



WILBRAHAM & MONSON ACADEMY
MIDDLE SCHOOL



COURSE OF STUDIES 2025-2026



Mission/Educational Philosophy

The WMA Middle School has developed a cross-curricular academic program that aims to accomplish the following:

- Stimulate and satisfy the innate and individually unique curiosity of the young adolescent
- Feature learning experiences that are highly integrated and connected to life lessons
- Provide a safe environment for each child to explore their emerging identity under the guidance of nurturing adults
- Expose students to a wide range of academic, social and recreational opportunities
- Allow students to question and explore their environment
- Involve each student in the richness of the world with the goal of developing caring, responsible and ethical citizens



PROGRAM INFORMATION

The Middle School program contains seven academic periods which meet on a rotating schedule. Students will take five core courses, which meet full time all year, in the disciplines of English, mathematics, world cultures, science and Spanish language. These will be augmented by “Specials” - physical education, health, art and music - which meet part of the week or part of the year, depending on the course. Additionally, students will have Directed Study, MS Meeting, MS Clubs and Advisor Meeting to round out their week.

Our program features:

- Cross-curricular and project-based learning
- Technology enriched instruction
- Differentiated learning opportunities
- Small class sizes, allowing for consistent individualized and small group instruction
- Beginning Spanish instruction
- Application of social and emotional learning strategies
- Advisor Program to encourage academic, social and emotional growth

Grading System

Faculty members assess student academic performance by assigning grades on a 0 - 100 scale. The letter equivalents of each numerical grade are listed below.

Numerical Grade/ Letter equivalent

100, 99, 98, 97	A+
96, 95, 94, 93	A
92, 91, 90	A-
89, 88, 87	B+
86, 85, 84, 83	B
82, 81, 80	B-
79, 78, 77	C+
76, 75, 74, 73	C
72, 71, 70	C-
69, 68, 67	D+
66, 65, 64, 63	D
62, 61, 60	D-
59 and below	F

Directed Study & Office Hours

In addition to the coursework outlined in the following pages, all students participate in Directed Study - a daily program that creates additional contact time between the classroom teacher and students for one-on-one or small group continued instruction in a given subject. Directed Study time occurs each day, providing a different course focus each day as determined by the student's schedule.

Academic Honors

Lists of students earning Honors, High Honors and Highest Honors are published on the Academy's website at the end of each term. A student must earn a numerical average of 87 to be eligible for Honors, 93 for High Honors and 97 for Highest Honors. A student may not have a grade below 73 and must be fully enrolled throughout the term to be eligible for academic honors.

Incomplete Grades

Incomplete grades may only be assigned when a student has been absent for an approved reason and was unable to complete work by the end of a particular marking period. Students should create a plan with their teacher to clear their incomplete in a timely manner. Students with incomplete grades in any course will not be included in the Honor Roll.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

ENGLISH

GRADE 6

Grade 6 English students will spend time reviewing basic grammar concepts, breaking down sentence structure, learning to use MLA style for paper formatting and completing one-paragraph expository essays before diving into the foundations of literature. As the year progresses, students will work to gain an understanding of the process of writing. The importance of brainstorming, planning an outline, utilizing Accordion Paragraphs, creating a first draft, and revising and editing for a final draft will be discussed, modeled and guided. Once the organization is acquired, students will be able to utilize their voice in their writing, making it unique and special. Students will complete their first group project utilizing creative writing and applying it through a mentor text. Groups will display their ability to identify themes and characters by creating the final chapter of the text. Students will learn to annotate and analyze literature within their Literature Groups by completing a poetry unit and telling a story through verse. Additionally, we will immerse ourselves in history, exploring both memoir and historical fiction, making connections between the represented historical era, our studies and the perspectives shared within the text. Readers will consider the concept of one's universal identity.

