

Garrison Forest School



Middle School Curriculum Guide 2025-2026

ENGLISH

English 6:

The Sixth Grade English curriculum is designed to foster an appreciation for literature, educate in textual analysis, provide students with an understanding of basic literary elements, and continue building on vocabulary and grammar. Students read literature from around the world to see how the works reflect different cultures. Featured works include: *Prairie Lotus*, *Other Words for Home*, and *A Wish in the Dark*. Students participate in both Readers' and Writers' Workshop Units, including taking part in a Social Issues Book Club and writing a personal narrative and a literary essay. Students study Greek and Latin roots using *Vocabulary from Classical Roots* and learn grammar skills throughout the course and in tandem with reading and writing.

English 7:

The Seventh Grade English curriculum incorporates a survey of literary genres: poetry, drama, and short stories along with reading a novel and graphic novel. Students will be reading texts set in the 1940's to the 1970's in order to complement their History course. Featured works include: Jacqueline Woodson's *Brown Girl Dreaming*, S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*, the dramatized version of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and the graphic novel *They Called Us Enemy*. Additionally, students will practice participating in classroom discussion and writing, both analytical and creative.

English 8:

The Eighth Grade English curriculum offers many different reading experiences that include whole class novels, book clubs, and independent reading. Students read Tara Sullivan's *The Bitter Side of Sweet*, Christina Soontornvat's *All Thirteen*, and William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as whole class texts as a way to practice reading comprehension and collaborative discussions. For book clubs, students read a selected text in small groups as either a thematic study or genre study. Several times throughout the year, students drive their own learning through self-selected independent reading, keeping track of their personal goals and commitment to reading. Using a Writer's Workshop model, students learn to write a variety of writing pieces including critical review, personal narrative, poetry, investigative journalism, and literary essays. Students learn vocabulary using *Vocabulary Workshop* and apply grammar skills throughout their reading and writing units.

MATHEMATICS

Math 6

Math 6 follows the *Primary Mathematics Book 6*, a Singapore-based approach that emphasizes problem-solving, deep conceptual understanding, and strong foundational skills. Students will explore topics such as fractions, ratios, percentages, geometry, algebraic expressions, equations, and data analysis. Through a combination of direct instruction, guided practice, and hands-on activities, students will develop both procedural fluency and critical thinking skills. The course encourages multiple strategies for problem solving and aims to build confidence and flexibility in mathematical reasoning.

Math 6 Enriched

Math 6 Enriched follows the *Primary Mathematics Book 6* curriculum at a more accelerated pace and incorporates additional enrichment tasks designed to deepen and extend learning. In addition to covering the same core topics at Math 6, fractions, ratios, percentages, geometry, algebraic expressions, equations, and data analysis, students will engage in more complex problem-solving challenges, projects, and real-world applications of mathematics. The course fosters advanced reasoning skills, encourages creative approaches to multi-step problems, and provides opportunities for students to explore mathematical concepts beyond the standard curriculum.

Math 7

In Math 7, students build strong mathematical foundations for future success. Students will study topics such as rational numbers, algebraic expressions, equations and inequalities, proportions, statistics and probability, and surface area and volume. The course is designed to strengthen computational fluency while fostering critical thinking and the ability to apply concepts in a variety of contexts. There is a strong focus on problem solving, cooperative learning and communication in mathematics. By solidifying these skills, students build the essential foundation necessary for more complex math courses in the years ahead.

Pre-Algebra Enriched

Pre-Algebra Enriched is a rigorous introductory course designed to immerse students in algebraic thinking through patterns, graphs, tables, and symbols. Multi-step equations and inequalities in one variable are examined, and slope and linear functions are introduced. Students explore linear relationships using graphs and then connect their understanding to equations. Applications of real numbers and exponents allow for introduction and exploration of The Pythagorean Theorem and Scientific Notation. Three-dimensional geometry is also explored, giving students the tools to compute volume and surface area. The focus of this course is on critical thinking, allowing students to be exposed to a deeper vocabulary of mathematical terms and array of methods to cope with various algebraic and geometric algorithms.

Foundations of Algebra:

Foundations of Algebra is an 8th grade course designed to prepare students for success in Algebra I. Building on prior mathematical knowledge, the course develops a strong understanding of algebraic concepts and skills, including operations with rational numbers, linear equations and inequalities, proportional relationships, functions, and systems of equations. Students also explore concepts in geometry, statistics, and problem solving to strengthen their analytical thinking. Emphasis is placed on applying mathematical reasoning to real-world situations, deepening conceptual understanding, and fostering the confidence needed to tackle the rigor of high school mathematics.

