UPPER SCHOOL COURSE DESCRIPTIONS 2020-21

marin country day school

Upper School Course Descriptions
2020 – 2021

Upper School offers an engaging, challenging curriculum that develops students' critical thinking skills while promoting the development of foundational skills such as reading, mathematics, writing and critical thinking. We use varied instructional methods and learning opportunities that place the student at the center of his or her learning. Throughout, active participation and engagement are the norm. To enable students to maximize their learning and feel its relevance, we promote integrated thinking and the broad, practical application of knowledge, concepts and skills.

We offer as broad and varied a program as possible to meet the needs of students with a variety of strengths and interests to find means of personal expression and self-fulfillment. MCDS Upper School students take English, a world language, history, science, mathematics, art, music, drama and physical education. Our program is further augmented by elective and club offerings and after-school opportunities.

FIFTH GRADE

Language Arts

In the fifth grade reading program, students respond to literature: they discuss responses in small and whole group settings, learn to understand point of view, voice, the author's purpose in writing and intended audience, analyze the characters' actions, summarize and analyze, share different kinds of reading (independent as well as class and small group novels), and learn new vocabulary and writing styles through exposure to a wide variety of authors and themes. Class novels include literature that accompanies social studies topics, genre or author study. In addition, fifth grade teachers select various read-aloud books for their classes.

Students write across the curriculum: math, science (journals, observations, hypotheses, analyses, conclusions, sharing of research in written form), history (reports, opinion essays, plans for study and research), and reading (response to and analysis of literature). Students edit their own and others' writing, learning the skills of writing for a specific audience, planning and organization, as well as revising, sharing for critical feedback, and responding to the writing of others. A major project in the fifth grade is the research and writing of the biography of a hero of their choice.

We further help students develop their language skills by providing them with consistent opportunities for discussion. By learning to listen and respond to their classmates in formal class discussions and presentations, students become the teachers of their peers. When students develop their own questions (inquiry-based learning) and learn how to find answers to them, they are more effective at integrating and applying their knowledge and skills throughout the fifth grade curriculum.

Social Studies

One goal of the fifth grade social studies curriculum is to help students discover what it means to be a global citizen. Students explore how environment and geography define and shape the way people live in different parts of the world and how the lives of people in countries around the globe compare with their own. Students look at the impact individuals make and explore ways that humans can leave both positive and negative footprints on the earth. Essential questions include: How does where you live impact your world view? How can we share the earth's resources? What qualities make a good leader? What are the important elements to creating a quality of life and what are the common, basic values all humans share?

Students consider these questions through the lens of United States history and other countries in the world. They explore the founding of the United States government and the various impulses that drove the colonists to create a new government. They examine the rights and privileges put forth by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights while comparing our government with governments in other parts of the world. Students look at the United Nations Children's Bill of Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals to understand current global challenges.

Through reading, writing, researching, discussing and debating, history is brought to life by and for our students. In addition to hosting guest speakers, and using the Internet and video as resources, students read historical fiction and non-fiction to obtain information about countries around the world. To cement their understanding of global citizenship, they participate in a micro-finance project, becoming individuals who have made a difference in people's lives across the globe.

Math

MCDS uses *Investigations in Number, Space, and Data (3rd Edition)* or "TERC" for mathematics in kindergarten through fifth grade. Research-based and developed by the research collaborative TERC under a grant from the National Science Foundation, this program is a hands-on, activity-based program that supports the development of mathematical thinking, problem-solving, computational fluency, application of math skills to real life problems, and effective communication of mathematical thinking. Math classes in fifth grade are one hour, five days a week. The fifth grade curriculum includes nine units: multiplication; division; 3-D geometry and measurement; addition, subtraction and the number system; fractions and percents; 2-D geometry and measurement; decimals, fractions and percents; patterns, functions and change; and data analysis and probability. Students work in various groupings both during the lessons and throughout the year. Individual, small-group and whole group lessons, activities and discussions are geared to meet all students' needs and foster a sense of inquiry about mathematics and multiple ways of finding answers to math problems. The online Dreambox program provides additional practice and enrichment opportunities in math.

