



# THADEN SCHOOL

## Intensives Course Offerings

Middle School  
Academic Year 2024-25

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# Letter From the Head of School

Thaden Families,

Our faculty members have worked creatively and collaboratively to prepare a compelling set of Intensive course offerings for our Middle School students in May 2025. As you will see, our academic program's pathways are incredibly robust, providing interesting, engaging, and challenging opportunities for students to pursue interests and develop passions across all disciplines.

These pathways, varied as they are, lead to a common goal: independence. Whether students are reading "Macbeth", exploring the culinary and cultural roots of the American South, testing the laws of physics, or writing and staging a one-act play, they are learning to think, speak, and act for themselves. At its core, a Thaden education is designed to cultivate the critical thinking skills our students need to become discerning consumers of information and citizens with courage in their convictions, built on free inquiry and civil debate.

Of course, the strength of a Thaden education ultimately resides in the quality of the faculty members who ignite in our students a passion for discovery and lifelong learning. Our students thrive under the guidance of exceptional educators recruited from across the United States and many parts of the world.

Thaden is creating the next generation of leaders to be dynamic, innovative problem solvers through a challenging educational experience grounded in critical thinking, collaboration, and real-world application.

Michael Maloy  
Head of School

# Mission and Guiding Principles

Our mission is to provide a balanced and challenging education that ignites in our students a passion for discovery and learning, prepares them to succeed in college, and inspires them to lead lives of integrity, purpose, and responsible global citizenship.

In pursuing our mission, we are guided by these principles:

- The diversity of a school is essential to the quality of education that it provides.
- In a small school, students are better able to form close relationships with teachers that will give them a strong sense of belonging, self-confidence, and responsibility.
- There is an art in masterful teaching, which requires resources, mentorship, and recognition.
- A well-balanced curriculum empowers students:
  - To think ethically, critically, and creatively about global issues and their local manifestations;
  - To see connections among the humanities, sciences, and mathematics as integrative disciplines in the search for knowledge, meaning, and beauty;
  - To build coherent, compelling, and innovative arguments;
  - To establish their voice in the world by writing and speaking well and expressing themselves creatively;
  - To work independently and collaboratively.
- Activities outside of the classroom (such as acting in a play, competing on a team, or working on a sustainability project) give students essential opportunities to develop as leaders, volunteers, and contributors to the life and spirit of the greater community.
- A school must create a safe and healthy environment where students have time and space for reflection, freedom to make important decisions, and opportunities to learn from mistakes.
- The harmony of a school community depends on a shared commitment to honesty, compassion, and fair play.

## Overview

Intensives are a two-week period of study in which students eschew their regular weekly schedule to participate in educational experiences that are not always easily facilitated during our typical 60- and 90-minute class periods. Intensives also allow for the development of creative interdisciplinary course offerings that are complementary to but distinct from Thaden's core curriculum.

Intensives leverage the special interests and expertise of our nationally recruited faculty by giving them considerable discretion in the design of their courses. The Intensive course offerings represent our faculty's passion, creativity, and interdisciplinarity. Similarly, throughout Intensives faculty use a wide range of pedagogical methods – from seminar-style discussions to hands-on activities – that collectively enhance students' versatility as problem solvers who can work creatively and collaboratively in a rapidly changing world.

All students in Grades 6-7 are required to enroll in two Intensive courses. Each course meets three hours per day for two weeks and carries  $\frac{1}{3}$  credit, awarded on a Pass/No Credit basis.

Students in Grade 8 participate in the Grade 8 Capstone: A Civil Rights Tour of the South. This course meets for two weeks. In addition to on-campus learning, it also features a five-day trip to civil rights landmarks in Arkansas, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi. The Civil Rights Tour of the South carries  $\frac{2}{3}$  credit, awarded on a Pass/No Credit basis.

# Courses for Grades 6-7

All students in Grades 6-7 will enroll in two of the following courses.  
Each course meets three hours per day for two weeks.

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## **Bookworms**

Calling all readers! This Intensive gives students uninterrupted time to do (almost) nothing but read! Our journey begins at the Library, of course, where we hunt for books to dive into over the course of two weeks. Students spend time each day reading in comfy chairs, sipping tea, and allowing their minds to go on adventures. Roundtable discussions, character portraits, creative writing, and craft-making deepen students' connections to their reading and provide opportunities to share discoveries with each other. Changes in scenery may include trips to the Bentonville Public Library, local parks, and bookstores. Join us for a feast for the imagination and be a bookworm!

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## **Epic Leadership: Discover Your Leadership Superpowers**

This is no ordinary Intensive; this is an epic quest to understand and wield the power of leadership. Undertake a deep exploration of individual strengths and conduct hands-on research to identify the needs of our community. Consider questions such as: What is leadership? Is it a rare gift, or is it something that lives within all of us? Who do we look up to as leaders and what can we learn from them? How can we identify our unique strengths and utilize them to serve our community?

This Intensive transforms students into emerging leaders and prepares them for future challenges and opportunities. The course concludes with a service project – a final test of newfound superpowers – aimed at serving the very community that helps you grow. Who will unlock the secrets of leadership? Only those bold enough to take the challenge!

