



# MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM GUIDE 2024 - 2025



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# ENGLISH

Pacific Ridge School's Department of English teaches students to interpret and analyze texts while honing their creativity and clarity in writing. Student-centered Harkness instruction and a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the heart of our pedagogy. The curriculum reflects our conviction that engagement with both the traditional canon and with diverse voices — particularly those that customarily go unheard and those that have historically been oppressed — is crucial for cultural empathy and personal development. Students develop a deeper understanding of themselves and the communities they inhabit, and they continually work toward an anti-racist worldview. Our writing program encourages students to explore their own voices by writing in a variety of genres, including literary and rhetorical analysis, plays, short stories, poetry, and personal narrative. In the classroom, students engage in cooperative, student-led dialogue that stimulates critical thinking and learning.





## ENGLISH 6

The English 6 course centers around the grade level theme of wayfinding. As the first grade in their PRS experience, students begin to explore and establish their role in the PRS school community and their broader community outside of school. Sixth graders read and write in a variety of genres to develop their critical thinking skills and begin to discern how best to share their ideas. Major writing assignments through the year include writing a Hero's Journey myth, literary analysis on selected passages from the reading, a poetry portfolio, and an informative essay on a problem and solution. Key texts include various myths from cultures around the world, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, *Young Readers Edition*, a selection of poetry, and their choice of a book club novel that connects to the theme of facing fears. Students are introduced to Harkness and expected to participate in discussions.

## ENGLISH 7

The English 7 course explores the relationship between individuals and their community through reading, speaking, and written expression. Seventh graders write for a variety of purposes and audiences in order to develop their written voices. Major writing assignments include descriptive vignettes, short stories, literary analysis and scripts for a podcast. By learning to use different literary lenses for reading, students learn to reflect on themes through Harkness discussions, analyze narrative structure, support their inferences with textual evidence, and appreciate stylistic features of the texts. Students also study vocabulary in context and elements of grammar and usage, focusing on how to apply these to improve diction, sentence structure and punctuation. Key texts include a selection of short stories, *The House on Mango Street*, *Animal Farm*, and *The Graveyard Book*. Each trimester, students additionally read and respond to books of their choice, which they present to their classmates. Frequent Harkness discussions over the reading assignments develop communication and critical thinking skills as students learn to listen attentively to others while speaking with more clarity and confidence about their ideas and thoughts.



## ENGLISH 8

The English 8 course examines the concept of how to balance the needs of the individual with the needs of the community through classical and contemporary literature as well as through non-fiction texts. The Writers' Workshop in English 8 reviews the fundamental skills learned in sixth and seventh grade and encourages students to independently explore writing for authentic purposes and authentic audiences. Through the Writers' Workshop, students continue to write narrative, informative, and argumentative compositions and develop their drafts through conferences with peers and teachers. By the end of the Writers' Workshop, eighth graders have developed their own Writer's Portfolio that incorporates an exploration into a variety of writing genres. Through the reading of non-fiction texts, eighth graders develop media literacy skills and explore the theme of how information is created and accessed as well as its effects on audiences. Other key texts include *Fahrenheit 451*, *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*, and a selection of poetry. Harkness discussions are incorporated throughout the course, and this enables students to arrive at more compelling insights, sharing their reactions, thoughts, and reflections while building on those shared by their peers.

# HISTORY & SOCIAL SCIENCES

The goal of the Pacific Ridge History and Social Sciences curriculum is to cultivate engaged citizens capable of informed and responsible problem solving in their communities and the world. To achieve this end, Pacific Ridge history and social sciences students practice and refine the skills of inquiry, research, historiography, recognition of perspectives, critical reading, dialogue, connecting past and present events, short and long-form analytical writing, and verbal and written advocacy. Harkness, a form of student-led discussion, is an especially important pedagogical tool used within our department to encourage critical thinking and collaborative problem solving. Harkness often works in conjunction with persuasive writing as the discussion stimulates deep thinking and encourages students to develop their arguments.



