2025-26
Middle School Curriculum Guide

Updated July 2025

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Mission

The IDEAL School of Manhattan is an inclusion school dedicated to creating a diverse community that affirms and accepts the full identities of all people, while inspiring academic excellence, creative leadership, and a desire to build a more just and equitable world.

Honor Code

This Honor Code summarizes but does not replace the community standards and rules for students set forth in The IDEAL School Family Handbook and the IDEAL Upper School Student Handbook and Code of Conduct. It is comprised of five essential rules and responsibilities to guide each community member to serve the school's mission and to participate in the creation of an inclusive and respectful community, in and out of the classroom, where all members have the opportunity to strive for excellence, demonstrate creative leadership, and work together to build a more just and equitable world.

The Five I's of IDEAL

1. I will be respectful of the learning process, strive for excellence in and out of the classroom, and engage respectfully in all school classes, programs, and activities.

2. I will act with integrity and represent myself and my work honestly.

3. I will ensure that my words and actions demonstrate respect for all and acceptance of the full identity of all individuals that make up our diverse community.

4. I will strive to ensure that my actions, work, and words contribute to creating a more inclusive community and a more just and equitable world.

5. I will be a creative and compassionate leader by modeling IDEAL's core values both in and out of school.

The Arts

Through the robust arts curriculum of The IDEAL School of Manhattan, students develop creativity, critical thinking skills, and confidence, and they learn to take healthy risks as they explore multiple perspectives and strengthen their thinking. The skills students acquire in the arts improve their learning in all academic areas. Partnerships with New York City outreach programs and cultural institutions extend classroom experiences and create a vibrant curriculum that is integrated throughout all disciplines.

Note: Electives are subject to change based on faculty and student interest and schedule.

Music

Music 6/7

In this introductory course, students begin training their “musical ears,” learn musicianship, and develop music appreciation skills. Students learn to sing polyphonic and harmonic music, select a vocal technique suitable for the genre, and utilize musical vocabulary to critique their performances. Students engage in choral and solo singing, call-and-response percussion playing, and intro to notation (POISON), and practice performance etiquette in live (concert) and non-live (studio) settings. Additional enrichment opportunities for students who are ready include an introduction to the drum set, guitar, bass, and keyboard.

Music 8

This course is a continuation of Music 6/7. Students continue to train their “musical ears,” learn musicianship, and develop music appreciation skills. Students learn to sing polyphonic harmonic music, select techniques appropriate for the genre, and utilize musical vocabulary to critique their performances. Students also study polyrhythms, solo singing, call-and-response percussion playing, and introduction to notation, playing intermediate musical instructions in a band context (drums, guitar, and bass), as well as performance etiquette in both live (concert) and non-live (recording studio) settings. For their final project, students combine all their learning to produce their own original studio recording and/or perform in a live concert.

Choir & Vocal Technique Elective

The cross-divisional choir brings together students in different divisions of the school to collaborate in a high-level choral ensemble. The choir focuses on advanced vocal technique, music theory, and ensemble performance. While designed to challenge experienced singers, the choir is inclusive and supportive of all skill levels. Students learn the benefits of breath control, posture, pitch accuracy, and overall vocal health. Students strengthen their confidence, musical literacy, teamwork, and stage presence – skills that transfer well beyond music. Through personalized vocal coaching and diverse repertoire, the ensemble fosters artistic growth, discipline, and meaningful musical connections across the school community.

Drama

Drama 6/7 (Ensemble Devising)

Sixth and seventh graders focus on writing and performance. From creating their own scenes to working as a team, this class builds invaluable theatrical skills. Students explore various styles of scene creation, including improvisation and puppetry. By the end of the course, students will have developed an appreciation and respect for their work as theater artists, as well as the skills necessary to work in a collaborative environment. Assessment tasks include scene creation and performance, art projects, and writing prompts.

Drama 8

Musical Theater will be offered in semester one. The content of the semester two drama class will be determined based on student interest. The students will collectively decide between Musical Theater and An Actor Prepares.

