Middle School
Program of Studies

2025 - 2026

SSiS
SAIGON SOUTH
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

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Overview

This Middle School Program of Studies, designed for parents and students, provides course information and registration guidelines to help students select their middle school schedule for next year.

The Program of Studies describes the general content and units taught in each middle school subject at SSIS. It also includes additional information about other essential elements of our middle school program at SSIS. Please read it carefully and refer to it when completing the course selection forms.

If you have any questions about the middle school program and cannot locate the information within this Program of Studies, please contact the Middle School Principal (dkerr@ssis.edu.vn) or the Counseling office (msoffice@ssis.edu.vn).

Mission Statement, Core Values, and Profile of a Learner

MISSION STATEMENT

Saigon South International School (SSIS) is a college preparatory school committed to the intellectual and personal development of each student in preparation for a purposeful life as a global citizen.

SSIS CORE VALUES

SSIS Believes In and Promotes:

	Academic Excellence A challenging academic program, based on American standards, that teaches the student how to think, to learn, to problem solve, and to work individually and in teams while acquiring a foundational knowledge base of the world.
	Sense of Self A community atmosphere in which each student can gain a sense of who they are in the world; to develop self-confidence, strong character, convictions, leadership abilities, grace, courage, the desire to be a life-long learner, and the commitment to achieve excellence in all they do.
	Respect for All A perspective that each individual is a person of worth.
	Balance in Life An academic program that promotes an appreciation for all of life and seeks to balance the sciences with the humanities; academics with the arts; mental wholeness with physical, social, and spiritual wholeness; and future career with family relationships.
	Dedicated Service A view that looks beyond oneself to the assets and needs of the surrounding community and the world and finds fulfillment in unlocking potential in the service of mankind. The model SSIS graduate will demonstrate a caring attitude, be environmentally aware, and persevere for the good of the community.

Profile of A Learner

As a community of learners, we are:

Collaborative
We include others, work purposefully and respectfully to achieve a shared goal and recognize everyone's contributions.

Creative
We wonder; we seek and generate original ideas and outcomes.

Critical Thinkers
We ask questions and inquire of self and others; we evaluate, analyze, and synthesize information from multiple perspectives to make meaning before taking action.

Communicators
We listen actively; we express ideas with clarity and respect.

Adaptive
We respond to change with an open mind in order to learn and grow physically, mentally, socially and emotionally.

Courageous
We take action in challenging situations; we persevere when it is right to do so and recognize when it is right to change.

Reflective
We pause and evaluate our thinking, actions, and impact.

Ethical
We act with integrity; we respect the rights of all individuals and meet our responsibilities to the greater community.

Knowledgeable
We develop and use conceptual understandings, exploring knowledge across a wide range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance. (IB)

Program Requirements and Course Descriptions

Grade 6 Requirements

All grade 6 students will be enrolled in the following courses, which are full-year courses (except Technology Discoveries, which runs for one semester):

Required Courses

- English Language Arts 6
- Mathematics 6
- Physical Education and Health 6
- Science 6
- Social Studies 6
- Technology Discoveries *(semester)*
- World Language* (Mandarin Level A or Spanish Level A), English as an Additional Language, OR Learning Strategies

*Note: World Language is a language-acquisition program designed for non-heritage speakers. Students whose home language/heritage language is Mandarin or Spanish are not eligible for that language and will be required to select a different language.

Elective Courses

Middle school students engage in a variety of enriching learning experiences. To ensure this well-rounded exposure, aligned with our core value of *Balance in Life*, **they are required to choose one Performing Arts elective and one Media/Technology Arts elective in each year of middle school**.

Grade 6 students will register for **three semesters of electives**. Students can choose either:
ONE full-year and ONE semester course, OR
THREE semester courses

Grade 6

Students must choose at least one elective from **each** column below:

Performing Arts	Media/Technology Arts
- Beginning Band *(full year)* - Beginning Strings Orchestra *(full year)* - Dance *(semester)* - Drama 6 *(semester)* - Musical Theater: The Middle School Musical *(full year)*	- Art 6 *(semester)* - Drawn to Stories: The Art and Craft of Graphic Novels *(semester)* - Electronic Music *(semester)* - Technology Design Foundations *(semester)* - Vex Robotics *(full year)* - Vocal Hero *(semester)*

Core Required Courses

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS 6

The SSIS English Language Arts program places a strong emphasis on developing students' skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening to help them become critical readers, writers, and thinkers. The workshop method, which prioritizes student choice and inquiry, provides opportunities to explore key elements of various narrative, informational, argumentative, and literary texts through reading and writing. The goal of the English Language Arts program is to provide rigorous, meaningful learning activities that will help students build the literacy skills necessary for college and career.

MATHEMATICS 6

Math 6 aims to enhance mathematical literacy by building on the foundations of computation and number sense learned in elementary school and applying them to a wide variety of situations to promote critical thinking and reasoning skills. Units of study include algebraic reasoning, operations involving decimals and fractions, rules of integers, ratios and proportions, data collection and representation, geometric relationships, measurement, probability, and an introduction to algebra. The course is differentiated to meet our students' learning needs through a rigorous, blended approach of learning experiences based on grade 6 and grade 7 learning outcomes.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH 6

The Physical Education program in grade 6 focuses on helping to develop physically literate students who respect and value their bodies and their health. We aim to provide a nurturing environment in which all students feel comfortable taking risks and challenging themselves to grow and develop, both in their physical skills and learning relationships, while having fun in the process.

Throughout the year, students are exposed to a variety of units structured around fitness, skill acquisition, and understanding the application of strategy and tactics of different sports and movement forms. Interpersonal skills such as sportsmanship, offering positive feedback, and demonstrating responsible behavior are woven into the nature of team games and activities. Units can include but are not limited to: invasion games, swimming, traditional Vietnamese dance, net and wall games, non-traditional games, striking and fielding, and fitness.

Through our Health curriculum, students learn about a range of topics related to their physical, mental, social, and emotional health. When put together, our program aims to empower students to have the confidence, ability, and motivation to be physically active and make healthy choices throughout their lives.

SCIENCE 6

The grade 6 science program focuses on critical thinking and communication of scientific thinking. Students explore concepts through the process of scientific inquiry to explain the world in which we live. Students learn how to formulate a hypothesis, identify variables, describe procedures, and test conjectures of whether or not their data is conclusive. Students apply these scientific skills in "diversity of life" and learn what it means to be "alive." Following this, students explore the transformation of energy using the design cycle to develop an efficient solar oven. Then they explore the cosmos by developing models and analyzing data, particularly the formation of solar systems, and lunar phases and eclipses as part of the earth, moon, and sun system. The final unit is evolution, where students construct explanations of Darwin's process of natural selection and learn about previous mass extinction events in earth's history.