Algebra I Enriched:

Algebra I Enriched is a thorough study of basic algebra, focusing both on symbolic manipulation and applied problem-solving. Topics include the four arithmetic operations with real numbers and variables; equations and inequalities; graphs and functions; polynomials and factoring; irrational numbers and radicals; and quadratic functions. The students will be able to dive deeper into the mathematics behind the topics and use challenging problems to develop critical thinking skills. The curriculum will be supplemented with advanced algebra concepts to adequately prepare students for Geometry/Trigonometry in the Upper School.

Geometry/Trigonometry (Honors):

While engaging in a structured review of Algebra I topics, this course will be a rigorous study of Euclidean geometry including points, lines, planes, angles, parallel and perpendicular lines, triangles, quadrilaterals, polygons, congruence and similarity, inequalities in triangles, right triangle trigonometry, circles, area and volume, and coordinate geometry. The nature of deductive proof and the structure of a mathematical system are introduced throughout the course. The Honors level course includes a more extensive study of trigonometry and coordinate geometry and is taught in the Upper School.

HISTORY

Geography & World Cultures 6:

This course uses an interdisciplinary approach to introduce students to the cultural and physical geography of the world's major regions. Students work in cooperative learning groups and engage in tasks and projects that require them to research aspects of various regions major cultures and topography. Students will use maps, movies, images, newspaper/magazine articles, artwork, and current events to help enhance their understanding of how geography affects different lifestyles. Themes that are explored throughout the year include cultural universals, ethnic and religious diversity, human interaction with their environment, and the impact of natural and historical forces on the shape of the earth.

U.S. History 7:

This survey course covers major developments in American history from Colonial settlement through the late 19th century, covering the complexities of colonization, rebellion, the U.S. Constitution, industrialization, slavery, civil war, and reconstruction. This course aims to educate students on early American history from all points of view. Students will engage in simulations, interpret primary sources, and research and write expository essays on assigned topics as well as topics of their choice. Learning how to develop and support a thesis and citing historical sources are two major objectives of this course. Special emphasis is placed on developing the research and analytical skills of a historian rather than the memorization of key dates and events.

Global Citizenship:

In the 8th-grade Global Citizenship course, students will learn what it means to be a responsible global citizen. Students will engage in research and discussion in an effort to better understand global issues such as food justice, migration, international economies/ living wage and public health. This course seeks to enhance students' awareness of the world outside of their immediate communities, increase their curiosity about global topics, and encourage them to think critically about global issues. Through inquiry-based learning and exploring various perspectives, students will identify global issues in specific communities, establish what has caused or contributed to the issues, discover obstacles and barriers to solutions and identify methods of how a responsible global citizen would respond.

SCIENCE/STEM

Environmental Engineering 6:

Environmental Engineering combines the disciplines of physics, earth and environmental sciences to study the processes that influence how people have influenced and interacted with Earth. Topics of study include the importance of water and its cycle, astronomy and its universal effects, geology and how landforms and masses have evolved over time, and the dynamic processes of plate tectonics.

Forest Scholars:

The Forest Scholars Program is an immersive outdoor education program designed to teach sixth grade students about the forest ecosystem and actively contribute to its conservation and sustainability through education, research, and community engagement. Through hands-on experiences, hiking expeditions, and focused observations, our scholars delve deep into the intricate web of life within our school's and neighborhood's forests, meadows, and wetlands. By fostering a sense of curiosity and stewardship, we aim to cultivate a generation of environmental leaders who appreciate, protect, and advocate for the natural world.

Life Science 7:

Life Science is designed to explore students' natural interest in the living world as it builds a foundation for further study of biology. The course exposes students to the vast diversity of life, challenging them to expand their concept of living things and engendering in them a respect for all forms of life. Students do at least one lab each week, learning to design experiments; make, record, and interpret observations; and collect, display, and analyze data.

Physical Science 8:

In Physical Science, students use models to plan and conduct investigations, analyze and interpret data, and construct explanations using CER (claim, evidence, reasoning) format. Through their study of chemistry, students will develop the understanding that pure substances have characteristic physical and chemical properties and are made from a single type of atom or molecule. They will be able to explain changes between states of matter, that chemical reactions involve regrouping of atoms to form new substances, and that atoms rearrange during chemical reactions. They will develop and use models to describe how the total number of atoms does not change in a chemical reaction and thus mass is conserved. Through their study of physics, students develop the understanding that interactions in matter can be explained and predicted using the concept of transfer of energy from one object or system of objects to another, and that the total change of energy in any system is always equal to the total energy transferred into or out of the system.

