

Charlotte Country Day School

January 2026

Middle School:

Our Ongoing Work to Foster Well-Being, Belonging, and Healthy Learning

The **Middle School** intentionally designed an environment that **meets the needs of adolescent learners** by fostering a community where students can explore their interests, engage in authentic learning, develop meaningful relationships, and know that they are seen and valued for who they are.

Intentional Scheduling to Address the Needs of Middle School Students:

- **Daily Physical Activity:** Students in grades 5–8 participate in grade-level physical education each day.
- **Unstructured Play:** Students in grades 5–8 have daily recess, with options such as climbing the rock wall, playing soccer or basketball, or enjoying card games in the library. These activities provide valuable opportunities for students to build friendships, practice social skills, and engage in healthy play.
- **Daily Advisory:** A schedule that includes daily advisory gives students a consistent touchpoint with their advisor and dedicated time to engage in meaningful lessons throughout the year. These lessons focus on digital citizenship, DEIB, SEL, teamwork, and other topics that their advisors design based on students' needs and interests.
- **Grade Level Interdisciplinary Meetings:** Teachers meet once per seven-day cycle to develop and strengthen connections among disciplines, design interdisciplinary projects such as *We Are Charlotte*, and plan field trips that connect us to our community, such as visits to The Nest Academy.
- **Rotating Schedule:** Seven-day waterfall schedule that allows students to attend classes at different times of the day.
- **Teaming:** Students are all part of a grade level teaching team. Each team of teachers has a scheduled meeting once per seven-day cycle to discuss how they can best support students.
- **Discovery:** Counselors provide direct instruction in social and emotional skills to all 5th and 6th grade students throughout the year through their Discovery classes.

Designing a Culture of Connection and Belonging

- **Town Meeting:** On Tuesdays, all students and faculty meet in the gym for town meeting. This is a time for our Middle School community to come together to share information, celebrate accomplishments, and learn new things. In town meeting teachers make announcements about clubs, contests, upcoming trips, and other student opportunities; students can make announcements inviting their peers to join clubs or sharing information about athletic and arts events. Town meetings are also a time to welcome guest speakers to address the entire student body.
- **Grade Level Fieldtrips:** Grade-level field trips are designed to build bonds within grade levels, explore new places, strengthen community identity, and make connections. All grade levels have field trips that are designed for team and community building.

- **5th grade** students experience School-in-the-Woods with two consecutive days at our farm, bonding and taking advantage of all our farm has to offer; then, starting in **6th grade**, each grade level has an overnight trip that aligns with the developmental, social, emotional, and academic goals of each grade level:
- **6th grade** travels to the mountains and stays two nights at Camp Rockmont,
- **7th grade** travels to Washington D.C. for two nights, and
- **8th grade** travels to the beach and stays three nights at Camp Caswell.

Each grade level also takes trips to our Farm and uses that space for everything from exploration of the 8th grade Environmental Science curriculum to playing field games and making pesto.

- **Daily Advisory:** Advisory is designed as a place for belonging and connection and has been a long-standing priority of our Middle School. This time not only allows students to make connections with each other, but also allows teachers to get to know students and provide them with the support that they need.
- **Clubs:** Students have an opportunity to participate in various clubs that allow them to explore their interests and talents while connecting with peers without pressure to achieve.
- **Community Service:** Our Community Service Coordinator, in partnership with grade coordinators, provides opportunities throughout the year for students to engage in community service projects and make connections within our Charlotte community. We are consistently working towards finding meaningful ways for students to serve and contribute. This year, our Community Service Coordinator designed an opportunity for all students to have the hands-on experience of packing

Bloc bags of toiletries for foster care while they participated in our annual Walk for Hope.

- **Intramurals:** Students and faculty are all part of cross grade level intermural teams that compete throughout the year and allow for joyful, low-stakes competition.
- **Time for Gratitude:** There is an intentional culture at the Middle School for expressing gratitude between and among students, faculty, and staff.
 - Students write thank you notes during advisory
 - Faculty and staff are often publicly thanked during town meetings
 - Teachers take time in faculty meetings to write thank-you notes, and
 - Students and teachers regularly thank each other for everyday things.

This culture helps remind everyone that they matter and that they make a difference in the lives of other people.

- **Building a Connected Faculty Community:** Administration in the Middle School spends time creating connections among the faculty and showing them that they are seen and that they deeply matter in our community. When the community of adults knows that they matter and feel seen and supported, they are more equipped to make our students feel seen and supported.

Academic Support and Structures

- **Assessment Guidelines:** All teachers submit assessment dates in advance to their grade coordinator, who then inputs them into an online test calendar. If there are already two assessments on one day, the teacher chooses a different day for their assessment. This helps balance the amount of testing a student has on any given day and creates a shared digital document with grade-level assessment information. Advisors also use this information to remind students of upcoming assessments and help them create a study plan if needed.
- **Homework Guidelines:** Grade-level homework guidelines help manage student workload and promote a healthy balance that includes sleep and downtime.
- **GPA Guidelines:** Students do not receive a GPA boost for honors or double language classes, and GPA is not published for students and parents.
- **No Homework and No Test and Quiz Days:** The calendar is designed with no homework nights before holidays, on certain performance nights, fine arts nights, field trips, and community events. In connection, there are no tests and quiz days on the school day that immediately follows a no homework night.
- **Intentional Introduction to Exams:** Each December and May, eighth-grade students take exams for all academic courses.
 - The focus is on the process of learning how to study for a cumulative test and practice the process of taking exams in a low-stakes environment.

- Before exams, students spend four class periods reviewing content with their teachers. This review time is used to teach study strategies and provide support for students as they study for exams.
- On exam days, students take one exam each day and exams are 10% of their semester average.