GRADE 7



Grade 7 English will immerse students in the joyful world of reading and writing, offering students an opportunity to experience a wide range of genres. We will explore characterization, and how our discoveries related to character allow for greater connections, drive plot and feed themes. We will read a graphic novel paired with a historical fiction text, as we explore corners of our world introduced in Grade 6 World Cultures. Students will consider the driving forces behind migration and its impact on young people over time. In a separate opportunity to reach across content, readers will explore United States history in both English and World Cultures, sharing a novel in verse alongside pieces of nonfiction, and examining both modern and historic change-makers. Additionally, readers and writers will consider the

impact of perspective and point of view in storytelling, as well as the profound effect on character development. Grade 7 students will also step into the dystopian world, exploring the elements of both utopia and dystopia, as well as the latter's appeal to young adult readers and writers. Within these discussions and responses, the class will explore the concept of a "classic" novel, questioning what makes a piece of writing both relevant and alluring for generations. Finally, our readers and writers will have an opportunity to engage with a screenplay, examining the impact of voice and performance in literature while maintaining a focus on United States history. This study will be amplified by opportunities for personal choice. We will fine tune our annotation skills, summary skills, responses to reading, ability to analyze and compare pieces of literature and presentation skills. We will build our vocabulary and grasp of grammar, and strive to showcase our understanding through creative and innovative choices, building our writing prowess throughout.

GRADE 8

The first two major units of study will focus on coming of age as students read a classic text accompanied by one of a selection of contemporary coming-of-age novels. Students will identify how characters create their own pathways to adulthood and how they themselves plan to do the same. Our focus will then turn to the examination of how a person's decisions can affect their community by exploring a piece of historical fiction alongside modern fantasy. This concept of change through personal action will also be examined as students consider to what extent literature can be used as a vehicle for social change. Students will also read and analyze a variety of poetry, stories and articles that explore similar themes and complement the major course readings. Students will sharpen their annotation skills and explore the concept of "reading between the lines" to discern a deeper meaning from the texts that they read. Throughout the year, students will write frequently in formal and informal assignments. They will become acquainted with the conventions and expectations of the literary analysis essay, including properly using quotations and citations. Class discussions will also be used as an important way for students to both sharpen and express their ideas, and students will learn ways to productively participate in such discussions.

MIDDLE SCHOOL ESOL

The Middle School ESOL program is designed to enable students to acquire the necessary skills and language to succeed in mainstream classrooms with fluent speakers, readers and writers of English. The course provides a balanced curriculum in the four domains of language: reading, writing, listening and speaking, with a strong focus on grammar understanding and usage presented in a variety of engaging academic disciplines. The course uses authentic content from National Geographic to challenge students to think critically and make real-world connections. Using a systematic approach, students explore, learn, practice and apply their new language to various formal and informal writing and speaking tasks. Students will develop English language for academic writing, reading, oral communication and critical thinking application to confidently engage and succeed in grade-level, discussion-based classes. ESL students are mainstreamed in all classes but are granted a language waiver so they may focus on reinforcing and expanding their English skills.

WORLD CULTURES

GRADE 6

The world's most populous nation, its largest democracy and the region experiencing the greatest urbanization at present are the three focus areas of Grade 6 World Cultures. Looking at the histories, religions and realities of China", India and Sub-Saharan Africa affords students insight into these major world players whose future directions will impact their own lives in this age of ever-increasing globalization. The main text, Pearson's "myWorld: World Geography, will help with this curriculum. Students will also explore a wide variety of rich supplemental writings, texts and other media, while primary source documents and PowerPoints are among the other resources that will aid in understanding. Outlining, note making – not just note taking – and writing based on critical thinking prompts



are some of the skills that will be developed this year, as will active viewing of film and news clips. Debates, quizzes, formal written responses and presentations involving technology will help students to demonstrate their learning in a variety of formats.

Students will begin their three-tiered Global Capstone project, a research-driven exploration of a country selected by the student in Grade 6 and carried through Grade 8. Global Capstone in Grade 6 World Cultures asks students to learn the key features of their chosen nation, including political, geographic and social elements, thereby forming a strong baseline for their presentations in Grades 7 and 8. With this research and background knowledge, students will then create a visual component to serve as backdrop for a public presentation.

GRADE 7

With ever-shifting political winds, as well as trade and immigration issues continually filling the headlines, it is more essential than ever for young people to understand their places in societies, as well as realities to the north and south of the United States borders. This course traces the origins and evolution of the American nation through its history, religious threads and governmental institutions while focusing on civic structure and the opportunities and need for civic engagement. National realities in Canada, Mexico and Latin America will be considered, as will U.S. relations across the hemisphere. Major religions such as different threads of Christianity and the value systems of indigenous peoples such as Incas and Aztecs will be explored in the context of their societies. Pearson's "myWorld Interactive: World Geography" will be the course's text. Students will also explore a wide variety of rich supplemental writings, texts and other media, while primary source documents and PowerPoints will aid in understanding. Noting the spiraling thread and developing skills involved in research and writing, students will continue to outline, note make, research and write based on critical thinking prompts, elevating their abilities beyond the realm of summary and into analysis. Graded discussions, quizzes, tests and presentations involving technology will help students to demonstrate their learning in a variety of formats.