SOCIAL STUDIES 6

The grade 6 Social Studies curriculum covers world civilizations from prehistory to the 6th century. The course is a thematically based exploration of the "big ideas" represented in history and geography. Geography themes are introduced through personal histories and timelines. Students explore these themes through the lens of the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Greece, and Rome with an emphasis on the impact of geography on human settlement, social systems, and daily life. Throughout the year, students improve their ability to critically analyze historical sources, use academic language in writing and speaking, compose argumentative essays, and think critically about the past, the present, and the future through a range of creative academic projects. Students strengthen their research and writing skills by crafting argumentative essays and build technology skills through presentations.

TECHNOLOGY DISCOVERIES *(Semester)*

In this course, students explore digital citizenship while learning 3D design, 2D design, and basic coding with block-based JavaScript. Through hands-on projects, they create designs that demonstrate creativity and technical skills. The course emphasizes ethical technology use, online safety, and problem-solving. By the end of grade 6, students will have a portfolio showcasing their design and coding abilities.

WORLD LANGUAGE: MANDARIN LEVEL A

Mandarin Level A provides basic knowledge and skills of the Mandarin Chinese language. Students develop their beginning communication skills in Mandarin as well as learning aspects of Chinese culture. Pinyin, basic strokes, components of the characters, reading, writing, and typing skills are taught at this level. Students also explore Chinese idioms, stories, and songs. Please note: This course is not for native Mandarin speakers.

WORLD LANGUAGE: SPANISH LEVEL A

Spanish Level A provides basic knowledge and skills of the Spanish language. Students develop their beginning communication skills in Spanish as well as learn aspects of Spanish culture. Students also explore Spanish stories and songs. Basic vocabulary, grammar, and speaking with daily oral exercises is introduced at this level. Please note: This course is not for native Spanish speakers.

Grade 6 Electives

Performing Arts Choices

BEGINNING BAND *(Full Year)*

This year-long performance course offers students the opportunity to participate in a large instrumental ensemble. This course is aimed at any student who is interested in beginning to play a band instrument. (This course is not suitable for students only wishing to play guitar or keyboard.) SSIS has a range of brass and woodwind instruments available for students to use. Music literary skills are an important aspect of this course. Students will read, write, and interpret basic musical notation on the treble and bass clefs. Students will participate in two major performances during the school year.

BEGINNING STRINGS ORCHESTRA *(Full Year)*

Beginning Strings Orchestra is a foundational full-year course designed to develop students' musical abilities through the study of instrumental music in an ensemble setting. Instruments introduced include violin, viola, cello, and double bass. This course focuses on teaching students the fundamentals necessary for playing their selected instrument. Instruction emphasizes identifying the parts of the instrument, instrument care, basic music theory and notation practices, posture and position, along with appropriate right-hand and left-hand techniques. Students are expected to practice daily after school and to take part in live and recorded performances. This course is appropriate for students who have no or limited experience playing a string instrument.

DANCE *(Semester)*

This semester-long dance elective is designed to promote an appreciation and enjoyment of dance, through both understanding and performance. The course is designed for students with little to no dance experience. However, students of all dance abilities and grade levels are welcome. The elements included in this course promote a solid dance technique and allow students to become familiar with dance terminology as well as a wide variety of musical styles and rhythms. There is no set music as students have the opportunity to perform to music that is appropriate in speed and currently popular.

DRAMA 6 *(Semester)*

Students in grade 6 have a varied and exciting introduction to Drama. This includes an introduction to core drama skills and the use of body and voice in theater while developing collaboration and social interaction skills through classroom and small-group activities. Initially, students develop trust and an understanding of key drama skills using theater sports, games, and improvisation. Then they learn to develop and play a role confidently and create scenes using text and improvisation. Students then focus on theater design and learn how to stage scenes creatively. They then perform short plays using props and costumes. The course is very practical and students must come to class with a willingness to experiment and become part of a team. Students are expected to take part in small and large group work, solo work, independent research, and creative writing, either in the classroom or at home.

MUSICAL THEATER: The Middle School Musical *(Full Year)*

Students develop their creative skills through acting, singing, dancing, and technical theater opportunities. Students reinforce these skills through engaging tasks, including preparation for and performance in the annual middle school musical! This course is designed for students interested in improving their theatrical skills and developing their abilities to both appreciate and participate in theater, although the skills they acquire transfer to other subject areas as well. The unique skills and values attained through a performing arts education have been linked to success in high school, college, career, and beyond. Come be part of our MS musical and have fun!

Media/Technology Arts Choices

ART 6 *(Semester)*

The Visual Arts program is a semester course. Initially, students develop an understanding of the Studio Habits and Growth mindset, which are incorporated in all learning throughout the semester. The grade 6 Visual Arts curriculum is designed to help students combine concepts collaboratively to generate innovative ideas and formulate an artistic investigation of personally relevant content. Students are exposed to a variety of artistic media and techniques from drawing, painting, and ceramics, to digital art. They demonstrate openness to trying new ideas, materials, methods, and approaches in making works of art and design. Students become comfortable taking risks to create artwork that speaks to who they are. All art is showcased in an online gallery and displayed regularly throughout the school.

DRAWN TO STORIES: The Art and Craft of Graphic Novels *(Semester)*

Students unleash their creativity within the world of graphic novels! In this course, they dive into the storytelling secrets behind their favorite comics, exploring essential comics techniques and film techniques that bring stories to life. They learn how these elements combine to captivate readers, and apply their knowledge to craft their very own original graphic short story. Whether an aspiring artist, storyteller, or both, this course helps students turn their ideas into a visual masterpiece!

ELECTRONIC MUSIC *(Semester)*

Students learn to create, produce, and record music in a variety of genres using current music technology. They gain hands-on experience in electronic music studio techniques, including digital recording, audio editing, signal processing, mixing, sampling, MIDI, synthesizers, and drum machines. Students acquire a historical perspective of the development of electronic music and an understanding of acoustics as applied to music production. They develop their listening skills and an appreciation for a wide variety of electronic music and the world of sound. This is a great introductory course for aspiring singer/songwriters, musicians, composers, producers, sound designers, or sound artists. No previous musical experience is necessary.

TECHNOLOGY DESIGN FOUNDATIONS *(Semester)*

This course provides students with a strong foundation in design and technology by focusing on the creation of textile-based products. Students use hands-on tools to bring their ideas to life as physical creations. Through the SSIS design cycle, they plan, test, and refine their projects, building essential problem-solving and technical skills. Along the way, students learn to organize workflows, document their progress, and improve their designs through iteration. By the end of the course, they will be well-prepared for more advanced technology and design courses.

