

Jonathan Dayton
Grade 8 Academy



PROGRAM OF STUDIES
2025-2026

SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Our Vision: Cultivating compassionate and extraordinary learners.
Our Mission: Springfield Public Schools will challenge every student through meaningful and engaging experiences, empowering all students to flourish and contribute in an ever-evolving world.

School Administration

Dr. Norman Francis, Principal
Mrs. Lisa Ramirez, Assistant Principal

Student Support Services

Mrs. Jenine Pentz, Nurse
Ms. Regine Rousso, Psychologist
Mrs. Kim Paz, Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultant
Mrs. Kelly Schulster, Social Worker

District Administration

Dr. Rachel Goldberg, Superintendent of Schools
Mrs. Erica Scudero, Assistant Superintendent
Mrs. Michelle Calas, Business Administrator/Board Secretary
Mrs. Ann Suter, Director of Student Support Services
Mrs. Tiffany Boehm, Director of Early Childhood & Elementary Education
Mrs. Julie Spoerl, Director of Technology
Mr. Anthony Salerno, Athletic Director
Mrs. Meredith Gerckens, Supervisor of School Counseling
Mr. Gregory Salmon, Supervisor of STEM
Mrs. Candice Schiano, Supervisor of Humanities

Dear Students and Families,

I am pleased to introduce the Jonathan Dayton - Grade 8 Academy, Program of Studies. This guide outlines the courses and opportunities designed to support students' educational growth and curiosity.

At Jonathan Dayton, we are committed to fostering an environment that values academic excellence, creativity, and personal development. Our curriculum offers a diverse range of subjects—Math, English, Science, the Arts—and a variety of enrichment courses in music, physical education, and technology to provide a well-rounded education.

In addition to academic subjects, we emphasize social-emotional learning, character development, and good citizenship through our co-curricular and extracurricular activities.

I encourage students to approach their time in the JD Grade 8 Academy enthusiastically, embrace challenges, and collaborate with teachers and peers to create a supportive community of learners.

Also, thank you to our parents and guardians for partnering with us to ensure each student's success. We look forward to a rewarding and successful school year!

Best regards,

Dr. Norman Francis
Principal

Grade 8 Program of Studies

We are thrilled to share with you the exciting course offerings available to our 8th-grade students! This is an important and inspiring time in your academic journey—one filled with opportunity, growth, and new challenges. The information that follows is designed to help you make thoughtful and informed decisions about the courses that best match your interests, goals, and aspirations.

As you explore these options, remember that your success, sense of pride, and personal accomplishments will be shaped largely by the effort, curiosity, and commitment you bring to your learning. The choices you make now can open doors to future opportunities, and we are here to support you every step of the way.

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Requirements

All courses satisfactorily completed count toward promotional requirements. Specific courses that must be completed satisfactorily are:

- Communication Arts
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- Physical Education and Health
- Practical Arts Grades (1 semester)
- Visual and Performing Arts (1 semester)
- World Languages (full year)

State and District Assessments

Students will be administered the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA) in the Spring of eighth grade. The iReady Diagnostic benchmark assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics are given three times a year to track progress toward grade-level mastery. Students in Communication Arts 8, Math 8, Pre-Algebra, Algebra, Geometry, and Science 8 will take the corresponding assessments on the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA). All courses follow the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) and comply with all New Jersey Department of Education policies and regulations.

Attendance

Students must meet attendance requirements for each course. These requirements vary according to the length of the course (i.e., full-year, semester). The standard is 90% attendance.

Grading Scale

The 8th Grade Academy uses a numerical grading scale with a grade of 65 or higher as passing.

A+	98 - 100
A	92 - 97
A-	90 - 91
B+	86 - 90
B	82 - 85
B-	80 - 81
C+	76 - 79
C	72 - 75
C-	70 - 71
D	65 - 69
F	Below 65

Honor Roll

At the end of each marking period, students who meet the requisite course averages are recognized by being placed on the Honor Roll:

- HONOR ROLL= 82 or above average, with no grade under 82.
- PRINCIPAL'S HONOR ROLL = 90 or above average, with no grade under 90

Technology Literacy

Technology and Media Literacy are infused into the standard curriculum as essential skills needed by students for academic and career success. All curriculum is regularly revised to incorporate developing skills, tools, and resources in a rapidly evolving world. Each course incorporates and aligns with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for College and Career Readiness with regard to Technology and Media Literacy.