Students will continue their three-tiered Global Capstone project. Global Capstone in Grade 7 World Cultures asks students to review the key features of their chosen nation before delving into historically significant events that have helped shape the country. Students will focus on elements such as indigenous peoples, colonization, historical impact of the environment (e.g. natural disasters), war, heroes and heroines, changes in leadership and governance, and global contributions. Ultimately, each student will settle on a person or event of interest that remains pertinent today. They will craft a research essay from the perspective of their selected figure or a fictional resident of their country, remembering events past. The larger community will have the opportunity to meet these memorable characters when students role play, recreating all they have learned for audiences to enjoy!

GRADE 8

World Cultures for Grade 8 is designed to continue to introduce WMA students to world geography, as well as to Judaism, Islam and Christianity, building a greater understanding of one's place in the world, physically, culturally and historically. Additionally, Grade 8 World Cultures provides an opportunity for students to explore the world regions of North Africa, the Middle East and Europe, delving into each from both historical and modern perspectives. In doing so, students will explore a variety of maps throughout the year, familiarizing themselves with patterns of settlement and development, becoming adept at reading and interpretation, as well as understanding the impacts of geography on a culture. We will fine-tune skills involved in the reading of nonfiction texts, specifically noting features such as graphs and charts, illustrations and photographs, captions and timelines, while also developing research-based questions, organizing our learning into meaningful notes, inspiring both our curiosity, and our own formal and informal writing.



In order to truly think about a topic, we must write about it. Students will be doing just that, in all forms - reading and responding, listening and responding, and researching and responding - from individual paragraphs to developed essays. In this vein, we will also determine central ideas and themes, synthesize our understandings and consistently cite evidence to support our thinking, striving to communicate what we know clearly and concisely.

Additionally, and in preparation for skills needed in the Upper School, Grade 8 will complete the final component of their three-tiered Global Capstone project. Through guided and independent research, students will develop a literacy of the nation's geography, history and current events. Ultimately, Global Capstone in Grade 8 World Cultures asks students to focus on a pivotal and student-selected current event tied to the country's geography or culture, which in turn highlights thematic global trends. Such trends may include human rights, government and politics, environmental policy or natural disasters. Grade 8 students will publish a research-based essay, as well as a scripted TED Talk-style presentation, given before an audience of friends, family and members of our school community. Through the Grade 8 World Cultures curriculum, students will leave the Middle School with an admirable knowledge of their physical place in our world, as well as the impacts of religion, culture and geography on their lives and the lives of others.

MATHEMATICS

MATH 6 – Math for the Real World

Our goal is a broad understanding of mathematical concepts in all aspects. Grade 6 students spend the year discovering their “Math Minds” as well as understanding and making connections from the classroom to the real world. Focus is not only on building strong mathematical foundations that students will need as they move onto pre-algebraic concepts in Grade 7, but also on giving them the opportunity to see when they will use this math in “real life”. Math games are used to reinforce concepts and skills – Quizziz and Gimkit, as well as other online group review programs, are utilized. “Big Ideas Math” series textbook is used for our Grade 6 math program, supplemented with other resources. We are committed to helping students realize there are multiple ways of approaching math and finding solutions. Students are encouraged to look for more than one way to solve a problem, to share those strategies and to solve “their way” as often as possible. Students are assessed through formative quizzes and summative unit tests. Pedagogies and methods used to engage learners include:

- Daily Review
- Math Around the Room – kinesthetic learning strategies. Students are often out of their desks.
- Differentiation
- Student-centered approach to problem solving
- Leveled problem sets offered to students
- Writing to Explain Math

Some, but not all, of the concepts covered consist of numerical operations, fractions, algebraic and numeric expressions, introduction to using variables, geometry, data collection and statistics. Math is not only teacher-led but student-centered, with a focus on creative thinking in problem solving with multiple approaches to answers.