HUMANITIES, ENGLISH AND HISTORY (Grades 6-8)

Sixth Grade Humanities

Humanities is an integrated English and history/current events course that requires daily work in reading, writing and discussion. Students explore facets of our modern world within the context of the origins and lasting influences of ancient civilizations and their relevance to contemporary cultures. Students learn a framework for studying any culture as they examine primary universal elements of culture such as geography, government, beliefs, and social structures. Students write in a variety of styles and applications including personal narratives, persuasive essays, creative writing, poetry, scripts and literary analysis. Students read literature in different forms, including novels (*The Giver, Brown Girl Dreaming* and *Animal Farm*), poems, plays (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) short stories, myths and essays, and participate in an independent reading program. Through the year, students develop critical thinking and study skills as well. Students develop core language arts skills utilizing a specialized vocabulary program (Membean.com) in conjunction with text-based vocabulary and an integrated grammar program focusing on student writing and practice (*Rules of the Game Vol. 1* and IXL.com).

Seventh and Eighth Grade History

The primary purpose of Upper School history courses is to enable students to think critically, to see patterns (both past and present) and to develop a historical perspective. Students examine how people and events from the past shape cultures and ways of thought, including their own. The course material helps students learn skills such as effective communication, analytical thinking and respect for diversity of opinion and belief.

Upper School students are often asked the same essential questions from one grade to the next in order to highlight past patterns. These repeating questions, or "through lines," include such queries as: How does geography influence human development? How might organization provide stability and power? How does religion shape a person's world views? What shapes and defines a culture? What does art tell us about the values of a particular culture? What are revolutions and how might they affect how people live?

Seventh Grade History:

Seventh grade history is a course in Global Studies. Students explore the following topics throughout the year: History & Memory, Human Migration, Multiple Perspectives, Early Belief Systems, Early Economies, Agriculture & Urban Revolutions, Oral Traditions & Storytelling, and Family & Gender in Ancient History.

Eighth Grade History:

Our eighth grade history course focuses on American Studies. Specific topics include wilderness in American History, foundations of Government and slavery in addition to a study of the major themes in each decade from the 1920s to the 1970s.

Seventh and Eighth Grade English

The English Department provides continuity and progression with skills and concepts that are developed through a variety of reading, writing, discussion, and public speaking opportunities. At each grade level students read literature for discussion and analysis, explore the significance of identity both within themselves and in social context, and write regularly in various genres, both fiction and nonfiction. The

writing is tied as closely as possible to the reading material; we select the vocabulary directly from the literature and emphasize the usage of grammar as a part of the overall writing process.

The English curriculum aims to strengthen the skills necessary for reading with accuracy and pleasure, thinking precisely and logically, writing effectively, listening thoughtfully, and speaking clearly and with conviction. Emphasis is placed on the need for care and thoroughness as well as on the pleasures derived from understanding and using language well. All stages of student assignments and class work are important: Assessments and evaluations are based on total process and performance rather than just the final product.

Seventh Grade English:
During this year, students are introduced to a wide range of literature and guided through various types of writing. Students engage in both creative and analytical writing while learning the steps of the writing process. Creatively, students learn to write original short fiction, poetry, personal narrative, and descriptive writing, in addition to creating a two-page graphic narrative in collaboration with the Art Department. Analytically, seventh graders begin by mastering the structure of the paragraph, including topic sentences, direct quotations, analysis, and concluding sentences. They learn how to use examples from our literature and other sources to support their ideas effectively. Students learn how to read actively and thoughtfully discuss class novels, which have in past years included Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Jennifer Latham's *Dreamland Burning*, Faith Hicks' *Friends with Boys*, Vera Brosgol's *Anya's Ghost*, *The Little Worlds* short story collection, William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, David Levithan's *Every Day, Hungry Hearts,* edited by Elsie Chapman**,** and S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*. Students study vocabulary from their class novels as well as grammar, and take periodic quizzes on new material.