WORLD LANGUAGES

French 6:

This course is designed for students with little or no previous study of French. This course is designed to be an immersive environment in which students receive almost exclusive input in French. Focus is placed on helping students build the skills and confidence to navigate new and unfamiliar situations in French. There is a required textbook for this course: the EntreCultures 1 workbook, which will be used throughout all three years of middle school French. Thematic units are based on the textbook and authentic resources and materials, which will be made available to students via Schoology. In 6th Grade French, themes may include: greetings, activities, school, and family. Students are assessed at the end of each unit through the completion of a project and via Integrated Performance Assessments that evaluate students' interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication skills.

French 7:

Building upon the skills from 6th Grade French, this course continues to be an immersive environment in which students receive almost exclusive input in French. Focus is still placed on helping students build the skills and confidence to navigate new and unfamiliar situations in French. There is a required textbook for this course: the EntreCultures 1 workbook, which is used throughout all three years of middle school French. Thematic units are based on the textbook and on authentic resources and these materials will be made available to students via Schoology. In 7th Grade French, themes may include: family, cuisine, clothing, and animals. Students are assessed at the end of each unit through the completion of a project and via Integrated Performance Assessments that evaluate students' interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication skills.

French 8:

Building upon the skills from 6th and 7th Grade French, students continue developing their proficiency in interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication skills. Students study thematic units based on authentic resources and delivered via comprehensible input strategies. Themes may include: housing, daily routines, travel, and story-telling. The required textbook for this course is the EntreCultures 1 workbook. . Students are assessed at the end of each unit through the completion of a project and via Integrated Performance Assessments that evaluate students' interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication skills. Upon successful completion of the course, and the recommendation of the teacher, students will enter French II or II Honors in the Upper School.

Spanish 6:

This course is designed for students with little or no previous background in Spanish. This course is designed to be an immersive environment in which communication is almost entirely in the target language. Focus is placed on helping students build the skills and confidence to navigate new and unfamiliar situations in Spanish. A textbook (*Espanol Santillana*) is required for this course and students will continue using it throughout middle school. Students will learn about different Hispanic cultures, listen to authentic audio and video activities and participate in grammar activities designed to develop their writing skills. In 6th Grade Spanish, themes may include: greetings, activities, school, people and family. Students are assessed at the end of each unit through the completion of a project, a quiz or a test via Integrated Performance Assessments that evaluate students' interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication skills.

Spanish 7:

This is a continuation of the Sixth Grade Spanish program. The Spanish course at this level emphasizes oral communication. The principal focus of our text, *Español Santillana*, is on communicating a message rather than manipulating grammatical structures. This course utilizes a digital textbook edition, where grammar is presented in a gradual and logical sequence by the characters from each chapter. Presentation of real-life vocabulary encourages communication in Spanish.

Spanish 8:

Spanish 8 continues the emphasis on oral communication while further developing skills in reading, writing, and listening. At this level we present more challenging grammatical concepts, additional verb tenses, and more specialized vocabulary. The *Español Santillana* online text continues to provide content that encourages students to communicate about real life situations. It is supplemented with short story readings and student writings as well as cultural projects. The text also provides lengthy reading passages in each chapter so that the students can hone their reading and begin to practice more formal writing skills as well as further oral communication. In addition to the ebook, we also provide magazines written in the native language with current news about the Hispanic world, where students can learn, discuss and write about contemporary topics. Upon successful completion of the course, and the recommendation of the teacher, students will enter Spanish II or II Honors in the Upper School.

Latin 7:

Using Book I of *Suburani*, Latin 7 focuses on introducing students to the language and culture of ancient Rome. By the end of Latin 7, students are able to read simple Latin sentences with subjects and direct objects. Throughout Latin class, students will review grammar topics. In addition to the Latin language, in this class students will encounter the following cultural topics: Greco-Roman mythology, daily life for working-class communities in ancient Rome, and powerful female figures throughout history.

Latin 8:

After a review of language and culture information covered in Latin 7, students will continue their work in Book I of *Suburani*, deepening their understanding of the Latin noun and verb systems. By the end of Latin 8, students will be able to read complex sentences and connected

passages using a variety of verb tenses and noun cases. Throughout Latin class, students will review English grammar and grammar terms. In addition to the Latin language, students will encounter the following cultural topics: Greco-Roman mythology, the Roman water supply, slavery and social mobility, military conquest and peaceful trade, and the acceptance or resistance of Roman rule in Britain. In addition, students will visit the Walters Art Museum and engage in friendly competition with Bryn Mawr School eighth graders during our annual Latin Day celebration in May.

