



**2020-21**

**Middle School Curriculum Guide**

Updated November 12, 2020

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## Mission

The IDEAL School of Manhattan is an inclusion school dedicated to creating a diverse community that affirms and accepts the full identities of all people, while inspiring academic excellence, creative leadership, and a desire to build a more just and equitable world.

## Honor Code

This Honor Code summarizes but does not replace the community standards and rules for students set forth in The IDEAL School Family Handbook and the IDEAL Upper School Student Handbook and Code of Conduct. It is comprised of five essential rules and responsibilities to guide each community member to serve the school's mission and to participate in the creation of an inclusive and respectful community, in and out of the classroom, where all members have the opportunity to strive for excellence, demonstrate creative leadership, and work together to build a more just and equitable world.

## The Five I's of IDEAL

1. I will be respectful of the learning process, strive for excellence in and out of the classroom, and engage respectfully in all school classes, programs, and activities.
2. I will act with integrity and represent myself and my work honestly.
3. I will ensure that my words and actions demonstrate respect for all and acceptance of the full identity of all individuals that make up our diverse community.
4. I will strive to ensure that my actions, my work, and my words help to create a more inclusive community and a more just and equitable world.
5. I will be a creative and compassionate leader by modeling IDEAL's core values both in and out of school.

## The Arts

*Through the robust arts curriculum of The IDEAL School of Manhattan, students develop creativity, critical thinking skills, and confidence, and they learn to take healthy risks as they explore multiple perspectives and strengthen their own thinking. The skills students acquire in the arts strengthen their learning in all academic areas. Partnerships with New York City outreach programs and cultural institutions extend classroom experiences and create a vibrant curriculum that is integrated throughout all disciplines. During the first semester, all sixth-grade students participate in art, music, and drama units. In the second semester, sixth-grade students choose one elective on which to focus. As seventh and eighth graders, all students choose one elective per semester.*

**Note:** Electives are subject to change based on faculty and student interest and schedule.

## Music

### ***Foundations of Musical Performance (Grade 6, first semester)***

This introductory course serves as a transition from general music into musical performance ensembles and larger groups. Students learn procedures in areas of the performing arts that ready them to adapt to mixed instrument and vocal ensembles in Grades 7 and 8. Students study effective vocal production and warmups, the physiology of intermediate vocal tone techniques and lyrical articulation, breath control, pitch matching, and foundational theory in harmony and written rhythms.

### ***Interdisciplinary Music Appreciation (Grades 6-8)***

Drawing from their knowledge in other subjects, personal life experiences, heritage, and viewpoints, students explore how music is both a product as well as an influencer of culture. Students learn how to appreciate music as a musician--applying musical language to evaluate aesthetic and performative aspects of music--and also as an ethnomusicologist--drawing connections between cultural implications and influences in the music they enjoy.

### ***Instrumental Exploration (Grades 6-8)***

Applying their growing expertise as music appreciators, students engage in instrumental mechanics, ear training, and performance with a variety of melodic and rhythmic instruments including guitar, bass, drums, and piano. Students employ rudiments of written music and also become practitioners of oral musical traditions from around the world.

### ***Choral Ensemble (Grades 6-8)***

The Choral Ensemble is a performing group that has regular practice in musical literacy, effective vocal techniques, singing in multiple-part harmony, and solo singing, leading to the creation of a blended group sound. The ensemble performs diverse choral works seasonally and for special events.

## Theatre

### **Theatre Arts Foundations (Grade 6, first semester)**

In this course, students explore the fundamentals of the art of drama. Students generate daily journals and participate in discussions about their submissions. Additionally, students collaborate when performing group scenes which may include pantomime, improvisation, and tableaux.

### **Theatre for Social Change (Grades 6-8)**

*“Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society.*

*Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it.”--Augusto Boal*

Theatre can create social and personal change. It can be innovative and contribute to learning. In this course, students uncover the radical roots of the theatre in education, and they utilize the tools and techniques of Augusto Boal’s interactive and participatory “Theatre of the Oppressed” and Bertolt Brecht’s “Epic Theatre” to research, create, and practice a piece of theatre for presentation.

