

2023-2024 Course Descriptions – Grade 8

Berkshire Middle School  
Eighth Grade Course Catalog  
2023-2024



21707 West Fourteen Mile Road  
Beverly Hills, MI 48025

# 2023-2024 Course Descriptions – Grade 8

## **REQUIRED COURSES**

### **American History (all year, every day)**

American History will incorporate the study of geography, civics, current events and economics using figures, events in history. This class will prepare students to become responsible, active citizens in today's world. Course studies include: Core Democratic Values, 19th Century American History, creation and implementation of the Constitution, Growth of the New Nation, The Jacksonian Era, Western Expansion, Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Industrial Era.

### **Language Arts (all year, every day)**

Eighth-grade English Language Arts exposes students to a variety of reading and writing strategies that encourage the development of skills necessary to master not only the Common Core Standards but also future academic courses and beyond. Our genre-based units – science fiction, historical fiction, and realistic fiction – expose students to a variety of texts. Through the development of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, students will become critical readers, analytical writers, and effective collaborators while maintaining attention to detail and a global perspective.

### **Earth Systems Science (all year, every day)**

Students will apply their knowledge from previous years as they study changes in the Earth, energy transformations involved with chemical reactions in living systems, genetics and the impact of environmental conditions on organisms, and force, energy and motion. Students plan investigations, collect and analyze data, and use models to construct explanations in order to help explain the world around them.

### **Mathematics (all year, every day)**

This program is a broad, concept-driven curriculum that reflects the full breadth of relevant mathematics in our society with connections to real life and its interrelationships with technology. The program is built on four overall goals for the students: learning to value mathematics, increasing confidence in their ability, developing as a mathematical problem solver, learning to communicate and reason mathematically.

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade math curriculum concentrates on a variety of algebraic functions recognizing and using multiple representations (tables, graphs, equations), with an emphasis on linear relations; applying algebraic properties to expressions and equations; and continuing the development of geometric concepts.

## **ELECTIVE COURSES**

### **Physical Education (semester)**

In this course, students will further develop skills and game strategies in traditional sports such as football, basketball, volleyball, swimming, soccer, and softball with great emphasis on competitive play. Practicing these skills will provide students the opportunity to fully participate in physical activities outside of the school setting.

### **Physical Education- All Girls (semester)**

In this course only for females, students will acquire the knowledge essential to enhancing and further developing healthy levels of physical fitness through both non-competitive lifelong activities and traditional sports. Throughout the semester, students will work to develop and increase self-esteem through participation in numerous, diverse, fitness exercises such as pilates, aerobics, yoga, power walking, jogging, and strength training. Covered sports will include soccer, basketball, volleyball, softball, and swimming. Students will also have the opportunity to attend health and fitness related field trips.

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## **Strategies (semester)**

Students will investigate a variety of strategies, which will help them develop habits to be successful, life-long learners. Students will explore a variety of physical, mental, and emotional strategies to ensure a well-rounded approach to academics, friendships, and life! Through movement and play, close-reading, goal-setting, group discussions, vocabulary-building, and test-taking strategies, students will learn how to problem solve and achieve intended, successful results.

## **Creative Communications (semester)**

Students will focus on building tangible, necessary, and beneficial skills of speaking and presentation in authentic situations. During the first marking period, students will explore and have the opportunity to participate in Forensics – a debate and public speaking and presenting competitive forum. Students will be able to choose from a variety of categories of presentation: Interpretation, Storytelling, Informative, Sales, Debate, Impromptu, Broadcast, etc.; there are opportunities for each student to participate in a local and regional middle-school competition. The second marking period will focus on honing skills centered around debate while also continuing to encourage the interpretation of stories and informative speeches to present to a wider audience.

## **Skills For Living (semester)**

This is a semester course where students will learn various 21st century skills. It is a cooperative learning style class with opportunities for hands-on activities. Students will learn how to work well in a group as well as on their own. Students will complete many invaluable lessons on topics such as: Kitchen Safety, Food Labs and Cooking Basics, Nutrition, Chores, Growth Mindset, Handling Anxiety, Positivity, Stress Management, Establishing Healthy Friendships, Digital Citizenship, Email Etiquette, Teamwork, How Supermarkets Operate and Consumerism, etc. These are skills that will help students prepare for a successful future and create positive habits.

## **Skills for Success (semester)**

Students in 7th and 8th grade Skills for Success will learn various 21st century skills. It is a cooperative learning style class with opportunities for hands-on activities. Students will gain independence, self-awareness and life skills. Students will complete many invaluable lessons on topics such as: Kitchen Safety, Food Labs and Cooking Basics, Growth Mindset, Digital Citizenship, Email Etiquette, Teamwork, Finance & Spending, SMART Goals, Career Exploration, etc. These are skills that will help students prepare for a successful future and create positive habits.

