



St. Anne's-Belfield School

# GRADES 5 - 8 CURRICULUM GUIDE

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2020 - 2021

**Before reading, please note:** COVID-19 policies and protocols, as outlined to faculty and families in August 2020, supersede this document. Any sections denoted with this symbol ▲ have temporary policies in place due to COVID-19.

Please reference [stab.org/back-to-school](https://stab.org/back-to-school) for more information.



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## MIDDLE SCHOOL GRADES 5 - 8 ▲

The Middle School Grades 5 - 8 curriculum weaves disparate threads. Traditional content and skills coexist with new forms of instruction and application.

Instead of merely combining the old and new, the School reimagines the academic context to create a bold paradigm of learning in which students learn through a variety of methods: Collaboration, seminar discussions, student-centered activities, and real-life problem solving requiring critical and creative thinking. The academic program is intentionally designed to build strong foundations in reading, writing, speaking, critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration.

All students study English, history, mathematics, science, world languages (offerings in Spanish, French and Latin), and fine arts. Additionally, all students in grades 5 - 8 engage in the Life Skills program and participate in physical education or sports. Every student is required to participate in the entirety of our curriculum and school program, as detailed in the Student and Family Handbook. Students will not be excused from specific units in any course or from community events or activities.

Interdisciplinary study truly begins in Grades 5 - 8, as evidenced by our humanities program commencing in the fifth grade. Another example is the School's computer science program, which brings together mathematical knowledge and fluency gleaned from our Kindergarten through Grade 6 Singapore Math program, computational thinking, and an understanding of coding. Breaking down the traditional silos of academic disciplines better serves to cement understanding in our students.

The approach to instruction is flexible, too, and it is informed by research and our faculty's experience. Our fifth and sixth grade math and science classes are taught in single-gender groupings, which allow teachers to optimize instructional and motivational techniques. To better meet the needs of our diverse group of students, ability grouping in mathematics begins in seventh grade, which allows more opportunities for differentiation.

The Middle School Advisory program is a social-emotional learning curriculum that provides students with the skills and habits they will need as they make important adolescent decisions. Students are split into co-educational groups and paired with a faculty advisor to allow for smaller teacher to student ratios in a setting where students can feel free to voice their questions and curiosities. The teacher is an advocate for their advisees, oversees their academic progress, and meets with their parents at scheduled parent-teacher conferences during the year. Advisors collaborate regularly with the Assistant Head of the Learning Village for Student Life and the Head of the Middle School, in addition to the School Counselor and Learning Support Specialist.

Topics include: Self-esteem; identity; friendship; grade level expectations; honesty, the Honor Code and integrity; community impact; stress management; digital citizenship; and executive functioning. All topics are revisited throughout the Middle School years in different and developmentally appropriate ways. For our 8th Grade students, there is also a special emphasis on community leadership. The advisory program focuses on topics that our faculty deem appropriate based on the guidelines from Common Sense Media and Advocates for Youth and is responsive to the current needs of our students.

## GRADE-LEVEL INTRODUCTIONS

### GRADE 5 ▲

Fifth grade at St. Anne's-Belfield marks the entry to our Middle School program. Our students relish both the new freedoms and the new responsibilities inherent in these years. Their core classes of math, science, and interdisciplinary English/social studies, enhanced with classes in the fine arts, world language, and physical education, ensure a balanced curriculum. Single-gender classes for math and science create a uniquely supportive learning environment for those disciplines. All fifth grade students participate in a strings program, choosing to learn either violin, viola, bass, or cello. Students are also members of a fifth grade advisory which provides a mentor for each child through an advisor, a fifth grade faculty member. Advisory extends community-building opportunities on a daily basis. The advisor and students also explore the School's Core Values as they work to strengthen our St. Anne's-Belfield family.

Highlights of the fifth grade year include studying microscopic pond life in the science lab, building and flying kites to study the complexities of flight, hosting a South African Chapel and Braai for the entire Lower and Middle Schools, playing a stringed instrument, and performing with a choral group. Serving the larger community, fifth graders create holiday table decorations for Meals on Wheels, share in a workday at a local farm, and participate in the School's annual fundraiser for Camp Holiday Trails or JDRF.

## GRADE 6 ▲

Sixth grade students at St. Anne's-Belfield learn and grow in exciting and important ways. They experiment with words, data, and ideas as they discuss amazing stories, write creative and thoughtful stories and essays, construct their own civilization, record and track math data on spreadsheets, and conduct experiments and present their findings at a science fair. They express their talents by crafting artwork, developing their acting skills, performing with the orchestra or choir, speaking and reading in a foreign tongue, and progressing as developing athletes. Sixth graders develop essential skills and gain broader perspectives.

Consider the following job descriptions our sixth graders try on for size: Roller coaster designer, playwright and puppeteer, Census Bureau statistician, medieval knight, or children's book illustrator. The sixth grade itinerary includes stops at the Poplar Ridge for team building, the Richmond Science Museum for hands-on thrills, a trip to the Fralin Museum for the Writer's Eye contest, and a visit to Gearharts' Chocolate for applied math. Serving the larger community, sixth graders share in a workday at a local farm, participate in the School's annual fundraiser for Camp Holiday Trails or JDRF, and write letters to pen pals at Ura-Gate School in Kenya. Through these experiences, sixth graders build a foundation of confidence and self-reliance they will draw upon during their remaining years in Middle School.