### **Actors’ Lab (Grades 6-8)**

Actors’ Lab gives students the opportunity to accomplish their best on-camera presentations. In this course, students participate in performance-based and production activities dedicated to creating compelling works for the screen. The classroom is equipped with cameras, microphones, softbox lighting, set pieces, and props for student use. Students film scenes, practice multi-camera shooting activities, and work as a group to compose original short films. This course challenges students to explore their creative identity, hone their energy, and express their presence to the camera. Furthermore, students gain knowledge and practice in multiple film crew responsibilities to support the actors presenting their scenes.

### **Comedy Workshop (Grades 6-8)**

This course gives students the opportunity to celebrate humor in all its forms. In this course, students are exposed to variations of improvisation, parody, delivery, and physicality. Additionally, students explore literary works by some of the great comedic playwrights of the 20th century, such as Neil Simon, Mary Chase, Edward Albee, and Eugene O’Neill. Students also collaborate to develop original scenes and characters.

## Visual Art

### **Foundations of Visual Art (Grade 6, first semester)**

This course offers sixth-grade artists a foundation in visual arts and cultivates specific habits of mind important to the discipline including reflection, engagement, persistence, self-expression, observation, exploration, and understanding. Student artists survey a range of media, with exposure to traditional and contemporary applications. By the end of the year, students are able to identify and apply the elements and principles of design to visual artwork. Artists acquire techniques for a range of media and demonstrate proper care,

storage, and use of high-quality tools and materials. This course develops students' visual fluency, ability to communicate meaning through materials, and understanding of the principles of design. Students practice mark making, hue, and value. The course culminates in the annual ArtBeat body of work show.

### **Form and Figure (Grades 6-8)**

Form and Figure is a course that explores sculpture and drawing. Unit one provides an introduction to sculpture techniques, materials, and practices. Students work with materials such as found objects, clay, plaster craft, soapstone, wooden dowels, balsa wood, and cardboard, and they create installations, relief sculptures, and sculptures in full round. In unit two, students learn to create depth in drawing through value and perspective. Artists work with media such as pastels, sepia chalk, charcoal, pencil, India ink, and pen and ink, and they maintain a sketchbook to cultivate the habit of drawing daily.

### **Composition and Color (Grades 6-8)**

Students explore the storytelling power of composition and color through an exploration of printmaking, collage, and painting. In the printmaking unit, students study composition in terms of negative and positive space, light and shadow, balance, and repetition. Students create prints with media such as wood, styrofoam, linoleum, and silkscreens. In the painting unit, students learn about painting bases, media, and tools as they practice the foundational techniques and processes of this art form. Students work with media such as watercolor, gouache, and acrylic paint; learn to identify and prepare primary colors, secondary colors, and tertiary colors; and become skilled in identifying and applying color relationships such as complementary and analogous colors.

## **English**

*The English Department cultivates voice, develops critical reading skills, and encourages students to work towards comfort and proficiency in writing in a variety of genres. The department emphasizes process as well as product, making drafting and revision a routine part of our students' experience at IDEAL. Grammar, vocabulary, and spelling are grounded in and reinforced by the study of literature and writing assignments. By seventh grade, students compose and workshop rough drafts of essays or personal or creative writing assignments regularly, and they strengthen their editing skills through a guided peer-review process. Classes attend plays or other cultural events in conjunction with their study of literature and explore connections between literature and life throughout their studies.*

### **English 6**

As students transition to Middle School, their study of spelling, vocabulary, paragraph structure, and grammar is integrated into their thematic study of literature and ongoing opportunities to cultivate their voice and style as writers. Students solidify their knowledge of parts of speech and idiomatic expression and review how to construct and punctuate grammatically correct sentences. In conjunction with their study of literature, students learn to craft personal, creative, persuasive, and comparative writing pieces. Students are

introduced to the formal writing process, including brainstorming, planning, drafting, editing, and sharing. The themes of supernatural, good vs. evil, jealousy, vengeance, mortality, and immortality connect the literature in sixth grade. Texts include works such as *The Giver*, *Tuck Everlasting*, *The Lightning Thief*, *One Half From the East*, and a selection of Greek myths, but choices each year are based in part on student interest and input. Through reading, students learn to identify literary elements such as plot, setting, conflict, theme, character development, and tone. Historical fiction and traditional literature receive particular focus. Assessments derive from students' reading, writing, and class discussion.