TECHNOLOGY

Digital Thinking I:

Digital Thinking I is a student-centered, hands-on course that promises to engage learners while challenging them to think creatively. The course is completely in-class and project-based. As much as possible, students will use content from their other courses to use in connection with the digital skills we are learning. Students will begin the year by learning how to build their ePortfolio in Google Sites which will follow them throughout Middle School. Then, students move through units such as video production in iMovie, coding in block-based format, composing their own composition in Garageband, and creating formulas and charts in Google Sheets. Throughout the year we also constantly revisit social media and how it currently affects our daily lives including being safe, responsible and kind to others. General media literacy, search skills and typing are also sprinkled throughout various units.

Digital Thinking II:

Digital Thinking II is similar to Digital Thinking I in terms of its project-based format, but explores a different variety of programs and skills. Students will learn photo editing in Photoshop, video editing in Final Cut and 3D Drawing in Google Sketchup. Similar to DT I, we continue to discuss digital citizenship and social media throughout the year. We also expand upon the programming skills learning last year and learn to write code and develop more interactive elements. Students will continue to add to their ePortfolio and further develop media literacy and research skills. Many joint projects with other courses are intertwined to help anchor the content students are learning in other subject areas.

Yearbook 8 (8th Grade Elective):

Students work with our faculty Yearbook advisor and Upper School students to help photograph, curate and create layouts for the current year's edition. Students work first hand with software and get a taste for journalism and publications.

ART

Art 6:

This course offers experiences which strengthen the ability to find original solutions, nurture habits that support the artistic process, and improve on the techniques and skills of the visual arts. Using the elements of art and the principles of design as a framework, students investigate a variety of experiences and concepts – including drawing, painting, printmaking and sculpture. In building an understanding of the elements and principles of design, students will learn how this knowledge can strengthen their artwork.

Art 7:

The emphasis in the Seventh Grade Art curriculum is on exploration, analysis, and investigation of the creative process. Students develop technical skills that empower them to communicate ideas visually. They begin by exploring non-traditional ways to represent themselves and their

identities. They also will learn to work collaboratively on projects such as stop motion animation. In conjunction with the grade level signature project, Architecture Expo, students will learn how to draw architecture using perspective drawing.

Art 8:

By using problem solving techniques in conjunction with imagination, students will create artwork using a variety of media. In the 8th grade, students are expected to make deeper connections between what they create and what has been made in other cultures and time periods. We will utilize multi disciplinary skills such as scale and proportion to accomplish tasks. Along with creative projects, students will culminate their art experience with a researched presentation on a female artist who has made a significant contribution to their field in order to connect art and practice to real world events beyond the classroom.

Sewing (8th Grade Elective):

Have you ever been interested in fashion design? How about bringing those designs to life? In this elective, you will get to design and construct your own creations from start to finish using sewing machines and several sewing techniques.

PERFORMING ARTS

Dance 6, 7, 8:

The primary aim of the dance classes at this level is to help students develop the skills and confidence necessary to express themselves through movement. Students concentrate on attaining basic skills in ballet and modern dance techniques. These include understanding proper body alignment, balance, posture, coordination, and isolation of major and minor muscle groups. Special emphasis is also placed on creative movement, awareness exercises, and group choreography. The year culminates in a performance to showcase the progress of the students.

Music 6:

The Sixth Grade Music course builds on the foundation of concepts and skills established in the Lower School. The students will explore the basic elements of music notation, classification of musical instruments and expressive qualities, through singing, composing, analyzing, movement and the playing of different musical instruments. Students will play soprano recorders, boomwhackers and percussion instruments to experience performing in an ensemble setting. In addition, focused attention will be given to developing the singing voice through proper breathing and vocal techniques. Music history and exposure to a variety of instrumental repertoire and genres will be incorporated into the Music lessons.

Music 7:

The Seventh Grade Music course is designed to expand the student's musical experience and further develop the concepts of reading and understanding music notation (rhythm, melody, form) and expressive qualities as they sing, play and perform a varied repertoire of music. Students will study vocal production and refine their ability to sing in unison and in harmony with a vibrant, healthy tone with pitch accuracy. Students will also have the opportunity to create and compose original compositions using traditional and non-traditional musical notation. Students will learn to ring Hand Chimes and perform Level 1+ and Level 2 music.