## GRADE 7 ▲

The seventh grade year at St. Anne's-Belfield is both an actual and symbolic rise to a new level of life in the Middle School. Our seventh grade students are immersed in a vibrant setting that nourishes body, mind, heart, and soul. Life upstairs on the second floor of the Middle School involves core classes of English and history, mathematics, science, and world language, enriched by fine and performing arts, life skills, athletics, Quests, and an Advisory program where students work closely with their advisors on a daily basis.

Seventh grade students also have the chance to participate in interscholastic sports for the first time. A Chapel program and community service opportunities help sustain a sense of community and responsible citizenship. Highlights of the seventh grade year include the building and launching of model rockets, making a video game using algebra, investigating historical artifacts in a joint project between English 7 and History 7, and journeying to several historic sites and museums in support of the history curriculum.

## GRADE 8 ▲

Grade eight is the culmination of the middle school experience. As more independent learners and thinkers, eighth grade students are given more responsibility as leaders of the division. They are expected to exemplify the School's Core Values that we value both inside and outside of the classroom. They are encouraged to lead and participate in weekly Chapel, on sports fields, in performance halls, and in community service activities. Some eighth graders step into the role of student Quest facilitator or teacher. Eighth grade continues to prepare students for the transition to the ninth grade, as academic requirements reflect the vigor and expectations of our Upper School. Eighth grade students attend three upper school chapels over the course of the year, shadow a current 9th grade student, and attend a spring transition conference with an Upper School faculty member in preparation for their move to the Greenway Rise campus.

While grade eight looks forward, it is also a time of reflection. At the end of the school year, grade eight students participate in Exhibitions: Formal, oral presentations to their parents, teachers, and classmates about the experiences that have molded and guided them in becoming productive and responsible members of the School and greater community.

# ENGLISH/SOCIAL STUDIES/HUMANITIES

## GRADE 5

Teaching and learning for the 21st century requires a vision of the world beyond our own lives and beyond our own country. The aim of the fifth grade interdisciplinary English/social studies curriculum is to enhance our students' global empathy and knowledge through the exploration of cultures, governments, and countries different from our own. The rich curriculum includes studying the Cultural Revolution in China, South Africa's Apartheid, immigration in the United States, the ancient civilizations of Latin America, and Sir Ernest Shackleton's epic voyage to the Antarctic. Lessons within these units require students to collaborate with their classmates, make choices about what and how they learn, and apply creativity as they complete projects and writing assignments.

Complementary literature accompanies each unit, thereby connecting reading instruction to the units of study. Daily class time is devoted to the teaching of English, including reading, writing, and language skills, which intertwine with the study of the geography, history, and the culture of the places our students explore. Reading assignments include a variety of texts and are balanced by the independent reading program. Teachers guide students' book choices and encourage selections from a variety of genres. Students write regularly and produce a comprehensive portfolio of written work and a poetry anthology featuring original poems. Nearly all of students' writing in fifth grade is typed on their school-owned laptop computers. Students also use their laptops for collaborative projects and vocabulary practice, among other assignments in fifth grade English/social studies.

## GRADE 6

Through a study of world religions, Social Studies 6 focuses on the themes of identity, community, and belief. Students begin by studying the historical foundations of the major world religions. We move on to an in-depth study of the religions' beliefs and rituals, their impact on art, government, and culture, and their role in current events. Students visit places of worship and learn directly from individuals who follow various religious traditions. They are given opportunities to select topics of personal interest (for example, religion and law; religion and gender; religious conflict and cooperation) and to explore those topics through independent and small group projects. Students consider both similarities and differences among the varieties of religious belief, and they are challenged to consider difficult questions from multiple perspectives. The course emphasizes values that are critical to an examination of religious belief, especially empathy, respect, diversity and inclusion. The skill of asking deep questions, and thinking critically about alternative answers, is emphasized, and students work on the close, critical reading of nonfiction and primary source texts. Throughout the year, content and skills are interwoven with the English 6 course.

At the foundation of sixth grade English is the belief that every student is a reader and every student is a writer, even if they do not yet know it. By engaging closely with a high volume and wide range of appropriately-leveled texts, students make great gains in their reading ability and nurture their love of reading. As students employ writing strategies and engage in the writing process, they develop their writing ability, confidence, and voice in an array of genres. Simply put, our aim is to develop students into lifelong readers and writers.

Each reading unit includes explicit teaching of reading strategies and exploration of the deeper elements of literature through reading workshop, guided whole-class discussion, modeling, literature responses, small-group work, and mentoring younger students. A workshop approach to writing develops student ownership and responsibility, all the while incorporating vocabulary, spelling, and the conventions of grammar and usage. Above all, students learn to write through constant practice, targeted instruction, frequent conferences and feedback, and varied opportunities to revise and publish their work. Additionally, the curriculum is designed to incorporate the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing and the integration of grammar within the context of the writing workshop mini lesson.

Given that reading and writing form the basis with which we access and interact with the vast majority of the world's store of knowledge, it is natural that the English and social studies curriculum crosses disciplines, reading levels, and communities. As we prepare our students for the 21st century, digital literacy is incorporated into each unit of study. Digital tools facilitate learning in the areas of creativity and innovation, communication and collaboration, research, critical thinking, and problem solving.