## **INNOVATIONS PAST AND PRESENT**

The Grade 6 History course examines the concept of wayfinding - finding one's way as an individual, in communities, and as a global citizen - by looking at the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and India. Students specifically look at their own wayfinding in terms of how they made sense of their worlds and solved problems through innovation and community. Students also look at our school and local communities to explore problem solving and innovation in building community. They explore the concept of wayfinding through a multi-subject integrated focus on trimester themes and guiding questions. Grade-level overarching questions are as follows. What is wayfinding and how does it serve a community? Where am I on my wayfinding journey? How can I recognize and honor the diverse journeys of others? What are our responsibilities to the community as we find our way within it? The course is organized thematically, with each trimester organized around central themes. These overarching themes are: navigation; resources; and transportation and infrastructure. A major focus of the year is developing and preparing students for the next level of learning by building the necessary skills for student success in areas such as collaboration, organization, study skills, and analytical thinking - along with listening and communication through Harkness discussion, presentation skills, and written work.

## **SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY STUDIES**

In a complex modern world that includes many people, cultures, expectations, laws, and ever-changing borders, modern humans must strive to be productive local and global citizens. By having students explore who they are and learn about people outside of their communities, the course aims to develop global citizens who are informed, empathetic, engaged, and civically-minded. To facilitate this examination of human connectedness, students explore current and past events inside three thematic units. In the first trimester, students explore individual, community, and national identity. They seek to understand how identity defines people, how we humans view and interact with each other, and how identities have power and influence. We then move into a unit on geography, including human geography. The second trimester covers the concepts of power and government. Students examine what constitutes power in our society and the larger world, the different forms of government in the world today, and what happens when governments do not serve their citizens. In the third trimester, students examine borders and boundaries. They explore the differences between natural and man-made borders and boundaries, and the effects those have on the people living near them through case studies based on current situations. In their year-long pursuit of learning and growth, students develop important habits and skills, including self-reflection, organization, and analytical thinking, as well as self-expression skills developed through debate, writing, and Harkness discussions.



## **AMERICAN STUDIES**

American Studies is an introduction to American history and government from 1492 to the present. Organized by trimester, the first part of the year focuses on physical and human geography, the formation of the United States' government, the responsibilities of citizenship, and the meaning of America's founding ideals. The second trimester shifts to migration, beginning with a focus on sectionalism, the Civil War, and the impacts of this conflict on people - spotlighting specifically the Great Migration, a mass movement of people from the rural South to cities in the North and Midwest during the early 20th century.

Relatedly, the students learn about the waves of immigration in the 1900s and the ways in which immigrants and their communities reshaped the nation. They also examine historical injustices, such as enslavement and discrimination, and investigate the ways in which the concept of equality is constantly evolving and social change has been sparked over time. In the third trimester, students study conflict and social change, with a focus on WWII, its impact on the American homefront, and how that sparked the major changes that ensued. Throughout the course of the year, students develop and improve their skills as writers, Harkness participants, group collaborators, presenters, critical thinkers, researchers, listeners, and debaters.

# MATHEMATICS

The Pacific Ridge School Mathematics Department's approach to teaching and learning is largely influenced by our small class size and the manner in which we utilize Harkness discussions to kindle the spirit of inquiry. Students learn how to persevere when tackling challenging problems, construct viable mathematical arguments, and ultimately communicate clearly about their mathematical knowledge. Classes are student-centered, allowing for students to engage, discover, and practice mastery of mathematical concepts with their peers. The teacher acts as a guide and facilitator through this process. Students regularly present their work to the class and discuss various methods of solving problems. They become active participants in their own learning and understanding of mathematical content, both as engaged listeners and vocal contributors to class discussions.



## **MATH FOUNDATIONS**

The Math Foundations course provides an introduction to Pacific Ridge School's Mathematics Program, and requires students to work together with classmates to grapple with challenging problems. Students explore, discuss, and develop their mathematical understanding in the areas of: rates and ratios; rational numbers, including operations with fractions and negative numbers; expressions and equations; statistics and data representations; and geometric properties including surface area of 3-dimensional figures. In addition to learning the required content, students begin to develop the study skills necessary to succeed in the PRS Math Program, which include organization, note-taking, self-assessment, and self-advocacy.

