CHRISTENSEN MIDDLE SCHOOL

2025-2026

EIGHTH GRADE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

EIGHTH GRADE CORE: The eighth grade core program consists of two instructional periods covering the content areas of Reading/Language Arts and Social Studies. In the **Reading/Language Arts** Component, students read from selected core novels, and other genre. Many of their extension activities are based upon their readings. Reading fluency and comprehension is another area of concentration. In the area of language mechanics, emphasis is placed on structure, punctuation, grammar, vocabulary, and spelling.

Eighth grade **Social Studies** begins the academic year with a review of the major ideas, issues, and events preceding the founding of our nation. After completing this review, students then concentrate on the forming of the constitution, the building of a new nation, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. The aim of this course of study is twofold: an appreciation of the history of our nation and a more complete understanding of current events from an historical perspective.

EIGHTH GRADE MATH ** Math placement will be determined using the LVJUSD Math Placement Matrix. This matrix uses information from multiple student data sources as well as teacher recommendation to determine the best math placement.

MATH 8: In 8th grade, students will further their mathematical reasoning skills and build the foundation for Algebra 1, which is essential for college and career readiness. Students will continue to learn how to write and reason with algebraic expressions. Students also engage in a thorough study of linear equations with one and two variables. Building on previous work with relationships between quantities, students will be introduced to the idea of a mathematical function. Students will also develop an understanding of congruence (same shape and size) and similarity of geometric figures. *Math 8* presents the California Common Core State Standards for Math (CA CCSSM).

ALGEBRA I: *Algebra 1* presents the CA CCSSM. *Algebra 1* in middle school includes the same content as *Algebra I* in high school.

EIGHTH GRADE SCIENCE: This is a yearlong course that covers physical science and includes physics, chemistry, and astronomy

EIGHTH GRADE PHYSICAL EDUCATION: Students in eighth grade physical education participate in a wide range of endurance, physical conditioning, and individual and team sport activities. Advanced motor skills and movement concepts are introduced. Leadership and personal responsibility are emphasized through a variety of health and wellness activities.

EIGHTH GRADE ELECTIVE OPTIONS: Eighth grade students have the option to select an elective class for the sixth course in their class schedule. If you select the “Two Electives = Zero Period P.E. Option,” please understand that in most requests for two electives will not be accommodated due to staffing and budgetary constraints. Please prioritize your elective choices carefully. While we will make every effort to honor requests, it may not be possible in many cases. If your first and second choices are the same elective, the office will assign an alternative if your preferred choice is unavailable.

THE FOLLOWING CLASSES ARE YEARLONG CLASSES:

- **ADV ART** Students in advanced art will refine artistic skills and learn a variety of new techniques. Through drawing, they will incorporate values, shading, light source, shadows and

perspective. Through painting with watercolors, tempera and acrylics students will take on a variety of subjects, both realism and abstract. Students will explore three-dimensional art through one or more of the following; ceramics, plaster, foam, paper and wood.

- **ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE** Students will use hands-on experiences to learn about the world around them. Activities will include labs, field work on and around the CMS campus, management of the school recycling program, student-designed research, and field trips.

- **LEADERSHIP** Students in the eighth grade may elect to take a yearlong course dealing with student government, school spirit, and leadership activities. This class is primarily a service organization, and as such, handles many duties and responsibilities such as Back to School Orientation, Dances, and Athletic Events. Requirements are excellent academic and discipline records combined with teacher recommendation. Students and parents sign a contract requiring them to maintain a 2.0 GPA and exemplary discipline record throughout the year. Students who fail to do so will be dropped from this elective. A student evaluation at the end of the first trimester will determine second trimester participation.

- **MUSIC Advanced Band or Orchestra.** Both groups are full year classes. Students will continue to focus on tone production, advanced standard notation reading skills, appropriate grade level technical studies, and challenging concert literature. Both groups will attend a music festival and have multiple performance opportunities. Performance attendance is required.

  Intermediate Band or Orchestra. These full year classes meet daily with the objective to learn to read standard music notation, learn proper tone production, and prepare appropriate grade level literature for performance. Grading emphasis is on participation, performances, and a willingness to learn.