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## **Hogwarts on Stage: Adapting the Harry Potter Series for Middle School Theater**

Explore the arts of storytelling and stagecraft through the lens of the Harry Potter series in this magical Intensive. Don wizards' robes, play Quidditch on brooms, and attend classes at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Community partner Jayme Brandt (Tee Rex) helps students interpret and adapt a selected Harry Potter character through artistic media. Adapt a scene from the books for the stage and mount a culminating performance showcase for the community. Explore questions such as: How can a book be interpreted for the stage? How are artistic and literary adaptations similar and different? How does adaptation become creative while staying true to the source material? This Intensive offers students the opportunity to collaborate and stage a unique performance.

## **More Than Junk: Found Objects in Art**

Do you collect stuff, enjoy art, and enjoy finding “junk”? This Intensive is for you! Students create their own work(s) of found object art and research various artists and art movements. More than Junk offers a brief survey of the modern history of found objects in visual art, from Marcel Duchamp to Louise Nevelson. Students also learn about the evolution of assemblage and found art pieces, including anti-fine art or outsider art. Students have several opportunities to go off campus to visit local museums and collect materials for their work. The course culminates in an exhibition of the artwork produced over the week.

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## **Northwest Arkansas History on Two Wheels**

Explore the rich history of Northwest Arkansas through the lens of a unique mode of transportation: the bicycle. This Intensive combines outdoor activity with engaging historical learning experiences. Visit local historical and cultural sites such as Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, The Walmart Museum, The Peel Museum & Botanical Garden, and the Museum of Native American History. Deepen your understanding of how our home region has evolved into what it is today and consider the important role cycling plays in our community.

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## **Thaden TEDx: Speak Your Mind!**

Are you ready to take the stage and share your ideas with the world? In this Intensive, students dive into the world of public speaking and discover the secrets behind the captivating TED Talk format. Explore the power of storytelling and the techniques used by the most engaging TED speakers. Students brainstorm, plan, and create their own TED Talks to be recorded and shared with the Thaden community. Through activities and discussions, students uncover what makes a great presentation and how to connect with an audience. Learn to express your thoughts with confidence and creativity!

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## **Time Travel Boot Camp**

It is very likely that you will never travel back in time. But what if you did? Wouldn't it be better to be prepared? This Intensive digs into what you'd want to know for when you'd want to go. How do you avoid disease before soap is invented? How do you invent fire? The wheel? The printing press? Calculus? What's that language they're speaking and how can you most rapidly adapt to it? With this Intensive under your belt you will be better prepared than 99.98% of the general populace should unexpected time travel become a reality.

## Unlocking Bridge: A Strategic Card Game Adventure

Dive into the exciting world of bridge with this fun and interactive Intensive! If you enjoy games like Uno or Spades, you'll love discovering the strategic depth of bridge. Learn how to play this classic card game from scratch, mastering tricks, strategies, and teamwork along the way. With easy-to-follow lessons, hands-on card play, and plenty of opportunities for competition, you'll develop your critical thinking skills while enjoying the intellectual challenge of the game. By the end of the course, you'll be ready to challenge family and classmates to exciting bridge matches. Join us for a fantastic adventure in card play and see why bridge is a game loved by millions!

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## Water, Water Everywhere

Did you know that over 70% of Earth's surface is covered by water? Water is essential for life and a source of relaxation and fun, but it also presents serious risks. This Intensive helps students develop a deeper understanding of and appreciation for water.

We begin by considering the many uses of water and exploring the concepts of buoyancy and hydrodynamics. Conduct laboratory tests and consider the effects of hard water, compete in water olympics activities, and engineer a boat that successfully floats. Certified instructors train students in basic first aid skills that may be needed around water. Hop in the pool and practice basic aquatic skills such as floating, holding your breath, and swimming. Learn to finesse the basic swim stroke elements, including the front crawl, backstroke, and side stroke. Engage in simulations that test and apply your learning of water safety, situational recognition, and response. This Intensive gives students increased confidence around water and a greater appreciation for this essential substance.

**This Intensive requires basic swimming skills and is not intended for those who do not yet know how to swim.**



# Grade 8 Capstone

All students in Grade 8 will participate in the Capstone.  
The Capstone includes travel by chartered bus and overnight stays.

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## A Civil Rights Tour of the South

The Grade 8 Capstone Trip offers students the opportunity to learn about the history of the Civil Rights Movement and reflect on its resonances in their own worlds. The course meets for two weeks. In addition to on-campus learning, it features a five-day trip to civil rights landmarks in Arkansas, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi. The trip includes museum visits, reading and journaling time, and engagement in the cultural life of several hub cities along the [Civil Rights Trail](#) and fits chronologically into the curriculum of American Studies, while also emphasizing interdisciplinarity and the connections between past and present. Explorations of food, music, and visual art complement an overview of the major events and leading figures of the Civil Rights Movement. The goal is for students to return to Bentonville with a new understanding of the quest for racial justice in the US, particularly as manifested in the Civil Rights Movement and the urban South.

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