Statement of Non-Discrimination

Board of Education policy states that the assignment of students to subject areas is to follow all pertinent federal and state laws and regulations, and such assignment will not be predicated on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex, ancestry, national origin, social or economic status, or handicapping conditions.

School Counseling & Social-Emotional Learning

Each student is assigned to a school counselor. Students can request to meet with their counselor independently or through a referral from a parent, teacher, or other faculty & staff. The counselor assists with the social, emotional, and academic needs of students and acts as an important liaison between the student, teacher, and parents. The counselors work with the classroom teachers and other student support personnel to meet the needs of the changing adolescent and develop school-wide character education lessons throughout the year. In addition, they provide classroom lessons on Social Media Safety, HIB/Code of Conduct, and Social-Emotional Learning. The counselors also provide restorative circles, implement I&RS and 504 Plans, assist with academic scheduling and testing programs, and help students with the transitions that occur from elementary school through middle school and into high school.

Gifted and Talented

All students who are recommended for this program will develop and pursue their own Individual Education Project under the direction of a mentor teacher. Also, included in this program is individual and group training in creative problem-solving and research techniques.

Discovery 8 (M8225) The Discovery program is designed to enrich the educational experience of those students who demonstrate exceptional intellectual ability, creativity, and/or task commitment under the Renzulli model of Giftedness. The Discovery classes require students to pursue an inquiry project for the year, as well as critical thinking, lateral thinking, and collaborative exercises. To complete this inquiry project, students choose a topic of personal interest, and with the aid of the Discovery instructor, explore and research that topic for expertise through each of the four marking period projects that culminate in an end-of-the-year presentation to the school community and parents.

Talented Arts Program (M8230) This program is open to interested students continuing to expand their artistic ability through an annual application process based upon nominations and portfolio reviews. It is designed to augment the program for students who demonstrate a passion and aptitude for the fine and visual arts. Participants in the Talented Art Program (TAP) will be offered exciting and meaningful opportunities to enrich, nurture, and explore their artistic skills and appreciation for the Visual Arts. Students selected for TAP will participate in the program during an elective period for the entire year.

Related Courses

In addition to the Discovery program, there are additional accelerated courses in Communication Arts and Mathematics in grade 8. In addition to the designated Gifted and Talented courses, a variety of rigorous academic and academically challenging elective courses are offered to all students.

- Accelerated Communication Arts 8 (M8034)
- Geometry (M8010)

*Also see our course listing for extensive academic electives

Subject Listings & Sample Student Schedule

Our 8th-grade program includes four core academic classes, physical education, world language, and one elective each semester.

Sample Student Course Load

Period	Courses
1	Math 8, Pre-Algebra, or Algebra
2	Communication Arts
3	Science 8
4	World Language
5	Lunch
6	Elective
7	PE/Health
8	Social Studies

Communication Arts Course Descriptions

Each student is required to take three years of Communication Arts. Each of the courses is one year in length. Students are required to read at least one assigned book over the summer. Novels may be selected by the teacher(s) or the student(s), depending on the course. In September, every student will be required to complete an assignment or activity based on the summer reading.

COMMUNICATION ARTS 8 (M8024)

The 8th-grade Language Arts Curriculum consists of a comprehensive program incorporating literature, informational texts, digital literacy, composition, grammar, and verbal and written communication. It is constructed around our Literacy Program, *myPerspectives*, to support and reinforce the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The units of study are divided into themes and core texts. The thematic units in Grade 8 are Generations, A Starry Home, Turning Points, People and the Planet, and Facing Adversity. The course incorporates a wide variety of resources, including informational texts, interviews, media clips, short stories, poetry, biographies, memoirs, literature excerpts, and anchor novels. The program takes a differentiated approach to literacy education, offering whole-class, small-group, and individualized resources to support reading and writing skill development.