## **INTRODUCTION TO ALGEBRA**

Introduction to Algebra is a course designed to prepare students for more algebraic, problem-based mathematics in terms of both content and mindset. This course incorporates three main curricular areas: problem solving, skills for algebra readiness, and understanding the relationships present in linear and non-linear models of data. Problem solving is emphasized throughout the course to allow the students to evolve as critical thinkers and communicators. To sharpen problem-solving skills, students work in groups on problem sets throughout the year. They demonstrate their understanding and strategies used to solve these problems with in-class presentations and discussions. As students develop their problem-solving techniques, they also build their algebraic foundation in the following areas: simplifying/evaluating algebraic expressions using both the order of operations and the distributive property, solving multistep equations and inequalities, and representing linear functions with a graph, a table, and an equation. Throughout the course, collaborative work is encouraged, as students work on honing their abilities to communicate problem-solving strategies.

After successful completion of this course, students will be prepared and recommended for either Algebra/Geometry 1 or Honors Algebra/Geometry 1.



**ALGEBRA / GEOMETRY 1**

The first year of a three-year math sequence, this course helps students form a solid algebraic foundation while introducing several geometry concepts. Students collaboratively discover key concepts, then practice mastery of skills both in class and independently at home, with emphasis on both analytical and mechanical skills. The curriculum provides a study of number sense, while introducing linear functions and models. The study of linear functions is addressed from a multi-faceted point of view; namely, algebraically, graphically, numerically, and contextually. Emphasis is placed on making connections between these facets. The course also explores systems of equations and inequalities. Coordinate geometry is integrated within topics, covering: midpoint and distance formula, Pythagorean Theorem, area, and rigid and nonrigid transformations. Other major class objectives include developing perseverance to grapple with problems, using technology appropriately and strategically, constructing models, reasoning abstractly, learning to appreciate real-life applications of the concepts, and recognizing interdisciplinary connections.

**HONORS ALGEBRA / GEOMETRY 1**

This is the first course in the honors math sequence. Using a problem-centered approach to learning, this course includes all topics included in Algebra/Geometry 1 in addition to the study of absolute value functions and radicals. Students in this course examine the content in greater depth, emphasizing the connection between procedure, understanding, and application. The pace of this course is demanding, and students are expected to engage in discussion about the topics, work together to solve challenging problems, build strong mathematical arguments using evidence to support their ideas, and make connections between concepts. Students begin to create a strong, well-developed algebraic and geometric foundation for their future math courses. They learn the skills to grapple with challenging problems, appropriately and strategically use technology, construct models, and reason abstractly. Students in this course should enjoy the rigor of problem-solving and feel comfortable being challenged.

# SCIENCE

Pacific Ridge aims to inspire and prepare students for a future built on STEM. By engaging students in the process of science through design, experimentation, discussion, and critical evaluation of evidence, we aim to foster curious students who clearly communicate ideas and make informed decisions that consider the impact of science and technology on society. We believe an integrated approach to science allows students to analyze and design solutions for complex, real-world problems. In grades six through ten, this is done through a phenomena-based inquiry and project-oriented curriculum that weaves together life, physical, earth, space, and computer science, much of it rooted in design and engineering practices. Our goal with this integrated science curriculum is to help students realize the real-world, interconnected nature of science. In grades eleven and twelve, students can choose to pursue honors or AP level classes in various science disciplines, as well as elect to pursue science electives such as Marine Biology or Anatomy and Physiology. Ethical issues surrounding current scientific research, comparing results from a laboratory investigation, and collaboration on scientific challenges are approached using the Harkness method to guide discussions.



## **SCIENCE 6**

Science 6 focuses on the interaction between living systems and their physical environment. This is an integrated science course that includes Life, Earth, and Physical Sciences. Science 6 units focus on four main concepts: growth and development of organisms, energy and chemical processes, Earth's systems and human impact on the environment. Sixth grade students will learn how to read multiple scientific texts and synthesize their ideas. Through scientific investigation they learn how to ask questions, collect and analyze data, create models, work in teams and problem solve. Students communicate their findings through discussions and written and oral presentations using scientific claims, supported by evidence.