MATH 6 Accelerated

The Accelerated Math 6 class focuses on the same content area and skills but at a faster pace and with more complex problems, requiring a greater depth of understanding and application. Students enter with strong foundational skills in place and ready to approach mathematical challenges collaboratively and creatively.

MATH 7

The objective of Math 7 is to continue to build math confidence and skill sets, along with introducing students to pre-algebra concepts. Students learn algebra through reinforcement of the math process, focusing on the step-by-step process in solving problems. Students will come to understand how math builds upon what they've learned before. They learn not only the process of solving problems, but also "why" we do what we do every day in math. Students will be able to connect algebraic principles to other math concepts, such as geometry and statistics. Our focus for the year is learning to "read math" to understand concepts, interpret and solve. We work to develop "math minds" even further. We use select units from the "Big Ideas Math" textbook with a strong emphasis on pre-algebra. Students are engaged in kinesthetic learning by writing on desk whiteboards and whiteboards throughout the classroom, reviewing student-generated math problems and developing a math "sense of self." Identifying math in everyday life is reinforced through project-based learning experiences, such as researching how math is utilized in multiple career paths or studying how a particular content area will play a role in their future. Math is not only teacher led, but student centered, with a focus on creative thinking in problem solving with multiple approaches to answers. Cross-curricular connections to science, particularly the unit on the Future City, are also fostered.

Math 7 Accelerated

The Accelerated Math 7 class focuses on the same content area and skills but at a faster pace and with more complex problems, requiring a greater depth of understanding and application. Students enter with strong foundational skills in place and ready to approach mathematical challenges collaboratively and creatively.

GRADE 8 MATHEMATICS

Students will be enrolled in math courses appropriate to their skill set levels. Recommendations for individual students will be reviewed and placement will be granted based on approval from the Math Department Chair.

PRE-ALGEBRA

Level: Introductory

Pre-Algebra is the study of a branch of math involving symbols, number values and their relationships. Pre-Algebra is based on the mastery of beginning algebraic concepts to build a strong base for Algebra I. Lessons are focused on the introduction of variables, solving equations, inequalities, ratios/proportions/percent, linear functions and number relationships. Students are encouraged to look at numbers to understand how they relate to each other and to notice patterns. Class time incorporates note taking and small group work, along with one-on-one instruction. Extra help sessions during Directed Study are also utilized throughout each week to check on and assist with individual learning paths and understanding.

ALGEBRA I

Level: Introductory

This course will feature a review of Pre-Algebra material with a focus on the first part of a typical Algebra I course. This includes linear equations and inequalities, systems of equations, radicals, exponents and factoring. Students will develop strong foundational algebra skills and prepare for a full-year Algebra I course.

HONORS ALGEBRA 1

Level: Accelerated Introductory

Prerequisite: Pre-Algebra and departmental permission

Topics studied in depth in this accelerated course include solving multistep equations and inequalities, graphing linear equations and inequalities including absolute-value functions, solving systems of equations and inequalities, exponent properties, exponential functions and polynomials. An in-depth study of quadratics will be covered including properties of quadratic functions, solving by factoring, completing the square and the quadratic formula. Radical functions are introduced including simplifying radicals, operations with radicals, solving radical equations and graphing. Students will develop foundational algebra skills and prepare for Geometry.



SCIENCE

GRADE 6 – Earth Science

The Earth is the focal point of the Grade 6 Science curriculum, starting with the scientific process and applying it to the physical world, then expanding outward to include the solar system and beyond. Students study soil, rocks and minerals, erosion and deposition, plate tectonics, and weather and atmosphere. Students also engage in cross-curricular projects such as planning a school garden, the ethical use of natural resources, town planning and exploring the causes and effects of climate on different parts of the world. Curricular projects focus on incorporating math skills and concepts along with writing reflection essays with English 6 to understand the natural world in a



context with other disciplines. Students also learn how to write advanced lab reports and hone their scientific writing skills. Interactive projects and hands-on learning are employed, such as identifying rocks and minerals while journeying through the rock cycle, constructing topographical maps, mapping temperatures of ocean currents and constructing Richter Scales. Students come to understand the importance of formulating hypotheses, note taking for experiments, using data tables and units of measurements and developing argumentation skills in scientific analysis. The classroom activities provide an opportunity for the students to develop hands-on experiences and trouble-shooting skills while trying to complete the activities. The students learn more through a guided trial and error approach, completing data tables electronically provided by the teacher and working in small groups to hypothesize what results to expect. Outside the classroom, students engage in project-based learning, in which they will conduct research and present their findings to their peers. Activities include investigations and labs, which average two per week. Activity analysis questions and final reporting are completed as homework, with opportunities for greater scaffolding and personalized feedback.