## GRADE 7

### HUMANITIES: ENGLISH & HISTORY

The Humanities 7 courses are scheduled separately by discipline but are interdisciplinary and collaborative in their approach. On any given day, the lines between English and History may be blurred, as students gather for common experiences, engage in group work, explore multimedia, and then possibly realign for direct instruction. Emphasis is placed on the use of technology to help students better understand topics, explore new perspectives, engage in debate, and present their ideas both to their classmates and to a wider audience.

**Humanities 7: English** complements the Humanities 7: History curriculum by encouraging students to be reflective readers and writers. Core texts like *Code Talker*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *Chains* explore the challenges of telling the American story: Who can tell it? What are its themes and conflicts? And why are diverse individual narratives necessary for understanding it? During the year, students practice the skills necessary to be confident, independent learners. For the independent reading program, they select and complete six texts per year. Both in and out of class, they write to develop their own thinking, communicate their ideas, and persuade their classmates. Through a detailed grammatical study of the sentence, students build the vocabulary necessary to inspect and critique their own work, and they practice active listening and respectful dialogue through Harkness seminars. Interdisciplinary projects allow for the development of research skills, including the ability to find relevant sources, evaluate and document information, and synthesize their findings. Students construct knowledge as they become responsible for sharing what they have learned.

**Humanities 7: History** is a project and research-based course following the timeline of United States history to explore a wide variety of social, political, cultural, scientific, technological, and historic events. Students engage in frequent conversations and activities about topics essential to their understanding of U.S. history and critical to the development of their own perspectives and voice. Throughout the year, we ask two essential questions, “What does it mean to be an American?” and “What does it mean to be a good citizen?” Core content aligns with each of the trimesters and involves three major periods in our country’s history: Foundations of the Republic; Struggles for National Identity in the 19th Century; and Globalization and Social Movements in the Modern Era.

## GRADE 8

### HUMANITIES 8: ENGLISH & HISTORY

The Humanities 8 courses are scheduled separately by discipline but are interdisciplinary in their approach. During each unit of study, students are asked to make connections through the themes and essential questions of the courses, reflecting on the core texts through the lens of a cultural anthropologist.

**Humanities 8: English** takes students on a literary journey that will, in combination with Humanities 8: History, broaden their historical perspective on the ancient and modern world and have them consider what it means to be a good citizen. Questions that synthesize ancient and modern historical contexts will challenge students to consider, by way of thoughtful verbal and written analysis, how human beings from any and all periods contain far more than a seed of similarity: How do people become a nation? How and why do nations fall? Is war ever just? What does it mean to be civilized? What distinguishes the individual from the state? How does one discover oneself? To that end, the course will stretch students intellectually by asking them to make ties to more modern literary works—works like *Animal Farm*, for example—that beg to have those same essential questions answered.

Course readings include texts whose central themes reverberate with notions of the citizen and the state, such as George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, Julia Alvarez’ *Before We Were Free*, and Markus Zusak’s *The Book Thief*, as well as a rich complement of short fiction and poetry.

**Humanities 8: History** explores the debt of 21st century Western European and American culture to the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome. The course examines Greek and Roman values through an interdisciplinary lens as a way to reflect critically on contemporary Western values. Students will engage with myth, military history, social history, political revolutions, philosophy, art, and archeology, among other topics. The skills emphasized in the course include engaging with primary texts, utilizing distinct academic disciplines, detecting point-of-view bias, identifying main ideas, drawing conclusions and supporting them with evidence, crafting compelling arguments, and creating multimedia presentations.

# MATHEMATICS ▲

*“We are not teaching math, we are teaching thinking through the medium of math.”*  
- Dr. Yeap Ban Har, Ministry of Education of Singapore

Fifth and sixth grade students learn math through a Singapore Math curriculum called Primary Mathematics in the context of a single-gender classroom. The Singapore Math approach equips students with a strong foundation in math by covering topics in depth and teaching to mastery. The concepts taught in fifth and sixth grade continue to lay the foundation and prepare students for the content they will learn in seventh and eighth grades. Students learn by progressing through a concrete pictorial-abstract sequence. Students first encounter mathematical concepts through the use of hands-on manipulatives. Then, they move on to the pictorial stage in which pictures are used to model problems. Later, when students are familiar with the ideas taught, they progress to the abstract stage in which only numbers, notations and symbols are used. Instruction focuses on mathematical thinking and immediate application of skills to problem-solving. Students share multiple methods for solving problems and are encouraged to keep a growth mindset in their mathematical thinking. Students learn to monitor their own thought processes, explore alternative methods for solving problems, and maintain a growth mindset in their mathematical thinking.

## MATH 5

Students in fifth grade are expected to compute and estimate accurately with whole numbers and decimals using all operations. They are introduced to the properties of whole numbers, basic fraction concepts, and addition and subtraction of fractions and mixed numbers. Students explore linear measurement, ratios, percentage, data analysis and multiplication of fractions. Throughout the year, students apply critical thinking skills to solve challenging word problems.