## **Adventures in Art (semester)**

This course offers students a comprehensive art experience with detailed explorations in the classics, such as: painting, drawing, printmaking, ceramics, sculpture, graphic design, and crafts. In addition to gaining confidence and proficiency working with a variety of mediums, students will learn about the history, analysis, and interpretation of art. Lessons focus on material use, design theory, historical and cultural influences, and an introduction to the process of the aesthetic merit of selected works of art. Sample projects may include, but are not limited to: self portraits, color theory, refining drawing skills, printmaking, plaster, and the formation of sculptural objects.

## **Art by Design (semester)**

This course will focus on how to create good design using the Elements and Principles of Art. Artists do this when they design and improve upon products we use every day. Posters, brochures, flyers, and magazine and newspaper advertisements are all created by graphic artists. Students will create projects revolving around design for both new and existing products using traditional art media. This class may be repeated as projects are changed to meet student needs.

## **Explorations in Art (semester)**

This course continues to form the foundation for further attitudes and the development of artistic skills and techniques. The units of study include a focus on design elements, art production, aesthetics, art history, and art criticism. The focus will include contemporary artists, both living and working today, as well as a primary focus on three-dimensional artworks. Lessons are designed to help students develop perceptual awareness and critical thinking skills. Using a variety of materials such as found objects, recycled materials, paper, glass, clay, metals, plastics, fabric, and plaster, we will primarily create expressive works of 3D art.

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## Theatre Arts (semester)

Theater Arts, a one-semester elective for 7th and 8th graders, is an activity-based course. The objectives are for students to gain knowledge and experience in performing and to improve communication skills. The emphasis is on participation, individually and in groups. Students will create and perform improvisations and scripted scenes applying the skills and knowledge gained in the course. The students will participate in pantomimes; the use of voice, improvisations, extemporaneous activities, and planned performances.

## Engage (semester)

Engage Studio is a Portfolio Project-based class designed for students to access and explore both design and engineering processes through a variety of technology-based tools to produce portfolio based projects that are chosen based on their curiosity and interests. Students will explore topics of study at their own pace while working on soft skills that will challenge and use their skills of organization, self-monitoring, reflection as well as time management. With guidance and project management from the teacher, students will set goals, report progress and reflect on their performance and work habits while learning about their topic of interest. Outcomes for Engage projects are to create pathways, examples, resources, or other shareable artifacts for themselves & others who might follow after. Students will develop their cognitive processes of analysis, comparison, inference, evaluation, and synthesis applied to a range of academic domains and problem solving contexts.

## Exploring Engineering (semester)

The Exploring Engineering Technology class is for students interested in designing and building individual projects using the design process as a guide. After learning “shop” safety and how to properly use the design process to come up with a working, to scale design of their project, students will have the opportunity to build their project in the lab. Two projects commonly produced are a CO<sub>2</sub> race car and a wooden candy machine. Students will have the opportunity to use a variety of materials, hand tools, and power tools, to complete their projects.

## Applied Engineering (semester)

The applied engineering technology program is a twenty-week experience where several different areas of technology will be explored. The course is designed where there will be more emphasis placed on group projects and designs emphasizing real world working environments. This class will explore major areas such as design, simple and complex machines, and research development. A strong emphasis will be placed on problem solving activities in which both individual and group efforts are developed. Projects may include cardboard chair, catapults, mouse trap car, and electricity and electrical wiring.

## Computer Aided Drafting and Design (CADD) (semester)

The CADD class is designed to help prepare the engineers of tomorrow. This class is designed for those students considering a field of engineering in their future. Throughout this class students will learn the fundamentals of drafting and different CAD software programs such as AutoCAD and TinkeCAD. Students will have the opportunity to see their drawing come to life using a 3-D printer and laser cutter. This is a great class for students looking to take high school engineering courses as it will give them a great start. Much of what they will need to know in their first course of high school will be taught in this class.

## Yearbook A and Yearbook B (semester OR all year, every day)

Students will learn the basics of journalism, layout and design, copy writing, digital photography, photo editing, and interviewing. Students will also have opportunities to practice broadcast journalism and some videography/editing. While working in teams to develop the yearbook, students will develop leadership skills. Students will design, create, and produce the Berkshire Yearbook for the school community. No prior knowledge or skills are required to take this class. It is highly suggested to take the class all year, to see the book all the way through, but one semester is an option for those who need it. **To be considered for the yearbook staff, students must request two teacher/staff recommendations. Students should get the necessary form from Mrs. Gacki (Room 203) and politely ask two of their teachers or Berkshire staff members to complete the form on their behalf (the form will be returned to Mrs. Gacki by the staff member).**

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## **World Language – Spanish-2A & 2B, French-1A & 1B, Chinese 1A & 1B (full year or first semester)**

Students will continue their studies of French/Spanish/Chinese language and culture from the seventh grade. Successful completion of this class may allow students to go on to French/Spanish/Chinese Level II in high school. Studying a world language in grades 6 through 8 is important for students who plan to benefit from taking an AP language course in high school.