GRADE 7 – Life Science/ Engineering Design

The human body is the focal point of the Grade 7 Science curriculum, starting with the ethics of studying people scientifically and leading to discussion of experimentation on humans. The scientific process is taught in increased detail, but these skills are applied to the biological world, expanding outward from the cell to tissue to organ and organ system, ending with the coordinated efforts of these systems. Similarly, students will study the impact of food and disease, working with the Health 7 curriculum to create more aware consumers.

Students spend time in active exploration of the body systems, involving drawing, sculpting and presenting their discoveries to their classmates. The study of the human body as an active system fueled by energy is carried into Grade 8, where energy itself is broken down. Midway through the school year, students will begin investigating Earth's ecosystems and the impacts of introduced species to new habitats. Students will participate in project-based learning and share their knowledge of an invasive species with their peers. The completion of the Ecosystems unit will segue into the final unit, Evolution. Students will learn how the process of natural selection has influenced the adaptations of species as they have evolved genetically on Earth.

Classroom activities provide an opportunity for students to develop hands-on experiences and a clearer picture of those processes and forms relating to the human body, ecosystems and the process of natural selection. While study and experimentation form the foundation, acceptance of failure is an anticipated offshoot of such a process. This is an appropriate environment to let students struggle, and even fail, then redirect if needed to successfully complete the task at hand. Students learn more through a guided trial and error approach, completing data tables electronically provided by the teacher, and working in small groups to hypothesize what results to expect. Partners are randomly selected with the goal of making sure students work collaboratively, but the classroom is more structured for these young and evolving scientists. We average two activities per week and the analysis questions and final reporting are completed as homework, with opportunities for greater scaffolding and personalized feedback.



Future City

Future City is a project-based learning program where students in Grades 6, 7 and 8 imagine, research, design and build cities of the future. Keeping the engineering design process and project management front and center, students work in teams to ask and answer an authentic, real-world question: How can we make the world a better place? To do so, each city must incorporate a solution to an annual design challenge. In past years, groups have explored topics from clean water to waste management. The groups research, design and build, incorporating content from geography and geometry to essay writing and presentation. Students participate in the Future City Competition in teams of at least three students, guided by an educator and a volunteer STEM mentor. Teams spend approximately four months creating cities that could exist at least 100 years in the future. In celebration of this effort and hard work, students present their projects before a panel of experts in a regional competition, answering detailed questions related to the innovation and viability of their work. The Science Department and Middle School are proud to share that our teams have received numerous awards and honorable mention for their essay writing, innovation and problem solving. Moreover, students experience the connectedness of their learning in this cross-curricular endeavor.



GRADE 8

Grade 8 students recall topics from their previous experiences and scaffold their scientific understanding through investigations of more fundamental physics and chemistry concepts behind broader issues. The program continues to use hands-on learning experiences to probe more deeply into physical science concepts through the overlap of ideas investigated in the life and earth science years. Water is the tool for many of these studies. Water quality is a gateway to many chemistry concepts such as solubility and acid-base chemistry. This in turn expands on ecology and health ideas from the Earth and Life Sciences as issues of pollution and disease are studied.



Water becomes “glocal” when many of these ideas can be discussed through the history of our own Quabbin Reservoir, and then compared to similar sites around the globe, such as China’s Three Gorges Dam. The importance of water in all science disciplines, whether the natural, physical or social science branches is an entry point to analysis of larger sets of data than are normally typical in a middle school classroom. Students have access via G Suite to the digital tools that will prepare them for the ever-deepening study of big data that will continue to impact their lives in this information age.

A crosscutting concept of all the science disciplines is energy; it is inherent in the study of our use of water. Energy is behind the most basic concepts of physics. Investigations of forces, motion and Newton’s Laws provide insights into energy that complement the introductory chemistry ideas. The introductory study of energy is an excellent segue to the “STEM 9: Physics” curriculum in the Upper School where energy emerges as a fundamental link among all the disciplines of science.