VEX ROBOTICS *(Full Year)*

Students in this course complete a series of design projects, each focused on a different aspect of robotics. Projects in this course are developed using VEX EXP, V5 robotics kits, and microcontrollers. Through these projects, students develop engineering and programming skills, and work collaboratively to design, prototype, test and document their designs.

VOCAL HERO *(Semester)*

Students learn techniques of voice-acting, sound engineering/production, and public speaking to produce audiobooks, radio dramas, and/or podcasts for the SSIS community and, perhaps, larger audiences. This course improves students' skills in reading, speaking, listening, performing arts, and the use of technology. This course is designed for students who wish to become more confident public speakers, those looking for an outlet for creative expression–but might be a bit shy about being on stage, and/or those wanting to learn about the technical side of audio engineering and production.

Grade 7 Requirements

All grade 7 students will be enrolled in the following courses:

Required Courses

- English Language Arts 7
- Mathematics 7
- Physical Education and Health 7
- Science 7
- Social Studies 7
- World Language* (Mandarin Level A/Level B or Spanish Level A/Level B), English as an Additional Language, OR Learning Strategies

*Note: World Language is a language-acquisition program designed for non-heritage speakers. Students whose home language/heritage language is Mandarin or Spanish are not eligible for that language and will be required to select a different language.

Elective Courses

Middle school students engage in a variety of enriching learning experiences. To ensure this well-rounded exposure, aligned with our core value of *Balance in Life*, they are **required to choose one Performing Arts elective and one Media/Technology Arts elective in each year of Middle School**.

Grade 7 students will **register for four semesters of electives**. Students can choose either:
TWO full-year courses, OR
ONE full-year + TWO semester courses, OR
FOUR semester courses

Grade 7

Students must choose at least one elective from **each** column below:

Performing Arts	Media/Technology Arts
- Beginning Band *(full year)* - Beginning Strings Orchestra *(full year)* - Dance *(semester)* - Drama 7 *(semester)* - Electronic Music *(semester)* - Intermediate Band *(full year)* - Intermediate Strings Orchestra *(full year)* - Musical Theater: The Middle School Musical *(full year)* - Vocal Hero *(semester)*	- Applied Design Technology *(full year)* - Art 7 *(semester)* - Creative Writing *(semester)* - Digital Art and Animation *(semester)* - Digital Fabrication *(semester)* - Drawn to Stories: The Art and Craft of Graphic Novels *(semester)* - Electronic Music *(semester)*) - Fashion Design *(semester)* - Game Making *(semester)* - Leadership Lab *(semester)* - Public Speaking *(semester)* - Technology Design Foundations *(semester)* - Vex Robotics *(full year)* - Vocal Hero *(semester)* - Yearbook *(full year)*

Core Required Courses

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS 7

The SSIS English Language Arts program places a strong emphasis on developing students' skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening to help them become critical readers, writers, and thinkers. The workshop method, which prioritizes student choice and inquiry, provides opportunities to explore key elements of various narrative, informational, argumentative, and literary texts through reading and writing. The goal of the English Language Arts program is to provide rigorous, meaningful learning activities that will help students build the literacy skills necessary for college and career.

MATHEMATICS 7

In Math 7, students continue to build an understanding of mathematics as it becomes more abstract and less concrete. They demonstrate their understanding through written and oral explanations. Topics include basic number operations, rational numbers (fractions, decimals, and percents), proportional relationships (ratios), exponent properties and scientific notation, patterns and functions (linear equations), geometrical transformations, and statistics and probability. There is an emphasis on developing the ability to determine the reasonableness of answers. The course is differentiated to meet our students' learning needs through a rigorous, blended approach of learning experiences based on grade 7 and grade 8 learning outcomes.

ALGEBRA 1

Algebra 1 delivers a rigorous, authentic curriculum that incorporates components of the Common Core Standards (CCSS) for mathematics. Students gain a strong foundation in algebra while also preparing them for future study of higher-level mathematics. Students explore the language of algebra in verbal, graphical, and symbolic form. Problem-solving activities and applications are also incorporated in each unit and encourage students to model patterns and relationships with variables and functions, ratios and proportions, and geometric figures. The units of study emphasize the following content strands: foundations of algebra, equations and inequalities, functions, systems of equations, exponents, polynomials, and quadratics.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH 7

The Physical Education program in grade 7 focuses on helping to develop physically literate students who respect and value their bodies and their health. We aim to provide a nurturing environment in which all students feel comfortable taking risks and challenging themselves to grow and develop, both in their physical skills and learning relationships, while having fun in the process.

Throughout the year, students are exposed to a variety of units structured around fitness, skill acquisition, and understanding the application of strategy and tactics of different sports and movement forms. Interpersonal skills such as sportsmanship, offering positive feedback, and demonstrating responsible behavior are woven into the nature of team games and activities. Units can include but are not limited to: invasion games, swimming, traditional Vietnamese dance, net and wall games, non-traditional games, striking and fielding, and fitness.

Through our Health curriculum, students learn about a range of topics related to their physical, mental, social, and emotional health. When put together, our program aims to empower students to have the confidence, ability, and motivation to be physically active and make healthy choices throughout their lives.

SCIENCE 7

The grade 7 science program focuses on learning by action. Students explore science concepts through the process of scientific inquiry to learn about themselves and the world they live in. The course is divided into four sections: Matter and Chemistry, Forces and Motion, Human Body, and Watersheds. After reviewing the scientific method, students apply it to examining matter and its chemical interactions in nature. They see how these interactions lead to real-world changes in the environment. In Forces and Motion, students connect Newton's Laws of Motion to examples in the world, then apply physics to build a "lunar lander." In the Human Body unit, students look at the various functioning systems found within their bodies through experimentation and dissection, while focusing on the interconnected relationships of the respiratory, digestive, and circulatory systems. The Watersheds unit examines the role of waterways in the development of healthy communities and ecosystems.

SOCIAL STUDIES 7

The grade 7 Social Studies curriculum covers world civilizations from the 1st through the 16th century, offering a thematically based exploration of the "big ideas" represented in history and geography. The grade 7 theme is Ideas in Action and focuses on the following units of study: the origins of Christianity and Islam, the ideological shifts of the Middle Ages, the legacy of the Byzantine Empire, and the causes and consequences of the Renaissance. Throughout the year, students improve their ability to critically analyze historical sources, compose argumentative essays, and think critically about the past, the present, and the future. Students strengthen their research and writing skills by crafting argumentative essays and build technology skills through presentations.