### **English 7**

In seventh grade English, reading, writing, and language skills continue to be major areas of concentration, and all aspects of this course focus on developing critical and inferential thinking skills. A variety of texts introduce students to the themes of coming of age, identity, and friendship, and students practice their analytical skills by evaluating various points of view. Texts include works such as *Monsters on Maple Street*, *Holes*, *Crash*, *Trickster*, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, and *Walk Two Moons*, but choices each year are based in part on student interest and input. In their writing, students work on developing familiarity with the formal stages of the drafting process, emphasizing editing and peer review. Students compose personal, creative, persuasive, and comparative pieces. Grammar and usage instruction is embedded within writing units, with a particular focus on subject-verb agreement as well as pronoun-antecedent agreement. Assessments derive from students' reading, writing, and class discussion.

### **English 8**

English 8 continues to develop students' reading, writing, and language skills. Eighth-grade students develop their analytical skills by reading a variety of novels and plays. Students learn to evaluate literary criticism and to incorporate secondary source material into their own analyses. As a part of the research process, students learn to utilize MLA guidelines, format, and citations. Literature emphasizes themes of injustice, integrity, prejudice, and self-assertion. Texts include works such as *The Outsiders*, *Of Mice and Men*, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *Bomb*, but choices each year are based in part on student interest and input. When writing, students manipulate their phrasing and sentence structure to convey precise ideas fluidly, applying transitional devices and cohesive organization. By the end of the year, students have developed their voice and craft as writers by composing personal narratives, poetry, argumentative essays, and a research paper. Assessments derive from students' reading, writing, and class discussion.

## **History**

*The History Department at IDEAL emphasizes historical thinking, research, and writing skills as students study World and American history through a variety of contrasting lenses. Debate and discussion are featured heavily in classes that cultivate student voice and opinion*

*through the examination of various viewpoints, even as students develop their foundational knowledge of the subject matter.*

### **History 6: Global History 1**

This world history course explores the development of ancient civilizations in Eurasia, starting with the Neolithic Revolution in Mesopotamia and spreading out along the east/west latitude to Egypt, Persia, India, and China. We begin by focusing on the dawn of humanity and exploring the factors that made cities and civilizations possible. Why certain hunter-gatherer communities developed into conquering empires while others remained hunter-gatherers who were conquered is a central question of our work. Subsequently, we see how the Neolithic Revolution led to the rise of more complex societies with developed economies, social hierarchies, and political institutions. Students examine the benefits and problems associated with maintaining such institutions. We also study the birth of some of the major religions in the world--Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Skills students learn this year enable them to analyze the causes and effects of major events and to compare and contrast different belief systems, perspectives, social policies, and political systems.

### **History 7: American History**

While many American history courses begin with the arrival of Europeans, this class recognizes that U.S. history is best begun with an understanding of the cultures of the continent's original inhabitants. By studying the cultures of the Lenape of the northeast temperate forest, the Hopi of the southwest desert, the Inuit of the Alaskan Arctic, and the Sioux of the Great Plains, students explore the cultural heritage of these groups and how it relates to their location. We then look at the arrival of the Europeans to the continent by examining the impact of their settlement on indigenous cultures. Students also study how these small colonies became the United States of America by exploring the conflict between the United States and Great Britain. Finally, the students examine how our early government evolved and functioned and compare this with the workings of our government today.

### **History 8: Cultural Anthropology**

This course explores the concept of culture, seeking to understand what aspects are shared between all people on earth and also to celebrate the great diversity of human cultures. The year begins with a project that shows how geography affects cultural development. By researching a particular biome in the world and imagining that they must survive in that environment, the students create societies--shelters, economies, and governments--which are integrally connected to the environment. In this way, the students understand how cultural development is essentially tied to geography and how all cultures try to meet their basic human needs in a particular environment. Students also consider what happens when cultures mix and share ideas, looking at the rich cultural diversity of New York City and celebrating their particular cultural heritages. With this understanding of culture, the class then looks more deeply at the specific cultural trait of religion, understanding the basic beliefs of the major religions of the world.

