



Middle School/8TH Grade

PROGRAM INFORMATION

About The Howard School

Founded in 1950, The Howard School educates students ages five through 12th grade with language-based learning disabilities and differences. Individualized instruction complements and addresses each student's needs, and helps each student understand and advocate for his or her own learning process. The curriculum focuses on depth of understanding to make learning meaningful, leading to educational success.

WELCOME TO THE MIDDLE SCHOOL/8TH GRADE

Middle School is a time of growth, change, discovery and opportunity. This is a special time in your child's life as he or she moves towards greater independence, maturity, and responsibility. It is exciting to watch as Middle School students begin to discover more about who they are in the world. At The Howard School, we value each child and their unique learning and personality profile. We focus on community and relationship building, using these strong bonds to help students better understand their own personal development.

Instruction is balanced to meet the different learning styles and profiles of our students, recognizing individual strengths and weaknesses. The arts, music, physical education, Habits of Mind, community service, and team building opportunities are seamlessly woven into the

fabric of the core academic subjects. Additionally, we offer typical tween and teen Middle School experiences including field trip outings, overnight study trips, and dances. We agree with the research which states hours of nightly homework have little benefit. Typically, we assign a minimal amount of work to include independent reading and math practice, while encouraging students to participate in extracurricular activities.

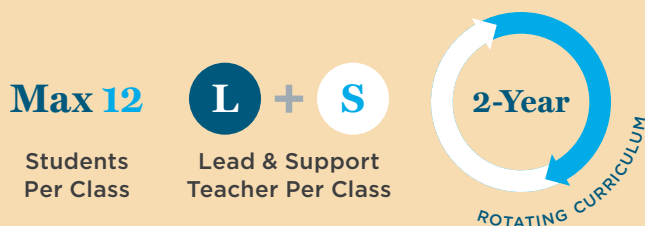
At Howard, Middle School students actively participate in their own learning. Student led conferences in the fall and spring give students and teachers a chance to share with parents an ongoing portfolio of work celebrating the student's hard work and individual progress. We know our students are capable of great things in many arenas, and we help them show what they know.

Hopes and Dreams for Middle School/8th Grade Students:

- Students will know who they are as learners and their own underlying learning processes.
- Students will reflect on and assess the quality of their own learning, and will advocate for what they need to learn best.
- Students will capitalize on their strengths, and will identify and use tools and strategies in such a way that barriers to learning are diminished.
- Students will demonstrate that they are learning the curriculum content and basic skills that support the big ideas and essential questions in the curriculum.
- Students will express themselves in a variety of ways, including through the arts and movement.
- Students will know how to use their knowledge and skills to solve new problems and to think critically about their world.
- Students will extend the reach of their learning with technology, using it independently to research, author, and communicate.
- Students will understand and act upon their responsibility to the communities in which they live.

CLASS STRUCTURE

Middle School and 8th Grade classes consist of a maximum of 12 students with a Lead and a Support Teacher. Additionally, the classes are supported by Speech-Language Pathologists, Literacy Specialists, a Math Lab Teacher, and Assistive Technology instructors.



In Middle School, advisory (homeroom) groups are a combination of first and second year (6th and 7th grade) students. During the school day however, students attend classes in academic groups based on learning needs. The Middle School follows a 2-year rotating curriculum in order to avoid repetition of curricular content.

In 8th Grade is the first time students are placed in a single grade destination class. In addition to the learning profile, students begin to receive grades and a transcript. This model continues through High School. Students switch between their academic lead teachers for their core subjects.

STUDENT SUPPORT

Language Support

Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) work closely with teachers to develop approaches to curriculum that allow students with language-based learning disabilities to be successful. They promote skill development and use of strategies that further students' listening, understanding, speaking, and writing. Most of the SLP's work takes place in the context of the classrooms and in small groups with students.

Literacy Support

The Literacy program offers students more intensive work in the areas of decoding (reading) and encoding (spelling) as needed. Literacy Specialists use a variety of programs and techniques to strengthen phonemic awareness and phonics, develop symbol imagery, and increase automaticity and fluency.

Assistive Technology Support

Assistive Technology, such as text-to-speech software, is used to support students' reading and writing skills. Students are evaluated, trained, and taught to implement these tools in the classroom. The technology gives the students access to materials at or above their grade level, which is often higher than their decoding level. Technology assistance for written expression gives students more freedom to express themselves, along with support for identifying and correcting errors in their writing.

Math Support

The Math Specialist consults with teachers to plan their math classes, offering content differentiation and pacing recommendations. Additionally, the Math Specialist teaches small groups.

School Psychologist/Counselor

The School Psychologist/Counselor consults with students, faculty/staff, administration, and parents to track and support students' educational and social-emotional needs. They review psychoeducational evaluations and learning profiles and maintain a broad perspective on interventions, accommodations, and modifications for students. The School Psychologist/Counselor follows students throughout their Howard School tenure to ensure continuity between school divisions, while suggesting strategies as students change over time. They do not provide individual or family therapy, but can make referrals to the community for such services.

