

**WARDLAW + HARTRIDGE**

**MIDDLE SCHOOL  
CURRICULUM GUIDE**



## **The Wardlaw+Hartridge School**

### **Mission Statement**

The Wardlaw+Hartridge School prepares students to lead and succeed in a world of global interconnection. We provide an educational atmosphere characterized by academic challenge, rigorous inquiry, support for individual excellence, diversity, and a familial sense of community.

### **Core Values**

The core values of the Wardlaw-Hartridge school community are:

- Integrity – our bedrock value, sine qua non.
- Opportunity – Wardlaw+Hartridge develops academic and intellectual excellence in its students through programs that stretch their creative imaginations, develop their athletic and artistic skills, engage their sense of discovery, and develop a social conscience. In the process, students take on leadership roles and learn how to work effectively in teams.
- Support – Every member of the Wardlaw+Hartridge faculty believes in a personal approach to educating and developing the whole child. Wardlaw+Hartridge educators take the time, care, and interest in each student to call forth his or her best work.
- Diversity – The diversity of thought, background, and culture at Wardlaw+Hartridge distinguishes us among independent schools, strengthens the global orientation of our curriculum, and enriches the daily experience of every member of the school community, inside and outside the classroom.
- Community – When faculty members, students, parents, or graduates walk through the doors of Wardlaw+Hartridge, they have entered a home. Our community is distinguished by an ethos of care and mutual respect, and a strong partnership with families.
- Sustainability – Wardlaw+Hartridge prepares students to become citizens whose beliefs and actions will create a more humane and sustainable global society.

## **The Wardlaw-Hartridge Middle School Curriculum Academic Overview**

The Middle School curriculum is designed to enhance the transition that students experience moving from the structure of the Lower School to the independence required of Upper School students. Moving from class to class, experiencing different teachers and their teaching styles, organizing a locker, and taking more responsibility all play an important part in preparing Middle School students for their future academic endeavors.

Hands-on learning and energetic student involvement are encouraged in the Middle School. This is true both in the classroom and on the athletic field. An advisee/advisor system builds bonds between students and faculty while the bonds between parents and faculty established in the Lower School are continued.

Research skill development, writing across the curriculum, and service learning form integral components of the Middle School program. Scientific inquiry and mathematical reasoning are honed and enhanced using problem-based learning strategies and appropriate technology resources and applications.

### **Courses by Grade Level**

#### Sixth Grade

English  
Mathematics Course I  
Life Science  
World History and Cultures  
Introduction to World Languages  
Art  
Band  
Choir  
Physical Education/Athletics  
Transitions

#### Seventh Grade

English  
Mathematics  
Course II Physical Science  
American History I  
World Languages IA  
Latin  
Mandarin  
Chinese  
Spanish  
Art  
Band

Choir  
Health  
Physical Education/Athletics

Eighth Grade

English  
Elements of Algebra  
Algebra I  
Earth Science  
American  
History II  
World Languages I  
Latin  
Mandarin  
Chinese  
Spanish  
Art  
Band  
Choir  
Health  
Physical Education/Athletics

## Sixth Grade

### English

Sixth grade English builds on the instruction in grammar, usage, vocabulary, and reading comprehension of previous grades. Students also gain new analytical skills as they discuss and write about literature from a variety of genres that relate closely to the history curriculum. Independent critical-thinking skills are developed as well as the ability to actively participate in groups through literature circles, peer evaluations, and class discussions. Expository writing emphasizes effective communication and introduces structural analysis.

Throughout the year, students write in a variety of formats, including cause/effect, comparison/contrast, narrative, and description. The culmination of the students' work in composition is the production of a research paper and a three-minute speech in the spring trimester. Instruction in study skills and independent research is coordinated with the history curriculum.

