will provide your daughter with an innovative and relevant interdisciplinary academic program, but also SPSG is a school where unique contributions are valued and every student’s voice is heard. Our Middle School educates girls through exploratory, integrated, and challenging programs that develop lifelong learners, leaders, and contributing members of their communities.

SPSG MISSION STATEMENT

St. Paul’s School for Girls educates hearts and minds in an inclusive community that is grounded in the Episcopal values of respect, integrity, and spiritual growth. We empower voice, nurture intellectual curiosity and creativity, and inspire confident leaders to serve in the world.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Believing that every child is a child of God and that trust, understanding, and mutual respect lie at the heart of our community, St. Paul’s School for Girls is committed to creating a supportive learning environment where all individuals are valued for their unique contributions and are able to achieve their highest potential. We strongly believe that a diverse and inclusive community is the best learning environment for our girls and prepares them to live, work, and thrive in an increasingly global and multicultural community. We reject all prejudice, particularly those based on race, national and ethnic origin, religion, socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, and physical characteristics.
PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

An SPSG Graduate is

1. **An innovative thinker** with the skills and knowledge to ask compelling questions, seek multiple perspectives, and create original work

2. **A lifelong learner** who demonstrates intellectual curiosity and a passion for new ideas

3. **A confident communicator**, prepared to engage in thoughtful dialogue, bring groups together to solve problems, and inspire positive action

4. **A healthy risk taker** who embraces challenges, demonstrates initiative, and is resourceful and resilient

5. **A joyful woman** who holds work and responsibility in balance with time for physical fitness, spiritual growth, personal interests, and friends and family

6. **A conscientious community member** who demonstrates empathy and integrity, respects every individual as a child of God, and acts as a steward of the earth’s resources

7. **A leader with global perspective** who serves others and contributes to the betterment of her society
MIDDLE SCHOOL ACADEMIC PROGRAM

THE ARTS

In Grades 5 and 6, middle school students have the exciting and unique opportunity to participate in all areas of study in the Visual and Performing Arts. In Grades 7 and 8 students select two art forms to study a year for more specialized study. The middle school arts program creates a solid foundation for a comprehensive and advanced study in the fine arts in grades 6-12 at St. Paul’s School for Girls.

Art

Art 5: Art 5 provides students the opportunity to explore the historical and personal significance of art in the world around them. Multicultural and interdisciplinary lessons help students gain an appreciation for art’s cultural and real-world applications. All units contain components of art history, art analysis, and skill development. Students learn how to apply the elements and principles of art to create their own meaningful pieces. They experiment with a variety of media and techniques to create 2D and 3D works which are displayed in two middle school art shows.

Art 6: This course expands upon all of the artistic foundations and applications learned in Grade 5 art. Students continue to investigate art forms from different time periods as well as a variety of global influences. They work with more challenging materials as they learn the appropriate techniques for applying them. Students explore what art means to them in many different forms including sculpture, paint, fiber, ceramics, drawing, and printmaking. Artistic accomplishments are displayed across campus and featured in two middle school art shows in The Ward Center Gallery.

Art 7: This class helps students take the application and synthesis of previously learned artistic fundamentals from grades 5 and 6 to the next level as they apply them in new and personally meaningful ways. Multimedia projects let students discover how to combine and utilize all of the different elements of art and principles of design. The projects continue to have historical and cultural significance but are more open-ended; this allows students to make personal and conscious choices of media and techniques for expressive purposes. Alternative techniques and materials such as needle felting and papermaking are introduced to allow for the further development of creative problem solving skills and as an introduction to the vast application possibilities in the art world today. The students’ artistic endeavors will culminate in two middle school art shows and many other opportunities to showcase their work both in the school and in surrounding communities throughout the school year.

Art 8: In Grade 8, students continue to develop their ability to express themselves through art. They begin to delve deeper into advanced technical and stylistic studies, and they debate the purposes of art, how context can influence meaning, and how it has and will continue to influence and define many aspects of the world around them. In order to let students further explore themselves in the role of artists in society, they will continue to use emerging and traditional art techniques, and they will work to develop their own personal aesthetic and criteria for making reasoned art judgments. Interdisciplinary, multicultural, and innovative multimedia projects with complex components such as bookmaking, silk screening, and stop motion animation will help students develop a world view and vision of art in a broader context and how it relates to other fields of knowledge. The students’ artistic endeavors will culminate in two middle school art shows and many other opportunities to showcase their work both in the school and in surrounding communities throughout the year.
Dance

Middle school students perform in the Winter and Spring Dance Concerts in the Ward Center for the Arts each year.

**Dance 5:** This class provides a fundamental introduction to classical ballet and contemporary jazz. Emphasis is placed on vocabulary, history, and performance. Students also learn proper dance class etiquette and musicality. During this introductory course, students begin to study the dance anatomy, focusing specifically on the skeletal structure of a dancer. Students’ understanding of the performing art culminates in a main stage performance in The Ward Center Theater.

**Dance 6:** This course continues to build on the fundamentals introduced in Grade 5 Dance. Students take classical ballet and contemporary jazz classes weekly, utilizing proper class etiquette and musicality patterns at the beginner to intermediate level. Students continue their study of the dance anatomy, focusing on the muscular structure of the dancer. The 6th grade’s understanding of this art also culminates in a main stage performance in The Ward Center Theater.

**Dance 7:** Students move into intermediate study of classical ballet and contemporary jazz. The study of the dance anatomy shifts from theory work to practical work as students focus on the specific movements of each part of the body. Students’ understanding of the performing art culminates in a main stage performance in The Ward Center Theater.

**Dance 8:** Students continue their intermediate study of classical ballet and contemporary jazz in Dance 8. They are also introduced to beginning modern dance concepts, preparing them for the Upper School dance curriculum. The beginning modern dance concepts include the study of both the Graham & Horton Techniques. Apprentices of our advanced Upper School dance ensemble, Inertia, may repeat this course with the permission of the instructor. Grade 8 students’ understanding of the performing art also culminates in a main stage performance in The Ward Center Theater.

**Inertia-Apprentice:** Grade 8 girls who show a special talent and interest in dance performance may opt to audition for a position as an Apprentice in the SPSG Inertia Dance Company. As a member of Inertia, students are expected to maintain strong academic standing and represent SPSG. The Inertia Apprentice candidates audition in May of the 7th grade year. Apprentices are required to take three technique classes per week, either in school (both semesters), through our on-campus program at The Dance Conservatory after school or another approved after school dance program. This is a full year commitment.

*(Prerequisite/Recommendation: 3 years of dance training)*
Music

Music 5: Fifth grade music provides students with the opportunity to become proficient in the fundamentals of basic musicianship. Students learn the notes of the grand staff, common musical symbols, principles of dynamics, tempo and note values. Students begin a music history timeline while learning how composition techniques, many of which are still in use today, were originally adopted as accepted practices. In chorus, students work on stylistically appropriate vowel formation, consonant articulation, intonation, understanding choral texts, and proper breathing techniques using unison and two-part canonic literature. In an effort to understand how natural surroundings can influence sound, instrumentation and more, students study music from a diverse set of cultural influences and repertoires in this ensemble setting. All students sing in two concerts during the course of the year.