Musical Theater (Semesters One and Two)

Eighth graders focus on the history and performance of musical theater. From learning the ins and outs of different musical styles to creating a portfolio of performance work, this class will prepare them to tackle any musical theater role. By the end of the course, students will develop a critical eye to analyze and celebrate their work, as well as that of others. Students will have opportunities to direct, design, perform, and work collaboratively. Assessment tasks include scene creation and performance, art projects, and writing prompts.

An Actor Prepares (Semester Two)

Eighth graders explore the work of Stanislavski to create a well-rounded character and performance. They explore "the seven questions," understand how to break down a scene, and practice performing in grounded scenes. They explore works from numerous playwrights and apply their character work to those scenes and monologues. They work together as scene partners and explore active listening to heighten the tension in a scene. This scene study class prepares students as actors capable of tackling any character.

Visual Art

Art 6/7

In this beginning visual art course, students learn the introductory skills and techniques behind a variety of artistic media and practices. Students are introduced to drawing, painting, collage, and 3D sculpture, and they are responsible for the care and upkeep of the shared art studio. Throughout the course, students keep a sketchbook and participate in class critiques and discussions about historic and contemporary artists. Upon completing each project, students write an artist statement that explains their work. After exploring and practicing introductory skills in each medium through small projects, students experiment with combining art mediums and creating their final project, which is presented at IDEAL's annual ArtBeat community showcase.

Art 8

Students learn the skills and techniques behind a variety of artistic media and practices in this eighth grade art course. Students are introduced to drawing, painting, collage, 3D sculpture, digital, and textile art. They learn responsibility by actively providing the care and upkeep of the shared art studio. Students keep a sketchbook and participate in class critiques and discussions about historic and contemporary artists. After exploring and practicing introductory skills in each medium through small projects, students create their own “W.O.W. piece” (Wonderful Original Work of Art). The culminating “W.O.W.” piece is an entirely student-led and designed opportunity to share their talents with the school community, and is presented in IDEAL’s annual ArtBeat community showcase.

English

The English Department cultivates voice, develops critical reading skills, and encourages students to work towards comfort and proficiency with writing in a variety of genres. The department emphasizes both process and product, making drafting and revision a routine part of our students’ experience at IDEAL. Grammar, vocabulary, and spelling are grounded in and reinforced by the study of literature and writing assignments. By seventh grade, students regularly compose and workshop rough drafts of essays or personal and creative writing assignments, and they strengthen their editing skills through consistent teacher feedback and revision opportunities. Classes attend plays or other cultural events in conjunction with their study of literature, exploring connections between literature and life throughout their studies.

Foundations English A

In Foundations English A, students work with a structured, systematic language program to enhance their reading skills. The focus is on three key areas: decoding unfamiliar words, improving fluency and reading comprehension, and developing written expression. The class reads literature, articles, nonfiction books, and leveled texts. Texts include works such as *Darth Paper Strikes Back*, *Count Me In*, and *The Giver*. Students identify lessons that characters learn and how characters are transformed throughout the narrative. Through their reading, students learn to answer literal comprehension questions. They also begin to develop their inferential thinking skills. Students complete formal writing assignments monthly using the standard writing process of brainstorming, drafting, revising, final writing, and publishing. Writing assignments feature broad thematic questions to demonstrate comprehension, as well as journaling and personal narratives. To enhance their written skills, students practice the conventions of appropriate grammatical mechanics. Throughout the semester, students also engage in creative projects related to the books they are reading.

Foundations English B

The Foundations English B class follows a rotating theme each year. Students explore this theme throughout the year in their formal and informal writing assignments, as well as in their discussions about the text. The class reads literature and nonfiction texts related to our anchor texts. Texts include works such as *Wonder* and *Seedfolks*. The focus of this course is on three key areas: expanding students' vocabulary, improving fluency and reading comprehension, and developing written expression. Through their reading, students learn to answer literal and inferential comprehension questions using text evidence to support their ideas. Students complete weekly lessons to develop their reading comprehension and vocabulary. Students develop inferencing skills, identify and describe main characters and their actions, compare and contrast various characters, identify characters' feelings, and describe the impact of the setting on the narrative. Students complete formal writing assignments every month, utilizing the standard writing process, which includes brainstorming, drafting, revising, final writing, and publishing. Appropriate grammatical mechanics are emphasized to ensure writing skill development.