Field Study at the Quabbin Reservoir

As part of the study of water and its importance to life in general and humans in particular, Grade 8 students learn about reservoirs and dams, water contamination and water treatment in science class. They also spend time discussing dams and reservoirs as part of their world cultures curriculum. As a culmination of those studies, Grade 8 will take a field trip to Massachusetts' largest reservoir, Quabbin. Here, they will learn about the history of the reservoir; visit what remains of a town that was demolished in the process of creating the reservoir; and visit other areas such as Windsor Dam, Goodnough Dike and the Enfield Lookout. That day also includes an English component, as the students will write essays about their experience as they stand in the middle of an area that once was a town.



COMPUTER SCIENCE

INTRODUCTORY MS CODING – (IMSC) – (6th Grade, 1 trimester)

Students in Grade 6 receive a trimester's instruction in coding, the 'language' of programming. Instruction includes an introduction to straightforward drag-and-drop techniques and specific programming languages. Building a strong foundation in coding basics involves students completing small projects, eventually investigating coding's application in the Mattern iLab, as well as in their own lives. Students will leave Introductory MS Coding with a clearer understanding of how their technology works and the ability to begin building their own amazing ideas.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

The WMA Middle School Language program is proficiency based, allowing students of similar skill and experience levels to be grouped together. The program works to build a lifelong love of languages. The focus of the program is setting a solid foundation, not rapid advancement; thereby ensuring students make the most of their Upper School World Language experience. Students begin in Grade 6 experiencing Spanish, which is offered in the Middle School through Language and Culture II. (Occasionally, a student with previous experience will be placed in an advanced course with Dean and department approval.)

INTRODUCTION TO SPANISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE (Grade 6)

Created to expose students to Spanish during two trimesters of their Grade 6 year, this course is taught using a communicative approach. The focus of this introductory course is to acquire simple language that can be used in everyday conversation. Teacher modeling and student skit performance, utilizing content-specific vocabulary, are essential components of the class as students explore how to introduce themselves, talk about personal information and descriptions, body parts, health and wellness, clothing, school, food, and colors, amongst many other engaging topics. Students participate in cultural activities, such as dancing and music, stories and more. There is a focus on starting to speak and feeling comfortable in a new language, which includes pronunciation. Additionally, students are introduced to cultural similarities and differences within the Spanish-speaking world and their own, making global connections and fueling excitement for future learning.

SPANISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE I

In the first full year of Spanish study, students continue to build their confidence in the target language. The approach extends to further developing the skills of listening and responding, writing, presenting and interpreting language. Topics of focus include greetings, telling time, school subjects, foods, shopping, weather, holidays, family and friends, and leisure activities. Conducted in Spanish as much as possible, this class emphasizes competency of communication. Elaborative research of the Spanish-speaking world expands students' understanding of diversity within the Spanish-speaking culture.

SPANISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE II

The four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing are the focal points of this course, as students approach each with greater emphasis on spelling and pronunciation of the Spanish language. Students learn to express more complex thoughts using a variety of sentence structures and verb tenses, while building vocabulary and developing writing skills. The class is conducted entirely in Spanish and students are required to use the target language. In this way students gain confidence, participating in and completing listening activities and lessons, as well as consistently engaging with one another in the classroom.

ART

GRADE 6

Students in Grade 6 are introduced to the Elements and Principles of Design through a variety of art projects. They are taught how to use a variety of media as well as how to care for their art supplies. In addition to the material aspects of artmaking, students are taught various methods that artists use to create artwork. Through the use of the Scholastic Art Magazine collection, there will be opportunities to learn about many artists and engage in classroom discussion investigating how artists work and the purpose of self-expression. The focus of this class is pencil drawing, basic color theory, sculptural techniques, an introduction to digital media and painting techniques. Students explore themes such as illustration and character design, self-portraiture and calligraphy. By the end of this class, students will have a basic comprehension of art making techniques and skills, as well as develop a visual portfolio of their work. This portfolio will exist in a digital format and students will curate their work throughout their tenure at the Middle School.