Music 6: Sixth grade music begins with a review of basic musicianship skills and quickly progresses into application by studying and performing a varied, diverse repertoire. Students work on larger principles of form and theme, and focus on developing a healthy vocal technique. Beginning with a simple ostinato, they learn more complex musical forms, sight singing, and applied basic compositional techniques while utilizing software such as Finale. In the choral setting, students continue to work on intonation with the introduction of stacked harmony in two parts and canonic harmony in three parts, while studying music from a diversity of cultural and stylistic influences including folk tales, oral tradition, and dance. Sixth grade students also participate in two concerts during the course of the school year.

Music 7: Seventh grade music allows students to refine their musicianship skills. Students work on becoming confident sight-singers and also learn basic rhythmic and melodic dictation. Students learn about social and international influences in the musical world and how such influences shaped the popular music of modern times. They delve into the history of popular music and learn to compose using software such as Garage Band and Finale. In chorus, students continue their study of polyphonic harmony in two-parts and progress to three-part homophonic harmony. The students enrolled in the choral portion of the course are required to perform in two concerts each school year.

Music 8: Eighth grade music students continue their study and application of sight-singing techniques as they learn the Circle of Fifths. The music history focus shifts as students explore another side of rhythm by studying drumming techniques from regions of the African diaspora and other tonal systems as they look at the Raga of India. Students demonstrate progressive confidence in their choral skills and in their knowledge of healthy, stylistically appropriate vocal technique and musicality by studying and performing four-part literature. The students who are enrolled in the choral portion of the course perform in both concerts each year. Students also learn basic keyboard and guitar skills, as well as chord progressions, as they complete analyses of popular songs and the music of diverse genres.
Theatre

Theatre 5:
Theatre 5 is an introductory course to the dramatic arts. Students will explore their own artistic potential through a series of warm-ups, games and acting exercises that focus on ensemble building, storytelling, movement and voice. Viewing the world through the eyes of an actor, director, designer, and playwright, each student is given an opportunity to explore her relationship to performance. Each student will develop her self-confidence, take supported risks and stretch their active listening skills.

Theatre 6:
6th Grade Theatre class builds on Theatre 5 by deepening knowledge of dramatic concepts and beginning level acting and design technique. Students will explore original script writing, improvised character creation, how to apply acting technique to scripts as well as work as designers to use the elements of design to form concepts for theatre productions. Students continue to develop confidence, collaboration, concentration, and begin the exploration of making bold choices based in their own artistry.

Theatre 7:
Theatre 7 deepens the basic skills of performance developed in Theatre 6 while building more advanced technique based acting and design work. Students experiment with a range of more advanced drama techniques in voice and movement. Students will gain experience created characters from scripted text and in improvised scenes. Content includes a collaborative growth-based response format for constructive criticism in generating text based and truthful acting. Skills are applied to devised scenes as well as professional scripts while learning confidence, risk-taking, and celebrating their own strengths as an artist. The semester culminates in a final performance project that students will collaborate to design, perform and film.

Theatre 8:
Theatre 8 is a preparation for Upper School Acting and Theatre through a variety of games and activities, as well as scene work, devising original theatre pieces and rehearsal. Students will gain experience presenting their work to others and applying feedback to performance. By performing heightened and contemporary texts, creating technical designs, working on the process of original writing, and ensemble focused techniques, students explore advanced techniques while learning confidence, risk-taking, and celebrating their own strengths as an artist. Students also formulate critical responses to live theatrical productions as they begin a deeper exploration of the art form. The year culminates in a final performance project that students will collaborate to direct, perform, design and film.

There are two Middle School productions that are coordinated between St. Paul's School and St. Paul’s School for Girls. Auditions are open to students in grades 5 and 6 and then 7 and 8, depending on the production. Participation in productions is independent of Theatre classes.
HUMANITIES

Believing that middle school students learn best when topics inspire their natural talent for interdisciplinary and creative thinking, SPSG’s humanities program bridges common themes in history, geography, and English. In their humanities classes, students develop foundational reading, writing, research, critical thinking, and organizational skills at the same time while they practice and gain confidence in such 21st century skills as collaboration, creativity, digital literacy, and communication.

**Humanities 5:** This class provides students with a lively, engaging course of instruction that combines English and history through literature and project-based learning. Weaving the study of history tightly with the study of literature deepens each student’s understanding and provides greater opportunities for engagement and student-centered learning. Students begin the year with an extensive unit on basic geographic skills including latitude and longitude, parts of a map, and landforms, as well as an introduction to primary sources so they may answer the question, “How do we know what happened in the past?” These skills are continually reinforced as the girls delve into the history and culture of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, and China. Their investigation into the four river valley civilizations include, reading, analyzing, and interpreting a variety of novels, myths, short stories, music and art from corresponding time periods.

Throughout the year students have the opportunity to create multidisciplinary projects that demonstrate their understanding of history and literature. Field trips to the Walters Art Museum, guest speakers, and authentic opportunities to showcase and celebrate student work are an integral part of the program. Grammar and vocabulary development are embedded throughout the year. Fifth grade humanities classes meet twice daily in lieu of separate English and history classes.

**Humanities 6:** Students continue to develop a sound understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of Humanities in sixth grade, where the curriculum focuses on early America, from the pre-Columbian era through the Civil War. The course begins by exploring the geographic and cultural elements of the indigenous populations of the Americas while students read Native American folktales. In a true humanities project, students incorporate their knowledge of the human and physical geography of the United States as they develop their own colony using resources from the Makerspace. Integration continues throughout the year as the grade moves through history and reads novels and plays by American authors set in specific historical time periods, such as The Witch of Blackbird Pond (colonial time period) and Chains (Revolutionary War).

An emphasis is placed on developing creative and analytical writing while dissecting literature and historical arguments. In conjunction, students learn to interpret primary sources, both as literature and a means to answer the question, “how do we know what happened in the past?” Grammar and vocabulary lessons support such endeavors, and attention to religion and the arts supplement the curriculum.
ENGLISH

The English Department holds the discovery and expression of each student’s voice as a primary goal of literary analysis and the writing process. Faculty invite students to develop critical thinking and writing skills, authentic self-appraisal, and respect for people and cultures.

The middle school writing program provides the foundational skill set on which girls will build throughout their academic careers. Girls have routine opportunities to develop their voice and style as writers of both formal, drafted compositions and informal, journal-style responses. Girls learn the tools needed to create their own works of fiction and poetry. They also work to structure and develop personal and expository compositions and analytical essays. Middle school English teachers emphasize the writing process by providing frequent opportunities for brainstorming, organizing, drafting, editing, and revising. Our program highlights discussion with peers and teachers in all stages of this process as another important way to enhance voice. In eighth grade, girls are well prepared to begin our Writing Workshop program, including bi-weekly writing assignments and carefully guided peer editing groups. Direct instruction in grammar and vocabulary is integrated into our writing program.

All middle school students select, memorize, and recite a poem for their class during Literary Week each April. One student from each English section is selected by her peers to perform her poem in front of the entire school at our annual Poetry Assembly.

English 7: The themes of relationships and personal growth are woven throughout the English 7 curriculum. Students investigate how relationships form and change over time and make connections between their own personal growth and the development of the protagonists they study. Students in Grade 7 continue their exploration of literature through two young adult novels, Miss Spitfire and The House on Mango Street as well as through the classics such as Between Shades of Gray. A Novel-of-Your-Choice unit fosters a love of reading by allowing students to choose their own piece of fiction and apply their knowledge of literary elements to that selection. In English 7, students are also introduced to their first Shakespeare play, A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Essay writing is an essential component of English 7 as it allows students to synthesize what they have read and work to answer guiding questions with supporting details and quotations. Instruction in all aspects of the writing process, prewriting, drafting, peer and teacher conferencing, revising, editing, and publishing, scaffolds the seventh grade learner. Grammar is taught in the context of writing lessons, and students use the program Membean to extend lessons and expand their vocabulary throughout the year.