WORLD LANGUAGE: MANDARIN LEVEL A

Mandarin Level A provides basic knowledge and skills of the Mandarin Chinese language. Students develop their beginning communication skills in Mandarin as well as learning aspects of Chinese culture. Pinyin, basic strokes, components of the characters, reading, writing, and typing skills are taught at this level. Students also explore Chinese idioms, stories, and songs. Please note: This course is not for native Mandarin speakers.

WORLD LANGUAGE: MANDARIN LEVEL B

Prerequisite: Mandarin Level A
Mandarin Level B builds on Mandarin Level A to provide further knowledge and skills of the Mandarin Chinese language. Students continue to develop their communication skills in Mandarin, as well as learn deeper features of Chinese culture. Chinese idioms continue to be introduced to students. Character writing, sentence structures, creating dialogues, dictionary skills, and reading are taught at this level. Please note: This course is not for native Mandarin speakers.

WORLD LANGUAGE: SPANISH LEVEL A

Spanish Level A provides basic knowledge and skills of the Spanish language. Students develop their beginning communication skills in Spanish as well as learn aspects of Spanish culture. Students also explore Spanish stories and songs. Basic vocabulary, grammar, and speaking with daily oral exercises is introduced at this level. Please note: This course is not for native Spanish speakers.

WORLD LANGUAGE: SPANISH LEVEL B

Prerequisite: Spanish Level A
Spanish Level B builds on Spanish Level A to provide further knowledge and skills of the Spanish language. Students continue to develop their communication skills in Spanish as well as learn deeper features of Spanish culture. Spanish stories and songs continue to be introduced. Sentence structures, dialogue, dictionary skills, and reading are taught at this level. This course is not for native Spanish speakers.

Grade 7 Electives

Performing Arts Choices

BEGINNING BAND *(Full Year)*

This year-long performance course offers students the opportunity to participate in a large instrumental ensemble. This course is aimed at any student who is interested in beginning to play a band instrument. (This course is not suitable for students only wishing to play guitar or keyboard.) SSIS has a range of brass and woodwind instruments available for students to use. Music literary skills are an important aspect of this course. Students will read, write, and interpret basic musical notation on the treble and bass clefs. Students will participate in two major performances during the school year.

BEGINNING STRINGS ORCHESTRA *(Full Year)*

Beginning Strings Orchestra is a foundational full-year course designed to develop students' musical abilities through the study of instrumental music in an ensemble setting. Instruments introduced include violin, viola, cello, and double bass. This course focuses on teaching students the fundamentals necessary for playing their selected instrument. Instruction emphasizes identifying the parts of the instrument, instrument care, basic music theory and notation practices, posture and position, along with appropriate right-hand and left-hand techniques. Students are expected to practice daily after school and to take part in live and recorded performances. This course is appropriate for students who have no or limited experience playing a string instrument.

DANCE *(Semester)*

This semester-long dance elective is designed to promote an appreciation and enjoyment of dance, through both understanding and performance. The course is designed for students with little to no dance experience. However, students of all dance abilities and grade levels are welcome. The elements included in this course will promote a solid dance technique and allow students to become familiar with dance terminology as well as a wide variety of musical styles and rhythms. As there is no set subscribed music, students will have the opportunity to perform music that is appropriate in speed and is currently popular.

DRAMA 7 *(Semester)*

Drama 7 builds on skills that were introduced in Drama 6. Drama 7 focuses on how to use voice and body expression clearly, both on and off stage. Students have the opportunity to create and perform a variety of drama pieces. Students develop physical theater skills and devise short comic physical performances, presenting them with music, lighting, costumes, and props. Following this, they focus on how to use voice to explore a short script, focusing on emotion, time, place, and meaning. Students in Drama 7 should consider themselves members of a cast, which means they will be on the same team working toward the same goals. The semester-long course culminates in a final drama showcase, allowing students to demonstrate the skills and confidence they have built throughout the course.

INTERMEDIATE BAND *(Full Year)*

Prerequisite: Beginning Band or 1+ years of experience
This year-long performance course offers students the opportunity to participate in a large instrumental ensemble. This course is for any student who currently plays a band or orchestral instrument and who has one or more years of experience on their instrument. (This course is not suitable for students wishing to only play guitar or keyboard.) SSIS has a range of brass and woodwind instruments available for students to use. Music literary skills are an important aspect of this course. Students will read, write, and interpret basic musical notation on the treble and bass clefs as well as more advanced playing techniques and expressive interpretation of music. Students will participate in two major performances during the school year.

INTERMEDIATE STRINGS ORCHESTRA *(Full Year)*

Prerequisite: 2 - 3+ years of experience playing a string instrument
Intermediate Strings Orchestra is a full-year course designed to continue developing students' ability in instrumental music in an ensemble setting. Music-reading skills are reinforced while students continue to refine the correct technique for playing their selected instrument (violin, viola, cello, or double bass). The curriculum builds on and adds to the skills introduced in Beginning Strings Orchestra. A variety of performing opportunities are available to students in this course. Students are expected to practice regularly after school and to take part in live and recorded performances.

MUSICAL THEATER: The Middle School Musical *(Full Year)*

Students develop their creative skills through acting, singing, dancing, and technical theater opportunities. Students reinforce these skills through engaging tasks, including preparation for and performance in the annual middle school musical! This course is designed for students interested in improving their theatrical skills and developing their abilities to both appreciate and participate in theater, although the skills they acquire transfer to other subject areas as well. The unique skills and values attained through a performing arts education have been linked to success in high school, college, career, and beyond. Come be part of our MS musical and have fun!

Media/Technology Arts Choices

APPLIED DESIGN TECHNOLOGY *(Full Year)*

Students participate in hands-on projects that introduce various aspects of design and problem-solving. Using microprocessors and sensors, they build interactive projects that showcase their creativity. Using a variety of tools, such as laser cutters and 3D printers, students learn how to combine hardware and software in their work. This hands-on experience helps them understand how to create interactive devices that respond to the physical world.

ART 7 *(Full Year or Semester)*

The Visual Arts program in grade 7 focuses on the development of creative thinking and expression. Students apply a variety of methods to overcome creative blocks and use visual organizational strategies to design and produce a work of art. Students demonstrate persistence in developing skills with various materials and techniques. They also demonstrate an awareness of ethical responsibility in relation to plagiarism and social media. Different aspects of drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, mixed media, digital art, and ceramics are taught. All art is showcased in an online gallery, displayed regularly throughout the school, and in a public exhibition at the end of the year.

CREATIVE WRITING *(Semester)*

Creative Writing is for students who want to develop their writing skills and bring their imagination to life through creative expression. As authors, students explore different genres of writing including memoir, fantasy/sci-fi, poetry, short stories, and journaling as well as wherever the students' interests take us. Students learn the techniques used by professional writers and read mentor texts from a variety of authors and poets. At the end of the course, students emerge as better readers, writers, thinkers, and confident content creators. They may even start a literary journal to share their awesomeness! Every best-selling author had to start somewhere. As a future best-seller, why not begin your journey here?