## **SCIENCE 7**

Science 7 builds upon the skills introduced in Science 6. The course is framed around real-world phenomena and inquiry, focusing on skills and concepts that bring together the biological, physical, and earth sciences. Each unit of study begins with a question and culminates with an inquiry-based project or design challenge. The year starts by engaging students in basic science skills while examining what it means to make a claim supported by evidence and how scientists gather that evidence through the experimentation process. From there, students begin the study of neuroscience and complete an Arduino project looking at reaction time. During the second trimester, the course centers on the basic properties of matter and how they relate to issues like climate change. Finally, students have the chance to look more broadly at atmospheric science and epidemiology to get a sense of how scientists study large, complex systems. Students use technology, engineering design, and scientific investigation to build the knowledge required to successfully answer our unit questions. As the second course in PRS' core 6th-10th grade Science Program, Science 7 continues to build the skill and content foundations PRS students will need to prepare for both Science 8 and a strong science education.

## **Science 8**

Science 8 builds upon the skills and concepts learned in Science 7. Through hands-on activities and investigations, students explore the physics of moving objects, the chemistry of living things, and the biological processes that drive evolution by natural selection. Throughout each unit of study, students are challenged to design solutions to real-world phenomena, as well as use evidence and reasoning to support a claim. The course requires that students are involved in problem solving, discussing, writing, reading, designing, building, analyzing, and experimenting. Computer-aided design (CAD), engineering design, and scientific inquiry are practiced and developed to ensure students are prepared to meet the challenges presented to them and also to prepare them for future science courses and STEM endeavors.



# WORLD LANGUAGES

The World Languages Department at Pacific Ridge strives to connect students to their local and global communities through the gift of language. The curriculum in all our Spanish, French, and Chinese classes is designed around immersion instruction, with students fully engaged and interacting in the target language beginning with their very first class. In addition to speaking, reading and writing are emphasized so that students are equipped to interpret and express ideas in both oral and written form. Cultural competence and cultural appreciation are presented as an integrated and essential part of our mission to connect students to the world around them. Our language classes are lively and student-centered, as we believe that the best learning takes place in an engaging, positive, and stimulating environment. At the upper levels, students are able to defend and support a thesis, debate ideas, hold Harkness discussions, and analyze text, film, and dialogue in the target language. Lastly, in the Upper School, our immersion-based homestay trips, offered through Pacific Ridge's Global Travel program, as well as our extensive exchanges with our sister schools in Mexico, France, and Taiwan, provide an abundance of opportunity to connect with others on a profound level—making the language-learning journey both relevant and deeply meaningful for our students.



**World Languages 6:**

The course introduces students to three world languages and their cultures. Each trimester students experience one of three languages: French, Spanish, and Chinese, so that they have exposure to each language by the end of the school year. Students learn in an immersion environment, interacting in the target language as they learn the basics of each language and develop the beginnings of cultural competency and appreciation. In collaboration with other grade-level departments, world language classes work on cross-disciplinary projects throughout the year. After completing this language rotation, students will be able to make an informed decision as to which language they would like to continue studying in seventh grade and beyond.

**CHINESE A**

Chinese A builds a strong foundation of Elementary Chinese, providing students with skills in basic grammar, vocabulary, idioms, phrases, and sentence patterns. The students practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing on a daily basis. Each lesson focuses on a thematic topic which introduces everyday life experiences, such as exchanging greetings and asking for names, talking about family and friends, making a phone call, and discussing routines. Written texts and discussion topics are related to school life, Chinese daily life, and culture. Students learn to make comparisons between Chinese culture and American culture. By the conclusion of the course, students will be able to communicate using foundational grammatical structures, ask simple questions, participate in novice-level spontaneous conversations, and learn in an immersion-style classroom.

**CHINESE B**

Chinese B is a continuation of the Chinese A course. It focuses on strengthening elementary-level skills in all four domains: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Each lesson has a topic which introduces everyday life experiences, such as asking for an address, exchanging phone numbers, making and responding to a plan, having phone conversations, describing daily life routines and schedules, and ordering food at a Chinese restaurant. Written texts and discussion topics are related to school life and Chinese daily life. Chinese culture is discussed in greater depth and is integrated into each unit. The course is student-centered, with numerous opportunities for students to be engaged in a more complex language environment through extensive, interactive classroom activities.