## The Learning Center

*The Learning Center is the hub of academic life at IDEAL. It provides a comfortable space for one-to-one and small group work where experienced faculty and learning specialists expand upon typical classroom instruction by providing additional support, enrichment, and resources such as book clubs and study skills classes. Each student's individual schedule provides time throughout the school day, one to three times per week, to visit the Learning Center in order to address specific academic needs. Students are also encouraged to visit or schedule an appointment to explore resources or clarify current work. The Learning Center is overseen by an experienced learning specialist and supported by a variety of faculty members. The Director of the Learning Center also serves as a resource to faculty members, gathering resources for projects, supporting differentiation, and developing student-centered or technology-based activities.*

### **Public Speaking**

In every academic class, Middle School students are required to present their ideas and work formally and informally on a regular basis. They learn how to craft and deliver persuasive speeches, how-to speeches, and personal narratives. In addition, every eighth-grade student creates an original IDEAL Talk, learning through critique how to strengthen their presentation and hone their material. Students practice their skills and then perform their IDEAL Talk in assemblies before the Upper School community.

## Mathematics

*The Mathematics Department strives to foster in all students an understanding of the foundational and algebraic mathematical functions that order our world. Math classes encourage critical thinking, creative and collaborative problem solving, and the connections between the curriculum and our world. Students are assessed regularly to be sure they are progressing at an appropriately challenging and supportive pace. Students begin the curriculum as appropriate for their readiness level and progress at their own pace, regardless of grade level.*

### **Foundational Math 1**

Foundational Math 1 is designed to enhance students' basic math skills. Students gain an understanding of the number system, place value, and operation of numbers that do not involve regrouping. Students learn how to measure and compare, an important life skill that encompasses the concepts of length, weight, temperature, time, and money. Students also begin to classify shapes based on their properties. Throughout the year, they complete projects to apply math concepts to real-life applications.

### **Foundational Math 2**

Foundational Math 2 reinforces and builds upon skills mastered in Foundational Math 1. Students expand their knowledge of the number system and operational skills, and they

begin to solve addition and subtraction problems that require regrouping. They are also introduced to multiplication and division. Students use their skills to plan a party, create shopping lists, and calculate a budget. Students also expand their knowledge of fractions and learn to add and subtract fractions with common denominators. Throughout the year, they complete projects to apply math concepts to real-life applications.

### **Foundational Math 3**

Foundational Math 3 reinforces and builds upon skills mastered in Foundational Math 2. Students expand their knowledge of number systems and operational skills. They begin to solve multi-digit multiplication and learn the steps in long division. They ultimately use fractions to prepare baked goods for a schoolwide bake sale. Students build upon their knowledge of fractions by adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing fractions with different denominators. Finally, students are introduced to decimals and perform calculations with decimals. Throughout the year, they complete projects to apply math concepts to real-life applications.

### **Math 6**

Grade 6 math establishes the foundational skills required for pre-algebra studies. Students practice elementary arithmetic concepts and skills through warm-ups and through applications to real measurement and calculations in the classroom and in their worlds. Students explore and practice an arithmetic calculation before formalizing it in a formulaic manner. For example, the year begins with a unit on area in which students explore fundamental concepts of surface area before they develop formulas for the areas of specific figures. In this approach, students expand their math skills in a broad range of areas including ratios, rates, percentages, fractions, rational numbers, and the fundamentals of data set statistics.

### **Pre-algebra Fundamentals**

Pre-algebra Fundamentals builds on the foundational skills students have developed in Grade 6 and further prepares them for Algebra I. Additionally, students continue their introduction to simple geometric concepts. Students work towards proficiency in understanding and applying proportional relationships; understanding operations and expressions with rational numbers; solving problems involving scale drawings and informal geometric constructions and working with two- and three-dimensional shapes to solve problems involving area, surface area, and volume. They are introduced to the fundamentals of linear equations and statistics, drawing inferences about slopes, intercepts, and populations based on samples.

### **Pre-algebra**

In this course, students hone their skills and strategies for basic operations with whole numbers and also extend these operations for use with integers, fractions, decimals, and percentages. Students gain experience with square roots and exponents through class discussions and guided problem-solving. Working with variables in expressions, equations, and inequalities allow students to develop skills in manipulating algebraic expressions, and

these skills allow students to solve word problems by modeling. Students are also introduced to graphing linear and basic quadratic functions. Hands-on projects introduce geometric concepts and allow students to gain experience with how dilations, tessellations, and similar figures form part of their everyday life experiences. The topics covered in this course provide students with the necessary skills for future studies in Algebra 1.