DIGITAL ART AND ANIMATION *(Semester)*

Discover the world of digital creativity in this engaging and hands-on course for grades 7 and 8. Students explore the fundamentals of digital art, including drawing, painting, and animation, using the Procreate platform on iPads. They develop essential skills in brushwork, layering, color theory, and frame-by-frame animation while applying design principles to create posters, custom merchandise, and collaborative projects. As the course progresses, students embark on a personalized project, connecting their artwork to passions, community, or other electives. From designing professional illustrations with dynamic lighting to crafting animated loops, students gain real-world experience and build a digital portfolio that showcases their creativity and growth. Whether aspiring to a career in art or simply exploring their talents, this course provides a platform for self-expression, innovation, and skill development.

DIGITAL FABRICATION *(Semester)*

Students develop 3D design skills using the SSIS design cycle, applying it to plan, create, and refine their projects. They make and continuously improve functional prototypes, resulting in practical physical models that meet specific goals. Additionally, they strengthen their abilities to organize workflows, document their progress, and refine their designs through ongoing iteration.

DRAWN TO STORIES: The Art and Craft of Graphic Novels *(Semester)*

Students unleash their creativity within the world of graphic novels! In this course, they dive into the storytelling secrets behind their favorite comics, exploring essential comics techniques and film techniques that bring stories to life. They learn how these elements combine to captivate readers, and apply their knowledge to craft their very own original graphic short story. Whether an aspiring artist, storyteller, or both, this course helps students turn their ideas into a visual masterpiece!

ELECTRONIC MUSIC *(Semester)*

Students learn to create, produce, and record music in a variety of genres using current music technology. They gain hands-on experience in electronic music studio techniques, including digital recording, audio editing, signal processing, mixing, sampling, MIDI, synthesizers, and drum machines. Students acquire a historical perspective of the development of electronic music and an understanding of acoustics as applied to music production. They develop their listening skills and an appreciation for a wide variety of electronic music and the world of sound. This is a great introductory course for aspiring singer/songwriters, musicians, composers, producers, sound designers, or sound artists. No previous musical experience is necessary.

FASHION DESIGN *(Semester)*

Fashion Design is an elective course designed to introduce students to the basics of fashion and textile arts. Students explore garment construction, design principles, and creative techniques while developing valuable life skills. Through hands-on projects, they learn to use tools like hand and machine sewing to bring their designs to life. Topics may include fashion illustration, embroidery, upcycling, pattern making, and fabric dyeing. This course encourages creativity, problem-solving, and self-expression, providing a fun and inspiring foundation for future exploration in design and beyond.

GAME MAKING *(Semester)*

Game Making introduces students to game development, where they develop creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Students use a programming tool to explore graphics, sound, animation design, and project management while creating interactive games. They also focus on designing engaging storylines for players. Team-based projects help them sharpen their ability to organize responsibilities, meet deadlines, and work collaboratively.

LEADERSHIP LAB *(Semester)*

This semester-long course empowers students to explore their passions through personal inspiration projects, engage in meaningful service learning, reflect on personal well-being, and align their actions with SSIS's core values. Students learn to balance academic rigor, personal interests, and community responsibility while developing a strong sense of self and a wide range of important leadership skills and strategies.

PUBLIC SPEAKING *(Semester)*

In this Public Speaking course, students develop speech and language skills that will help them in their classes, in university, and in their careers. Beginning with basic formal speaking techniques and moving toward public speaking opportunities, this semester-long course allows students to practice speaking styles such as formal speech, debate, storytelling, and impromptu speaking. The course is designed for both hesitant speakers and confident performers: students progress at different levels and paces throughout the course. Students can expect two to four formal speaking opportunities to audiences outside the classroom.

TECHNOLOGY DESIGN FOUNDATIONS *(Semester)*

This course provides students with a strong foundation in design and technology by focusing on the creation of textile-based products. Students use hands-on tools to bring their ideas to life as physical creations. Through the SSIS design cycle, they plan, test, and refine their projects, building essential problem-solving and technical skills. Along the way, students learn to organize workflows, document their progress, and improve their designs through iteration. By the end of the course, they will be well-prepared for more advanced technology and design courses.

VEX ROBOTICS *(Full Year)*

Students in this course complete a series of design projects, each focused on a different aspect of robotics. Projects in this course are developed using VEX EXP, V5 robotics kits, and microcontrollers. Through these projects, students develop engineering and programming skills, and work collaboratively to design, prototype, test and document their designs.

VOCAL HERO *(Semester)*

Students learn techniques of voice-acting, sound engineering/production, and public speaking to produce audiobooks, radio dramas, and/or podcasts for the SSIS community and, perhaps, larger audiences. This course improves students' skills in reading, speaking, listening, performing arts, and the use of technology. This course is designed for students who wish to become more confident public speakers, those looking for an outlet for creative expression–but might be a bit shy about being on stage, and/or those wanting to learn about the technical side of audio engineering and production.

YEARBOOK *(Full Year)*

Over the course of the year, yearbook students will create the annual SSIS Middle School Yearbook. During this year-long course, students have the opportunity to explore digital photography, graphic design, and journalism. This course emphasizes working collaboratively to learn the process of publishing a yearbook with accuracy, effective photography, design layout, and equal student representation. Students also focus on professional communication skills and time management.

Grade 8 Requirements

All grade 8 students will be enrolled in the following courses:

Required Courses

- English Language Arts 8
- Mathematics 8
- Physical Education and Health 8
- Science 8
- Social Studies 8
- World Language* (Mandarin Level A/Level B/Level C or Spanish Level A/Level B/Level C), English as an Additional Language, OR Learning Strategies

*Note: World Language is a language-acquisition program designed for non-heritage speakers. Students whose home language/heritage language is Mandarin or Spanish are not eligible for that language and will be required to select a different language.