  Band students will receive instruction on the core instruments: flute, clarinet, trumpet, and trombone. Depending on class size, progress, and instrumentation, students may have the opportunity to play alto saxophone, baritone, and tuba. Depending on class size and instrumentation, a limited number of students may audition to play in the percussion section.

  Orchestra students will receive instruction on cello, viola, and violin. Depending on class size, progress, and instrumentation, students may have the opportunity to play string bass.

- **SPANISH 1B** Students in Spanish 1B will continue to develop the skills mastered in Spanish 1A (a prerequisite for this class). A textbook and workbook, supplemental worksheets, guided conversations and role-playing are also featured in this second year Spanish class.

  REQUIREMENTS: Students must have completed 7th grade Spanish 1A or have received instructor approval.

- **SPECTRUM** Students in Spectrum will be enrolled in the following three single-trimester courses during the school year:

  - **ART** Students in art will learn a variety of art skills. Through drawing, they will learn about line, shape, value, shading, and perspective. Through painting, students will learn about color mixing, color theory, expression, realism, and abstract. Art techniques will be explored through various media such as pen, colored pencil, pastels, tempera and watercolor paints. Students will record art vocabulary and maintain a sketchbook for drawing assignments.

  - **CERAMICS** Students in ceramics will be introduced to the basic fundamentals of ceramics including hand building techniques, basic sculpture, surface decoration, types of firing, and glaze

techniques. As students learn more complex techniques, they will be encouraged to create examples that reflect their individual expression. Students will be required to analyze and evaluate their work. The class will emphasize hands-on projects but will also include written work. The course explores historical, cultural, and contemporary pottery/sculpture. Students will have tools and materials supplied. A lab materials donation may be requested to help cover the cost of supplies needed for personal use/consumption.

- **HOME ECONOMICS** Students in the home economics class focus on skills for personal life-management. Topics covered include financial management, nutrition, cooking, child development, consumer skills, and sewing.

- **STEM EXPLORATION 1** STEM Exploration 1 (STEM) is an activities-, project-, and problem-based (APPB) learning program designed to challenge and engage the natural curiosity of middle school students. The instructional units excite and motivate students to use their imaginations and teach them to be creative and innovative, while gaining the skills they need to develop, produce, and use products and services.

  The STEM curriculum appeals to a full range of middle school students and relates technology to students' daily lives. It also promotes communication and collaboration by emphasizing a team approach throughout the instructional units. This approach utilizes the strengths of each team member to accomplish the goals of the project, while offering students learning challenges at all ability levels.

  The STEM program helps students develop and hone skills in middle school that enable them to enter the high school program with foundational knowledge and skills for success in engineering.

- **STEM EXPLORATION 2** STEM Exploration 2 (STEM2) continues the STEM1 curriculum and is an activity-, project-, and problem-based (APPB) learning program designed to challenge and engage the natural curiosity of middle school students. The instructional units excite and motivate students to use their imaginations and teach them to be creative and innovative, while gaining the skills they need to develop, produce, and use products and services.

  REQUIREMENTS: Students must have completed STEM1 or have received instructor approval.

- **STUDENT ASSIST** Seventh and eighth grade students may elect to participate in the CMS Star Student Program. Stars are assigned to classroom teachers or staff members to assist in the classroom or office. Duties are assigned by individual teachers, and, as a result, may vary. They generally include record-keeping, grading papers, and other clerical duties. The goal of the course is the development of good organizational and office skills, the ability to work with others, and the ability to take and follow directions. Star students must have and maintain a 2.5 GPA and have an exemplary discipline and attendance record.

- **VOCAL MUSIC** This is an elective course designed to introduce students to the musical concepts of tone, pitch, rhythm, and music reading. This course will offer students the opportunity to learn the basics of vocal production. As members of a choral ensemble, students will be exposed to a variety of music styles. Attendance at all performances is required. Both boys and girls are equally welcomed in this class.

- **YEARBOOK** This course will guide students through the organization and publication of the school yearbook. They will enhance their communication skills as they gather information, organize it, produce individual pages and sections, and ultimately create product. Afterschool time may be necessary to complete assignments and meet deadlines, which will include the coverage

of many sports and evening events. Student participation in all aspects of yearbook production is required.