## MATH 6

Students in sixth grade are expected to compute and estimate accurately with fractions and mixed numbers using all operations. They explore percentages, ratios, proportions, exponents, and one- and two-step algebraic equations with whole numbers and decimals. Students continue to explore the properties of whole numbers and decimals, and the geometry of circles and 3D figures. Students are assigned projects and problem sets that require critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

## MATH 7 (EARNED-ADVANCED OPTION)

The Math 7 curriculum builds students' computational proficiency with a focus on algebra, geometry, probability, and data analysis. Students use integers, rational numbers, and the coordinate system as they investigate and learn algebraic principles, two- and three-dimensional geometry, data analysis, and the foundations of probability. Practical applications are used extensively and the art of problem solving is modeled and developed from the outset of the course.

The earned-advanced option means that students who are most eager to learn and apply their learning beyond mere content mastery will identify themselves to their teachers and opt in to differentiated assignments. All students will be candidates for advanced credit. All students will be enrolled in one, heterogeneous course known as Math 7. Students pursuing advanced credit must first show mastery of class-taught concepts and express a desire to apply their understanding in original ways. Assignments for advanced credit will extend learning to a novel context and credit will require demonstration of correct application of the mathematics being studied that synthesizes previously learned material. Assignments will encourage student teamwork while also advocating for independent thinking. There will be many opportunities to opt in to advanced credit work throughout the academic year.

## MATH 8

Math 8 is a combined algebra and geometry course that focuses on building the foundational skills needed to learn higher levels of mathematics. Students work extensively with linear functions and systems of linear equations and inequalities before a thorough introduction to quadratic functions. Reasoning skills are developed through explorations of sequences, geometric properties of polygons and circles, surface area, and volume of three-dimensional figures, as well as through the process of learning how to prove a result. Problem solving is modeled and developed throughout the course. Most students pursue Integrated Mathematics 1 or Integrated Mathematics 2 following Mathematics 8.

## ADVANCED MATH 8

Advanced Mathematics 8 is a combined algebra and geometry course that moves at a rapid pace but pushes students to think deeply about the material being studied. Functions are studied in depth with a heavy focus on linear and quadratic functions and their transformations. Systems of equations and inequalities are also used to discuss a wide variety of applications. Students develop their reasoning skills throughout the course but get a focused lesson on inductive and deductive reasoning so that they can use these methods in order to prove conjectures. Students will prove properties of polygons and circles, among other things, and they will use their findings in a variety of contexts, including finding surface area and volume of three-dimensional objects. The course will end with an introduction to right triangle trigonometry. Students typically pursue Integrated Mathematics 2 or Honors Integrated Mathematics 2 following Advanced Mathematics 8.

## SCIENCE ▲

### GRADE 5

Biology, chemistry, and physics in the fifth grade? Yes! Single-gender classes, SCRATCH programming projects, and no textbook make for an exciting hands-on experience for our young scientists.

In our biology unit, students study the balance of nature as they head outdoors to visit local fields and catch and identify insects. Using compound microscopes, students are introduced to rotifers, cyclops, stentors, and other remarkable microscopic pond creatures.

The next curricular focus is on the mechanical aspects of physics through construction projects using motorized LEGO kits. Levers, wheels and axles, pulleys, and gears are explored and investigated. Students problem solve to conquer the steep ramp challenge, the sail car challenge, and more. The culminating “Battlebots” project takes place in the “Ring of Doom.”

Mid-winter, chemistry is introduced: Atoms and molecules, physical and chemical reactions, the Periodic Table, and chromatography engage students.

In the early spring, fifth graders have a two-week unit on puberty. The eight-lesson unit, taught in gender separate sessions, supports students’ curiosity about the physical changes they are experiencing as they mature.

Finally, the year ends with fifth graders revisiting physics with the study of flight. Students study the Wright Brothers, design and build paper airplanes and kites, and collect, graph, and analyze their flight data.

### GRADE 6

Sixth grade science is inspired by student curiosity about the sciences. Within each unit of study, the main goal is for students to generate questions and think critically about answers. Each class period begins with students asking questions about their individual interests, from late-breaking science news to science-related content from the sixth grade math and humanities curricula. An emphasis on inquiry helps to inform students of the latest scientific developments, offers the chance to discuss student-centered topics, and in the process, teaches students to ask better questions.

In the first unit, students learn to think and act like scientists by asking more in-depth questions and concentrating on problem solving as they prepare projects for the annual science fair. Student scientists choose their own question, conduct an experiment, gather and analyze data, and present their findings to students from other grades, parents, and faculty.

The Physics of Roller Coasters unit teaches principles of forces and motion through a series of STEM-based projects and activities involving race cars, wrestlers, helicopters, and lunar landers. Students then apply their learning by designing and testing model roller coasters.

Science in the Laboratory helps students develop lab skills and procedures through a series of chemistry and biology labs. They learn about lab safety while they conduct serious experiments using a variety of chemicals, lab equipment, and dissecting tools. The study of atoms and chemical reactions involves flame tests and hydrogen “bombs.” The course concludes with an in-depth study of comparative anatomy during a weeklong dissection project.

## GRADE 7

Students are exposed to the interconnected nature of Earth's major systems — the geosphere, the hydrosphere, the biosphere, and the atmosphere — as the context for a survey of the Earth sciences. As seventh grade scientists learn about the materials on Earth's surface and the processes that change Earth's features, they also delve into theories and evidence about the earth's age and geologic history. They are exposed to ideas about when and how our oceans and atmosphere developed while learning about modern meteorology, oceanography, and climate science. As they explore Earth's place in the universe, seventh graders grapple with concepts such as the Big Bang, exoplanets, and space exploration.