## **Music Options**

### **Choir 8A and Choir 8B (semester OR all year, every day)**

This intermediate choir is open to all students; no previous middle or elementary school choir experience is required to be successful in the choir. This choir prepares students for the high school choral program. A wide variety of music from pop/rock and folk to classical and musical theater will be studied. Participation in Choral Festival is required at this level. Participation in Solo & Ensemble Festival and the MSVMA Honors Choir is encouraged at this level. **Attendance is required at all choir performances.** In order to participate in the end-of-the-year trip to Chicago, students must be enrolled in choir during the second semester.

### **Advanced Band (all year, every day)**

Advanced Band is an exciting and rewarding experience for students. Students will focus on preparing themselves for high school band and will focus on rhythm, instrument technique, improving tone, and performing challenging new music. Advanced Band has 4 performance opportunities throughout the year and **attendance at performances is mandatory**. Daily practice is expected for students who are enrolled in Advanced Band.

### **Orchestra (all year, every day)**

Students will enjoy their musical experience in 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Orchestra! Enhance your instrumental skills and further your overall musicianship with periodic lessons in music theory and history. Students will focus on advancing their technique, including rhythm, bowing, shifting, and vibrato skills. Students will participate in approximately four performances throughout the year, including performances at MSBOA Orchestra and Solo & Ensemble Festivals. **Class requirements will include: averaging twenty five (25) minutes of practice daily during the week, bi-monthly playing tests, and attendance at all performances.**

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## **COURSES RECOMMENDED BY TEACHERS**

### **Literacy (semester, every day or all year, every other day)**

Literacy provides an opportunity for students to learn and practice reading strategies through teacher modeling, cooperative learning, and independent practice. In this strategy-based course, students will benefit from this additional practice by using reading strategies for comprehension, decoding, and fluency when reading fiction and non-fiction text. **Reading Specialist recommendation is required.**

### **Math Lab (all year, every day or all year, every other day)**

Math Lab is taken in conjunction with College Prep Math (two math classes per day). This class is designed to support and preteach concepts and skills that are being taught in the college prep class. **Teacher recommendation is required.**

### **Language Arts for Emerging Bilinguals A (all year, everyday)**

Language Arts for Emerging Bilinguals A is a class for newcomers to the U.S. Students learn English in the four domains: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students learn interpersonal communication skills and begin developing the academic language needed to be successful in their content area classes. This class is based on English level rather than grade level, and students may be in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, or 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

### **Language Arts for Emerging Bilinguals B (all year, everyday)**

Language Arts for Emerging Bilinguals B is a language arts class that is aligned with the BPS language arts curriculum, with modifications to meet the needs of English language learners. Students work on the same reading and writing strategies, genres, literary analysis, and themes and skills as their native English-speaking classmates. The goal of this class is to help students develop increased fluency in their reading and to read increasingly difficult texts in English for multiple purposes. This class focuses on the application of multiple reading strategies in a variety of genres, the continued learning of high-frequency vocabulary, note-taking in academic settings and further development of listening and speaking skills. Students develop increased skill in the use of more complex grammatical conventions, such as identification of all parts of speech, singular and plural nouns, verb usage in past, present and future, subject-verb agreement, and compound and complex sentences. Writing skills are developed from the paragraph to the essay level using various organizational patterns. Students increase their proficiency in the use of multimedia as tools for language development. This class is based on English level rather than grade level, and students may be in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, or 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

### **Language Arts for Emerging Bilinguals C (all year, everyday)**

Language Arts for Emerging Bilinguals C is aligned with the BPS language arts curriculum, with modifications to meet the needs of English language learners. Students work on the same reading and writing strategies, genres, literary analysis, and themes and skills as their native English-speaking classmates. The goal of this class is to help students develop increased fluency in their reading and to read increasingly difficult texts in English for multiple purposes. This class focuses on the application of multiple reading strategies in a variety of genres, particularly with a focus on their ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information and increase their independent reading. Furthermore, students continue to develop their mastery of academic vocabulary, note-taking in academic settings and more extensive listening and speaking skills. Students develop increased skill in the use of complex grammatical conventions, such as more sophisticated verb usage, comparatives and superlatives, prepositions, dependent and independent clauses, and compound and complex sentences. Writing skills are developed at the five-paragraph essay level using various organizational patterns. Students increase their proficiency in the use of multimedia as tools for language development. This class is based on English level rather than grade level, and students may be in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, or 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

### **Language Arts for Emerging Bilinguals (LAEB) Tutorial (all year, everyday)**

Language Arts for Emerging Bilinguals (LAEB) Tutorial is an elective offered to English language learners in ESL A, B, or C. In this class, students receive help with their content area classes such as science, social studies, math, and language arts. The staff works in conjunction with the mainstream teachers to provide additional support. Tutorial may also be used for more instruction in the English language or in American culture.