**FRENCH A**

French A introduces students to the French language and French-speaking regions of the world. Students develop their oral and written expression by engaging in simple conversations and writing short paragraphs to express likes and dislikes, make requests, and obtain information. Finally, students learn about Francophone culture through authentic French resources which include texts, course readers, videos and films. By the conclusion of the course, students will be able to communicate using foundational grammatical structures, ask simple questions, participate in novice-level spontaneous conversations, and learn in an immersion-style classroom.

**FRENCH B**

French B builds upon the reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills acquired in French A. The course places a strong emphasis on oral proficiency. Students refine their ability to describe, compare, and express ideas and emotions in past, present, and future tenses. Students also write short paragraphs and read extracts from French and Francophone poetry, articles, and stories. Finally, students continue to learn about Francophone culture through authentic French resources including texts, course readers, videos, and films. The course provides numerous opportunities for the students to be engaged in a more complex language environment through interactive, student-centered classroom activities.

**SPANISH A**

The Spanish A course is an introduction to the language and cultures of the Spanish-speaking world. Students learn to use basic vocabulary to describe themselves and their communities, narrate in the present tense, and grow familiar with common grammatical structures. Students use a variety of methods to get acquainted with the target cultures, and in the process, begin to compare these customs and traditions to their own. In this course, students read two short beginning-level novels in Spanish, practice their oral communication skills on a daily basis, and begin to transition from writing sentences to writing paragraphs. The class is conducted increasingly in Spanish as the year progresses. By the conclusion of the course, students will be able to communicate using foundational grammatical structures, asking simple questions, participating in novice-level spontaneous conversations, and learning in an immersion-style classroom.

**SPANISH B**

In the Spanish B course, students build upon the reading, writing, listening and speaking skills acquired in Spanish A, while expanding and deepening their cultural awareness of the Spanish-speaking world. Students acquire several additional thematic vocabulary sets and more complex grammatical structures in both the present and preterite tenses. As they continue upon their path toward greater fluency, students are encouraged to communicate exclusively in the target language. Daily immersion activities, collaborative group projects, and modified Harkness discussions provide an abundance of practice in order to reach this essential goal. In this second year course, students read three short, intermediate-level novels in Spanish, develop their essay writing skills, and begin to comprehend, interpret, and produce oral language within a more advanced context. Class is conducted in Spanish within a level-appropriate immersion environment.



# ARTS

The Pacific Ridge Arts program offers a comprehensive and vibrant range of performing arts experiences, including vocal and instrumental music, dance, and theater courses, as well as several co-curricular productions. At the same time, Pacific Ridge engages students in a wide variety of stimulating visual arts opportunities including studio art, welding, ceramics, 3D printing, graphic design, mixed media, filmmaking, and photography.

In the Middle School Arts Program, students thrive on experimentation, self-expression, and fun. In sixth grade, all students rotate through three of the PRS arts disciplines and get to experience Vocal Ensemble, Studio Art, and Theater. In seventh and eighth grades, students continue to rotate into a new arts discipline for each trimester so that over the course of several formative years, they gain exposure to a range of different visual and performing experiences. This variety sparks creative and personal growth and invites students to discover their passions. Especially for young brains, the arts provide a vibrant and inclusive space for problem-solving and critical thinking. Some ensemble classes for music and dance may include groupings of students with prior experience and students who repeat a rotation for the purpose of performances.



## GRADE 6 ARTS

In grade 6, all students rotate through three of the PRS arts disciplines and get to experience Vocal Ensemble, Studio Art, and Theater.

### **VOCAL ENSEMBLE 6**

In Grade 6 Vocal Ensemble, students learn foundational aspects of singing through informal and formal stage performances. With focus on the changing adolescent voice, students learn singing parts, team-building, and skills related to musicianship. Students engage in a variety of activities designed to instill a love for music, challenge their vocal ability, and provide opportunities for growth as individuals.

### **STUDIO ART 6**

Studio Art 6 encourages students to have lots of fun while practicing and developing foundational techniques. Students expand their creative confidence and problem-solving skills through a variety of projects, from simple sketches to extended assignments. They also work on honing their motor skills and testing out personal styles of expression. The focus of each lesson connects to the essential Elements of Art, such as color, shape, and pattern. Students acquire vocabulary that will help them become stronger critical thinkers and more perceptive learners in all of their academic pursuits.