ACCELERATED COMMUNICATION ARTS 8 (M8034)

Throughout the 8th-grade year, students can expect to increase skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking through a variety of activities. Usage, mechanics, and vocabulary will be taught in context with literature and language-based units. There will be more opportunities to practice higher-level thinking, reading, and writing skills due to an increase in rigor, inquiry, and reflection. Students are expected to be independent learners, meet deadlines, read on or above an 8th-grade level, and have superior writing ability. Research skills, assignments, and projects are infused throughout the year. Students should be active participants who demonstrate that they can manage their time efficiently for both short and long-term assignments. Students will work at an accelerated pace throughout the course.

CREATIVE WRITING (M1678)

In this course, students will read, critique, and compose original poetry, short fiction, and creative non-fiction. Students will examine the works of published writers, as well as peers, to discover, expand, and refine their skills, voice, and style.

JOURNALISM (M7035)

Journalism is a project-based elective where students will explore the history of Journalism and Media from original newspapers to the advent of social media. This course is designed to teach you how to be a more effective communicator across all platforms, including communication arts, creative writing, blogging, social media, photography, and podcasts. You will engage in a variety of independent and group-based projects which include creating newspapers, social media posts, podcasts, videos, interviews, and more.

Social Studies Course Descriptions

In middle school, each student is required to take three years of Social Studies. Each course is one year in length. The 8th-grade courses are described below.

SOCIAL STUDIES 8 (M8040)

This course will focus on American History from the Reconstruction Era to Modern Day. Students will explore the geographical and industrial expansions that occurred within the United States. They will analyze how these expansions led to great times of economic prosperity and the increased role of the United States on the world stage. Students will study the causes of WWI and WWII and how they had lasting implications that led to the Cold War and contributed to the global tension of today's world. The skills of critical thinking and problem solving are central to this course, thus resulting in many research activities and simulations. Writing skills that will be emphasized are the analysis and construction of informational texts.

MOCK TRIAL (M0678)

In the mock trial class, students will have the chance to take on the role of lawyers, witnesses, and jurors to conduct civil and criminal trials from start to finish. Students will develop an understanding of the fundamentals of the American legal system and the role a trial plays within that system. The class will cover the trial process, including the purpose of a trial, the layout of the courtroom, and the roles of the people involved in a civil and criminal trial. Students will analyze various

methods of dispute resolution, including negotiation, mediation, and trial. Students will obtain an understanding of the steps in civil and criminal proceedings. Students will have the opportunity to reflect, analyze, and use creative skills to take on the role of an advocate to prepare and write legal arguments, question witnesses on behalf of a given client, and act as witnesses and jurors to present a trial and render a verdict.

MODEL UN (M8045)

Students will study the structure and goals of the United Nations and practice skills relevant to the world's nations' participation in the actual international organization. The student's area of focus will center primarily on cultural competency, public speaking, debate, and research. In the second half of the course, students will take on the role of delegates from different countries and attempt to solve real-world issues with the policies and perspectives of their assigned country.

MYSTERIES OF HISTORY 2 (M8046)

This course will follow the same instructional approach as MYSTERIES OF HISTORY (M7045), while introducing new topics and subjects. In this class, students will take on the role of detectives as they work to solve some of America's coldest cases. Through six assigned cases, students will search for clues, analyze evidence using forensic methods, and draw informed conclusions based on their investigations.