English 6

As students transition to Middle School, their study of vocabulary, paragraph structure, and grammar is integrated into their thematic study of literature, along with ongoing opportunities to cultivate their voice and style as writers. Students solidify their knowledge of parts of speech and review how to construct and punctuate grammatically correct sentences. By the end of the year, students will be able to diagram simple sentences and identify direct and indirect objects. In conjunction with their study of literature, students learn to craft personal and creative writing pieces. Students are introduced to the formal writing process, including brainstorming, planning, drafting, editing, and revising. The themes of supernatural, beauty, friendship, and identity connect the literature in sixth grade. Texts include works such as *Out of My Mind, The Lightning Thief, Some Places More Than Others,* and a selection of short stories and poems for a creative writing unit. Through reading, students learn to identify literary elements, including character development, story arcs, literary devices, and foreshadowing. Middle-grade literature receives particular focus. Assessments are derived from students' reading, writing, and class discussions.

English 7

In seventh grade English, reading, writing, and language skills remain significant areas of concentration, and all aspects of the course focus on developing critical and inferential thinking skills. A variety of texts introduce students to the themes of storytelling, community, and persuasive language, and students practice their analytical skills by evaluating various points of view. Texts include works such as *Trickster, Walk Two Moons, Seedfolks, The Outsiders, and Animal Farm*. In their writing, students develop familiarity with the formal stages of the drafting process, emphasizing textual evidence and analysis. Students compose personal, creative, and persuasive pieces. Grammar and usage instruction is embedded within writing units, with a particular focus on complex sentence structure, subordinating clauses, and prepositional phrases to express relationships. Assessments are derived from students' reading, writing, and class discussions.

English 8

English 8 continues to develop students' reading, writing, and language skills. Eighth grade students develop their analytical skills by reading a variety of novels and plays. Students learn to evaluate literature and to incorporate secondary source material into their analyses.

As a part of the research process, students learn to utilize MLA guidelines, format, and citations. Literature emphasizes themes of injustice, integrity, prejudice, and love. Texts include works such as *Romeo and Juliet, To Kill a Mockingbird, Piecing Me Together, and The Rose That Grew from Concrete;* however, choices each year are based in part on student interest and input. When writing, students manipulate their phrasing and sentence structure to convey precise ideas fluidly, applying transitional devices and cohesive organization to achieve a precise and coherent narrative. By the end of the year, students have developed their voice and craft as writers by composing poems, analytical and argumentative essays, and essays that incorporate secondary sources. Assessments are derived from students' reading, writing, and class discussions.

History

The History Department at IDEAL emphasizes historical thinking, research, and writing skills as students study World and American history through a variety of contrasting lenses. Debate and discussion are featured heavily in classes that cultivate student voice and opinion through the examination of various viewpoints, even as students develop their foundational knowledge of the subject matter.

History 6: Global History 1

The Global History course introduces students to the rise and development of early civilizations. Students begin with a brief overview of how humans transitioned from hunting and gathering to farming, and how this shift enabled people to settle in one place and establish societies. From there, students explore key ancient civilizations — Mesopotamia, Egypt and Nubia, Greece, and China — focusing on how they developed, how their governments and belief systems functioned, and how geography, trade, and leadership influenced daily life. Students develop skills in comparing cultures, understanding cause and effect, and analyzing how ancient ideas and institutions continue to impact the world today.

History 7: American History I

While many American history courses begin with the arrival of Europeans, this class recognizes that U.S. history is best understood by starting with an understanding of the cultures of the continent's original inhabitants. By studying the culture of the Lenape, as well as those of other indigenous peoples of the Americas, students explore how these groups utilized the environment to meet their needs. Students then examine the arrival of Spanish, French, Dutch, and English colonizers on the continent by analyzing the impact of their settlements on indigenous cultures. Students also study how the British colonies evolved into the United States of America by examining the conflict between the United States and Great Britain during the American Revolution.