### **Algebra 1**

In Algebra 1, students develop the skills, knowledge, and vocabulary needed to perform and communicate mathematical ideas, solving real-world problems using algebra. Students develop algorithms for solving and simplifying expressions, equations, and inequalities. Students work with linear and quadratic functions, both as equations and as visual graphs that they create to model their thinking. Through discussions and guided activities, students explore positive and negative exponents and learn how these ideas relate to many areas of study, such as finance, games, and science. Students also learn techniques for factoring polynomials and practice using online graphing applications to assist them in their work.

## **Physical Education and Health**

*IDEAL's health and physical education programs are integral aspects of our curriculum as we recognize the connection between healthy bodies and minds. Because research supports the connections among physical activity, learning, and concentration, physical education classes meet three days a week. IDEAL's Physical Education Department emphasizes collaboration, team spirit, and effort, in addition to encouraging a lifelong appreciation for physical fitness. Health classes are taught each year, one day per week within the PE block, in order to present students with a forum for discussion and to tailor conversations to developmental needs.*

### **Physical Education**

The physical education curriculum emphasizes the need for physical activity in supporting healthy lives while honing fundamental skills in team sports and fitness. Units are focused not only on learning the physical skills required to play sports but also on how to be a supportive member of a team. Fitness days and activities are part of all units so students can work towards individual fitness goals. A range of sports is practiced over the course of the year, including soccer, basketball, volleyball, and badminton. Students also create original physical games of their own design, presenting and teaching them to the class.

### **Health and Wellness**

IDEAL's schoolwide health curriculum is based largely on the guidelines of the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS). Key concepts of the curriculum include human development, relationships, personal skills (decision-making, communication, negotiation), and sexuality. In the Middle School age, the physical, emotional, and social changes associated with puberty and adolescence are a central focus. The curriculum also addresses issues of healthy nutrition, stress reduction, relationships, mental health, and sexual health and identity. Lessons, discussions, and readings are undertaken in developmentally appropriate ways, and some lessons occur in smaller groups.

## Science

*IDEAL's Science Department is dedicated to creating an inquiry-based integrated science curriculum for Middle School students that develops foundational knowledge of earth, life, and physical sciences. By developing techniques in experimental design and problem solving using the scientific method, students strengthen the critical thinking skills necessary to question and comprehend our natural and technological environments. Students in each class work on group or individual projects that are presented to the community at the annual Science Expo.*

### **Science 6**

Through inquiry-based learning, sixth-grade scientists begin their journey with an exploration of the scientific method and its application to real-world challenges. Students are encouraged to question and analyze their physical world by learning basic investigative skills like using a microscope or tabulating data through grids and charts. Our newest Middle Schoolers develop research skills using textbooks and credible websites, enabling them to evaluate a variety of sources in an age of diverse information. The curriculum focuses on earth and space science but integrates aspects of life and physical science frequently. Topics include the history, timeline, and scales of the universe and the solar system and how the motions of the Earth and moon system are connected to the seasons and tides. Geologic history and plate tectonics are linked with the emergence and evolution of life on Earth. Students cultivate independent study skills by organizing a science notebook and learning to work in small teams to prepare and present their conclusions.

### **Science 7**

Seventh-grade science students begin this course with a review of the scientific method and measurement, utilizing a wide range of instruments and the metric system. Students hone their skills in researching and gathering data, presenting new ideas, and drawing conclusions. With an emphasis on life science that includes biology and chemistry, students study concepts of evolution and taxonomy through the geological timeline. Students learn through comparative anatomy and dissection how all living things are similar. Topics include taxonomy, cellular structures, evolution, and ecology. Connections are made with the physical processes of earth science as well as contemporary issues in climate change and environmental sustainability.