Eighth Grade English:
In eighth grade, students hone their reading and writing skills, becoming ever more skilled readers and writers. Eighth graders learn how to construct an effective essay using strong thesis statements, context, evidence and analysis. Students also learn how to write unified and cohesive essays with introductory and concluding paragraphs and effective transitions. Students practice analytical writing during essays through exploring themes from our class literature, specifically that of how identity is shaped and formed. Past novels have included Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, Gene Yang's graphic novel *American-Born Chinese*, Jason Reynolds' and Brendan Kiely's *All American Boys*, and Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, and William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as various pieces of poetry and short fiction. In addition to writing frequently, students discuss class novels, engage in creative collaborative and individualized projects related to literature and writing, and develop as readers and thinkers. Students study vocabulary from their class novels as well as grammar and take periodic quizzes on new material.

MATHEMATICS (Grades 6-8)

The objective of the mathematics program in grades 6-8 is that students will gain the mathematical literacy that will enable them to:

- Engage in mathematical reasoning with confidence
- Analyze and present information and data
- Use a variety of strategies to solve problems
- Draw conclusions from investigation of mathematical ideas
- Communicate mathematical concepts
- Use technology as a tool
- Successfully meet the challenges of ongoing mathematical study

Critical thinking skills such as application analysis, synthesis, and evaluation are emphasized throughout the curriculum. Students will have many experiences in which to learn cooperatively, to explore and communicate mathematically, and to investigate authentic questions. Students will develop a balanced approach to calculation, to be able to choose appropriate procedures, to find answers and to judge the validity of those answers. As students demonstrate proficiency with arithmetic skills in fifth and sixth grades, technology use is introduced to leverage problem solving. Emphasis is placed on the role of the calculator as a tool to solve real problems. The online Dreambox program provides additional practice and enrichment opportunities in math.

To enable all students to work to their potential, courses are designed to challenge and engage students at the appropriate conceptual level. Math sections in sixth through eighth grade are sized and scheduled to allow maximum fluidity of developmentally appropriate placement between grade-level and accelerated sections.

Sixth Grade Math

In the sixth grade, students are placed in either standard or more advanced math sections. Placements are based upon a number of factors including standardized test scores, classroom performance, prior year teacher evaluation and individual student commitment. The sixth grade courses are 6th grade Math or 6th Grade Pre-Algebra. The two levels are differentiated by pace and depth. Students are observed throughout the year to evaluate whether changes in placement are warranted. Topics covered in sixth grade are whole numbers, integers, fraction and decimal operations, percents, number patterns and number theory, geometry and measurement, graphs, statistics, percents and pre-algebra concepts such as expressions and equations.

Seventh Grade Math

In seventh grade, students take either 7th grade math or 7th grade Algebra 1A. Students reinforce and deepen their understanding of the material learned in sixth grade with continued work in real world applications, problem solving, and operations with percents, decimals and fractions. Other topics include geometry, multi-step equations, probability, word problems, data analysis, and graphing in the coordinate plane.

In the Algebra 1A course, students also begin the formal study of algebra and study other topics such as geometry, probability, permutations, and number theory at a more advanced level. Algebra 1 topics include

writing and solving complex variable equations, evaluating algebraic expressions, classifying numbers, linear functions and writing equations of linear models.

Eighth Grade Math
In the eighth grade, the 8th grade math class begins the formal study of algebra. Topics covered include expressions, equations and functions, real number properties, solving single variable equations, linear equations, inequalities and systems. It is expected that students who satisfactorily complete the grade-level section will place into a higher level of Algebra I in high school.

The Algebra 1B course continues the formal study of algebra begun in the seventh grade Algebra 1A course. Topics covered include systems of equations, exponents and radicals, polynomials, quadratics, rational expressions and extensive problem solving. Students taking this course will complete a full year of algebra in preparation for high school geometry.

WORLD LANGUAGES (Spanish and Mandarin Chinese)

In our world language program, we place equal emphasis on the four basic skills necessary for an active and flexible command of the language: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Self-expression and association are encouraged over rote memorization. Vocabulary and grammar explanations are presented in a comprehensive way that supports communicative proficiency. Confidence, enthusiasm and communication are stimulated with the use of cognates, visuals, oral repetition, dialogues, skits, physical response to commands, songs and games. We explore culture through language, stories, folklore, celebrations, music, discussion of current events, and real life opportunities to actively engage in those cultures. Homework, tests, oral and written quizzes are an integral part of the world language curriculum.