History 8: American History II

This course offers a comprehensive examination of pivotal events and themes in American history, spanning from the early days of the Constitution to World War II and the Holocaust. Students will delve into pivotal moments that shaped the nation, including Manifest Destiny, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the rise of industrialization. The course will also examine significant periods such as the Progressive Era, the World Wars, the Great Depression, and the impact of fascism. Through an in-depth study of these topics, students will gain a deeper understanding of America's past and its enduring impact on society today.

Language

Through the study of Spanish at IDEAL, students gain confidence in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in the target language. They develop an appreciation for the diverse cultures and communities of native speakers. The arts and experiential learning are integrated into the curriculum as students explore the rich history of Spanish culture within New York City and around the globe, applying their knowledge creatively. All IDEAL students are required to study a language during their Middle School years, except those for whom the family, student, learning specialist, and school agree that additional support in foundational literacy skills or therapies would be beneficial. In Grade 8, students are given a choice between ASL (American Sign Language) and Spanish.

Spanish (Grade 6-8)

Spanish at IDEAL is a multi-year course. Using *The Vamos Curriculum* from The Comprehensible Classroom, students learn that language is inextricably linked to its speakers and their cultures. Students learn new words and phrases and practice using their Spanish skills in communicative contexts, such as conversations, reading, and listening. Students also learn about different Spanish-speaking countries. Throughout the course, students learn vocabulary related to introductions, complete a project on popular dishes, explore chocolate in Mayan culture, and create an art project in which each student designs their own *farol*.

ASL (Grade 8)

This course introduces American Sign Language, emphasizing vocabulary building and appropriate use of the body and grammatical patterns. Students become familiar with various ASL communication styles used in the Deaf community. Students also learn about Deaf culture and its members' uniqueness in society. In the first semester, students create a comprehensive project describing a dream food truck, including a menu and business plan. The goal is to incorporate vocabulary related to food and dining, utilize classifiers and mouth morphemes for compelling descriptions, and incorporate elements of Deaf culture when ordering food. This project offers students the opportunity to engage meaningfully with language and culture, while fostering creativity and business skills. Additionally, students focus on vocabulary building across several key topics, including errands, language background, leisure activities, fingerspelling, Black Deaf History Month, expanding on Wh-words, numbers, emotions, weather, time, and calendar. By the end of the course, students learn to fingerspell six-letter words, hold a basic-level conversation regarding taught topics, use vocabulary appropriately, and improve their ASL grammar.

The Learning Center

The Learning Center is a centrally located space in which students in all grades can receive specialized support in literacy and/or math. The Learning Center is staffed by a team of learning specialists who provide targeted and individualized academic interventions in one-on-one or small group settings. The goal of the sessions is to develop foundational skills that students rely on to progress and succeed in their classes. Students who require this additional academic support attend sessions one to four times per week, depending on their individual needs. Learning specialists utilize a variety of intervention programs, including PAF (Preventing Academic Failure) and the Wilson Reading System (both Orton-Gillingham-based programs), as well as See and Learn, Tell Me, Quick Reads, *and* WordlyWise 3000.

Mathematics

The Mathematics Department strives to foster in all students an understanding of the foundational and algebraic mathematical functions that order our world. Math classes encourage critical thinking, creative and collaborative problem-solving, and the connections between the curriculum and the world. Students are assessed regularly to be sure they are progressing at an appropriately challenging and supportive pace. Students begin the curriculum at a level appropriate for their readiness and progress at their own pace, regardless of grade level.

Foundational Math A

Foundational Math A is designed to enhance students' basic math skills. Students gain an understanding of the number system, place value, and operations of numbers. Students learn about a variety of foundational math topics, including geometry, data, statistics, integers, fractions, time, and money. Throughout the year, they complete projects to apply math concepts to real-life applications.