Elective Courses

Middle school students engage in a variety of enriching learning experiences. To ensure this well-rounded exposure, aligned with our core value of *Balance in Life*, they are **required to choose one Performing Arts elective and one Media/Technology Arts elective in each year of Middle School.**

Grade 8 students will **register for four semesters of electives**. Students can choose either:
TWO full-year courses, OR
ONE full-year + TWO semester courses, OR
FOUR semester courses

Grade 8
Students must choose at least one elective from **each** column below:

Performing Arts	Media/Technology Arts
- Beginning Band *(full year)* - Beginning Strings Orchestra *(full year)* - Dance *(semester)* - Drama 8 *(semester)* - Electronic Music *(semester)* - Intermediate Band *(full year)* - Intermediate Strings Orchestra *(full year)* - Musical Theater: The Middle School Musical *(full year)*	- Applied Design Technology *(full year)* - Art 8 *(semester)* - Creative Writing *(semester)* - Digital Art and Animation *(semester)* - Digital Fabrication *(semester)* - Electronic Music *(semester)* - Fashion Design *(semester)* - Game Making *(semester)* - Leadership Lab *(semester)* - Public Speaking *(semester)* - Vex Robotics *(full year)* - Yearbook *(full year)*

Core Required Courses

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS 8

The SSIS English Language Arts program places a strong emphasis on developing students' skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening to help them become critical readers, writers, and thinkers. The workshop method, which prioritizes student choice and inquiry, provides opportunities to explore key elements of various narrative, informational, argumentative, and literary texts through reading and writing. The goal of the English Language Arts program is to provide rigorous, meaningful learning activities that will help students build the literacy skills necessary for college and career.

MATHEMATICS 8

In grade 8 Math, students solidify the basic principles of algebra and geometry through hands-on activities, everyday examples, and relevant practice. Areas of focus include rational numbers; exponents and roots; simplifying and solving single and multiple-step algebraic equations; solving equations/problems that involve ratios, proportions, percents, perimeter, area, and volume; writing, graphing, and recognizing linear, exponential, and quadratic functions; and recognizing and solving problems that relate to angles and various shapes in geometry.

ALGEBRA 1

Algebra 1 delivers a rigorous, authentic curriculum that incorporates components of the Common Core Standards (CCSS) for mathematics. Students gain a strong foundation in algebra while also preparing them for future study of higher-level mathematics. Students explore the language of algebra in verbal, graphical, and symbolic form. Problem-solving activities and applications are also incorporated in each unit and encourage students to model patterns and relationships with variables and functions, ratios and proportions, and geometric figures. The units of study emphasize the following content strands: foundations of algebra, equations and inequalities, functions, systems of equations, exponents, polynomials, and quadratics.

GEOMETRY, STATISTICS, AND PROBABILITY

The Geometry, Statistics, and Probability course covers the foundation of geometric reasoning and an exploration of the basics of statistics and probability. During the first half of the course, students focus on two- and three-dimensional geometry; relationships between points, angles, lines and planes; congruent triangles; and right-angled triangle trigonometry. The second half of the course explores types of data, data collection, basic statistical measures, relative frequency, theoretical probability, Venn diagrams, and expected values.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH 8

The Physical Education program in grade 8 focuses on helping to develop physically literate students who respect and value their bodies and their health. We aim to provide a nurturing environment in which all students feel comfortable taking risks and challenging themselves to grow and develop, both in their physical skills and learning relationships, while having fun in the process. Throughout the year, students are exposed to a variety of units structured around fitness, skill acquisition, and understanding the application of strategy and tactics of different sports and movement forms. Interpersonal skills such as sportsmanship, offering positive feedback, and demonstrating responsible behavior are woven into the nature of team games and activities. Units can include but are not limited to: invasion games, swimming, traditional Vietnamese dance, net and wall games, non-traditional games, striking and fielding, and fitness.

Through our Health curriculum, students learn about a range of topics related to their physical, mental, social, and emotional health. When put together, our program aims to empower students to have the confidence, ability, and motivation to be physically active and make healthy choices throughout their lives.

SCIENCE 8

The grade 8 science program focuses on different types of learning environments. Students explore concepts through traditional lessons and inquiry labs, independent units, and big project learning. This course focuses on the theme of change as it occurs in human genetics and ecosystems, weather and climate, and chemical and atomic interactions. Students approach each unit of study from a different angle, both in content and learning style. Students extend their knowledge of elements, chemical reactions, and chemical bonding, investigate the key to genetic inheritance and diversity, study the natural processes of ecosystems and our environment, and investigate the change in our climate and its effects on individuals and humanity as a whole.

SOCIAL STUDIES 8

The grade 8 Social Studies curriculum covers world civilizations from the 16th through the 20th century. The course is a thematically based exploration of the "big ideas" represented in history and geography. The grade 8 theme is Conflict and Change and focuses on the following units of study: the Age of Exploration, mercantilism and capitalism, absolutism, the scientific revolution, the age of Enlightenment, Revolutions, and the rise of Nationalism. Throughout the year, students improve their ability to critically analyze historical sources, compose argumentative essays, and think critically about the past, the present, and the future.

WORLD LANGUAGE: MANDARIN LEVEL A

Mandarin Level A provides basic knowledge and skills of the Mandarin Chinese language. Students develop their beginning communication skills in Mandarin as well as learning aspects of Chinese culture. Pinyin, basic strokes, components of the characters, reading, writing, and typing skills are taught at this level. Students also explore Chinese idioms, stories, and songs. Please note: This course is not for native Mandarin speakers.

WORLD LANGUAGE: MANDARIN LEVEL B

Prerequisite: Mandarin Level A
Mandarin Level B builds on Mandarin Level A to provide further knowledge and skills of the Mandarin Chinese language. Students continue to develop their communication skills in Mandarin, as well as learn deeper features of Chinese culture. Chinese idioms continue to be introduced to students. Character writing, sentence structures, creating dialogues, dictionary skills, and reading are taught at this level. Please note: This course is not for native Mandarin speakers.

WORLD LANGUAGE: MANDARIN LEVEL C

Prerequisite: Mandarin Level B
Students in Mandarin Level C continue to develop their language skills, learning more complex grammatical constructions, while developing their listening and reading competencies. Students use the language for authentic communication and presentation, thereby gaining a better understanding of the issues of Chinese communities and the Chinese language and culture. An interactive classroom environment enriches this cultural language and culture study. This course is not for native Mandarin speakers.

WORLD LANGUAGE: SPANISH LEVEL A

Spanish Level A provides basic knowledge and skills of the Spanish language. Students develop their beginning communication skills in Spanish as well as learn aspects of Spanish culture. Students also explore Spanish stories and songs. Basic vocabulary, grammar, and speaking with daily oral exercises is introduced at this level. Please note: This course is not for native Spanish speakers.

WORLD LANGUAGE: SPANISH LEVEL B

Prerequisite: Spanish Level A
Students in Spanish Level B continue to develop their skills in Spanish, mastering new vocabulary, learning more grammatical constructions, and developing their listening and reading competencies. Students use the language for authentic communication and presentation. Students learn to read stories in Spanish to help them understand the structure of the language as well as the culture of Spanish-speaking communities. This course is not for native Spanish speakers.

WORLD LANGUAGE: SPANISH LEVEL C

Prerequisite: Spanish Level B
Students in Spanish Level C continue to develop their language skills, learning more complex grammatical constructions, while developing their listening and reading competencies. Students use the language for authentic communication and presentation, thereby gaining a better understanding of the Spanish language and culture. An interactive classroom environment enriches this language and culture study. This course is not for native Spanish speakers.