Fifth Grade Spanish
The objective of fifth grade Spanish is to strengthen syntax and develop the use of basic verbs within the context of self, seasons, weather, telling time, class schedules, sports, common places and daily activities. Songs, dialogues, skits and games continue to enhance the learning process. Culture is experienced in the observance of holidays and further explored in research projects. Homework, oral and written quizzes, and tests are an integral part of the course. In fifth grade, students meet three times a week.

Fifth Grade Mandarin Chinese
Students in the fifth grade build on their Mandarin Chinese foundation. Through song, video, web resources and classroom conversation, students learn to ask questions of friends, introduce themselves, and describe their lives—from describing their family and school to their likes and dislikes. Students will review pronunciation and basic Chinese radicals, while learning new vocabulary, dialogue, sentence patterns and the writing of Chinese characters. Chinese holidays, lifestyles, and customs are also introduced with supplementary materials and multimedia. Students use various iPad apps for their projects. In fifth grade, students meet three times a week.

Sixth Grade Spanish

The sixth grade course concentrates on developing greater fluency in speaking, reading and writing. The content includes present tense of regular -AR, -ER and -IR, the simple future tense (IR + A + INFINITIVO), and other structures that take infinitives. Students acquire the vocabulary necessary to describe themselves and others; daily activities, pastimes and things in and around the house, such as rooms, household items and food. Students explore the culture of the Spanish-speaking world through discussions of current events and major holidays, weekly trivia, traditional and contemporary songs, and cultural research projects designed by each student. From sixth grade on, classes meet on the same schedule as all other academic subjects, for a total of 175 minutes of instructional time per week.

Sixth Grade Beginning Spanish

Beginning Spanish students learn culture, vocabulary and grammar through communicative classroom activities. These are designed to draw on students' personal experience, attitudes and opinions in order to foster authentic communication in Spanish. Skits, songs, art activities and games enhance and facilitate the learning process. Basic vocabulary is covered (such as greetings, numbers, question words, subject pronouns, places, family members and possessive adjectives), as well as the present and simple future tenses of regular and irregular verbs. Students explore the culture of the Spanish-speaking world through discussions of current events and major holidays, weekly trivia, traditional and contemporary songs. From sixth grade on, classes meet on the same schedule as all other academic subjects, for a total of 175 minutes of instructional time per week.

Sixth Grade Mandarin Chinese

Beginning students will start by learning the four tones. Intonation plays a crucial part in learning the language and a strong emphasis is placed on this for the first three months of the class. The four basic sentence structures are introduced: declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory. Students also learn numbers, colors, greetings, dates and the days of the week. Lessons often integrate songs and games as a way of teaching basic vocabulary. Students also gain exposure to the culture and get to know the customs through lessons on Chinese holidays, food and traditions. For example, through the dumpling-making project, students will learn food-related vocabulary, table manners and simple restaurant dialogues. Chinese calligraphy presentations also introduce each character to the students as a pictograph, which is the origin of these intricate characters.

Seventh Grade Spanish

At this level, students will polish previously learned skills in communication, reading and writing. Emphasis is on creating everyday situations in class and challenging students to produce the language with increasing fluency. Students have extensive practice with subject/object pronouns, present verb tenses (regular/irregular and reflexive), present progressive, imperatives and idiomatic expressions used to communicate opinions, preferences and obligations. Reference to the past tense is made throughout the course and is formally taught at the end of the year. Students explore the culture of the Spanish-speaking world through discussions of current events and major holidays, as well as contemporary and traditional songs. Student will also do a travel project on a Spanish-speaking country, written and presented in Spanish.