Foundational Math B

Foundational Math B reinforces and builds upon skills mastered in Foundational Math A. Students expand their knowledge of the number system and operational skills to include decimal and negative numbers. Students are introduced to ratios, percentages, the coordinate plane, geometry, statistics, and algebra. Throughout the year, they complete projects to apply math concepts to real-life applications.

Math 6

Students in Math 6 build upon and strengthen their existing mathematical knowledge, while also discovering new methods and techniques. Students learn operations with fractions and mixed numbers, as well as ratios, unit rates, and percentages. They also learn about rational numbers and the coordinate plane. A significant emphasis in sixth grade math is placed on introducing pre-algebra skills, including working with expressions, equations, and inequalities. Lastly, students expand their geometry skills to include the surface area of polyhedra. Throughout the year, particular emphasis is placed on understanding how to solve word problems by identifying key phrases and applying knowledge to real-world scenarios. Students demonstrate knowledge through classwork, homework, weekly quizzes and tests, and projects.

Math 7

Math 7 emphasizes pre-algebra skills, beginning with explorations of equivalent fractions, building fluency in performing all operations with fractions, converting fractions to decimals and percentages, and performing operations involving negative integers. This foundation will prepare students to evaluate, simplify, and solve two-step equations, and support their work with ratios, proportional relationships, and more complete percentage problems. They develop strategies such as building a table of values, creating equations, and graphing to support their problem-solving. Students continue to strengthen their pre-algebra skills by simplifying, evaluating, and solving multi-step equations and extend this knowledge to solving one-variable equations and inequalities. After developing their proficiency in algebraic thinking, they apply their knowledge to study angles, triangles, and geometric relationships.

Pre-algebra

Students in Pre-Algebra hone their skills and strategies for basic operations with whole numbers and extend these operations to include integers, fractions, decimals, and percentages. Students gain experience with square roots and exponents through class discussions and guided problem-solving strategies. Working with variables in expressions, equations, and inequalities enables students to develop skills in manipulating algebraic expressions, which in turn allows them to solve word problems by modeling. Students also strengthen their ability to explain their thinking through etymological breakdowns and collaborative group activities. Throughout the course, students are introduced to functions through an exploration of linear relationships. Hands-on projects introduce geometric concepts such as similarity, congruence, and geometric transformations of shapes. Students are guided to apply their knowledge to solve problems involving area, surface area, and volume of two- and three-dimensional shapes.

Algebra 1

Students in Algebra I learn to simplify expressions by combining like terms, applying the distributive, commutative, and associative properties, in addition to factoring binomials using the most significant common factor. Students expand their understanding and ability to solve linear equations and inequalities within the context of real-world problems. They also study relations and functions, and how to represent them using tables, mapping, graphs, or as equations. Students learn how to identify the domain and range of functions, as well as how to evaluate functions both algebraically and by interpreting a graph. In the second semester, students learn how to solve systems of equations graphically by substituting for a variable and eliminating a variable. Students learn about exponents and grow their skills in simplifying complex exponential expressions. Exponent fluency allows students to explore exponential functions and their applications in economics, science, and the real world. They learn to calculate inflation rates, half-lives, and investment returns. They explore quadratic polynomials and how to factor them using the F.O.I.L. and area model methods. Students solve quadratic equations by factoring and develop a geometric understanding of the process of completing the square using algebra block manipulatives. They learn how to solve quadratic equations using the quadratic formula. To end the year, students utilize statistics to investigate and describe patterns in the real world.

Physical Education and Health

IDEAL's physical education and health programs are integral aspects of our curriculum, as we recognize the connection between a healthy body and mind. Because research supports the connections between physical activity, learning, and concentration, physical education classes meet four days a week. IDEAL's Physical Education Department emphasizes collaboration, team spirit, and effort, while also encouraging a lifelong appreciation for physical fitness. Health classes are taught one day per week within advisory, providing students with a forum for discussion and tailoring conversations to their developmental needs.