English 8: English 8 focuses on rites of passage and the journey through adolescence, as students read and analyze books such as The Poet X, A Raisin in the Sun, Speak, A Separate Peace, and Jane Eyre. Students also continue their study of Shakespeare with Romeo and Juliet. Students focus on developing critical thinking skills and building both vocabulary and grammar skills through work with Membean. Beyond reading comprehension, students focus on theme, characterization, stylistic elements, and literary devices. Faculty guide students to articulate their own analysis as they become more critical readers and writers. This course also introduces the Writing Workshop program, which helps develop writing skills in a process that involves peer review.
HISTORY

The Middle School History program is designed to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to engage in meaningful historical analysis and argumentation. Students work with a variety of primary and secondary sources and are encouraged to identify and evaluate a wide range of perspectives and points of view as they engage with historical content. Geography is included in every year of instruction, as a vital component of historical understanding. Girls engage in meaningful research and learn to use historical evidence to support an analytical thesis statement, mastering the process by taking small steps in each year at SPSG. Faculty members are committed to creating engaging and challenging classroom activities and projects, including debates, simulations, presentations, field trips and guest speakers.

History 7: American History: This American history course continues the early American themes studied in sixth grade Humanities and explores the years from 1865 through the present. Major units of study include the Reconstruction, the Progressive Era, the Suffrage Movement, World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, the Vietnam War, and the Civil Rights Movement. In researching the events and people that have made our nation great, students become familiar with the print and on-line resources available through SPSG’s library and learn fundamental research skills. Discussion of current events is a central component of this course as students gain awareness of how today’s events will be depicted in the history books of tomorrow. Students continue to develop their understanding of America’s increasing role on the world stage through the use of technology, debate, and cooperative learning.

History 8: Ancient World History: In History 8, students explore the political, social, and cultural histories of the ancient world. Students experience such topics as Early Civilizations, Greece, Rome, Africa, India, China, and the Middle Ages in fresh and exciting ways as they read primary sources, create imaginative projects, observe precious works of art, and interact in discussions and debates. As an introduction to World History, students watch events unfold through a global lens. A focus of the year is also analytical and research-based writing, as students compose thesis statements, learn essay organization, and discuss the interpretation of historical facts. Such skills allow students to build a foundation for courses in the Upper School and prepare students to approach history with intellectual curiosity and appreciation.
MATHEMATICS

Research shows that students experience the greatest future success and develop healthy, confident attitudes towards mathematics when they thoroughly master the foundational skills at each level of mathematics. Such mastery is a function of development as opposed to grade placement. Thus, after Grade 5, our program incorporates flexible groupings to support and challenge each learner with rigorous content at her own level, rather than locking her into a uniform pacing. Some groups may accelerate, while others take the extra time they need to solidify their mathematical competence.

**Math 5:** The topics of study at the first level of middle school mathematics include whole number properties and computation, decimals, fractions, and patterns, including informal geometry. New concepts are introduced and integrated throughout the year, going beyond basic calculations to establish sound mathematical modes of thinking as well as to apply mathematics to real-world situations through integrated problem-solving.

**Math 6:** Students extend and expand upon the basics learned in Grade 5, developing a deeper understanding of our number system and becoming acquainted with algebraic thinking. Topics of study include division of fractions, integers, equations, percentages, proportions, data analysis, and more informal geometry. Students hone their problem-solving skills using a variety of approaches.

**Pre-Algebra:** After a review of basic arithmetic skills, students begin the transition to more formal mathematical reasoning and are introduced to more abstract concepts as they study the topics of Pre-Algebra. Class discussion, modeling, and individual explorations help students master a variety of new concepts involving properties and operations with integers, equations and inequalities, more advanced data analysis and statistics, ratios, proportions, percentages, probability, and topics from geometry. This course is a prerequisite for Algebra I.

**Introduction to Algebra:** In this course, students reinforce their Pre-Algebra skills while using a more sophisticated approach that incorporates algebraic thinking and problem-solving techniques. More advanced applications of mathematics are included, and computational fluency is enhanced. Students who successfully complete this course will be ready to undertake a full Algebra I program in Upper School.

*This course is open to advanced 7th graders (by math department recommendation) and 8th graders who have completed Pre-Algebra and would benefit from the opportunity to achieve solid mastery of fundamental mathematics skills before beginning a full Algebra I program.*

**Algebra I:** Students who have thoroughly mastered the Pre-Algebra content are ready for this rigorous and complete Algebra I course. Topics include the Real Number system and its properties, linear equations and problem-solving methods, relations and functions, inequalities, systems of linear equations, polynomials and factoring, and quadratic equations. The appropriate use of the TI-84Plus Graphing Calculator is incorporated into the course to enhance students’ problem-solving abilities and to facilitate an understanding of complex concepts; it is not used as a computational crutch.

*This course is open to advanced 8th graders (by math department recommendation) and is a prerequisite for Geometry or (in some cases) Algebra II.*

**Geometry:** In this high school level course, students analyze characteristics and properties of two- and three-dimensional figures in space, making conjectures and formulating proofs using both classical Euclidean techniques and other representational systems (coordinates and transformations). Students then apply their new knowledge to a wide range of authentic situations, emphasizing the STEAM areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Art, as well as pure Mathematics. Students develop skills in logical reasoning and mathematical modeling, and also use appropriate
geometry tools strategically for constructions, with compass-and-straightedge and computer-based sketch programs. Algebra 1 topics are thoroughly reinforced and applied in geometric contexts; this keeps skills fresh and facilitates the move to a full-fledged Algebra 2 course in the Upper School.

*This course is open to 8th graders who have successfully completed Algebra I.

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

The Physical Education Program in the Middle School provides a sequence of courses designed to improve the skill-related fitness components of agility, balance, speed, power, coordination, and reaction time while students simultaneously focus on overall fitness, including cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength and endurance, body composition, and flexibility.

**Physical Education 5 and 6:** Students in Grade 5 and 6 physical education classes meet three days each week for a class lasting 45 minutes. Because all students are new to SPSG in Grade 5, we spend extra time evaluating each student to best meet her where she is in the development of her physical skills and fitness levels. Primary emphasis in this course centers on the assessment of and then the subsequent improvement of the skill related fitness components of agility, balance, speed, power, coordination, and reaction time. The health related fitness components of cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength and endurance, body composition, and flexibility are also assessed followed by efforts devoted to the improvement of these components. The course is divided into units throughout the year where students are introduced to various team and individual sports, including those that are part of the SPSG athletic program, while combinations of the skill related components are used in modified game-like situations that involve increasingly complex movements and strategies based on skill level of the students.