Classroom instruction for seventh grade science is based mostly on hands-on laboratory activities and projects. Students take notes at home from teacher-made lecture videos to ensure that they receive thorough exposure to content. Class time is reserved for collaborative projects, experiments, and problem-solving activities.

## GRADE 8

Eighth grade science primarily focuses on the subject of life science. Specifically, the course focuses on how cellular structures interact to form our various body systems. Students explore body systems including: The musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, reproductive and digestive systems. Students gain foundational knowledge from readings and interactive lectures as a primer for hands-on activities, projects and experiments in the classroom. Coding and problem-solving skills are infused into the course content through labs and projects; thereby allowing students opportunities to apply their knowledge of the material to real world situations.

# COMPUTER SCIENCE

Computer science (CS) is distinguished from other technology-related curriculum that focus on how to use computer technology because CS is focused on understanding why it works and how to create it. Knowing why and how computers work (i.e., computer science), provides the basis for a deep understanding of computer use and the relevant rights, responsibilities, and applications. Learning computer science involves problem solving, logical reasoning, and design skills that can be meaningfully integrated into every discipline. During middle school, all CS learning is project-based and integrated into other disciplines. New CS skills are learned based on the needs of the projects students create.

## GRADE 5

In fifth grade, students are given several opportunities to create technology projects across disciplines. These projects expand their computational thinking and design skills as students are given creative freedom within the framework of the learning objectives of the classroom project. As their projects gain complexity, fifth graders will also begin making independent decisions about when and where to incorporate variables, Boolean logic, and procedures to create their own solutions.

Sample projects: Teach a chemistry concept (science), build a virtual habitat (science), create a Wright brothers inspired game (science), explore simple machines through coding and physical computing (science), exploring angles through code (mathematics), and creating family albums in Spanish (world languages).

## GRADE 6

In sixth grade, students will begin to recognize that they can use their computer science skills to create tech projects that reflect their learning across other curricular areas. Teachers across disciplines will challenge them to consider the usability of their designs and to begin to iterate their solutions. Sample projects: Choose your own adventure (world languages), model motion with code (science), create a website on the Renaissance (social studies and English).

## GRADE 7

In seventh grade, students begin to understand more fully the impact of computer science and technology on the world around them including the way we educate, govern, work, and communicate. Through science and mathematics, students explore the power of big data and computer modeling. They must also begin to weigh the ethical consequences of using their power to create tech for good or ill. Sample projects: Model climate change (science), simulate Earth's atmosphere and oceans (science), create a website to share rock knowledge (science), create math video games (mathematics).

## GRADE 8

In eighth grade, students learn methods of design that will help them decompose large problems into functional units. They will continue to explore the unifying numerical constructs that underpin all of computer science and the fundamentals of computation, as they determine what next steps they want to take in their computer science education in the Upper School. Sample projects: Design thinking and robotics (science), explore functions (mathematics) and app making (world languages).

# WORLD LANGUAGES

## FRENCH 5

*Prerequisite: None*

All students in French 5 are new to a School-based approach to French language study. The principal goals of the French program in grade five are to nurture an appreciation of world language and culture, to build basic skills necessary for successful language learning, and to introduce students to the elements of French grammar, while expanding their French vocabulary. Through thematic dialogues created by students, readings, and written exercises, students build upon oral skills and are exposed to the formal structures that govern the language. Phonetic exercises encourage proper pronunciation and promote an awareness of the written form. The program is supplemented by cultural lessons, songs, and poems. The final project—creating a memory book about themselves—incorporates innovative technology, collaboration, and creative thinking.

## FRENCH 6

*Prerequisite: None*

French 6 is open to students with some or no experience studying the French language. The curriculum is based on the text *Mise en Scene* written by one of our French teachers and allows students new to the language to enter our program. The sixth grade program serves as the link between the informal and formal study of French at St. Anne's-Belfield. Students expand their vocabulary and emphasize their fluency and accent while acting, reading and pulling grammar from their creative writing. The program is supplemented by cultural lessons, songs, and the reading of *The Adventures of Louis Specteur*. The final project incorporates innovative technology, collaboration, and creative thinking where students turn the Louis Specteur stories into a movie, a comic book and then write their own adventures.

## FRENCH 7

*Recommended: Successful completion of French 6 or some previous exposure to French.*

The seventh grade French program serves as the first year in a two-year introduction to the formal study of French language and culture. The first half of the program is completed in the seventh grade and the remaining half in the eighth grade.

Students in the seventh grade are also introduced to the Francophone world.

The curriculum is based on the text *Bon Voyage*, published by Glencoe-McGraw Hill, but the class does not use the book. Students create all the materials needed, including dialogues and presentations—even pulling the grammar from their creative writing. Themes include: School/school supplies, family, real estate, nutrition, clothing, and vacation. The program is supplemented by cultural lessons, songs, and movie discussions. Projects incorporate innovative technology, collaboration, and creative thinking: Students engage in a hypothetical real estate project where students buy a vacation home in France, they present their own cooking show with food from francophone countries, and they create a magazine for young adults that includes sections on travel and fashion, an interview of a famous person, as well as a personality quiz.