Seventh Grade Continuing Spanish
Following a thorough review of material covered in first-year Spanish, students build on basic skills of communication, vocabulary, reading and writing. Students master the present and simple future tenses and are able to describe themselves and others, daily routines/activities, pastimes and things commonly found around them, such as food and other items around school or the house. Students explore the culture of the Spanish-speaking world through discussions of current events and major holidays, weekly trivia, traditional and contemporary songs. At the end of the year students will be introduced to the past tense, which will be reinforced during their eighth grade year.

Seventh Grade Mandarin Chinese
Seventh graders utilize online programs to further develop their skills. Students learn to construct the pronunciation for each Chinese character using tones and Hanyu Pinyin (phonetics) and learn about homonyms and how to tell the difference between each word. Students practice describing different objects (time, subject and place) using correct sentence structure. Traditional Chinese objects such as Chinese Chess and the Pipa, a Chinese instrument, are introduced to students to allow them to better understand Chinese culture. Students listen to Chinese folk tales to learn more about Chinese history.

Eighth Grade Spanish
The emphasis at this level is on communication and self-expression. We cover in detail useful phrases, idiomatic expressions and verb forms in the present and past tenses. Students also learn the present perfect and future tenses to talk about things they *have done* and things they *will do*. We also review and expand upon the imperative. A variety of exercises and activities help students become more proficient in listening, speaking, reading and writing in Spanish. Cultural projects allow students to explore aspects of the Spanish-speaking world outside the parameters of language mechanics and limits of the classroom. Students completing Spanish in eighth grade typically enter Spanish II in high school.

Eighth Grade Continuing Spanish
As the culminating year for students who started Spanish in sixth grade, the goal of this class is to help students develop a level of proficiency and confidence that will allow them to enter Spanish II in high school. Students review basic vocabulary and grammar previously learned and build on this with new material, including reflexive verbs, past tense, object pronouns and idiomatic expressions used to communicate opinions, desires and obligations. The imperative is also taught. Students explore the culture of the Spanish-speaking world through discussions of current events and major holidays, weekly trivia, traditional and contemporary songs, and cultural research projects designed by each student.

Eighth Grade Mandarin Chinese
The eighth grade Mandarin class is conducted mostly in Mandarin and designed to further improve the students' oral proficiency and expand on vocabulary and grammatical expressions. Students acquire more advanced linguistic skills while systematically reviewing previously studied materials. Upon course completion students are expected to be able to understand and sustain more complex conversations in Mandarin and write short compositions with correct grammatical application by using Pinyin

(phonetics). Supplementary materials on Chinese culture, holidays, lifestyle, and customs are also introduced.

SCIENCE

The main focus of science in the Upper School is to foster in students an awareness and curiosity about the world around them. This curriculum emphasizes observation and experimentation. Inquiry, investigation, analysis and explanation become key words as students work to further develop scientific skills and knowledge. Demonstrations, field trips, hands-on activities and outdoor spaces are utilized to gather, organize and evaluate data and to generate meaningful questions, hypotheses and more questions. Skill and content areas build on previous knowledge and become more defined and intensive as a student progresses through the Upper School. Throughout the curriculum, we emphasize the idea of science as a process for knowing.

Fifth Grade Science

In the fall semester, students develop an understanding of how life on Earth is supported and sustained both by the sun and our planet's components and cycles. Students then observe, inquire and investigate the inner workings of ecosystems. A closer look at Ring Mountain and other neighboring ecosystems engages students with the processes, biodiversity and interdependent relationships that occur. A developed sense of how ecosystems function lends itself to a study of human impact on our environment. Natural resources, consumption, waste, and conservation are explored. Students design and implement action projects in an effort to raise awareness of these issues and improve operations and habits on campus. Students practice skills of observation, question building, data collection, constructing conclusions, and representing information through diagrams and scientific sketches.

Sixth Grade Science

Students engage in projects and experiments to look in depth into many science disciplines: earth and physical sciences, geology and chemistry. Students build a greater understanding of Earth's systems and are challenged to apply their knowledge as they explore their role and responsibility to the world around them. Through observation, questioning, and experimentation, students draw conclusions based on evidence, logic, imagination and systems thinking. Students use a variety of scientific equipment to gather data and use technology to analyze and present their findings. Design and engineering skills are developed and practiced throughout the year.