**Physical Education 7 and 8:** The curriculum for grades 7 and 8 builds on the students’ skills and knowledge from Grade 6 and begins the introduction to “Lifetime Fitness and Wellness.” Faculty spends extra time evaluating each student to best meet her where she is in the development of her physical skills and fitness levels. Similar to the fifth and sixth grade physical education courses, this course places significant emphasis on the assessment of and then the subsequent improvement of the skill-related fitness components of agility, balance, speed, power, coordination, and reaction time. The health-related fitness components of cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength and endurance, body composition, and flexibility are also assessed and followed by efforts devoted to the improvement of these components. Through class discussions and activities, seventh grade students will begin to connect the value of the health related fitness components to the concept of “Lifetime Fitness and Wellness”. The eighth grade will be able to explain and apply concepts in their own fitness and wellness routines. The eighth grade will also learn how to use the fitness and cardio rooms. The course is divided into a variety of units throughout the year where students continue to experience various team sports, individual sports, and lifetime activities.
RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The Religious Studies program occupies a unique space within the middle school program. Study of sacred texts offers students the opportunity for self-reflection and spiritual exploration. In their religious studies classes, students engage in meaningful dialogue, collaborative assignments and individual reflection. Looking at religious interpretation from different viewpoints and traditions exposes students to a variety of perspectives and ideas while allowing them to understand the role of religion in life and society in history and today.

Religious Studies 5: 5th grade Religious Studies is a discussion based class that provides an introduction to cultural literacy and the five major world religions: Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. Throughout the semester, students develop an understanding of and appreciation for the basic beliefs, customs, symbols, history, art, and sacred texts of each religious tradition.

Religious Studies 6: The 6th grade Religious Studies class narrows its scope of study to Christianity as students begin to build a foundation of understanding of the Episcopal faith. The course concentrates on church history within the context of world events ranging from the Renaissance and Reformation to the Age of Exploration and Colonialism. Students are introduced to the pillars of the Episcopal tradition such that they have a greater understanding of SPSG’s mission, philosophy, and traditions.

Religious Studies 7: Introduction to the Bible: The seventh grade religious studies course introduces students to the structure and the content of the Bible. They learn the books of the Old Testament, how to read, write, and find references correctly, and how to use the resources in the Bible, such as maps, articles, and timelines. The course then turns toward the study of Creation and other significant events and figures, such as Abraham, Sarah and Moses, throughout the Hebrew Scripture. Students also explore the Wisdom literature, particularly the book of Psalms, as well as the writings of the Major and Minor Prophets.

Religious Studies 8: Ethics and the Bible: Grade 8 Religious Studies focuses on the New Testament and the role of religion in western civilization. Students build on the foundation laid in seventh grade and use their understanding to explore the roots and evolution of Christianity. In conjunction, the course seeks to develop leadership skills and enhance students’ understanding of community, civility, social justice, and the value of multiple perspectives through related discussions and activities. The Student Bible and The Bible and its Influence, provide a springboard for discussion as students analyze and discuss the passages and ethics. Current events, works of art and other multimedia resources supplement the texts and enrich the course.
The Middle School science department introduces students to life science, earth science, and environmental science in an effort to establish a foundation for continuing science education in the Upper School. The curriculum in each grade is based on the acquisition of scientific knowledge and science processes that are appropriate for the level of the student. Students learn to be observant as they increase awareness of the world around them, hone critical thinking skills, and work together in problem-solving activities. Classes inspire students to express themselves not only in their written work but also in their voiced opinions. They are encouraged demonstrate their understanding with models, experiments, and demonstrations that they have designed.

Science 5: Life Science: This introductory science program introduces students to broad concepts of life science with an emphasis on cells and human body systems. Organization, energy, form and function, comparisons, and connections are among the unifying concepts addressed. Science terminology and vocabulary are emphasized so students can ask questions and become experienced in strengthening their opinions and observations. Activity-based classroom experiences, use of models, observation, non-fiction reading and comprehension, and analysis are at the forefront of this curriculum. Some examples of activities include a study of nutrition and a developing awareness of their own diets, dissection of owl pellets and organization of bones to compare skeletal similarities in humans and rodents, and analysis and instruction on human diseases so that students begin to be knowledgeable about their own bodies.

Science 6: Life Science: This class complements and expands on concepts previously taught while introducing environmental science, natural selection, botany, and zoology. Critical thinking skills, science language, and foundational knowledge are emphasized through observation, activities, research, dissections, and oral presentations. Students design ecosystem murals, research the “change over time” of everyday objects, and dissect as a culmination of their learning units. The yearlong community service project of the 6th graders is to grow flowers and herbs from seed using SPSG’s greenhouse. In the spring the girls transplant the seedlings into hanging baskets that are delivered to Habitat for Humanity residents in Baltimore City for Mother’s Day.

In the spring, the students grow flowers and herbs from seed and partner with Habitat for Humanity to deliver the fruits of their labor to Baltimore City residents on Mother’s Day. Both of these activities put the girls in charge of their own plants. They must plant, water, and transplant. Throughout the year, girls are encouraged to participate actively in all areas of the course.

Science 7: Earth Science: This course examines our dynamic Earth, its composition, its resources, and its place in the solar system. Content for this course is presented through the lens of natural disasters while examining layers of the earth, plate tectonics, convection currents, weather prediction, and the relationship between land and water. Activities include collaborative investigations, critical thinking, and technology. Students gain a better awareness of interactions that take place on earth by presenting and researching current events related to earth science.
Science 8: Environmental Science and Society:
The Environmental Science and Society course will take a close look at how humans impact the natural world and how the responding environment affects us in return. Students will examine how different forms of pollution (water, air, land) can impact human health, survey the different types of resources that the Earth provides (soil, water, biodiversity, land), and explore the causes and impacts of global climate change. Through numerous investigations, students will use scientific principles, concepts, skills and methodologies to recognize how society and the environment work as an interrelated system.
TECHNOLOGY

Over the course of their middle school years, students develop fluency with digital technologies, computational thinking, and digital citizenship. STAR classes for 5th and 6th grades integrate technology usage that is scaffolded throughout all curricula, and technology-based electives allow students to gain confidence in using technology to be creative communicators, global collaborators, innovative designers, and digitally-empowered learners. In Grades 5 – 7, faculty integrate student-centered technology usage in the classroom and students gain familiarity and comfort as they develop work on school-owned MacBooks. In Grade 8, SPSG’s 1:1 laptop program provides students with opportunities for increased independence, exploration, and self-expression. Recognizing that safe and effective use of technology are critical skills for students in the twenty-first century, SPSG emphasizes and models Internet safety and digital literacy throughout its academic and advisory programs.

STAR (Science, Technology, Arts, and Research)

Students in Grades 5 and 6 spend one day each week in STAR (Science Technology Arts and Research) class. Equipped with MacBook Pros, iPads, and other digital tools, this course is dedicated to fostering the development of digital literacy, creativity, research, communication, and problem-solving skills in middle school girls. Projects in STAR class are developed in coordination with the subject-area teachers and advisors and encourage girls to make interdisciplinary connections as they explore topics in greater depth. Student projects include skill building in online research, engineering, coding, web and digital design and publishing, 3D printing, robotics, and digital citizenship (with an emphasis on safe online habits and combating cyber-bullying).

MakerSpace

Our Makerspace is a place where students can explore their passions, think creatively and practice innovation by applying science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics in a framework that bridges the gap between our school, the community, professional careers and the global economy. It is a place that values hands-on learning and projects where students set out to solve real world problems individually or collaboratively using cutting edge programs such as SketchUp Pro, Fusion 360, Tinkercad, Scratch, Python, Java, Flipgrid, the Adobe Suite and many more! Through the use of our LEGO EV3 robots, Flashforge 3D printers, Glowforge laser cutters, our vinyl cutter and our wood shop, the possibilities for creation are endless! This space is also the home to our Girls Who Code Club, our middle school First LEGO League Robotics Team, our co-ed high school robotics team that competes in LEGO’s First Tech Challenge and CyberPatriot teams.