### Mathematics Course I

Sixth grade mathematics is the first year of a two-year program to prepare students for algebra in the eighth grade. Students will gain confidence in their abilities to problem solve, recognize patterns, and communicate effectively. General topics include data, surface area, plane geometry, pre-algebra, decimals, measurement, number theory, fractions, proportions, percents, and probability. A stronger emphasis on problem solving emerges as students become more comfortable with their skills.

### Life Science

The goal of sixth grade science is to expose students to a range of topics in the life sciences, to strengthen their ability within each component of the scientific method, and to help them develop key academic skills in preparation for their future studies in science. The life sciences curriculum includes an in-depth study of cell biology, heredity, and explores evolution, scientific taxonomy and the six kingdoms of living organisms. Ecological concepts and chemistry are integrated throughout the study of life sciences.

The classes are comprised of a mix of hands-on experiments and activities, STEM and problem-based learning assignments, as well as written work and discussions about the various topics studied. Classes are infused with appropriate technologies including computer simulations, internet research, and videos. Students will be given the opportunity to present their understanding with various presentation applications. Trips and research projects will enhance the subject.

### Transitions

Transitions are defined as “changes.” Sixth graders participate in a class called “Transitions,” a discussion-based program that examines the many transitions in the life of a sixth grader. The weekly sessions, led by the school counselor, examine the transitions from fifth to sixth grade, from Lower to Middle School, and the social, emotional, and academic changes experienced by this age group. Students develop good listening skills, have the opportunity to hear the opinions and feelings of their classmates, and develop a broader understanding of individual and group experiences of sixth graders.

### World History and Cultures

The sixth grade course presents an introduction to the study of history and social studies. Students begin the year with a discussion and study of geographical concepts and understandings, building a sense of their place in the world, both spatially and through the lenses of culture and society. Students then apply their geography knowledge as they explore the history and cultures of Asia and Africa from ancient times through the Middle Ages.

Students are also introduced to the more recent history of selected regions and discuss current events to gain a better understanding of how the past shapes and affects our world. In-class activities, individual and group projects, writing assignments, and presentations strengthen students’ collaboration, research, technology, writing, and speaking skills.

### Introduction to World Languages

In sixth grade, students follow an exploratory course in Latin, Mandarin Chinese, and Spanish. This course offers the student an exciting introduction to world languages and cultures. In addition to learning basic vocabulary and grammar concepts, students gain knowledge of the culture and history of Hispanic countries, China, and the ancient world, and are able to discuss the influence they exert on our society. Where applicable, students also connect their study of the three languages with the curricula of other middle school subjects, including math, science, history, music, English, and art.

### Trip to Frost Valley

Sixth grade students have a unique educational experience when they travel to Frost Valley for several days to create a living-learning community that integrates academic experiences with the social development of the community. This is a residential experience that takes an interdisciplinary approach, using the natural environment as a main theme. Students participate in small and large group lessons and activities.

## Seventh Grade

### English

A literature-based course, seventh grade English continues work in English usage, study skills, grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, critical inquiry, and composition. An emphasis is placed on developing more sophisticated writing in several modes and for varied audiences.

Students read across multiple genres and learn how to summarize, paraphrase, take notes, and create paragraphs from notes in preparation for writing longer papers. Information and expository writing form a key component of the course. This course includes the writing of an original research paper and a speech based on student research. Reinforced by novels, short stories and poetry, seventh grade creative writing emphasizes character delineation, description, creation of mood, plot construction, and the use of various literary devices. The course concludes with an in-depth introduction to a Shakespearean drama and performance.

### Mathematics Course II

Seventh grade mathematics is the second year of a two-year program to prepare students for algebra in the eighth grade. Students will continue the study of integers, rational and irrational numbers, variables, exponents, expressions, and equations. Through perseverance in problem solving, students will improve their deductive reasoning with emphasis on number sense, modeling, constructing and critiquing arguments, using precision and giving structure to their work.