World Language Course Descriptions

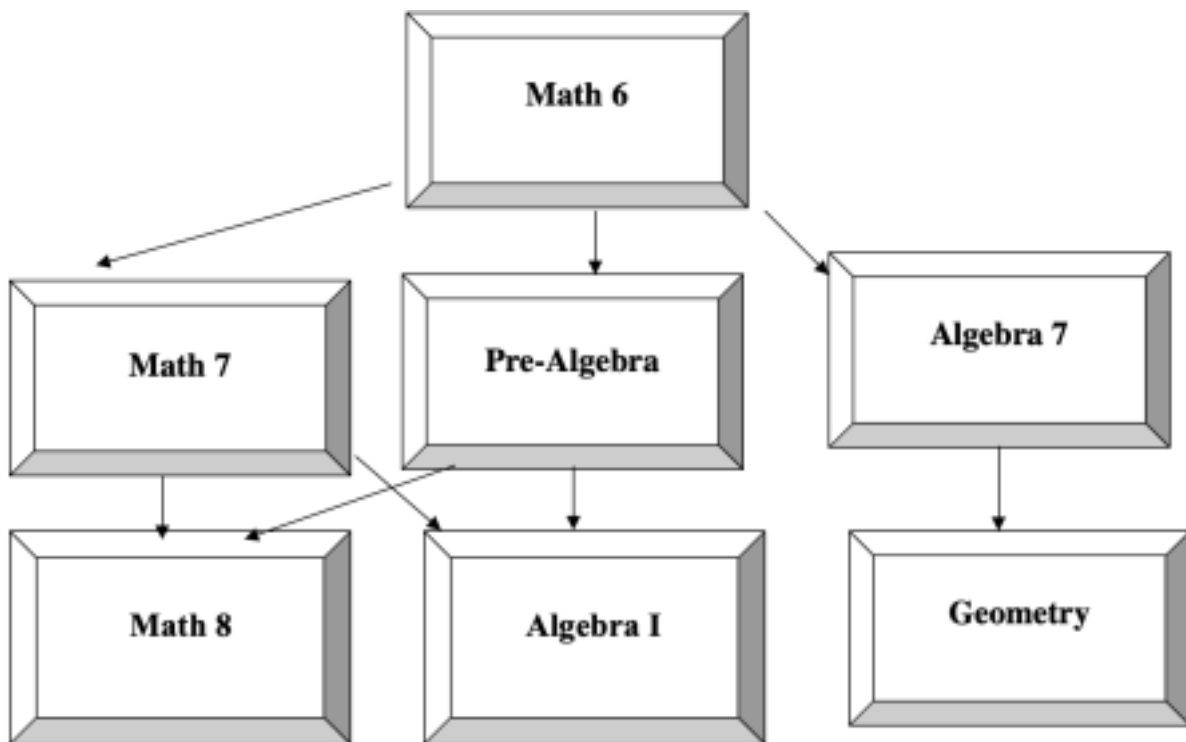
SPANISH 8 (M8060)

In this course, students will continue developing and mastering their Spanish language skills. Emphasis will be given to the development of the student's ability to communicate in Spanish, to learn and apply new vocabulary, and to utilize appropriate grammatical structures. The four skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening will continue to be used so that students can reach communicative competence and linguistic accuracy while continuing to expand their awareness and appreciation of Spanish culture. This course meets every day. Upon successful completion of the three years of the Spanish program, students will have completed Spanish 1 and will be placed into Spanish 2 in high school.

Mathematics Course Sequence and Descriptions

Each student is required to take three years of Math. Each of the courses is one year in length. All Math courses place heavy emphasis on creative thinking and fluency with number facts. *Selection Criteria are based on teacher recommendation, iReady scores, NJSLA, and final average from the previous year.*

MATHEMATICS COURSE SEQUENCE



MATH 8 (M8208)

This course emphasizes proficiency in skills involving numbers and operations, measurement, patterns, simple functions, algebra, geometry, statistics, and probability. Students will apply the eight mathematical practices as well: make sense of problems and persevere in solving them; reason abstractly and quantitatively; construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others; model with mathematics; use appropriate tools strategically; attend to precision; look for and make use of structure; and look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

This course focuses on three critical areas: (1) formulating and reasoning about expressions and equations, including modeling an association in bivariate data with a linear equation and solving linear equations and systems of linear equations; (2) grasping the concept of a function and using functions to describe quantitative relationships; (3) analyzing two- and three-dimensional space and figures using distance, angle, similarity, and congruence, and understanding and applying the Pythagorean Theorem. This course will use formative and summative data to target specific topics for students throughout the course. This course is designed to prepare students to take Algebra 1 in Grade 9.

ALGEBRA 8 (M8014)

Algebra 8 begins with a review of major topics that are covered before high school, including properties of real numbers, arithmetic involving fractions and positive and negative numbers, and the concept of variables. Beyond these fundamental building blocks, Algebra 1 is an organized study of various families of functions and relations, with special emphasis on linear and quadratic functions. As students study each family of functions and relations, they will learn to represent them in multiple ways—as verbal descriptions, equations, inequalities, tables, and graphs. An emphasis is placed on modeling real-world situations using functions to solve problems that arise from those situations.