Hour of Code

Each year SPSG joins over 91 million students worldwide in the Hour of Code, a guided hour of computer programming with hands-on experience. The students enthusiastically investigate concepts of coding and enjoy creating algorithms with looping and sequencing. The coding games, as well as other programming resources, are integrated into core and STAR classes throughout the school year.
Faculty incorporate technology at all levels to provide a robust and relevant classroom environment and to facilitate project-based and collaborative learning, to introduce global perspectives, and to promote interdisciplinary thinking. Students use technology to take ownership of their learning by comparing perspectives, drawing connections, articulating the relevance of their studies, and developing creative solutions to authentic problems. Examples of essential skills integrated into middle school classes include utilizing collaborative tools to revise and reflect on writing, using audio and visual communication tools for speaking and listening skills in modern language classes, evaluating and using digital non-fiction sources in science, and producing original digital works of art and engineering using 3D printing, laser cutting, and 3D modeling. The 1:1 Laptop Program in the Middle School brings increased opportunities for exploration, collaboration, and long-term technology-based projects by requiring a laptop for each 8th grade student.

**Finalsite: Learning Management System**

A Learning Management system is a tool to help 21st century learners stay organized and efficient by providing students, parents and teachers a digital space for resources, collaboration and feedback tools, organization of due dates, a drop box for assignments, and daily gradebook. All SPSG classes use faculty designed pages on Finalsite, to extend learning beyond the classroom.
WORLD LANGUAGES

Students in the Middle School can choose to take Japanese or Spanish in Grades 5-8. French is also offered in Grades 6 through 8. All middle school world language courses develop students’ language skills and foster students’ awareness of their own culture and the cultures of French, Japanese, or Spanish speaking countries.

French

French 6: French 6 is an introductory course; no prior knowledge of French is required. Students learn vocabulary related to greetings, homes, family members, school, food, and clothing. The class is conducted primarily in French. Students participate through a variety of activities to develop language skills such as games, dialogues, and skits. In addition, students have the opportunity to explore the Francophone world. The course covers cultural understanding, speaking, and writing skills as well as reading and listening comprehension.

French 7: This early intermediate course reinforces and builds the students’ ability to communicate in French, developing the acquisition of essential vocabulary and grammatical structures needed to function in a variety of situations. Students explore topics such as daily routines, movies, health, computers, traveling, and cooking. Students engage in debates and skits, as well as conversations and discussions that they can truly understand and that could occur in real life. Students interact in the target language using authentic resources such as videos, audio recordings, and songs. Reading materials such as short narratives, literature, letters, and newspaper articles inform students about Francophone peoples and cultures from around the world. Representative topics may include cultural and historical sites, medical services and driving in France, health in Africa, cuisine in Morocco, and phone access in various francophone countries. Assessments cover speaking, reading, and writing as well as cultural understanding and take the form of group or individual projects, skits, presentations, quizzes and tests.

French 8: In 8th grade, students will continue to develop their communication skills and cultural knowledge of the French language. Students will continue to work on mastering new concepts by participating in various listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities. Students interact in the target language using authentic resources such as videos, audio recordings, and songs. Reading materials such as short narratives, literature, letters, and newspaper articles inform students about Francophone peoples and cultures from around the world. By the end of 8th grade, students will be able to talk about their free-time, the different celebrations across French speaking countries, travels and home. Students will learn how to express opinion and emotion. They will be able to do so in the past, the present and the future. They will take the French National Exam in the spring.
Japanese

Japanese 5: Middle school Japanese students focus on the exploration of the language and culture. During the fifth grade year, the class welcomes new students and focuses on basic characters called Hiragana and Katakana. Students also learn simple self-introduction, greetings, and classroom expressions. They develop their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills through the use of text, songs, games, and other methods that enhance their learning.

Japanese 6: The sixth grade Japanese course builds on the fifth grade curriculum and welcomes new students. Students practice the two basic Japanese alphabets and master basic vocabulary words and grammar in order to communicate successfully in Japanese. Students develop their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in a program geared to a variety of learners using a variety of authentic materials and projects. At the end of sixth grade, students are able to introduce their family and describe each family member’s characteristics, including age, appearance, occupation, habits, likes and dislikes, and skills. Students also learn how to type Japanese on the computer. Technology and arts enrich students’ understanding of the language.

Japanese 7: In seventh grade, students continue to study Japanese language and culture in greater depth. All students are encouraged to communicate only in Japanese in class, as they develop interpersonal, interpretive, and presentation skills. The third Japanese alphabet, Kanji, is introduced in Grade 7 as they further expand their vocabulary. Students are also introduced to some special features of the Japanese language and learn to interact with each other to express their needs and desires. Technology and arts enrich students’ understanding of the language, as the girls communicate with SPSG’s sister school in Japan and use calligraphy to articulate their understanding of cultural elements such as holidays.

Japanese 8: In eighth grade, students continue to hone their communication skills as well as expand their cultural knowledge as they develop insight into their own language and culture and make connections with the global community; the importance of cultural and global awareness continues to be stressed. All classes are taught in the target language, more Kanji characters are introduced, and projects and cooperative learning activities continue. By the end of 8th grade, students are be able to communicate informally, describe symptoms related to illness, to ask for permission, to make requests. More special features of the Japanese language, such as giving and receiving verbs, are introduced, and additional technology and arts enrich students’ understanding of the language.

Spanish

Spanish 5: The study of Spanish encompasses all language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Though the primary emphasis is on oral acquisition, the students also begin reading and writing core vocabulary in simple sentences. Therefore, the program accommodates both the visual and auditory learner. Emphasis is placed on developing strong pronunciation and oral skills. Students complete several comprehensive projects that incorporate grammar and vocabulary skills, and they are introduced to cultural and geographical concepts in order to strengthen their global awareness of the Spanish-speaking world. Students converse about self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences.

Spanish 6: The study of Spanish encompasses all language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Though the emphasis in Grade 6 continues to be placed on oral acquisition, students also begin reading and writing in depth longer sentences and paragraphs. Students learn vocabulary relating to greetings, school, family, hobbies, travel, health,
shopping and food. Through the use of dialogues, interviews, class discussions, games, and skits, the students develop their communication skills and proficiency in a manner that is sequentially coherent and developmentally appropriate. The class is conducted primarily in Spanish. Strategies for language learning are also presented in this course, and global awareness is integrated throughout the year. Students are encouraged to immerse themselves in culture as their study culminates in a research-based project entitled “Adopt-a-Spanish-Speaking-Country”.

**Spanish 7:** This course provides a balanced focus on listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills through student-centered instruction as it meets the learning needs of a broad range of students. The course is conducted primarily in Spanish. Cultural and global awareness are stressed. All students practice their proficiency through daily oral warm-ups, monologues and dialogues, and they create oral stories using visual cues. Along with the use of a traditional textbook, materials presented in class include online audio and video resources and exercises. Authentic newspaper and magazine resources are used throughout the year. Students use their language skills to discuss current events and give their opinions about what is happening in the world. In addition to oral and auditory exercises, the students strengthen their writing skills by developing summaries and compositions related to chapter vocabulary and themes, current events and trends in the Spanish-speaking world. The textbook is covered over the course of two years, and Grade 7 focuses on the first five chapters.