Seventh Grade Science

The seventh grade science curriculum is a project-based inquiry program aligned with the new Next Generation Science Standards and supported by the National Science Foundation. The instructional model is based on contemporary cognitive research that indicates that learning occurs in context, is active, is social and is reflective. This program provides the framework for students to learn science the same way that scientists learn science: collaboratively and within a meaningful context. While traditional hands-on science education first introduces vocabulary and concepts and then asks students to use the information to conduct an investigation or activity, our program introduces the activity before

the concept, allowing students to have some initial context in which to interpret and build their new knowledge. The learning becomes an iterative process—students are constantly adjusting and modifying their understanding—which is valuable in developing student scientists who can apply concepts rather than simply recall them.

Student scientists learn how to ask questions, how to design experiments, how to use evidence to support claims and develop scientific explanations, and how scientists arrive at facts, theories and models. The class project board helps students keep track of what they know, what they are learning and what they still need to learn in order to tackle the unit's big challenge or question. Student scientists work collaboratively to achieve their goals and thus are provided with authentic ways to develop the social and interpersonal skills needed to succeed as working adults in the 21st century. Ultimately, this program gives students a reason for doing science. It becomes real and relevant to their everyday lives. Seventh graders begin the school year with the unit *Good Friends & Germs* and explore the central question, "How can you prevent your good friends from getting sick?" Using some of the practices and skills used by epidemiologists, students learn about unicellular organisms, such as bacteria and viruses that cause disease; cell structure and theory; levels of organization of living organisms; structure, function, and interdependence of human body systems; how diseases affect body systems; and how to track a disease. Students use this information to develop a set of recommendations for helping themselves and others stay healthy.

For the second half of the school year, seventh graders study energy. The big challenge of this unit is to design a Rube Goldberg machine to turn off a light. In the process, students learn about the following types of energy: kinetic, elastic potential, gravitational potential, thermal, chemical, light, sound and electrical. Students observe energy transfer and transformations in order to understand conservation of energy and renewable/nonrenewable energy sources.
Other life science topics Integrated into the course include human development and healthy decision-making. In addition, seventh graders engage in a desert study, in preparation for the outdoor education trip to Joshua Tree National Park.

Eighth Grade Science
The eighth grade science curriculum is a project-based inquiry program aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards and supported by the National Science Foundation. The instructional model is based on contemporary cognitive research that indicates that learning occurs in context, is active, is social and is reflective. This program provides the framework for students to learn science the same way that scientists learn science: collaboratively and within a meaningful context. While traditional hands-on science education first introduces vocabulary and concepts and then asks students to use the information to conduct an investigation or activity, our program introduces the activity before the concept, allowing students to have some initial context in which to interpret and build their new knowledge. The learning becomes an iterative process—students are constantly adjusting and modifying their understanding—which is valuable in developing student scientists who can apply concepts rather than simply recall them.

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Eighth graders begin the school year with an introductory study of chemistry. The unit's big question is, "How can you improve air quality in your community?" Through numerous investigations and case studies, students learn about the nature and composition of air and other matter, states of matter, atomic theory, bonding, the Periodic Table of the Elements and many other fundamental chemistry topics, as well as sources and effects of pollution and implications for global climate change. Students apply their knowledge by investigating the air quality in their own community and examining the sources, effects and potential solutions to the pollution problems that they identify.

For the second half of the year, eighth graders focus on physics. Their big challenge is to design and build a vehicle that will go straight, far, and fast, and carry a load. Students explore principles of motion and force, including relative motion, velocity, acceleration, Newton's laws, friction, gravity, balanced and unbalanced forces, and net force. They use these principles to improve their design of two cars, one with, and one without, a propulsion system.

VISUAL ART

The Upper School art program provides students with intellectual, creative and emotional experiences, connecting them to a common core of knowledge and to the arts of many cultures. We believe that a complete program gives students a working knowledge of the basic elements, techniques and principles of art, and develops their perceptions and responsiveness to a wide variety of artistic practices. Using examples of art from around the world, we address values and the diversity of the human experience, using the arts as a vehicle for understanding cultures.