Physical Education

The physical education course supports students in developing gross motor and motor-planning skills. Students develop overall coordination and stamina for sustained activity and learn to work in a team environment. A typical day in a PE class consists of a structured warm-up, including individual relays that improve cardiovascular health and encourage students to move out of sedentary positions. Students then participate in unit-focused lessons, including volleyball, basketball, soccer, and more. All team games are designed to develop teamwork, individual growth, confidence, and communication skills.

Health and Wellness

IDEAL's schoolwide health curriculum is mainly based on the guidelines of the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS). Key concepts of the curriculum include human development, relationships, personal skills (such as decision-making, communication, and negotiation), and sexuality. Physical, emotional, and social changes associated with puberty and adolescence are a central focus of this discussion. The curriculum also addresses issues of healthy nutrition, stress reduction, relationships, mental health, and sexual health and identity. Lessons, discussions, and readings are presented in developmentally appropriate ways, and some classes are conducted in smaller groups to facilitate a more personalized learning experience.

Public Speaking

In every academic class, Middle School students are required to present their ideas and work formally and informally. They learn how to craft and deliver persuasive speeches, how-to speeches, and personal narratives. In addition, every eighth grade student creates an original IDEAL Talk, learning through critique how to strengthen their presentation and refine their material. Students practice their skills and then perform their IDEAL Talk in assemblies before the Upper School community.

Science

IDEAL's Science Department is dedicated to creating an inquiry-based integrated science curriculum for Middle School students that develops foundational knowledge of earth, life, and physical sciences. By developing techniques in experimental design and problem-solving using the scientific method, students strengthen the critical thinking skills necessary to question and comprehend our natural and technological environments. Students in each class work on group or individual projects that are presented to the community at the annual Science Expo.

Science topics are taught in the cycle below:
2025-26: Earth Science
2026-27: Physical Science
2027-28: Life Science

Earth Science (2025-2026)

Science 6
In this sixth grade science course, students investigate a range of topics, including the scientific method, the origin and expansion of the universe, types of galaxies, stars, solar systems, planetary motion, and orbits. As the year progresses, they delve into Earth science concepts, including plate tectonics, Earth's internal structure, climate and weather systems, environmental factors, geology, and renewable resources. Hands-on learning is a key component of the course. Students participate in collaborative lab projects and conduct experiments aligned with each unit, followed by formal lab reports. They also apply the scientific method by designing and executing independent experiments for the Middle School Science Expo, presenting their findings through slideshows and poster boards.

Science 7
In this seventh grade science course, students investigate a range of topics, including the scientific method, the origin and expansion of the universe, types of galaxies, stars, solar systems, planetary motion, and orbits. As the year progresses, they delve into Earth science concepts, including plate tectonics, Earth's internal structure, climate and weather systems, environmental factors, geology, and renewable resources. Hands-on learning is a key component of the course. Students participate in collaborative lab projects and conduct experiments aligned with each unit, followed by formal lab reports. They also apply the scientific method by designing and executing independent experiments for the Middle School Science Expo, presenting their findings. Science 7 includes an emphasis on writing in the scientific context. They practice writing formal lab reports after weekly 90-minute lab periods and develop the writing skills needed to complete science expo projects and presentations, including writing data analysis and conclusions after collecting data.

Science 8

In this eighth grade science course, students investigate a range of topics, including the scientific method, the origin and expansion of the universe, types of galaxies, stars, solar systems, planetary motion, and orbits. As the year progresses, they delve into Earth science concepts, including plate tectonics, Earth's internal structure, climate and weather systems, environmental factors, geology, and renewable resources. Hands-on learning is a key component of the course. Students participate in collaborative lab projects and conduct experiments aligned with each unit, followed by formal lab reports. They also apply the scientific method by designing and executing independent experiments for the Middle School Science Expo, presenting their findings through slideshows and poster boards. Science 8 places an emphasis on mathematics, applying mathematical skills in a scientific context, including solving word problems and working with algebraic formulas. Grade 8 students continue to build the math skills needed to analyze data collected while completing science expo projects.