GRADE 7

Students in Grade 7 are expected to continue their understanding of the Elements and Principles of Design through a variety of art projects. As they learn about different art careers they will be introduced to architecture, printmaking, logo design and animation. The focus of this class is on developing those basic skills learned in Grade 6 and practicing revision, critique, and variation. Students will also embark on a more focused study of a visual artist; such as a book illustrator or landscape painter. By learning how a specific artist comes to terms with their artwork, students will gain insight into the creative problem-solving skills that we are asking them to bring to bear on their own work. As students learn about techniques, such as perspective drawing and abstraction, they will be able to create visual images that tackle more sophisticated concepts.

GRADE 8

Students in this course gain an understanding of the fundamentals of painting, drawing and principles of design through studio practice. The course addresses aesthetics, criticism and art history. Students will be assessed on sketchbook assignments, major projects and class participation. Art 8 is a mirror of our Upper School Studio Art curriculum. Students who pass this class in Grade 8 are exempted from taking the survey-level course in Grade 9 in the Upper School and can sign up directly into other art electives.



MUSIC

GRADE 6

Students in Music 6 are introduced to the wide world of rhythm. Rhythm is music's pattern in time, the one indispensable element of all music; though it can exist without melody, melody cannot exist without rhythm. Grade 6 students will learn how to read and play rhythms from rhythm worksheets. They will perform rhythmic pieces, both as solos and as duets. As a primarily performance-based class, students will learn how to perform as a "class band." Eventually, they will work together on a musical piece which will be performed on stage. My hope is for Grade 6 students to gain an appreciation for how important rhythm is to music and life.

GRADE 7



Music for Grade 7 is a chance for students to get hands-on experience playing instruments in a band situation. Students select from classroom instruments such as drums, guitar, bass, keyboards, etc., as well as singing. Basic instruction is given in the fundamentals of chords and basic chord progressions, tempo and song structure. Students learn to work as a team to put songs together. Songs undertaken in previous years include rock n' roll classics like the Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby" on up to modern day songs like "Levitating" by Dua Lipa. Students also gain historical perspective of popular music of the 20th century through research and shared presentations.

GRADE 8

Grade 8 Music is the culmination of our students' active learning and collaboration in Grades 6 and 7. Students will select an instrument of their choice and, as a group, select songs to learn and perform. Students will continue to learn together the elements needed to put on a great performance, delivered with confidence. These include but are not limited to: dynamics, emotion, personality, audience participation and theatrics. The hope is that the culmination of Music 6, 7 and 8 is a growing appreciation for "live music" and all that goes into the delivery of a stellar performance.

HEALTH

GRADE 6

“Believe you can and you’re halfway there!” Theodore Roosevelt

The focus of Health in Grade 6 is to instill in students at a young age the importance of physical, social, mental and emotional well-being to build a better quality of life. Students are taught that health is a combination of all three sides of the health triangle, and all three sides must be balanced. Using the Strong Kids Curriculum, combined with health standards from the National Institute of Health and Responsive Classroom techniques, students are taught the foundations of physical, social, mental and emotional health. By exploring a myriad of topics that encompass the health triangle, students will come to a stronger understanding of themselves in this particularly important developmental phase of their lives.

Project-based learning is used to reinforce understanding of concepts and create a more collaborative, innovative and fun learning environment. Students will use Google slides and give oral presentations for five major projects throughout the year, including an “All About Me” poster whereby students articulate and identify their goals, strengths, hopes and dreams. Growth mindset and safe, healthy decision-making strategies are explored, and students will engage in value exercises. The “Circle of Power and Respect” is a Responsive Classroom approach that is used during every health class to build community. This is a friendly ritual that builds and fosters social and emotional skills, and trusting relationships that facilitate learning.

GRADE 7

“Character is how you live your life, when no one is looking.” John Wooden

The course objectives for Health 7 center on building character, developing a growth mindset, and promoting safe and healthy decision making. Using the “Character Counts” program, students are introduced to the six pillars of character to foster a positive and safe learning environment. The six pillars of character are: trustworthiness, respect,



responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. These are ethical values to guide our choices. Each time a student is "caught" showing good character, they are rewarded with a character ticket. In addition to this focus on building character, the Responsive Classroom approach is used to establish a safe and strong learning environment which emphasizes the social-emotional and academic growth of middle school students. The “Circle of Power and Respect” is an approach used in health class to build community, social skills and trusting relationships.