GEOMETRY (M8010)

This course is structured around undefined terms, basic definitions, postulates, and theorems. Topics include properties of angles and their measures, parallel and perpendicular lines, congruent triangles, similar polygons, right triangles, segments and angles associated with circles,

areas of polygons and circles, surface areas and volumes of solids, the distance and midpoint formulas, parallel and perpendicular lines in the coordinate plane, the equations of a line, properties of quadrilaterals and mathematical modeling. Transformations, which include reflections, translations, and rotations, will be covered. Throughout the course, students are asked to apply geometric facts and reasoning to problem-solving in real-world situations.

STEM Course Descriptions

Each student is required to take three years of Science. Each of the courses is one year in length. All Science courses place heavy emphasis on understanding the process of Science. The 8th-grade courses are described below.

SCIENCE 8 (M8050)

Eighth-grade science provides exploration with hands-on activities and problem-solving within the domain of physical science. The content covers general science (such as safety, scientific method, and measurement skills), engineering design, chemistry (such as classifications and interactions of matter), physics (such as motion, forces, energy, and waves), Earth's place in the universe, and human activity on Earth (such as Climate Change and use of renewable and non-renewable resources). Many activities and experiments are used to enrich the course and provide opportunities for each learner to build a solid understanding of the physical world. Assessment methods include laboratory reports, presentations, group and individual projects, quizzes, and tests.

ROBOTICS (M8173) (PLTW)

Robotics is the study of mechanical and automated systems. This course follows the Project Lead the Way model of instruction, where students will work cooperatively to design, build, and program a robot to complete an assigned task. Students will learn programming basics and how simple mechanisms work. The robot will be assembled using VEX robotics components and controlled using VEX Code software.

Project Lead The Way (PLTW) provides K-12 STEM-based curricula to students with engineering-rich, interactive, and project-based lessons in a variety of areas within the emerging STEM fields

Visual and Performing Arts Course Descriptions

CHORUS 8 (M8185)

A mixed choir environment where we learn the basics of music theory and sight singing while also singing fun repertoire in a group setting. The objectives of this course are to develop vocal skills, knowledge, understanding, and appreciation, and to develop the highest possible standards of performance. Membership is open to any student who is interested in singing. All concerts and rehearsals are required; failure to attend may adversely affect a student's proficiency and grade in this course. Some rehearsals and performances may be on weekends or in the evening.

BAND 8 (M8215)

Students will have the opportunity to begin or continue studying the following instruments: Flute, Oboe, Bassoon, Clarinet, Saxophone, Trumpet, Trombone, Baritone, Tuba, and Percussion. Students who are enrolled in this class are also eligible to perform with the middle school Band. The culminating experiences in the band are the winter and spring concerts, which all members must attend. Additionally, students in 8th Grade are eligible to perform with the JDHS Marching Band.

JAZZ ENSEMBLE (M8219)

This course is a performance-based, repeatable elective for experienced music students in grade 8 who wish to perform in the Jazz Ensemble. Students who play saxophone, trombone, trumpet, as well as the piano, guitar, bass, or percussion. The course offers a more rigorous repertoire in the jazz idiom, with a focus on improvisation and group performance. Students must have experience in the concert band or another music ensemble. As an alternative prerequisite, students may receive a recommendation from a member of the music faculty.

INTRODUCTION TO DANCE 2 (M0751)

This course is designed for students who have completed Intro to Dance 1. It extends the genres and styles introduced in the prerequisite. This course is designed to give students the opportunity to build the foundational skills of dance while improving their techniques, poise, self-confidence, and creative ability. Students will choreograph and dance in-class presentations. Students continue to grow in

understanding dance and its elements through direct experience. Students will also have the opportunity to explore the dance production process through participating in the end-of-the-year dance showcase.

INTRODUCTION TO DRAMA 2 (M0761)

This course is designed for students who have completed Intro to Drama 1. It extends the genres and styles introduced in the prerequisite. Drama will further examine the basics of theatrical productions. Students will explore the writing of scripts and the development of an actual performance. Students will learn the essential skills and components of a successful live performance.