### **Theater 6**

In Theater 6, all students get a taste of performing onstage and an opportunity to harness their creative voices. During Trimester 1, the entire 6th grade contributes to the production of a play, either as an actor, singer, or costume and set creator. Previous productions have included *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. In Trimesters 2 and 3, after they practice basic performing skills, students write their own short plays from scratch. They develop an understanding of story structure, how to read and compose a script, and how to get their big, bold ideas across to an audience. Several student-written plays are selected for production, and students spend the second half of those trimesters bringing these plays to life.

## GRADE 7 & 8 ARTS

In seventh and eighth grades, students continue to rotate into a new arts discipline for each trimester so that they continue to gain exposure to a range of different visual and performing experiences. While there are many options, students will take one arts class each trimester.

### **DANCE 7**

This introductory dance course is designed to help seventh grade students explore jazz dance technique, including various aspects of contemporary and hip hop. No previous experience is required. Students learn basic dance techniques, including traditional foot, arm and body positions, fundamental locomotor and non-locomotor movements, rhythm and musicality, dance stretches, strengthening exercises, and dance performance. Students are exposed to improvisation and choreography, and they also begin choreographing their own combinations. Students will spend a portion of the trimester exploring dance history by focusing on a specific dancer and their role in the growth of the art form. At the end of the trimester, each class member is required to perform a group routine to share with the PRS Community.

### **DIGITAL MEDIA ARTS 7**

This seventh grade course is a practical exploration of creative expression using fundamental design principles. Students delve into the essentials of visual communication using graphic design, digital photography, and filmmaking. Students become familiar with the basic features of Photoshop, Illustrator, and iMovie as preparation for the visual challenges of our digital era. Effective composition, clear messaging, and inventive narratives factor into student work at this level.

### **BEGINNING INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC 7**

“Create, perform, respond, and connect” are the primary themes of this seventh grade class. Students discover that making music is not something that requires extensive experience or skill. Rather, it is an intuitive process that everyone can engage in and benefit from. Students learn the language of music by studying the basics of music theory, the principles of sound and acoustics, and the basic techniques for playing a variety of instruments. Classes split into groups to build and rehearse simple arrangements of popular music. Groups perform for each other, and then students are able to analyze and respond to what they hear.

### **INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC 7**

This seventh grade class explores various genres of music including classical, jazz, rock, blues, Latin, and funk. Students discover music from a wide range of historical eras and learn about harmonic texture and composition techniques used by composers of each era in music. Students learn a variety of forms and chord progressions, the building blocks of modern music. The class focuses on how to play together using different musical forms and how to communicate with music to achieve thoughtful, balanced arrangements of their chosen works.

### **VOCAL ENSEMBLE 7**

In this course, students learn how to sing music in a wide variety of styles including classical, folk, rock, and Broadway. Students also use music theory to understand the essentials of reading and writing musical notation. Both fundamental techniques and ensemble performances are important components of the class. Students work on concepts such as intonation, balance, blend, interpretation, and rehearsal decorum.

### **3D VISUAL ART 7**

Students learn the Elements and Principles of Design through experimentation with a variety of three-dimensional art-making techniques. Each project involves a range of tools and design possibilities in metal, fabric, wood, paper, and more. The priorities in this class are learning how to use the Fabrication Studio safely, giving and receiving clear and kind feedback, and having fun in a collaborative environment.

### **DANCE 8**

This eighth grade class deepens students' investigation of jazz dance technique and a range of contemporary and hip hop forms. No previous experience is required. Students expand their dance techniques and terminology, putting their knowledge to use in exploring and executing a variety of forms. Students continue to work on creating their own choreography and collaborating in small groups before sharing the dances they created. Students spend a portion of the trimester researching dance history by focusing on specific dance genres (Tap, Jazz, Ballet), their origins, and what the genres look like today. At the end of the trimester, each class member is required to perform in a group routine shared with the PRS community.