**Spanish 8:** This course begins with a review of Chapters 1-5 and incorporates a communicative approach. Students are given an Oral Proficiency Test at the end of this review in addition to a written test. Students continue to work towards mastering the material through a variety of engaging activities that focus on listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Along with the use of a traditional textbook, the material presented in class includes online audio and video resources and exercises. Current Events are discussed several times per week using several Spanish online sites including BBC Mundo, CNN Español and Telemundo. Students use their language skills to discuss the events and give their opinions about what is happening in the world. Students will develop reading skills to tackle and infer meaning (including perspectives, opinions, facts) from a variety of reading passages. Students will be able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversations will include exchanges necessary for survival: information related to self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food, shopping, travel, and lodging.

Students review the present tense of regular and irregular verbs, regular and irregular preterit (past tense) verbs, future tense, adjectives and adjective agreement, as well as vocabulary related to school, family, home, shopping, eating, hobbies, leisure activities, basic needs, and travel. In addition, students expand their understanding of culture and customs by studying a variety of Spanish-speaking nations, and they read short stories and write summaries, compositions, and alternate endings. At the end of the year, students write their own children’s short story to practice the grammatical structures covered. Students take the National Spanish Exam in the spring. Upon successful completion of this course, students will be placed into Spanish 2 or 2-Honors in the Upper School.
Dedicated to providing students with choice in their educational experience, semester-long elective courses are offered to students in 7th and 8th grades. Electives are interdisciplinary courses designed to help students explore their passions and dive deeper into topics that pique their interest. They are typically smaller in class size, mixed grade level, and project and discussion-based, which allows students to take an active role in directing the curriculum. The 7th grade selects one elective for the year and takes a Life Skills class the other semester. 8th grade students select two electives for the year. Electives offered in a given year may include:

**3D Printing:** In this class, students have the opportunity to create and explore in the world of 3D technology! Students use Tinkercad, Cura, and other applications to design and print three-dimensional objects, learning about the design process and principles of engineering. Projects include art projects such as jewelry design, reverse engineering projects to find solutions to common problems, and service related projects such as developing prosthetics to assist the disabled.

**Creative Writing:** This course is an introduction to the art of creative writing for students who enjoy writing short stories, poetry, and plays. Students read and discuss writing by classical and contemporary authors, while also writing and revising pieces of their own. The class is taught in a workshop style where much time is spent in small groups with peer critique and discussion. As a final piece, students create a literary journal.

**Personal Finance:** In the Personal Finance elective, students will learn about income, expenses, banking, investments, insurance, savings, debt, budgeting, and interest rates. The class sets up fictional checking accounts, learns how interest rates impact personal finances, and much more. FAQs will be answered! For example, have you ever wanted to learn how to balance a checkbook? What is interest? Why is it fun to earn interest but not so fun to pay interest? What is a credit score? Should I put gift money or babysitting money into a savings account? How do I choose a good bank? How long would it take for my savings to double in value? What is the difference between using a credit card and using a debit card? What are the pros and cons of using a credit card? Is pet insurance a good idea? Is it easy to own a share of Disney stock?

**Full STΣ@M Ahead:** S.T.E.A.M. intertwines the disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math into one curriculum. Students use experimentation and problem solving to help them understand current real-world situations. This course allows students to engage fully in every stage of the process – from conception and design to its physical creation. If students can dream their idea, this S.T.E.A.M. elective will provide them with the space and tools to bring those visions to life.

**Food, Sustainability, and our Environment:** When asked to name the largest environment issues we face, how would you respond? Pollution? Global warming? Climate change? All correct, but among these environmental topics, feeding our growing population, is one of the most pressing issues that requires a solution. This course explores the development of modern food products and distribution systems and the ways that it affects our environment and planet while highlighting ways to improve its sustainability long term. It covers topics such as agricultural and food policy, local, industrialized and factory farming, the relationship between climate change and food production, water quality and scarcity, and the impact of technology and bioscience on the food production industry.

**Introduction to Robotics:** In Introduction to Robotics, students use LEGO Mindstorm Robots and the corresponding software to learn basic programming, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Students incorporate their knowledge in
order to build and program their own LEGO robot working with a team to design, build, and create the program that will perform given tasks. Some of the topics of the course are controlling motors, gears and gear ratios, introduction to friction, working with sensors, timing, loops, logic, and basic binary systems. Students will be able to enter LEGO competitions with their teams.

**Introduction to Urban Studies: Getting to Know Baltimore:** Over 80% of the people in our country live in urban areas, and most of us probably consider ourselves “urbanites” or “suburbanites.” What does that mean? Do all cities look the same? How have cities like Baltimore evolved and changed over the years? This semester-long elective takes a closer look at Charm City, using it as an example to help us explore and understand the challenges and success of American cities. Field trips to downtown neighborhoods such as Fells Point, Mt. Vernon, and more will help bring our study to life!

**Myth, Legend, Lore:** Every culture has its own form of important and universal tales that reflect details about its history, values, ideology, spirituality and geography. Mysterious creatures, epic adventures, magical worlds, and whimsical characters abound in this fantasy-based art elective where we create 3D artifacts, 2D documentation, and other visual evidence of our findings while exploring timeless myths, legends and lore.

**Pixar Animation:** Pixar Animation focuses on real-Pixar-world applications of concepts you will see in your classes and the world. This behind-the-scenes introductory class introduces computer science fundamentals by taking a closer look at the tools Pixar engineers and artists use to craft some of your favorite animated movies. Topics include everything from how characters are brought to life to how virtual sets are constructed using geometric transformations.

**Public Speaking:** In this elective, students practice composing and delivering speeches in a variety of styles, including persuasive, impromptu, informative, and personal. Projects include creating and narrating a lesson for their peers, and presenting a formal speech on a topic with personal significance. This class serves as a workshop, with peers delivering constructive feedback and encouraging experimentation with new styles and ideas as we work together to strengthen the confidence and communication skills critical for success throughout high school and beyond.

**Social Justice:** This semester-long course provides an introduction to human rights and social justice. It sheds light on international case studies of justice and injustice and opens the door for debate and activism. Case studies could include girls’ education in Pakistan/Afghanistan, war in Syria, the lack of access to clean drinking water in South Sudan, the Me Too Movement, and more. The course culminates with a student-designed advocacy project, which educates the community and allows girls to use the power of their voices to reach out to the United Nations and our local community on behalf of those in need of support.

**Woodworking:** Students have the opportunity to explore and learn about the basics of woodworking and design some great projects in the process. In this class, students discover the basics of hand tools like handsaws, hammers, and sanders as well as specific power tools such as drills and electronic screwdrivers. They learn workshop safety and creative problem solving while working on several projects throughout the semester. Students work on projects such as creating workbenches, picture frames, bird feeders, and cubbies.
ACADEMIC SUPPORT: MIDDLE SCHOOL LEARNING SERVICES

Middle School Learning Services provides a range of assistance to students. In addition to meeting with individual students to provide support and to analyze current learning skills, the Learning Specialists collaborate with teachers either as a consultant or as a team teacher. In the Middle School, SPSG has developed Language Lab, a class for students in grades 5-8 dedicated to providing direct instruction. For students with diagnosed learning differences who can benefit from increased individualized attention, Language Lab takes the place of world language and gives students the opportunity to improve writing, organization, and reading comprehension in a small class setting. Students focus on math, reading comprehension, and writing skills as needs are determined in conjunction with core classes. In addition, class time is used to teach a variety of study and testing skills. In a small group, students learn to advocate for themselves and develop positive relationships. As students mature, they begin to understand their own learning strengths and to develop effective learning strategies. This course provides a strong foundation for girls’ success in the Upper School. Our model is fluid and student-centered.