## FRENCH 8

*Prerequisite: Successful completion of French 7 or equivalent level of proficiency as determined by placement exam.*

Open only to those students who have successfully completed French 7 or its equivalent, this course completes the first Upper School level of French. Upon completion of this course, most students enroll in French 2 or Honors French 2 in ninth grade. The program is based on the themes included in the book *Bon Voyage*, published by Glencoe-McGraw Hill, but the class does not use the book. Students create all the materials needed, including dialogues and presentations—even pulling the grammar from their creative writing. Themes include: Airport/train station, sports, cinema/art, and morning routine.

The program is supplemented by cultural lessons, first-person accounts of immigration, poems, the reading of *The Giving Tree* and a unit on TV advertisement. The projects incorporate innovative technology, collaboration, reflection and creative thinking. Projects include the creation of a picture book, presentations about the evolution of technology since the 1900s or the evolution of women since 1900, as well as an art project.

## SPANISH 5

*Prerequisite: None*

In Spanish 5, students begin to establish the foundation for their Middle School language experience. They explore different ways of communicating in the target language through dialogues, stories, and skits. Lessons are designed to provide learners with tools to delve into grammar and sentence structure, to develop both oral and written proficiency. Vocabulary is acquired through Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS), a well-known language approach, that allows students to listen, narrate, and act in Spanish. There is also a focus on developing cultural awareness, as students engage in discussions and presentations of Spanish-speaking countries. Teachers speak predominantly in Spanish throughout the class, exposing students to a rich spoken language. Spanish 5 is the first year of the two-year requirement (Spanish 5 & 6).

## SPANISH 6

*Prerequisite: None*

Spanish 6 lessons are designed to help students acquire and strengthen foundational linguistic skills. Classes are conducted predominantly in Spanish as students focus on the four skills areas: Speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Educators provide structure for their students to create dialogues, skits, and stories. One well-known approach to storytelling that

is frequently implemented in class is Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS). Through a repetitive series of listening, narrating, and acting, students learn vocabulary and grammar in a creative context. There is also a focus on developing cultural awareness, as students engage in discussions and presentations of Spanish-speaking countries.

## SPANISH 7

*Prerequisite: Successful completion of Spanish 5 and 6 or equivalent level of proficiency as determined by placement exam.*

The seventh grade Spanish program exposes students to the first half of a high school Spanish I course. Students strengthen skills in the four areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The course is based on thematic units designed to allow for linguistic exploration through creative lesson plans. Students frequently engage in collaborative activities to enhance conversational skills. They prepare presentations and projects including fashion shows, menus for imaginary restaurants, family portraits, and school supply infomercials. Many of these projects are created using various forms of technology and graphic design. Teachers increasingly speak more Spanish throughout the year to expose students to the nuances of spoken Spanish. During the second trimester, students read a short novel entirely in Spanish to gain reading fluency and to acquire new vocabulary in a different context.

## SPANISH 8

*Prerequisite: Successful completion of Spanish 7 or equivalent level of proficiency as determined by placement exam.*

The eighth grade Spanish program completes the first Upper School level of Spanish. Upon completion of this course, most students enroll in Spanish 2 or Honors Spanish 2 in ninth grade.

Students continue to strengthen skills in the four areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The course is based on thematic units adapted from the ¡Buen Viaje! textbook, which have been redesigned to allow for more linguistic exploration through creative lesson plans. Students frequently engage in collaborative activities to enhance conversational skills as well as discussion and expression of opinion. Projects teach students various forms of technology and graphic design and promote more refined presentational skills. Teachers speak predominantly in Spanish throughout the class, exposing students to a rich variety of spoken language. During the second part of the year, students read a short novel entirely in Spanish to gain reading fluency and to acquire new vocabulary in a different context.

## LANGUAGE 8: SPANISH

*Prerequisite: None*

Open to students for whom French 8 or Spanish 8 is not the right fit, students in Language 8: Spanish participate in a blended learning class facilitated by a St. Anne's-Belfield language instructor during an eighth grade world language period. In addition to direct instruction in both English and Spanish, students study language and culture with the support of the online learning platform, Middlebury Interactive. This interactive tool challenges students to read, write, listen, and speak the language, and most activities provide immediate feedback and multiple opportunities to master a concept. Emphasis is placed on language learning study skills and how to be an effective self-learner. Graduates of the course will have the opportunity to continue with the same language or explore an introductory course in a different language in ninth grade.

# GRADES 5 & 6 ARTS

## GRADE 5 VISUAL ARTS ▲

Fifth grade students explore drawing, painting, and sculpture using a wide variety of materials, ideas, and techniques. They work with realistic, abstract, and non-objective images with an emphasis on developing creativity, imagination, and skills. During art class, references to specific artists, works, styles, and movements are incorporated into this course. In our study of the work of Claude Monet and Wayne Thiebaud, students study theories of light and color applied to painting. They learn to base their paintings on groups of values and tones. Students create trompe o'eil (fool the eye) food sculptures. They also create non-objective abstract sculptures based on the works of Frank Stella, or graffiti-style art, based on Jean Michel Basquiat.