Fifth Grade Art

Fifth graders explore the creative process through a variety of media, cultures and artists. Emphasizing the range of ways to be creative and the range of materials at their fingertips, students begin the year with a short "use what you have" project. Given a bag of randomly selected recycled materials, students must use everything in the bag (and the bag) to create something. The resulting art demonstrates that each student is creative in a different way. The theme of this project carries through the year with all the work we do – from gesture drawings to still life drawings, from clay to papier-mâché.

Sixth Grade Art

The sixth grade course emphasizes the process of art making as well as the students' ability to make connections to their own personal history as they transition into adolescence. Sixth graders are asked to

take greater responsibility for their art and to begin to understand their personal creative process. The program touches upon a wide variety of media and artistic styles, ranging from printmaking to ceramics to drawing and painting. In all of their work, students not only are exposed to the skills needed to communicate visually, but they also develop an awareness of art as a pervasive and powerful part of our world.

Seventh Grade Art

In seventh grade, students focus on exploring the question, "What is my personal perspective and does it represent my identity?" They will continue to work on technical skills while focusing on artists and projects that ask them to reflect on their own perspective more clearly, beginning to communicate their own young and growing personal histories. We will stress critique and what artwork can tell us about an individual. Through inspiration from art history, folk art and integrating with classroom work, students will be introduced to new media and techniques. They will work in 2D and 3D media that challenge traditional art methods yet reinforce the importance of knowing the elements and principles of art and design. The focus of this course is on experimentation, process and critique in order to encourage inspired artists for life.

Eighth Grade Art

In eighth grade, students explore specific visual arts topics in depth during a twice-weekly Arts Block during two quarters during the year. Specific offerings change and include such courses as Mixed Media Explorations, Digital Photography, Sculpture and 2D Text and Design.

PERFORMING ARTS

The performing arts program gives Upper School students the opportunity to grow comfortable with performance, presentation and ensemble. Students in grade 5 have music twice weekly, while students in grades 6 and 7 have 35 minutes of both music and drama per week. In eighth grade, students explore specific topics in depth during a twice-weekly Arts Block, with specific courses changing quarterly. Upper School students participate in after-school music programs and bands and perform at winter and spring concerts, in addition to having the chance to be a part of school plays at sixth, seventh and eighth grades.

Music

Our music program emphasizes the development of rhythmic, melodic, vocal, instrumental, notation, song-writing and listening skills and provides students with multiple opportunities for ensemble work. Through playing in Orff ensembles with xylophones, metalophones and glockenspiels through fifth grade and in ukulele ensembles beginning in 6th grade, students develop their rhythmic, melodic and listening skills. Students are introduced to guitar, bass, keyboards and drums, with each student having a chance to explore these instruments within an individual and band dynamic. Students study notation, theory, melody and harmony, and write melody and lyrics. Throughout the year, students learn songs from a diversity of countries and cultures.

Drama

Through drama classes, students build self-confidence, imagination, self-presentation, and the ability to work in ensemble with others. Students learn basic theater-related vocabulary and explore different genres of theater. In addition, they learn specific acting skills, such as improvisation, diction, projection, stage presence, character study, and stage directions. We also explore elements of stagecraft, including set, lighting, makeup, costume, and sound effects. Beyond class, students will have the opportunity to participate in various plays and elective offerings throughout the year.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

MCDS offers a comprehensive physical education and after-school athletics program. Students of all aptitudes, abilities and ambitions have ample opportunity to learn, evolve, achieve and succeed in a nurturing and supportive environment.

Physical education classes meet 3-4 times per week for 35 minutes for all students in grades 5-8. Instruction is logical, sequential and cumulative. Basic locomotor skills provide a foundation for increasingly complex movement patterns, games and sports. Sport-specific fundamental skills are learned and practiced in isolation before being incorporated into game activity. Team concepts and strategies are explored and ingrained. We emphasize the notion that "there is more to games than the games themselves." Relevant values such as selflessness, cooperation and perspective are reinforced. Typical physical education units include: movement, group games, cross-country, soccer, volleyball, football, floor hockey, conditioning, ball handling, gymnastics, stunts and apparatus, basketball, team handball, kickball/wiffle ball, ultimate frisbee, badminton, softball, and track and field. Heart rate monitors are introduced in fifth grade as a mechanism to offer exercise feedback to students.