Language Lab: Students who would benefit from additional support or reinforcement in their study skills take Language Lab in lieu of a world language. This class offers students the opportunity to continue the development of reading and writing skills. There is an increased focus on reading nonfiction material, writing for assessments, using content area vocabulary, and mastering the content material. The learning specialist works with the English, history, science, math, and religion teachers to reinforce the material students are exposed to in those classes. Using research-based strategies, students are provided activities to review, organize, and make meaning from the content-area material. The focus of the curriculum and unit plans will be tailored to meet the specific needs of the students.

HOMEWORK PHILOSOPHY

Homework in the SPSG Middle School is a natural extension of daily instruction. It serves as an opportunity to reinforce and apply knowledge and skills that are introduced in the classroom. Because we feel that each girl should learn to identify her own strengths as well as formulate questions with regard to her understanding of subject matter, homework should also allow for student reflection. As teachers assign homework, they are looking to reinforce skills in the following areas:

- Mastery of content
- Organization
- Time management
- Critical thinking
- Responsibility
- Synthesis of information from multiple sources
- Ownership of individual learning

Homework will be assigned in most courses on most days. Quantifying the amount of time that should be spent on homework is difficult as it is largely dependent on the individual’s learning style. On average, students in fifth and sixth grade should have no more than 60-70 minutes of homework per day, while seventh and eighth graders should have no more than 80 – 90 minutes of homework per day. There will be evenings when this will be exceeded for the final completion of projects or in preparation for assessments. Teachers will take into account special school and calendar events in the scheduling of homework.
MIDDLE SCHOOL PARALLEL PROGRAMS

Middle School is a time for growth, exploration of interests, and pursuit of passions. As such, our co-curricular or parallel program provides opportunities for students to challenge themselves, take healthy risks, and engage in meaningful discussions as they develop confidence and a sense of self outside of the classroom.

ADVISORY

Supportive student-teacher relationships are the cornerstone of our community. Through such relationships, our advisory program cultivates the development of confident, joyful, and healthy young women. Each advisor establishes a spirit of respect and collaboration, while fostering respect, voice, and community.

Our advisors know and cheer for their students in the classroom. They are role models, coaches, and mentors. Advisors guide students in setting and achieving goals that lead to personal growth. They are advocates for their students while actively teaching students to advocate for themselves.

Middle school students begin most days with their advisors as they sit together at morning Prayers and Chapel and advisories meet as a small group for extended discussion at least once a week. Within this framework, advisors and students celebrate milestones and successes, plan strategies to overcome challenges, and pause for reflection.

Advisors support students’ academic progress and achievement, encourage participation in extracurricular activities, and promote a healthy balance between schoolwork and activities.

Additionally, advisors work as a grade-level team to plan age-appropriate activities and conversations focused on SPSG’s core values of respect, integrity, spiritual growth, and creativity. The advisory curriculum includes lessons related to digital citizenship, diversity, and SPSG’s value themes of the month. Annual service projects and off-campus experiences further the goals of the advisory program.

Middle school advisors serve as a first point of contact with families, fostering healthy communication and dialogue between school and home. Through a Hopes and Dreams Conference at the start of the year, and annual fall and spring conferences, advisors partner with parents in supporting the academic, social, and emotional growth of each student.

HEALTH and WELLNESS

A comprehensive and developmentally appropriate health and wellness curriculum is taught through advisory activities, assemblies, Peer Education, Life Skills classes, and science units. Topics include puberty and adolescent development, body image, respect for all, safety in relationships, drug and alcohol prevention, and social networking.

6th Grade Peer Education Program: The Christopher O’Neil Peer Education Program promotes healthy decision-making and leadership skills. Each year, about 20 upper school students are trained to teach sixth grade students lessons about communication skills, stress, body image, friendship, responsible use of the Internet and cell phones, and decision-making. They also discuss challenges that may arise in upper school and how to effectively make life decisions. The program provides meaningful and age-appropriate opportunities for honest conversations and mentoring between middle school students and upper school role models.

Life Skills: Life Skills is an interactive semester-long course offered to grades 5-7. It is designed to increase student knowledge and abilities in skills necessary for everyday living as a healthy adolescent. Students build personal and social competency skills through individual and group activities as well as guided class discussions. Topics addressed include
body image, understanding self and others, friendships, Internet safety, communication skills, media literacy and healthy decision-making. The course is taught by the school counselor and is graded pass/fail.

8th grade students take part in special Life Skills programming throughout the year focusing specifically on sexual education. The 8th grade students participate in a total of 5 classes focusing on relationships and boundaries, consent and the law, the male and female reproductive systems, sexually transmitted infections, contraception, pregnancy, and abstinence.

Counseling and Health Support Services: Our staff includes a licensed clinical professional counselor, a chaplain, and a registered school nurse. Short-term counseling and pastoral care are available to all students. Students can self-refer or be referred by an advisor, teacher, or parent. Support is offered for friendship issues, stress, loss and change, and peer conflict, as well as other adolescent concerns. The SPSG Health and Wellness Departments uses a solution-focused approach, and the counselor or chaplain communicates with the parent as appropriate. The counselor may refer students to resources outside of school in order to meet her psychological, emotional, or social needs.

Parent Education Program: SPSG strives to provide meaningful programming for middle school parents throughout their child’s development. While it is our mission to provide educational opportunities for our students, it is equally important that the adults in our students’ lives continue to grow and seek understanding during their child’s adolescent years. Thus, in an effort to foster conversation about a topic of specific importance to the middle years, SPSG requires participation by middle school parents in one program annually.
Believing that every child is a child of God and that trust, understanding, and mutual respect lie at the heart of our community, St. Paul’s School for Girls is committed to creating a supportive learning environment where all individuals are valued for their unique contributions and are able to achieve their highest potential. We strongly believe that a diverse and inclusive environment is the best learning environment for our girls and prepares them to live, work, and thrive in an increasingly global and multicultural community. We reject all prejudice, particularly those based on race, national and ethnic origin, religion, socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, and physical characteristics.

The Middle School Diversity Curriculum is implemented through the advisory program, life skills classes, and core academics classes. Lessons lay the groundwork for developing a common language about diversity and creating an atmosphere conducive to dialogue. Students:

- Learn and practice the ground rules for open communication
- Learn the vocabulary of diversity
- Identify their families’ cultural backgrounds
- Learn about the cultural backgrounds of their classmates
- Understand that diversity refers to many ways that groups of people are unique
- Learn that everyone has advantages and disadvantages
- Learn how to be an ally
- Learn how to interrupt teasing and bullying
- Learn the basics of respecting and valuing cultures and beliefs that differ from their own
ATHLETICS

At SPSG, athletics help students build camaraderie, develop strategies for competition, and learn valuable lessons about achieving goals. St. Paul’s School for Girls focuses on providing athletes with a positive athletic experience as we seek to build character, forge leaders, and promote citizenship and sportsmanship through participation and competition. Middle school teams include cross country, field hockey, soccer, and volleyball in the fall; basketball and winter soccer in the winter; and softball and lacrosse in the spring. Middle school teams emphasize participation, skill building, collaboration, and team spirit, and our many faculty-coaches create an environment where girls feel supported and are encouraged to take healthy risks, cheer for their classmates, and give competition their all.
SERVICE AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Founded in the Episcopal tradition, St. Paul’s School for Girls embraces service and outreach as a major component of its program. Our yearlong service projects provide a depth of understanding about local and global issues. We encourage the students to think outside of themselves and empower them to fuse creativity, empathy, and leadership skills to affect change.