Students will graph linear equations and inequalities, write and solve proportions, explore angle relationships, three-dimensional geometry, transformational geometry, the Pythagorean theorem, percent change, counting strategies, and conditional probability. Through the year, students apply their understanding of concepts to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) projects.

### Physical Science

The goal of seventh grade science is to expose students to a range of topics in the physical sciences. In asking them to explore the matter all around them, we seek to strengthen and build upon their science skills of measurement, observation, inquiry and critical thinking. Through hands-on activities and labs, students will investigate the topics of Properties of Matter, Introduction to the Atom and the Periodic Table, Energy and Energy Resources and Motion and Forces. The lessons will utilize internet resources, independent research, computer simulation and videos.

Students will have the opportunity to express their understanding of the topics through various technological applications and group work. World events will be discussed through a scientific lens culminating in a unique project on a global issue. On the seventh grade trip to Colonial Williamsburg, students will explore a focus of simple machines and tools from Colonial times.

### American History I

All seventh and eighth graders take a two- year, comprehensive survey of American history. In the first year, students start with European colonial contact with Native Americans. The course then progresses through the formation of the colonies into states, the growth of the American economy, an independent American government, the expansion of American territory, and America's increasing role in global affairs. A special focus is dedicated to sectional, racial, gender, ethnic, and class tensions, and the ultimate collision of conflict in the US Civil War. In the midst of these major topics, students are consistently challenged to consider and reconsider the ways in which communities form and are defined.

### Seventh Grade Mandarin Chinese IA

The Mandarin course serves as an introduction to Chinese language and culture. Emphasis is placed on building strong speaking and listening skills, supplemented with reading and writing simple Chinese sentences. Students also will learn the pinyin system as the basis for learning proper pronunciation. The units will cover familiar topics like greetings, introductions, talking about school and home, visiting friends, eating, and discussing likes, dislikes, and preferences. Chinese culture, including holidays, cuisine, art and crafts and music, is an important part of the course.

### Seventh Grade Latin 1A

Latin 1A presents students with an opportunity to explore the Ancient World, with a particular focus on Greek and Roman cultural influence. English vocabulary building, Latin grammar, and composition both in Latin and in English are important touchstones of Latin 1A. Students are encouraged to expand the study of Latin outside the classroom through project-based learning, which helps them contextualize Latin and Greek influences on the global community. In addition, students are introduced to various aspects of the mythology and culture of the ancient Greeks and Romans.

### Seventh Grade Spanish IA

The Spanish IA course provides students with the necessary foundation for the continued study of Spanish through Level I. It presents basic structures and grammar of the Spanish language and encourages conversation with elementary

vocabulary. The four language skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) are developed in a meaningful context as students use the different modes of communication to interact, to interpret, and to present learned information. The close relationship between language and culture is studied as students learn about the people who speak Spanish in Spain, Latin America, and the United States and understand the relationship between the products, practices, and perspectives of the culture.

## **Eighth Grade**

### English

Eighth grade English is designed to finalize preparation of the Middle School student for the rigors of Upper School reading, writing, and critical inquiry. Emphasis is placed on building confidence and skill in the various modes of writing expected of high school students, including formulaic (5-paragraph), definition, persuasion, expository, and literary analysis. The course is literature based, drawing its writing and vocabulary study from the assigned readings. Additionally, units of grammar study are paired with the teaching of writing in order to place all structures in context. Students read across the genres, including: the novel and novella, short story, information/non-fiction texts, essays, poetry, and drama. This course of study includes an action research capstone project that develops inquiry, writing, and presentation skills. Capstone topics are selected by students with the assistance of their teachers. These topics focus on issues of global significance and personal relevance. We end the year with the study of Shakespearean sonnets and drama and a student performance of one Shakespearean play.