As physical education is a multi-year-path at MCDS, students are encouraged to "be patient with the process," and to embrace both "fitness now," and "fitness for a lifetime." Physical education is fun, illuminating and challenging, an opportunity for self-discovery and essential social integration.

ATHLETICS

Student athletes seeking an enriching, educational and competitive outlet may begin representing MCDS in interscholastic athletics beginning in the sixth grade. MCDS participates in the Bay Area Independent Athletic League (BAIAL), fielding teams of boys and girls at the sixth grade level, Junior Varsity (predominantly seventh grade) and Varsity (predominantly eighth grade) levels. Fifth grade students are invited to dip their toes in the competitive waters with an instructional and participatory level program. Sports offered include: volleyball, cross-country, track and field, soccer and basketball. Values emphasized on athletic teams are commitment, persistence, resilience and perspective. All teams recognize that one goal of an athletic event is to win, and players and coaches will employ specific

strategies for success. In addition, teams are conscious that they are representing MCDS in the larger community, so their personal conduct assumes equal value with their competitive efforts.

TECHNOLOGY

We take a balanced approach to technology integration in the Upper School. We see value in integrating technology *as well as* coaching students to develop healthy personal habits around tech use, which sometimes means unplugging. We teach coding / computer science developmentally, and students also regularly explore principles of digital citizenship and media literacy. On a project-by-project basis, students are also taught "tech skills" like effective search, critical thinking, online communications and workflow, uploading, downloading, troubleshooting, data manipulation, design, and creative problem solving. Students use tech tools to create and share portfolios, practice math skills, conduct research, create digital artwork, make movies, organize ideas, develop reading and logic skills, engage in the writing process, compose music, practice coding, collaborate with teachers and classmates, offer feedback, and more.

Each Upper Schooler is issued a Chromebook for everyday classroom use, and students also have access to iPads, Macbooks, digital cameras, and physical computing materials. Our 6th-8th graders take home Chromebooks for homework use. We partner with parents to help guide families through the complex digital world, and we provide students with data about their internet browsing activity in the interest of self-reflection and personal growth. Our end-goal is to equip students with skills and habits of mind so they can participate responsibly in the digital world.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social and Emotional Learning is an explicit and intentional component of the curriculum in Upper School. We follow a definition and framework from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Social and emotional learning, by CASEL's definition, is "the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions." Active and focused approaches are used to educate students in the five core competencies of self awareness, self management, social awareness, relationship skills and personal decision making.

Fifth through eighth grade students attend SEL class once per week, where explicit skills are practiced and applied in real-life, developmentally appropriate contexts. Fifth grade classes are taught by a specialist within the homeroom. In dedicated class periods for sixth, seventh and eighth grades, students continue to refine and put SEL skills into practice through lenses of diversity and inclusion, service learning and technology. The Upper School Advisory program gives students another supportive, small-group context in which to discuss and practice SEL skills. School-wide, the approach is flexible and

responsive to students' developmental needs, school year events, and current dynamics of student grade levels and groups.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

At MCDS, we believe in the inherent value of the many different kinds of service and community engagement and believe that a balance of all of these most effectively helps us "envision and work toward a better world." We encourage students at every level to engage in all kinds of service, and we believe that service can take many forms—direct or indirect, short-term or long-term. Upper School students regularly participate in "Service at Home," giving back to our immediate school community through classroom jobs, "Lunch Bunch," student councils, and providing support at special events and in day-to-day tasks, such as a campus clean up or mailings. In addition, our students provide community service through fundraising as well as the collection of items requested by partner organizations and communities, such as school supplies, books, gardening equipment and toys. Eighth graders form long-term relationships with outside organizations, serving in "Community Internships" all day multiple times through the school year and working with agency staff to envision Community Action Plans designed to create even more sustainable positive change.