Grade 8 Electives

Performing Arts Choices

BEGINNING BAND *(Full Year)*

This year-long performance course offers students the opportunity to participate in a large instrumental ensemble. This course is aimed at any student who is interested in beginning to play a band instrument. (This course is not suitable for students only wishing to play guitar or keyboard.) SSIS has a range of brass and woodwind instruments available for students to use. Music literary skills are an important aspect of this course. Students will read, write, and interpret basic musical notation on the treble and bass clefs. Students will participate in two major performances during the school year.

BEGINNING STRINGS ORCHESTRA *(Full Year)*

Beginning Strings Orchestra is a foundational full-year course designed to develop students' musical abilities through the study of instrumental music in an ensemble setting. Instruments introduced include violin, viola, cello, and double bass. This course focuses on teaching students the fundamentals necessary for playing their selected instrument. Instruction emphasizes identifying the parts of the instrument, instrument care, basic music theory and notation practices, posture and position, along with appropriate right-hand and left-hand techniques. Students are expected to practice daily after school and to take part in live and recorded performances. This course is appropriate for students who have no or limited experience playing a string instrument.

DANCE *(Semester)*

This semester-long dance elective is designed to promote an appreciation and enjoyment of dance, through both understanding and performance. The course is designed for students with little to no dance experience. However, students of all dance abilities and grade levels are welcome. The elements included in this course promote a solid dance technique and allow students to become familiar with dance terminology as well as a wide variety of musical styles and rhythms. There is no set music as students have the opportunity to perform to music that is appropriate in speed and currently popular.

DRAMA 8 *(Semester)*

Drama 8 focuses on how to use voice and body expressions clearly, both on and off stage. Students have the opportunity to create and perform a variety of drama pieces, including multiple semi-formal and formal performances for peers and the broader school community. Students learn how to use voice and movement to explore short scripts, focusing on emotion, time, place, and meaning. Students in Drama 8 should consider themselves members of a cast, which means they will be on the same team working toward the same goals. The semester-long course culminates in a final drama showcase, allowing students to demonstrate the skills and confidence they have built throughout the course.

INTERMEDIATE BAND *(Full Year)*

Prerequisite: Beginning Band or 1+ years of experience
This year-long performance course offers students the opportunity to participate in a large instrumental ensemble. This course is for any student who currently plays a band or orchestral instrument and who has one or more years of experience on their instrument. (This course is not suitable for students wishing to only play guitar or keyboard.) SSIS has a range of brass and woodwind instruments available for students to use. Music literary skills are an important aspect of this course. Students will read, write, and interpret basic musical notation on the treble and bass clefs as well as more advanced playing techniques and expressive interpretation of music. Students will participate in two major performances during the school year.

INTERMEDIATE STRINGS ORCHESTRA *(Full Year)*

Prerequisite: 2 - 3+ years of experience playing a string instrument
Intermediate Strings Orchestra is a full-year program designed to continue developing the student's ability in instrumental music in an ensemble setting. Music-reading skills are reinforced while students continue to refine the correct technique for playing their selected instrument (violin, viola, cello, or double bass). The curriculum builds on and adds to the skills introduced in Beginning Strings Orchestra. A variety of performing opportunities are available to students in this course. Students are expected to practice regularly after school and to take part in live and recorded performances.

MUSICAL THEATER: The Middle School Musical *(Full Year)*

Students develop their creative skills through acting, singing, dancing, and technical theater opportunities. Students reinforce these skills through engaging tasks, including preparation for and performance in the annual middle school musical! This course is designed for students interested in improving their theatrical skills and developing their abilities to both appreciate and participate in theater, although the skills they acquire transfer to other subject areas as well. The unique skills and values attained through a performing arts education have been linked to success in high school, college, career, and beyond. Come be part of our MS musical and have fun!

Media/Technology Arts Choices

APPLIED DESIGN TECHNOLOGY *(Full Year)*

Students participate in hands-on projects that introduce various aspects of design and problem-solving. Using microprocessors and sensors, they build interactive projects that showcase their creativity. Using a variety of tools, such as laser cutters and 3D printers, students learn how to combine hardware and software in their work. This hands-on experience helps them understand how to create interactive devices that respond to the physical world.

ART 8 *(Full Year or Semester)*

The Visual Arts program in grade 8 is focused on the development of creative thinking and expression. Students experience different aspects of drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, mixed media, digital art, and ceramics. Students peer assess, self-assess, and reflect regularly throughout the course. They work in groups, pairs, and individually. Students participate regularly in discussions linking to core courses, community, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, and service, whenever possible. Students are assessed through the lens of the Studio Habits. All work is documented in an online journal and exhibited throughout the year, physically and virtually.

CREATIVE WRITING *(Semester)*

Creative Writing is for students who want to develop their writing skills and bring their imagination to life through creative expression. As authors, students explore different genres of writing including memoir, fantasy/sci-fi, poetry, short stories, and journaling as well as wherever the students' interests take us. Students learn the techniques used by professional writers and read mentor texts from a variety of authors and poets. At the end of the course, students emerge as better readers, writers, thinkers, and confident content creators. They may even start a literary journal to share their awesomeness! Every best-selling author had to start somewhere. As a future best-seller, why not begin your journey here? Please note: students may only take this course once during middle school.

DIGITAL ART AND ANIMATION *(Semester)*

Discover the world of digital creativity in this engaging and hands-on course for grades 7 and 8. Students explore the fundamentals of digital art, including drawing, painting, and animation, using the Procreate platform on iPads. They develop essential skills in brushwork, layering, color theory, and frame-by-frame animation while applying design principles to create posters, custom merchandise, and collaborative projects. As the course progresses, students embark on a personalized project, connecting their artwork to passions, community, or other electives. From designing professional illustrations with dynamic lighting to crafting animated loops, students gain real-world experience and build a digital portfolio that showcases their creativity and growth. Whether aspiring to a career in art or simply exploring their talents, this course provides a platform for self-expression, innovation, and skill development.

DIGITAL FABRICATION *(Semester)*

Students develop 3D design skills using the SSIS design cycle, applying it to plan, create, and refine their projects. They make and continuously improve functional prototypes, resulting in practical physical models that meet specific goals. Additionally, they strengthen their abilities to organize workflows, document their progress, and refine their designs through ongoing iteration.