Project-based learning is used to reinforce understanding of concepts and create a more collaborative, innovative and fun learning environment. Students will use Google slides and give oral presentations for various projects throughout the quarter, including an “Character in Action” project and a “Vitamin and Mineral Project,” in which students design and create a trifold brochure. Topics and units from all sides of the health triangle are taught throughout the quarter. The students have a clear understanding of the importance of maintaining balanced health and overall wellness.

GRADE 8

“Sometimes what we call “failure” is really just that necessary struggle called learning.” ~unknown

The curriculum of Health 8 ties in with the grade-level theme of “Knowing One’s Self,” and students will explore more sophisticated topics to better understand each side of the health triangle. The Responsive Classroom approach is used to promote social-emotional skills and build a positive community. Students will create individual, partner and group projects to foster understanding of the content while developing strong oral presentation skills. Students will also be introduced to the work of Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck and learn more about the “Growth Mindset” paradigm. This will help prepare them for the Grade 9 Freshman Foundations course, which also uses the Mindset curriculum. Students will come to understand what a fixed or a growth mindset means and apply that thinking to their own lives.

Through self-reflection exercises, students will explore their own identity and learn more about grit, positive thinking, resilience, empathy and kindness. Projects will include “A Bit of Grit,” as students will interview someone who has proven gritty in their life. A large unit is dedicated to building and cultivating healthy relationships. In addition, self-care and hygiene, sleep health, drug awareness and prevention will also be explored, as well as learning about nutrition in terms of maintaining proper energy balance. Sexual health topics include units on consent and birth control basics. And a large focus on preparing students for high school is explored in the digital citizenship unit, with a focus on building a positive digital footprint and ways to avoid cyberbullying.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical Education takes place twice per week throughout the school year, where students participate in various individual, team and life sports, and activities. The emphasis is on having fun, participation, a moderate level of competition, skill development, understanding of rules and strategies, and the importance of sportsmanship and teamwork. The main goals of the Middle School physical education program are for students to enjoy being physically active, work cooperatively with classmates, improve in a wide range of athletic skills and appreciate the importance of being active for a lifetime. A highlight of our program is the opportunity for our students to use all of the outstanding athletic facilities at WMA, which include the gymnasium, fitness room, dance/wrestling room, pool, outdoor track, tennis courts and outside fields.

GRADE 6

The focus of Grade 6 is on skill development and teamwork. The first half of each class is usually dedicated to practicing skills with a partner or small group, while teamwork is encouraged by promoting passing the ball to all teammates, taking turns playing different positions, and winning and losing with humility. Throughout the fall, students will learn about the games of football, soccer, volleyball, speedball (handball), Frisbee, and many different tag games. In the winter, students will learn about the game of basketball, a variety of dodgeball games, kickball, pickleball, yoga, relay races, partner and group cooperative games, gymnastics, modified wrestling/combatative sports, as well as agility and fitness. During the spring, the students will learn more about tennis, Wiffle Ball, track and field, hiking, swimming, and yard games.

GRADE 7

In Grade 7, there is concentrated focus on teamwork and strategy. Teamwork is promoted by encouraging students to pass the ball to all teammates, to take turns playing different positions and winning/losing with humility. Presenting different ideas and options for team offense and defense, as well as proper spacing and ball movement, emphasizes strategy. Grade 7 students are also introduced to the fitness room, where they learn how to use the free weights and weight machines with proper form, as well as the cardiovascular machines. In the fall, students will learn more about the games of football, soccer, volleyball, speedball (handball), Frisbee and many different tag games. During the winter, students will learn more about the game of basketball, a variety of dodgeball games, kickball, pickleball, yoga, relay races, partner and group cooperative games, gymnastics, modified wrestling/combatative sports, agility and fitness, and weight training. During the spring, students will learn more about tennis, Wiffle Ball, track and field, hiking, swimming and yard games.



GRADE 8

In Grade 8, the focus continues to be on skills and teamwork, while students are really encouraged to make their own decisions about offensive and defensive strategy, rotating positions, spacing, tempo, etc. Grade 8 students are exposed to the fitness room, using both the weights and cardiovascular machines. Proper technique is reinforced and the benefits of strength training as it relates to both athletics and long-term health are discussed.