Physical Science (2026-27)

Science 6

In this sixth grade science course, students explore key concepts in the physical sciences, with an emphasis on hands-on learning and scientific inquiry. Students begin by reviewing the scientific method with a focus on gathering and using background information. They then study topics in chemistry, including states of matter, chemical and physical properties and changes, mixtures, the metric system, measurement, atomic structure, the periodic table, and molecular bonding. Students conduct multiple experiments in each unit, producing formal lab reports that reinforce their understanding of scientific processes and chemical principles. They also design and conduct independent investigations for the Middle School Science Expo, presenting their research and analysis to the IDEAL School community through visual displays and digital presentations. As the year progresses, students transition into physics-based topics, including the laws of motion, forms of energy, magnetism, and waves. Practical activities include predicting motion trajectories, building simple electrical circuits, and mapping magnetic fields.

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Life Science (2027-28)

Science 6

In this sixth grade science course, students focus on the biological sciences, with an emphasis on inquiry-based learning and hands-on experimentation. Early in the year, students explore the scientific method, measurement techniques, heredity, and genetics. Through structured lab investigations and formal lab reports, students examine DNA, genes, and inherited traits. They also design and carry out independent experiments for the Middle School Science Expo, presenting their findings through slide presentations that highlight their research, data analysis, and conclusions. Later in the year, students study major human body systems and their interactions, as well as human adaptation and its effects on ecosystems. Projects include constructing a skeletal model and conducting a lab on Darwin’s finches to illustrate the concept of adaptation.

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STEM

In this interdisciplinary STEM program, students in Grades 6-8 tackle complex challenges using technology, engineering, and environmental science. They design and maintain advanced hydroponic systems, program autonomous LEGO robots, and participate in local sustainability projects in collaboration with the Billion Oyster Project to study local ecosystems and water quality. Through 3D modeling and printing, students prototype solutions for real-world environmental and technological issues. Emphasis is placed on iterative design, data analysis, and systems thinking. This course prepares students for future STEM pathways by connecting innovation, sustainability, and community impact.

Leadership, Service Learning, and Social Justice

Working in concert with the pedagogy and the academic curriculum, the leadership, service learning, and social justice programs at IDEAL foster the social and emotional development of confident and compassionate young people who can advocate for themselves and others, possess the self-awareness to take healthy risks that lead to growth and are prepared to contribute their voices and talents to a more just and equitable society.

Advisory

Every Middle School student is a member of an advisory group, and each advisory group is led by faculty members who support and oversee the academic, social, and emotional growth of both the individual students and the group as a whole. Advisory groups gather briefly at the beginning of each day to touch base, strengthen the sense of community, and ensure that students are organized before delving into academic classes. With guidance from an advisor, time is spent each week working on navigating the various topics and stressors that may arise for a Middle School child. Students spend time practicing mindfulness techniques, developing frustration tolerance, and exploring conflict resolution strategies, as well as discussing issues that may be weighing on them. It is the role of the advisor to know each student as an individual and as a learner and to support the academic and personal growth of each student daily and in more strategic ways over the year. The advisor serves as the primary point of contact and partner for parents, enabling the school and families to work together in support of each child's full potential.

Service Learning

Each Middle School grade selects and discusses one issue to focus on throughout the year. Through facilitated discussions, guest speakers, two days of service learning, and partnerships with nonprofit organizations, students have opportunities to learn more about an issue and its impact through direct civic engagement. Service learning experiences are carefully scaffolded with intentional preparation and reflection, encouraging students to strengthen their understanding of their role in creating a more just and equitable community.

Social Justice Curriculum

IDEAL’s anti-bias and multicultural values are woven into the fabric of the school’s curriculum. IDEAL supports each student’s positive identity and social development by directly addressing the impact of stereotyping, bias, and discriminatory behavior, encouraging cooperative learning, and teaching conflict resolution. Students compare multiple perspectives in all of their classes as they develop empathy, voice, and advocacy skills for themselves and others. Social justice topics are also integrated into the advisory program. Inclusive education provides students with an excellent academic foundation, empowering them to succeed in a truly diverse society with self-confidence, acceptance, and compassion.