## GRADE 5 MUSIC & MOVEMENT

The fifth grade Music & Movement program is based on the Orff-Schulwerk method of music education, and emphasizes advanced ensemble opportunities. This method is characterized by the inclusion of all students in ensemble work; the unity of music, dance, and speech; the emphasis on process teaching; and the guided improvisation and composition experience. Each week the students receive technique lessons in singing, barred instruments, recorder, or dance. Students are also given opportunities to explore literature, songs, movement, instruments, or even visual art as inspiration for their own music and dance making possibilities.

Music literacy is taught through actively making music with the body, followed by identifying patterns in sound, and finally by labeling that sound with symbols. In fifth grade, students will address modal literature, advanced instrument technique, layered melodies leading to advanced harmony study — through the voice and instruments, and physical movement work appropriate for adolescent bodies. Students at this level perform actively through opportunities in Chapel and various performances throughout the year.

## GRADE 5 STRINGS

Beginning performance and music reading skills are introduced and refined as students study traditional classical, folk, and improvisational repertoire on the violin, viola, cello, or bass. The course is based on the pedagogy of Dr. George Bornoff and provides a logical, sequential, and unique approach to the mastery of instruments in a classroom setting. Dr. Bornoff believed that it was essential to teach artistry as well as technique. First year students are introduced to several bowing styles and finger patterns with many variations to ensure flexibility and understanding.

## GRADE 5 THEATRE ARTS ▲

In fifth grade, students will begin the year with building ensemble in their class communities in order to have a supportive foundation for personal and collective artistic growth. Students will engage in a skill-based introductory curriculum to increase kinesthetic awareness, develop vocal techniques, and enhance imagination, analytical thinking, and improvisational response. Fifth grade ensembles will explore the art of physical theatre, mime, and an introduction to clowning.

## GRADE 6 VISUAL ARTS ▲

In sixth grade, students continue to build on the skills and knowledge acquired in fifth grade and use the elements and principles of design to develop their own sensibilities and meaning in their work. Through drawing, painting, sculpting with clay, computer graphics, and a variety of media, students in sixth grade study the arts with an emphasis on integration with their history unit on the Renaissance, particularly in studying perspective. Students learn to use clay in many of its more expressive forms, using acrylics and glazes and other decoration. Sixth grade students also continue to build on their knowledge of color theory, especially applied to realistic painting.

## GRADE 6 CHORAL PROGRAM ▲

The sixth grade year represents an important transition from advanced ensemble work in a general music program, to specialization in advanced singing in preparation for the seventh and eighth grade chorus. Students will still have exposure

to Orff media – instruments, body work, and speech – in order to fine tune their musicianship skills. The focus, however, will become introducing students to choral concepts such as: vocal warm-ups, breath control, beginning score analysis, two part sight-singing, and diction. In addition, students will receive lessons in vocal technique appropriate for the young voice. Students at this level perform actively through opportunities in chapel and various performances throughout the year.

## **GRADE 6 HAYDN ORCHESTRA**

The Haydn Orchestra is the sixth grade string orchestra open to any student, including students who have not previously played an instrument. Students continue to refine skills and solo repertoire as prescribed in the Bornoff Approach, and ensemble music including traditional classical, folk, and jazz. The pedagogy of Dr. George Bornoff provides a logical, sequential, and unique approach to the mastery of instruments in a classroom setting. Dr. Bornoff believed that it was essential to teach artistry as well as technique.

## **GRADE 6 THEATRE ARTS ▲**

In sixth grade, students will continue to build ensemble with a focus on taking artistic risks and giving constructive feedback. Students will engage with an intermediate curriculum to develop their kinesthetic, vocal, imaginative, improvisational and analytical skills with a focus on character development and playmaking. Sixth grade ensembles will engage with process drama and progress into writing original monologues and scenes. All sixth grade students are invited to audition for the after school production.

## **GRADES 7 & 8 ARTS**

The Arts program in Grades 7 & 8 provides an opportunity for students to focus on one area of the arts more exclusively. Students may choose to excel in the string orchestra or choral performance groups, study theater arts, or concentrate on specific visual arts media. Some course offerings are yearlong, while others are trimester length.

## **GRADES 7 & 8 VISUAL ARTS**

The Visual Arts program for seventh and eighth grade provides students the opportunity to explore a wide variety of visual arts media including 2D, 3D, digital and mixed media. During the first and second trimester, students rotate to each visual arts teacher to explore and develop foundational techniques and skills. Students will be exposed to diverse art genres and the works of historic and contemporary artists. During the third trimester, students are challenged to explore their own ideas, coming up with a project plan and working independently to learn more advanced techniques and processes to bring their idea to life.

Student work will be guided by and evaluated using the eight Studio Habits of Mind, developing craftsmanship, engaging and persisting, envisioning, expressing, observing, stretching/experimenting, reflecting, and understanding art, as well as the arts community.

## **GRADES 7 & 8 CHORAL PROGRAM: SAINTLY VOICES ▲**

The seventh and eighth grade chorus is an advanced singing opportunity for those interested in participating in the Upper School chorus. The focus, however, is on the adolescent changing voices, and how to manage vocal technique during this period of physical change. Students will learn concepts such as: Advanced choral warm-ups, breath control, score analysis, two- and three-part harmony, and diction. Students will explore vocal literature from various genres, including folk, classical, early music, world music, and gospel. Literature will be specially selected to accommodate the needs of the adolescent voice. As leaders in the Learning Village, students at this level will perform actively in Chapel and various performances.