CURRICULUM

Language Arts

Our Language Arts Program in both Middle School and 8th Grade focuses on developing students' reading comprehension and written expression skills, often with the support of the Speech-Language Pathologists as well as with the use of Assistive Technology. Students work to read more challenging texts, learning to analyze more deeply, make inferences, and identify themes. The evaluation of the impact of language on tone and meaning allows students to have a more sophisticated view of the texts they read, including both expository and novel studies. Instruction in writing conventions, including grammar and mechanics, is differentiated to meet individual needs. These skills will be incorporated into the students' own narrative and expository writing.

Humanities/Science

The Howard School refers to the Georgia State standards when determining the focus of study. Students learn note taking skills, hone reading comprehension, and also explore expository texts related to the subject area. In the Middle School, students cultivate their skills in small groups, where novels are selected and connected to the topics of study in humanities.

Math

The objective of the math curriculum at The Howard School is to help students progress as math thinkers, regardless of math facts or algorithm automaticity.

The Howard School uses **Math in Focus: Singapore Math** as the backbone for our Middle School (6th and 7th Grades) math curriculum. Building math thinkers rather than math doers, students move from the concrete to the pictorial to the abstract. Following a concept-based approach enables teachers to meet students at their level of success and differentiate as needed.

The Howard School 8th Grade mathematics program follows the same instructional practices as in the Middle School. Students are presented with higher-level concepts necessary for success with Algebra and Geometry. Depending on their academic needs, students study Pre-Algebra or Algebra 1 in preparation for High School. Students completing Algebra 1 may receive a High School credit for the course.

The Arts

In addition to the core academic subjects, students participate in art and music classes, as well as STEAM projects throughout the day, providing additional opportunities to focus on taking responsible risks and exploring different media while enriching their classroom experiences. The Howard School is affiliated with the **High Museum** and **MODA**, which enhances art and STEAM education.

The culminating musical project in the Middle School and 8th Grade is a *Battle of the Bands*, where each music class performs a popular song and competes against the other classes. Faculty and parent bands also participate in this exciting showcase of talent.

PE/Health Education

PE/Health Education classes are offered every day of the week. The focus is lifetime fitness, team sports, strategy, flexibility, and personal bests. Health classes offer students a chance to explore healthy relationships and learn tips and techniques for wellness including social, emotional, and mental health. Developmentally appropriate information is also presented about sexuality, tobacco, alcohol, and illegal drug use.

Athletics

Our athletic department offers a variety of “all-in” sports throughout the course of the school year. Fall sports include cross country, volleyball, and soccer. Winter sports include basketball, spirit/dance team, and swimming, and our spring season rounds out the year with golf, track, and girls soccer. Our students enjoy ample opportunities to learn their chosen sport, practice, and compete against likeminded schools.

Student-Led Conferences

Student-Led Conferences are held twice a year for Middle School and 8th Grade students and their families. Through the development and presentation of a digital portfolio, these conferences give students the opportunity to deepen and understand their own personal learning profile, as well as identify strategies that complement their personal learning approach.

Full School Experience

We strive to provide our **Middle School** and **8th Grade students** with a full school experience that is rich with hands-on learning opportunities, special events, such as our Halloween and Spring Dances, Breakfast of Reflection, evening Poetry Slam, several day-long field trips, and both fall and spring overnight learning opportunities. These thoughtfully curated experiences promote student reflection, growth, and independence.

ALL ARE WELCOME AT HOWARD!

We celebrate what makes us different and what makes us the same. All people deserve respect and kindness. The Howard School has the privilege of being the only LD school in the southeast with the designation of a **No Place for Hate**® school from the Anti-Defamation League. We go through a process every year to earn and maintain this certification and distinction. Additionally, students participate in division-level and cross-division activities. These community activities are designed to foster a school culture of respect and create a safe, bully- and bias-free learning environment.



The Howard School believes that we together hold the power to stand up for what is right for everyone. We believe that Black Lives Matter. As an educational institution, we embrace the opportunity to be anti-racist.

As a No Place for Hate School, we pledge to combat bias in all forms. This call to action means we work with our community to move beyond an awareness of racism, beyond being non-racist, and

actively become anti-racist. We have compiled a list of resources for our staff to utilize as part of our instruction and for our families to discuss at home. Our Diversity Committee supports our teachers with curricular resources, activities, and information.

Students sign a pledge:

- I will seek to gain understanding of those who are different from myself.
- I will speak out against prejudice and discrimination.
- I will reach out to support those who are targets of hate.
- I will promote respect for people and help foster a prejudice-free school.
- I believe that one person can make a difference-no person can be an "innocent" bystander when it comes to opposing hate.
- I recognize that respecting individual dignity and promoting intergroup harmony are the responsibilities of all students.



1192 Foster Street NW
Atlanta, Georgia 30318
404-377-7436

howardschool.org