### **DIGITAL MEDIA ARTS 8**

This class deepens the concepts introduced in 7th Grade Digital Media Arts. Students gain confidence in designing expressive, artistic work, discussing their creative choices, and connecting their work with both historical and current trends in art. Visual storytelling skills using graphic design, photographic techniques, and digital drawing are applied in a series of projects, both individual and collaborative. This rotation of digital art helps students prepare to select high school courses in graphic design, photography, yearbook, or filmmaking.

### **BEGINNING INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC 8**

“Create, perform, respond, and connect” are the primary themes of this class. Students discover that making music is not something that requires extensive experience or skill. Rather, it is an intuitive process that everyone can engage in and benefit from. Students learn the language of music by studying the basics of music theory, the principles of sound and acoustics, and the basic techniques for playing a variety of instruments. Classes split into groups to build and rehearse simple arrangements of popular music. Groups perform for each other, and then students are able to analyze and respond to what they hear.

### **INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC 8**

This class explores various genres of music including classical, jazz, rock, blues, Latin, and funk. Students discover music from a wide range of historical eras and learn about harmonic texture and composition techniques used by composers of each era in music. Students learn a variety of forms and chord progressions, the building blocks of modern music. The class focuses on how to play together using different musical forms and how to communicate with music to achieve thoughtful, balanced arrangements of their chosen works.

### **VOCAL ENSEMBLE 8**

This is an intermediate choir available to eighth grade students. While many of these are returning students to choir, we also welcome brand new singers while we work at a quicker pace. Our goal is to get everyone on the same page to create beautiful and fun music as a team, while learning and refining the skills needed to be sensitive and musical singers. Eighth grade singers hone not only their vocal skills, but also their overall music and sight-singing skills before performing in a variety of styles and languages.

### **STUDIO ART 8**

Students develop a personal creative vision through the lenses of storytelling and identity. Students access a range of historical and cultural inspirations, often tied to themes that they find in their world language, mathematics, and history classes. The Elements and Principles of Design help students create original naturalistic drawings and paintings as well as expressive abstractions. Projects include exploring the earliest forms of pictorial space through East Asian landscape painting, ceramics, and pastel portraiture. Students also gain increased powers of perception, an appreciation of various artistic traditions, and confidence in their own creative abilities.

### **THEATER 8**

The course builds a strong foundation for budding performers. Class begins with the adage “acting is NOT pretending; acting is DOING.” During eighth grade theater, focus is placed on creating a lively and professional space, developing the ability to invent through storytelling, experimenting with the art of playing through improvisation, learning to critique one another’s work constructively, and examining the elements of a dramatic script. The most important goal is to build an ensemble while promoting individual self-confidence and personal growth. By the end of each trimester, students learn the foundations of effectively portraying a character, how to successfully prepare and master an audition, and how to present a scene with two or more acting partners.



# SKILLS

The purpose of the Middle School Skills program is to provide learning opportunities for students in areas they may not normally explore but are pertinent to their Middle School lives. The Middle School skills classes meet once every six-day cycle throughout the entire school year. Skills classes meet either during 3rd Period or 4th. PE and Service Learning also happen during 3rd and 4th Period.

GRADE 6	GRADE 7	GRADE 8
Health & Wellness	Health and Wellness	Health and Wellness
Design & Build: Wayfinder Quilting	Design & Build: Woodworking	Design & Build: Digital Fabrication Challenge
Community Connections	Community Connections	Community Connections



## HEALTH & WELLNESS

Health and Wellness classes are designed to help students with their understanding of how their minds and bodies work and develop that awareness into action steps to improve our social, emotional, and academic experiences. Each grade has a developmentally specific curriculum that explores important topics, including executive functioning, social-emotional skills, brain science, stress and anxiety, exercise and nutrition, digital wellness, relationships, hygiene and body changes, sexuality, and substances.

## DESIGN & BUILD

Design and Build classes focus on working collaboratively to design and build a project in different mediums. Students practice iterating, designing, prototyping, learning new skills, and learning how to use the specific tools and resources for each project.

### **6th Grade — Wayfinder Quilting**

All sixth graders design and create a quilt by the end of the year allowing for an important shared grade level experience and the further exploration of the theme of individual and collective wayfinding. Students learn basic handcraft and quilting skills, design their own elements, and ultimately connect all individual parts into a finished quilt.