21ST CENTURY MUSIC AND MUSIC TECHNOLOGY (M8167)

This course is an 8th-grade project-based elective that focuses on digital music production, audio editing, and expanding basic music literacy concepts. Students work heavily with GarageBand software with MIDI and live audio, utilizing a variety of pro audio peripherals. It is preferred, but not required, that students take Keyboard Skills in 7th grade to prepare themselves for the performance aspects of this course. Required materials include a laptop, wired headphones, and a place to corral handouts and other course materials. Students who complete this course will be prepared for the JDHS Music Production Lab courses.

STRINGS 8 (M8187)

Open to any student who plays violin, cello, viola, or string bass, Strings 8 offers musicians challenging opportunities to develop many aspects of performance. This course offers students experience in studying and performing a wide variety of music, such as chamber music, classical and contemporary literature, as well as other repertoire appropriate to the students' degree of advancement. Elements such as intonation, articulation, rhythmic precision, dynamic variety, bowing techniques, balance, and blend are studied.

ART 8 (M8080)

This course is designed for students to explore and experience creative expression, critical evaluation, and a greater appreciation for the Visual Arts. While learning about the elements and principles of design, students will develop their drawing, painting, sculpting, and printmaking

skills. A variety of famous artists and their styles throughout history will be studied. This course will consist of a more in-depth study of art criticism, aesthetics, and art history. Students will develop an ability to talk about their work and the work of others.

21st CENTURY ARTIST (M8130)

21st Century Artist is a survey class, with a focus on Visual Culture and Personal Voice through work in two and three-dimensional forms. Visual Culture recognizes the predominance of visual media in the postmodern world and merges popular and low-cultural forms and media with high-cultural forms of Fine Art and Design. Students work in both traditional and non-traditional media.

Academic Support Opportunities

ELA LAB 8 (M9229)

This course is designed to support 8th-grade students in strengthening foundational reading and writing skills. Through focused instruction, guided reading, and writing practice, students will work to improve comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and written expression. The course provides personalized support to help students build confidence, close learning gaps, and prepare for success in grade-level English Language Arts.

MATH LAB 8 (M9888)

This course is designed to provide targeted support for 8th-grade students who need additional instruction and practice in foundational math skills. Through small-group instruction, guided practice, and individualized support, students will strengthen their understanding of key concepts such as operations with integers, fractions, decimals, equations, and problem-solving strategies. The course aims to build confidence, close learning gaps, and prepare students for success in grade-level math.

ENGLISH/SECOND LANGUAGE (M9520)

In the ESL class, students who speak a first language other than English work to improve their English language skills. In this small class, students actively speak, read, write, and listen to others in a supportive environment. Activities are designed to increase knowledge and vocabulary of the academic content areas as well as develop English language skills.

STUDY SKILLS

Recommended students will be given direct instruction covering general academic skills and strategies to enhance their understanding and participation in core academic classes. Organizational skills, pneumonia, and individualized strategies will be applied to grade-level concepts and demands.

Health and Physical Education

The Physical Education/Health Department's main goal is to provide information necessary for students to develop the ability to make healthy life choices that will last a lifetime.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION 8 (M8086)

The Physical Education program for 8th-grade students is an integral component of students' overall educational experience. Participation in the program is essential in fostering the development of students' mental, moral, physical, and emotional growth. The Health and Physical Education curriculum provides movement-centered and knowledge-based activities for all students in a non-threatening but challenging environment. A variety of activities will be offered to students that promote fitness through a comprehensive spectrum of physical skills and knowledge necessary to maintain fitness for life.

The program consists of three marking periods of Physical Education and one marking period of Health. Students will receive health instruction for one marking period during one of the four marking periods. Each marking period contains approximately forty-five instructional days. Student performance is assessed in several areas using specific criteria. The program has established guidelines, rules, and regulations to ensure all students have a safe, satisfying educational experience.

HEALTH 8 (M8090)

This is a marking period-long class that is part of the comprehensive Middle School Health Program. The students will learn lifetime skills related to health activities from the six components of health (Physical,

Emotional, Social, Mental, Spiritual, and Environmental). Topics for discussion are Personal Growth and Development, Disease and Health Conditions, Character Development, Interpersonal Communication, Relationships, Pregnancy and Parenting, and Sexuality. These activities will prepare the students for their journey through life and their high school health courses.