Music 8:

The Eighth Grade Music course is designed to give students many opportunities to apply their basic musicianship skills to reading, creating, and performing a varied repertoire of music. Vocal production and techniques will be continued as students become acclimated to hearing and performing two and three part harmony. They will strive towards singing with a healthy, substantial, and blended sound with accurate pitch and tonal placement. Performing on Orff and World Music Drumming instrumentation students will have the opportunity to improvise melodies and rhythms within an ensemble setting. In addition, students will learn both major and minor chords on the Ukulele so they may accompany themselves while singing.

Modern Band/Songwriting (8th Grade Elective)

Students will learn how to play modern band instruments, including electric guitar, drumset, electric bass, and keyboard. They will set up sound system equipment and experience singing on a microphone. Students will use lead sheets to play select songs from a variety of musical genres such as pop, rock, jazz, country, and hip hop. After learning various song forms, they will write original music and lyrics to be performed together as a band.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical Education 6, 7, 8:

The Middle School Physical Education program combines a general overview of sport skills and wellness components. Age appropriate activities are introduced and incorporated in each class activity. The focus for each student is to increase her knowledge and understanding of good health, wellness, and the skills and rules that govern a variety of sports and games. Yearly activities include individual and team sports, opportunities for students to teach and learn games from their classmates, and group problem-solving activities that originate from the Project Adventure Outdoor Education philosophy.

ATLAS

ATLAS

The Additional Tutoring Learning and Support (ATLAS) program provides small group executive function and academic support, including general study skills and extra practice for skills that have been taught across subject areas. Students will work with the Middle School Academic Resource Coordinator and Boyce Center specialists on skills including organizing materials, prioritizing assignments, breaking down larger projects, note-taking, reviewing material from classes or studying for upcoming assessments.

ENRICHMENT COURSES

CAPSTONE

The semester-long 8th Grade Capstone Course empowers students to explore their passions and “ideas worth sharing” through personal reflection and intentional, in-depth research. The project is broken up into three sections: Discover, Develop, and Share. Each section contains a set of Explorations that contain discussion, thought, and activity prompts designed to help students build presentation literacy and public speaking skills. The course culminates with each student’s own TED-style Talk in a showcase for the Middle School and Garrison Forest community.

PERSONAL FINANCE

This introductory Personal Finance course empowers middle school students with essential money management skills to build a strong financial foundation for the future. Through engaging lessons, hands-on activities, and real-world scenarios, students will explore topics such as budgeting, saving, spending wisely, earning income, understanding needs vs. wants, and the basics of banking and credit. Designed to promote financial literacy at an early age, the course encourages responsible decision-making and helps students develop habits that support long-term financial well-being. By the end of the course, students will be better prepared to navigate everyday financial choices and understand the value of planning for their financial goals.

DEBATE

In sixth grade Debate, students learn to harness the power of their voices as they explore the art of persuasive speaking and respectful discourse. Through engaging topics and structured debates, students develop critical thinking skills by researching current issues, identifying and defending an argument, and evaluating the credibility of sources. Emphasis is placed on building confidence, articulating ideas clearly, and listening actively to opposing viewpoints. This course empowers students to become thoughtful communicators who can speak with purpose, conviction, and empathy.

DECISION MAKING

Decision Making 6:

This Sixth Grade course provides an opportunity for students to strengthen areas of a young person’s personality that will later enable her to make healthy choices about a variety of issues related to personal growth. Emphasis is placed on teaching students new skills in communication, problem solving and relationship building. Topics include:

- Trust
- Decision-making & Core Values
- Peer pressure
- Assertiveness
- Cliques/Relational Aggression
- Effective Communication, Social Media
- Stress Management/Time Management
- Feelings Identification
- Self-Esteem/Empathy
- Identity and Individuation
- Family Systems

Decision Making 7:

In this Seventh Grade Life Skills class, the main focus of the first semester is health and wellness. The studies include discussion about nutrition, self-esteem, and general health. Students are encouraged to share their own feelings while learning to negotiate the environment around them. Factual information is presented with opportunities for discussion, in-class activities, and special projects.

Decision Making 8:

This course is designed to provide Eighth Grade students with an opportunity to explore their personal values, the people and institutions that have influenced their values and, most importantly, how to put those values into practice. As students prepare for Upper School a number of topics and guest speakers are introduced as education and prevention for preparing them for increased independence. These include:

- Uniqueness
- Diversity/Stereotypes
- Value systems
- Understanding your own voice
- Physical and Emotional Safety
- Reproductive Health/Body Image
- Relationships – Healthy and Unhealthy
- Decision making and role modeling
- HIV Education/Risk behaviors/Alcohol/Drugs
- Social Networking
- Insight into yourself/transition to Upper School