## **GRADES 7 & 8 MOZART ORCHESTRA ▲**

The Mozart Orchestra is the seventh and eighth grade orchestra open to any student who has played a string instrument for at least one school year. Students study beginning through intermediate level repertoire including solo, ensemble, and chamber music in classes that meet four times per week. The Mozart Orchestra performs for four School concerts, a music festival trip in the spring, the biannual concert, and occasional Chapel services or off-campus events.

## GRADES 7 & 8 THEATRE ARTS

Theater arts in seventh and eighth grade is a yearlong course self-selected by students who are interested in further developing their theatre training. Students work closely with the teacher at the beginning of the year to identify individual and ensemble inquiries and goals. Students will continue to hone their skills through physical and vocal training, improvisation and an exploration of select theatre forms such as Shakespeare or Commedia dell'arte. As students grow as actors, they will also explore the aspects of theatre tech and design and further their skills as playwrights in creating and staging original material. In addition, "theatre majors" will support the development of the Middle School productions through leadership roles in the theatre space and production processes. All seventh and eighth grade students are invited to audition for the after school productions.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION & ACTIVITY

### GRADES 5 & 6

Physical education is an important part of a well-rounded education. Students in grades five and six participate in physical education four (fifth grade) and five days (sixth grade) of each six-day rotation for 50 minutes. Daily fitness is a top priority with individual progress and goals for each student. In addition to an emphasis on overall fitness, interacting with peers, and working within a group, our program is based on sports-related units. These units include soccer, football, volleyball, lacrosse, field hockey, tennis, and basketball. In sixth grade, student choice is intentionally included as a stepping stone into our grade 7 athletic program. Each unit is approximately two weeks in length with the students staying with one teacher and rotating through all the units throughout the year.

### GRADES 7 & 8

Physical activity is an important part of a well-rounded education. Students in grades seven and eight participate in their choice of a physical activity Monday - Thursday.

## GRADE 7 & 8 HEALTH

In Health 7, student learning will focus on identity and how to take care of oneself. Specifically, students will learn about the impact of body image on their health, the importance of healthy nutrition, as well as substance use and abuse, particularly around alcohol, marijuana, and vaping. In addition, they will discuss topics around identity development, including sexual orientation and gender identity. Furthermore, students will explore ideas around consent and healthy decision making in relationships.

In Health 8, students will learn about healthy decision making. The first unit focuses on sexual decision making and will include male and female anatomy, sexual behaviors, sexually-transmitted infections and diseases, contraception, and safe sex. In addition, the course will cover healthy relationships, consent, substance use and abuse, as well as stress management and mental health. Students will explore the research of Dr. Daniel Siegal, author of the book *Brainstorm*, in an effort to help them understand the teenage brain and the impact it has on their decision making.

## GRADES 5 & 6 FAB LAB ▲

Fifth and sixth grade FAB Lab is an extension of our Grades K - 4 FAB Lab program to engage in student-initiated inquiry during a dedicated time period once every six days. Started in 2017 for Grades 5 & 6 students, FAB Lab is our own version of Google's 20 percent Time, adapted to be developmentally appropriate for children brimming with natural curiosity and plenty of questions.

During FAB Lab meetings, teachers supplement curricular academics with the habits and skills of student-initiated learning. Children develop perseverance as they generate questions, solve problems, collaborate with peers, and delve into their natural curiosities and intellectual pursuits.

Regardless of the topics chosen, all students practice and master a variety of learning skills while working on their FAB Lab projects. Planning, writing, researching, reflecting and revising, and presenting findings are all inherent in the project cycles,

as are opportunities for collaboration, and giving, receiving, and utilizing peer feedback. Students are encouraged to consider how their acquired knowledge and skills can impact their communities.

An integral part of FAB Lab research is for students to share their findings and projects with others. This occurs both with on-campus audiences through presentations and performances, and also with the broader world via blogs, movies, and more. Considering the world around them and how they can investigate and solve problems within it is an overarching theme of students' FAB Lab investigations.

## **GRADES 7 & 8 QUESTS ▲**

The St. Anne's-Belfield Quests program is a component of the Middle School curriculum in which course options are shaped around questions, with classroom teachers facilitating group explorations rather than leading a set syllabus.

Quests are student-driven in both choice and content. Students can choose a Quest that is project-based, problem-based, product-driven, skill-specific, service-oriented, or one that evolves with them. With new course options each trimester, students have the opportunity to explore multiple topics outside of the traditional curriculum, or follow one project through three courses with each building upon the last.

### **Sample Quests include:**

- The Battle of the SumoBots
- Can Sharing Change the World? (photography and self-reflection)
- Can We Go Viral? (digital film and social media)
- The Way Things Go School Edition (student-imagined devices and inventions)
- Learn the Guitar—But How?
- What's For Lunch? (cooking classes with Chef Trey Holt)
- What Does Life Cost? Game Edition
- What Knits Us Together? (knitting and the art of conversation)
- Whodunnit? (improvisational theatre work)
- How Do I Draw What I See?

# St. Anne's-Belfield School

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