ELECTRONIC MUSIC *(Semester)*

Students learn to create, produce, and record music in a variety of genres using current music technology. They gain hands-on experience in electronic music studio techniques, including digital recording, audio editing, signal processing, mixing, sampling, MIDI, synthesizers, and drum machines. Students acquire a historical perspective of the development of electronic music and an understanding of acoustics as applied to music production. They develop their listening skills and an appreciation for a wide variety of electronic music and the world of sound. This is a great introductory course for aspiring singer/songwriters, musicians, composers, producers, sound designers, or sound artists. No previous musical experience is necessary.

FASHION DESIGN *(Semester)*

Fashion Design is an elective course designed to introduce students to the basics of fashion and textile arts. Students explore garment construction, design principles, and creative techniques while developing valuable life skills. Through hands-on projects, they learn to use tools like hand and machine sewing to bring their designs to life. Topics may include fashion illustration, embroidery, upcycling, pattern making, and fabric dyeing. This course encourages creativity, problem-solving, and self-expression, providing a fun and inspiring foundation for future exploration in design and beyond.

GAME MAKING *(Semester)*

Game Making introduces students to game development, where they develop creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Students use a programming tool to explore graphics, sound, animation design, and project management while creating interactive games. They also focus on designing engaging storylines for players. Team-based projects help them sharpen their ability to organize responsibilities, meet deadlines, and work collaboratively.

LEADERSHIP LAB *(Semester)*

This semester-long course empowers students to explore their passions through personal inspiration projects, engage in meaningful service learning, reflect on personal well-being, and align their actions with SSIS's core values. Students learn to balance academic rigor, personal interests, and community responsibility while developing a strong sense of self and a wide range of important leadership skills and strategies.

PUBLIC SPEAKING *(Semester)*

In this Public Speaking course, students develop speech and language skills that will help them in their classes, in university, and in their careers. Beginning with basic formal speaking techniques and moving toward public speaking opportunities, this semester-long course allows students to practice speaking styles such as formal speech, debate, storytelling, and impromptu speaking. The course is designed for both hesitant speakers and confident performers: students progress at different levels and paces throughout the course. Students can expect two to four formal speaking opportunities to audiences outside the classroom.

VEX ROBOTICS *(Full Year)*

Students in this course complete a series of design projects, each focused on a different aspect of robotics. Projects in this course are developed using VEX EXP, V5 robotics kits, and microcontrollers. Through these projects, students develop engineering and programming skills, and work collaboratively to design, prototype, test and document their designs.

YEARBOOK *(Full Year)*

Over the course of the year, yearbook students will create the annual SSIS Middle School Yearbook. During this year-long course, students have the opportunity to explore digital photography, graphic design, and journalism. This course emphasizes working collaboratively to learn the process of publishing a yearbook with accuracy, effective photography, design layout, and equal student representation. Students also focus on professional communication skills and time management.

Support Services (Grades 6-8)

ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EAL)

SSIS offers an English as an Additional Language (EAL) program for students who are further developing their academic English skills. The EAL support service prepares students to use academic language in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, focusing on skills needed across the curriculum. The program stresses vocabulary development, sentence fluency, grammar, and academic writing structures.

EAL students in grades 6-8 receive English language support through small-group EAL classes. Class sizes are limited, allowing for individualized instruction and enabling students to gain confidence in a risk-free environment. EAL courses generally take the place of either a world language course or an elective. In addition to EAL courses, some students also receive direct content-area support through a co-teaching model. This is where EAL teachers and content-area teachers collaborate, plan, and team-teach in science, social studies, math, or language arts classrooms to ensure that English language learners can successfully access the content in the core curriculum.

Students are placed in the EAL program based on a combination of: performance in core classes, an English language proficiency test, and teacher recommendations. Students exit the EAL program when they have passed set criteria in each of these areas.

LEARNING STRATEGIES

SSIS offers Learning Strategies, which provides individualized assistance and differentiation so that students can reach their full potential as successful, confident, and independent learners. The goal of Learning Strategies services is to provide individual students who have identified learning needs with the skills and strategies they need to help them be successful with the SSIS curriculum. Specifically, the Learning Strategies services help students with learning needs by:

- Providing academic and emotional support needed to achieve success with the academic curriculum
- Instilling confidence so that students realize and believe that they can achieve success in their coursework
- Equipping students with the tools and strategies necessary to achieve success at school.

Students receiving Learning Strategies services in grades 6-8 are given direct support through small-group Learning Strategies classes. Class sizes are limited, allowing for individualized instruction and enabling students to gain confidence in a risk-free environment. Learning Strategies classes generally take the place of either a world language course or an elective. In addition to Learning Strategies class, some students also receive direct content-area support through a co-teaching model. This is where the Learning Strategies teacher and content-area teachers collaborate and use a wide range of strategies to ensure that students in the Learning Strategies program can successfully access the core curriculum.

Students are placed in the Learning Strategies program based on a variety of factors. Initially, new students may be accepted into the Learning Strategies program at SSIS if they have mild learning needs that can be supported through differentiation and accommodations in the mainstream classroom setting. These students may have received Learning Strategies services at their previous school. Students already enrolled at SSIS may be referred for Learning Strategies services through the Student Support Team process (SST). The SST is a collaborative process involving school personnel, students, and their parents. A recommendation for Learning Strategies services is made following a thorough investigation of the student's learning needs. Once students are identified, the team, composed of the student, their parents, a Learning Strategies teacher, core teacher, and administration develops an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). The plan includes services, accommodations, and specific instructional goals. Parents are updated regularly regarding their child's progress. Students may exit the program when they have passed set criteria and demonstrate self-advocacy skills successfully across their courses.

MIDDLE SCHOOL ADVISORY

An integral component of middle school at SSIS is our advisory program. The purpose of the MS advisory program is to help students develop the mindset, skills, and disposition to navigate their middle school years and beyond. The MS advisory program at SSIS is built on positive psychology and supports students in their development with the aim of helping students to thrive during their middle school years as well as be equipped to later lead purposeful lives as global citizens.

Small groups of students are assigned to a middle school faculty member who serves as their advisor. This advisor acts as a personal mentor and provides academic, social, and personal guidance. In addition to program material, advisors address students' needs outside the regular academic program. Advisors get to know the unique characteristics and needs of each student. As a result, the advisory program promotes meaningful student, teacher, peer, and community relationships. Our Advisory program results in students' academic success, improved self-esteem, and social success.

WEEK WITHOUT WALLS

A significant component of the middle school experience is Week Without Walls (WWW). The WWW program is an exciting opportunity for all middle school students to extend their learning beyond the classroom walls. Exploring and learning about Vietnam, extending curriculum skills and content, and developing our Core Values are the three primary goals of the WWW program. Students embark on their exciting journey as a grade level, spending four to five days learning, growing, and making memories that will last a lifetime. This valuable experience helps students further develop their independence, collaboration skills, and confidence.