**Grade 5:** The fifth grade service program focuses on the issue of hunger. Students engage in service learning initiatives on and off campus throughout the year, beginning with an introduction to the causes and effects of hunger in small group advisory discussions. The girls visit Paul’s Place soup kitchen in the fall and participate in the Classic Casserole Program by making and delivering meals six times during the school year. The casseroles are put together by the students of SPSG and SP during long advisory periods and are transported by the class parents. We appreciate the generosity of the Grade 5 parents who help make this outreach possible.

**Grade 6:** The sixth grade builds on the foundation laid in fifth grade and expands its focus to involve the concept of sustainability and food. Students work hand in hand with the SPSG greenhouse and community garden to grow herbs and flowering plants from seeds, paint and decorate flowerpots, and transfer the seedlings to create beautiful herb gardens for residents of the Sandtown neighborhood in Baltimore City. The pots are delivered to the members of the community just in time for Mother’s Day through a partnership with Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake. The relationship with Habitat also includes a visit from the Education Coordinator. In addition, the grade visits Real Foods Farm, an urban garden run by the Civic Works program in Clifton Park, to learn about food deserts and volunteer their time to help improve food security in Baltimore City.

**Grade 7:** The seventh grade focuses on aging, healthcare, and giving back to the oldest and youngest members of the community. Through a strong partnership with the Pickersgill Retirement Home, students visit residents four times during the school year. The girls build relationships by interviewing residents about their experiences, engaging in activities and crafts, and forming valuable bonds. The girls also seek opportunities to work with their younger counterparts at St. Paul’s Plus and The St. Paul’s Lower School throughout the year. The seventh grade experience promotes a lifelong love of learning as the girls spend time absorbing information from the Pickersgill residents and sharing their own wisdom with the young ones up and down the hill.
**Grade 8:** The eighth grade service program provides an opportunity for students to partner with the Ridge Ruxton School, a learning environment for students with significant disabilities. SPSG students assist in directed recreational events such as Earth Day and in classroom activities in art, life skills, library, and adaptive PE. SPSG students offer support, encouragement, and friendship.
The Penny B. Evins Learning Commons

In the Middle School, students use the library to research questions, expand knowledge, and explore interests. Under the guidance of the librarian and faculty members, students discover that research includes defining a question for exploration, locating materials, using text and electronic features to become oriented within a source, and strategically pre-reading material. They learn that information is available in multiple formats and should be evaluated to determine its quality and usefulness for exploring the question at hand. Students are encouraged to be mindful that information should be used and shared accurately, creatively, and ethically. SPSG students are conscious of ways that reading, viewing, and listening to both text and multimedia sources can be a source of enjoyment and a means of exploring the greater world.

**Library Skills: Grade 5:** SPSG’s fifth grade learns to restate topics in order to identify the need for additional knowledge. Students practice using text and site features that provide direction within sources, as they become oriented to the library as a physical and digital space and familiar with the services provided. The girls use the library software to search for, locate, and check out materials. Fifth graders explore commonly used print and digital reference source types. They discuss the concept that sources of all kinds must be evaluated for quality and relevance, and they are taught to define some terms related to the ethical use of information, citation (using MLA Style at a “starter” level in NoodleTools), and the basics of saving work on a computer. Fifth graders expand on their sense that pleasure reading has value and that knowledge of books can lead to finding and sharing materials that are personally fulfilling.

**Library Skills: Grade 6:** The sixth grade learns to formulate research questions and engages in a pre-research process involving effective information gathering. Students connect with the library’s digital collections, using databases to search for specific content types and to generate citations. Students integrate multiple sources into note taking and writing for research projects, while gathering basic bibliographic information about sources in order to cite and credit them appropriately. Sixth grade students discuss specific criteria for evaluating online sources and actively avoid sources that do not meet standards. The girls negotiate the transition to a more complex array of reading choices with assistance from library staff. They clarify their understanding of a variety of genres and explore both nonfiction and fiction in various formats for recreational reading.

**Library Skills: Grade 7:**
A SPSG seventh grader approaches assignments with a clear idea of how the research process works, reflecting critically and changing course, if needed, between pre-research and deeper reading. Students seek multiple perspectives when gathering information, detect biases in some content, and locate reliable information sources. Seventh graders use ethical note-taking practices that include recording, summarizing, and analyzing. They demonstrate an understanding of intellectual property, avoid plagiarism and cite using MLA Style at the “Junior” level in NoodleTools. Students consider both digital and physical library resources when seeking information and they understand that not all sources are available on the open Internet. Seventh grade girls are encouraged to read based on personal interest and acknowledge that taste in books and formats may change over time and may differ from their peers’.

**Library Skills: Grade 8:** The eighth grade approaches research assignments with the expectation that the research process involves critical thinking throughout and that source information must be recorded along the way to prepare for appropriate citation. Students begin to use in-text citations when requested. Eighth graders are taught that there are multiple citation styles and use MLA Style at the “Junior” level in NoodleTools. They use notecard functions in NoodleTools to take and organize their research notes. Eighth graders assess the probable credibility of digital and print sources by determining their comprehensiveness, currency, and authority. They also show an understanding of ethical responsibilities related to copyright, intellectual property, and the conservation of resources when printing or using power and understand the need to be prepared for and engaged in class by planning ahead to use technology and time efficiently. Reading for pleasure and a willingness to explore a variety of genres, authors, and formats widens curiosity and provides a frame of reference for understanding the world.
SIGNATURE TRIPS

Fifth Grade
The fifth grade begins its middle school adventure by spending a day whitewater rafting near historic Harper’s Ferry, West Virginia. The afternoon on the Shenandoah River allows students to bond through a shared experience and sets them up for a successful eight-year journey together at SPSG. Later in the fall, fifth graders spend a day immersed in activities that enrich their Humanities classes and supplement their service-learning project surrounding food and hunger in Baltimore. Students visit Paul’s Place to learn about the organization and to work directly with the people who coordinate and receive the casseroles they prepare. Students spend the second half of the day building upon their study of ancient Egypt at the Walters Art Gallery. Their learning comes alive while they tour the Egypt galleries with an Egyptologist.

Sixth Grade
Sixth graders spend a day engaged in team-building activities in Genesee Valley, where adventures on the ropes course and small group challenges build trust, confidence, and community among the girls while they learn to be supportive friends and helpful community members. Some years the enrichment is extended another half day when students take their talents and teamwork to the community and engage in service learning projects at local parks or urban farms.

Seventh Grade
Each fall the seventh grade class travels to Echo Hill Outdoor School in Worton, Maryland, for four days of experiential learning and environmental studies. Zip lining and other physical challenges build self-confidence and trust in one another. Students also visit a working dairy farm and learn about the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem as they expand their understanding of the role they each play in protecting and advocating for the watershed. The grade also participates in an off-campus day of service with their peers from St. Paul’s School.

Eighth Grade
The eighth grade travels to Washington, D.C. each fall to experience the capital’s rich cultural and historical resources. Students visit the Air and Space Museum and Museum of Natural History, The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, The Holocaust Museum, and several historical sites such as the Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorials. The trip furthers relationships within the grade and provides age-appropriate opportunities for independence as students prepare to work together to maximize opportunities in their final year of Middle School. In addition, a portion of one day is spent touring the city and Smithsonian museums with their peers from St. Paul’s School.