### Elements of Algebra

The Elements of Algebra course focuses on introductory algebra topics. It is designed to further facilitate students' transition from concrete concepts of pre-algebra to the abstract concepts of Algebra I. Students will develop a deeper understanding of equation solving, combining like terms, the distributive property, linear equations, and an introduction to quadratic equations. In addition, students will have further practice with operations of fractions, decimals, percentage problems, ratios, and proportions. Students who take this course will take Algebra I in ninth grade.

### Algebra I

This course is designed for students who have successfully completed our Mathematics Course II program. Students will study the traditional material for an Algebra I course: signed numbers, equations and inequalities, graphing functions, systems of equations, exponents and radicals, polynomials and quadratics. Graphing calculators are regularly used by all students as an integral part of both instructional and assessment activities to enhance students' understanding and command of mathematics. The successful completion of this course is the prerequisite for Geometry in the ninth grade. It is important for students to be adequately prepared in mathematics in order to do well in subsequent courses. Consequently, a student who receives a grade of C- in Algebra I will have the option to re-take the course in the summer or during ninth grade in order to advance to the next level of math.

## Earth Science

Earth Science provides a balance of physical geology, historical geology, meteorology, and astronomy. It is the study of Earth - its matter, features, processes, and place in the universe.

Students will continue to develop their ability to measure, organize, and communicate scientific information, with a focus on precision and accuracy. In addition, students will develop knowledge of facts, terminology and principles that will help interpret occurrences in the environment. Attention is given to important principles, concepts, and science processes that serve as a framework for understanding and interpreting the general characteristics of Earth.

This framework is then applied to problem solving from the simple to the complex. Students continue to develop research and presentation skills while exploring natural and man-made disasters. A strong emphasis is placed on the use of technology and mathematics in scientific investigations (STEM), and students perform investigations culminating in comprehensive lab reports.

## American History II

In the second year, all eighth graders resume their study of American history, beginning with Reconstruction through the early 21st century. Special attention is given to the continued discussion of racial and socio-economic divisions, the continued rise of industry, the increased role of the federal government, and the increased presence of the United States as a global political, economic, and military stage. A special focus, throughout both years, is an emphasis on civil rights, liberties, and responsibilities.

## World Languages: Requirement for Advancement

It is important for students to be adequately prepared in a world language in order to do well in subsequent courses. Consequently, a student who receives lower than C- in a foreign language course as a final grade and/or an F on the final exam must either take a summer course or pursue tutoring to review that year's course work during the summer. At the end of the summer, he or she must take a placement test and earn a grade of C- or better in order to be permitted to advance to the next level.

## Mandarin Chinese I

This course is intended to prepare students for continuing study of the Chinese language and culture. Students review Pinyin and further enhance four tones of Chinese pronunciation. They master more common Chinese characters, words and sentences related to daily life and school life. Topics include greetings, family and

friends, date and time, hobbies, shopping, weather, etc. Through a variety of meaningful and authentic activities, the course trains students in four communicative skills. In addition to traditional textbooks, a variety of technologies are used to make learning an interesting and productive experience.

## Latin I

In Latin I, emphasis is placed on skills in reading, comprehension and composition. The course also gives insight into ancient life in Rome and in Greece by following and participating in the daily lives of a family in the city of Pompeii shortly before the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. Morphology, vocabulary, and syntax are studied, with constant reference to the English language when looking at derivatives and cognates. The pace allows time for consistent reinforcement and mastery of the basic structures of the language, especially in the use of verb tense and noun/adjective agreement. Web-based supplements are used for cultural enrichment of the customs and history of ancient Rome and Pompeii.

## Spanish I

The Spanish I course is designed to further enhance the study of the Spanish language and culture therefore completing the two-part sequence of Level I at the Middle School. Students will be introduced to more advanced grammar concepts, structures, vocabulary, and verb tenses. There is an emphasis on more complex reading selections (contemporary articles and news) and writing tasks (descriptions and short compositions.) Communication will continue to be a significant component of the course as students interact, interpret and present content. The close relationship between language and culture will continue to be studied as students advance in their use of Spanish in writing and speaking.