### **Science 8**

In their final year of Middle School, eighth-grade students apply their research, organizational, and design skills to projects and lab activities that build confidence in scientific investigation. Using the scientific method to test hypotheses, students develop their understanding through group projects and oral presentations while maintaining organized science notebooks. Students build critical thinking skills and master experimental design as they formulate inquiry-based projects for our Science Expo. With a focus on

physical science, the course covers topics including states of matter, the periodic table, and chemical reactions and they are introduced to concepts including force, motion, and energy.

## Spanish

*Through the study of Spanish at IDEAL, students gain confidence in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in the target language, and they develop an appreciation for the diverse cultures and communities of native speakers. The arts and experiential learning infuse the curriculum as students explore the rich history of the culture within New York City and across the globe and apply their knowledge in creative ways. All IDEAL students are required to study Spanish during their Middle School years, with the exception of students for whom the family, student, learning specialist, and school agree that additional support in foundational literacy skills or therapies would be beneficial.*

### **Introductory Spanish (Grade 6)**

This introductory Spanish class teaches basic reading, writing, and speaking skills to students new to the language while challenging those who already have some foundational skills. Throughout the year, students study the culture of Spanish speaking countries and communities, building their understanding of people and customs. Each unit is organized into three major blocks: linguistics, culture, and projects. Upon completion, students comprehend and respond with grammatical accuracy to both spoken and written Spanish prompts and are able to demonstrate their cultural awareness. Students select a specific country from the Spanish speaking world and develop a project which requires them to research and present key aspects of their nation's history, culture, climate, and traditions.

### **Spanish 1 (Grades 7 and 8):**

Spanish 1 is a two-year course that provides daily opportunities for students to continue to develop the fundamental elements of the Spanish language within a cultural context. This class focuses on listening, understanding, responding, reading, and writing. Students learn and practice using practical vocabulary on topics such as school, family, home, community, animals, sports, transportation, travel, and more. The class is taught largely in Spanish to allow students to practice conversational skills. Upon completion, students are able to comprehend and respond with grammatical accuracy to both spoken and written Spanish and demonstrate their cultural awareness with more confidence. Throughout the year, students travel to cultural events, art exhibits, shops, and restaurants to expose them to the rich Latino culture within New York City.

## Leadership, Service Learning, and Social Justice

*Working in concert with the pedagogy and the academic curriculum, the leadership, service learning, and social justice programs at IDEAL foster the social and emotional development of confident and compassionate young people who are able to advocate for themselves and others, possess the self-awareness to take healthy risks that lead to growth and are prepared to contribute their voices and talents to a more just and equitable society.*

### **Advisory**

Every Middle School student is a member of an advisory group, and every advisory group is led by faculty members who support and oversee the academic, social, and emotional growth of the individuals and the group as a whole. Advisory groups gather briefly at the beginning and end of each day to touch base, strengthen the sense of community before delving into academic classes, and ensure that students are organized when they leave for the day. With guidance from an advisor, weekly time is spent working on navigating the different topics and stressors that might arise for a Middle School child. Students spend time practicing mindfulness techniques, frustration tolerance, and conflict resolution strategies and discussing issues that might be weighing on them. It is the role of the advisor to know each student as an individual and as a learner and to support the academic and personal growth of each student on a daily basis and in more strategic ways over the course of the year. The advisor serves as the first point of contact and as a partner for parents so that the school and families act in concert to support each child in achieving his or her full potential.

### **Service Learning**

Each grade of the Middle School selects and discusses one issue to focus on throughout the year. Through facilitated discussions, guest speakers, two days of service learning, and partnerships with nonprofit organizations, students are provided with opportunities to learn more about the issue and those it impacts through direct civic engagement. Service learning experiences are carefully scaffolded with intentional preparation and reflection, encouraging students to strengthen their understanding of their role in creating a more just and equitable community.

### **Social Justice Curriculum**

IDEAL's anti-bias and multicultural values are woven into the fabric of our curriculum and school. We support each student's positive identity and social development by directly addressing the impact of stereotyping, bias, and discriminatory behavior, encouraging cooperative learning, and teaching conflict resolution. Students compare multiple perspectives in all of their classes as they develop empathy, voice, and advocacy skills for themselves and others. Social justice topics are also integrated into the advisory program. Inclusive education provides students with an excellent academic foundation and empowers them to succeed in a truly diverse society with self-confidence, acceptance, and compassion.