### **7th Grade — Woodworking**

The seventh grade woodworking project is designed to teach students the basics of woodworking — tool and woodshop safety, tool use, basic drill and saw use, and designing and constructing a project from start to finish. The course is designed to be a precursor to the grade-level project at the end of the year during which students build and race derby cars.

### **8th Grade — Digital Fabrication Challenge**

The digital fabrication course focuses on giving eighth graders an opportunity to work collaboratively to solve a problem using various technologies. Students will be in the Innovation and Design Center, learning how to laser cut or 3D print objects for their project. At the end of the course, students will test their designs in a friendly competition. The challenge for this course varies from year to year.

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Community connection courses use the PRS core values as a lens to build the individual awareness, skills, and habits needed to be successful students and community members. These classes focus on our four core values: Care for Community, Own our Outcomes, Commit to Learning, and Acknowledge Views Beyond our Own, so that by the end of middle school, students will not only fine-tune their ability to navigate their world, but also become leaders in building a strong PRS community that values and appreciates all of its members.

# PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Middle School presents a wonderful opportunity for students to either try new sports or to continue with those they have played before. Pacific Ridge's middle school athletic program teaches lifelong skills and habits such as organization, persistence, patience, teamwork, humility, balance and open-mindedness. We emphasize the benefits of a "growth mindset" in all our programs, but especially with our middle school students, who come in all shapes and sizes, and who typically possess a wide range of skills and abilities.



Pacific Ridge School's PE program teaches students fitness concepts used for achieving and maintaining lifelong physical health. The curriculum includes, but is not limited to, sections of basketball, touch football, volleyball, badminton, ultimate frisbee, and various games that employ ball skills, teamwork, strategy, and hand-eye coordination; each sport section lasts approximately four weeks. In addition to our general PE class we also offer sections of swim PE.

Middle School students are required to participate in physical education or a team sport in sixth through eighth grade. Teams and PE classes train two to three times each week, during the school day. For the sports teams, games are usually two days per week, after school and/or on the weekends.

This is a current list of our Middle School sports offerings by season:

**Fall Sports**

CROSS COUNTRY  
FLAG FOOTBALL  
LACROSSE - GIRLS  
VOLLEYBALL - GIRLS

**Winter Sports**

BASKETBALL - BOYS  
SOCCER - BOYS  
SOCCER - GIRLS

**Spring Sports**

BASKETBALL - GIRLS  
LACROSSE - BOYS  
TENNIS  
VOLLEYBALL - BOYS



# SERVICE LEARNING

Middle School Service Learning is grounded in ethical principles and societal issues help our students to understand how they impact their communities and the world.

Combined with relevant service projects in communities near and far, we instill in our students a responsibility to act, a desire to do good, and the belief they can make a difference.



## Service Learning Inquiry Cycle

### REFLECT

What did you learn?  
How can we make  
lasting impacts on  
systems or institutions?

### EXPLORE

What do you know? What are  
your preconceived notions?

### ACTION

Create a service  
project, work for  
systemic change  
(social action)

### INVESTIGATE

Research the problem. How  
does it impact the community?

### ENGAGE

What can we do to create change?  
Who are potential partners?

Students meet weekly to gain academic, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving skills that will assist them in their projects, which vary by grade. Service-Learning projects require students to collaborate with both local and global communities in order to reach concrete goals. There are opportunities throughout each trimester to complete service work on campus as well as off campus with local partners.

Students utilize the inquiry cycle to research information on local communities, identify a specific need and community partner, then work with their service advisors to create service projects to support. There are ongoing reflection activities that allow students to identify preconceived notions about their communities and discuss what they've learned and how they've been impacted by the work.

**GRADE 6 ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**

What is a community?

What values are needed to build a strong community?

What role do we play in building strong communities?

What are visible components of the PRS community? How do we contribute to its growth?

**GRADE 7 ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**

What are the basic needs of people?

What are the needs of a community?

How do we assess the needs of a community?

How are we helping to meet community needs?

**GRADE 8 ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**

What is sustainability?

How is sustainability being addressed locally and globally?

What can we do to create more sustainable communities?