## Washington D.C. Trip

The Washington D.C. trip is taken during the second half of the school year. This trip integrates material studied across the disciplines. The students visit and have special guided tours of many of the museums, monuments, and government buildings in the capital. They also attend a special performance at the Kennedy Center. Meetings with members of Congress and a tour of the Capitol Building are highlights of this trip.

## **Special Programs**

Involvement in co-curricular athletics, electives, service learning, art and music not only positively impact academic achievement, but they also shape the way our students understand the world around them and foster critical life skills and joy. These Special Programs convey our commitment to educating the whole student and reflect our philosophy that these programs form an integral part of a student's education and life.

### **Middle School Art**

The Middle School art program is designed to be a transitional stage as young artists leave the Lower School, assume more responsibility, accept new challenges, and prepare for the Upper School. Students work in the mediums of painting, drawing, clay, pastel, sculpture, pen and ink, color pencil, marker, collage, mixed media, and scratch board. The goals are to develop each student's ability to create his or her own works of art, to deepen their aesthetic awareness of the environment, and to develop an appreciation for art created by others. Students are challenged to explore many ideas through individual projects.

In the sixth grade, students are encouraged to articulate their creativity through aesthetic self-expression. They will draw on techniques and concepts that focus on engaging their imagination and enhancing their critical thinking skills while developing both technical and perceptual skills. With each project, students will begin to explore and develop their observations of the world while becoming more self-assured in their artistic skills. As they open their conscious minds to their own potential, they will strengthen their self-respect and creative courage. This self-discovery within fine arts encourages students to move toward greater awareness and mastery of themselves as they continue to develop their imagination and sense of individuality.

In the seventh grade, students will engage in an exploration of art history by looking at a variety of famous artists. Each project will begin with a brief biography of the artist, general background, and interesting facts about the artist. Examples of the artist's work will be viewed and discussed. The students, becoming the artists themselves, will work with the medium, the technique, and the style used by the artist.

In the eighth grade, students will learn about the principles and elements of design and the ways to apply them to the art they create. Projects will be based on one or more of the five basic design elements: form, line, texture, color, and space. Through the exploration of the foundations of design, students will learn composition, understand new concepts, and improve basic artistic skills.

### **Middle School Learning and Life Skills**

A feature of our advisory program and embedded within curricula across the disciplines are units of study and opportunities for practice in essential learning and life skills. Cognitive and executive functioning skills are nurtured through explicit instruction using developmentally appropriate strategies to teach test preparation, note taking, organization, performance and public speaking, active listening, and effective study habits. Non-cognitive life skills, such as creativity, curiosity, teamwork, empathy, resilience, and ethics are fostered through a daily community-based advisory program as well as problem and project-based learning opportunities.

### Middle School Speeches

Continuing the tradition of student speeches begun in the Lower School, Middle School students are required to research, write, and present a speech at the end of each year. The English and history teachers work together to help students prepare for these speeches. Public speaking is a critical skill for success in college and beyond.

### Middle School Electives

Each student in the Middle School is encouraged to explore and develop individual interests and passions. Our elective program is structured to introduce students to an array of co-curricular topics and activities including STEM Lab, Debate, Screenwriting and Filmmaking, Robotics, Chess, Artistic Expression, and Competition Trivia Team (competing against other schools in areas such as geography, spelling, and math). Elective options may vary from year-to-year and students are invited to nominate new electives based on interest.

### Middle School Music and Theater

The Middle School music program develops musicianship using varied methods of instruction. All students in grades six through eight participate in both vocal and instrumental classes. Music-reading skills and general music knowledge are emphasized in the selections they learn and perform in the winter and spring concerts. In addition, opportunities for solo and/or small ensemble performances including two concerts, a fall musical, and spring recital are offered throughout the year. Students who enjoy singing and/or playing an instrument may also participate in our Middle School Boys Choir, Girls' Choir, and/or Jazz Band. Students in these ensembles rehearse before or after school and perform advanced repertoire at our school concerts. Students in grades 7 and 8 also participate in an annual Shakespeare Festival, performing a work of drama for peers, family, and friends in the spring.

## Choir

The students meet once a week for choir and once a week for small group instruction. Students learn a repertoire of music that represents diverse genres and cultures. They work to accurately place their singing range as they read music arranged from two-part treble voices in sixth grade to a full mixed chorus experience of four-part soprano, alto, tenor, and bass arrangements in seventh and eighth grades. Ear-training exercises and vocal production warm-ups are a part of each rehearsal. The curriculum emphasizes the student's ability to identify and define standard notation symbols for pitch, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, articulation, and expression. Music appreciation lessons are taught throughout the year to teach students listening and analyzing skills. They will also learn about composers from different historical periods. Choir members perform in winter and spring concerts and in a competitive event each June in Pennsylvania.

## Instrumental Music: Band

Instrumental music students rehearse once a week as a full band and once a week in a smaller sectional class. Emphasis is placed on instrumental music fundamentals and techniques unique to each student's instrument, rhythmic and sight-reading skill development and preparation to perform music representing a wide range of musical styles. Students with previous band instrumental experience (woodwind, brass and percussion instruments) may sign up to become members of the concert band. Parents of students with no previous band instrumental experience are encouraged to contact the band director ([rfontaine@whschool.org](mailto:rfontaine@whschool.org)) before signing up. The concert band performs in the winter and spring concerts as well as in a competitive event each June in Pennsylvania.

## Middle School Athletics

At Wardlaw-Hartridge, we consider athletics an extension of the classroom and believe it is integral to the educational experience of our students. We strive to provide an environment that promotes achievement, fair play, integrity, sportsmanship, and overall health and fitness.

In Middle School, students are allowed to choose a team sport to fulfill the PE requirement. The primary goal of the sixth grade athletics experience is development. The seventh and eighth grade teams tend to be more competitive, with each child receiving ample opportunity to develop his or her skills and compete in games at the appropriate level. Each child may choose from the following sports: in the fall, boys' soccer, girls' soccer, coed volleyball, or girls' tennis; in the winter, boys' basketball, girls' basketball, girls' cheerleading or coed swimming; in the spring, boys' baseball, boys' tennis, girls' softball, or coed track and field.

## Middle School Health

Health Education is required of all students in grades 7 and 8. The goal of the program is to promote values that will improve the health and well-being of the student and develop skills for a healthy life. The topics and information are presented each year in an age-appropriate format. The curriculum emphasizes communication and social-interaction skills, body systems, sex education, human growth and development, drug education, family life issues, tobacco, alcohol, stress management, and building self-esteem.

## Middle School Physical Education

The Middle School students attend physical education class when they are not participating in a seasonal athletic sport. During class, students experience a variety of sports and games, as well as fitness, conditioning, and strength building units. Students are encouraged to develop an appreciation for an active and healthy lifestyle while improving physical, mental/emotional and social skills in a dynamic environment.

## Middle School Service Learning

Service learning is a cornerstone of the Middle School program. It further supports our mission “to prepare students to lead and succeed in a world of global interconnection” by cultivating a sense of civic engagement and responsibility for one another. The Service Learning Program allows students to engage in active service locally and across the world through myriad activities large and small. A feature of this program is learning about the causes and consequences of actions that precipitate a need. Students learn about food insecurity and the causes of poverty in their work at a nearby food bank; they study ecosystem fragility and restoration as they rehabilitate nature trails and remove invasive plant species from a local preserve. Eighth graders take their service learning to a large-scale level in an action research project that requires study of philanthropic entrepreneurialism as they form and operate small businesses that raise money for a micro-finance project that provides funding for women-owned small businesses in the islands of the South Pacific.