

Ignite Handbook

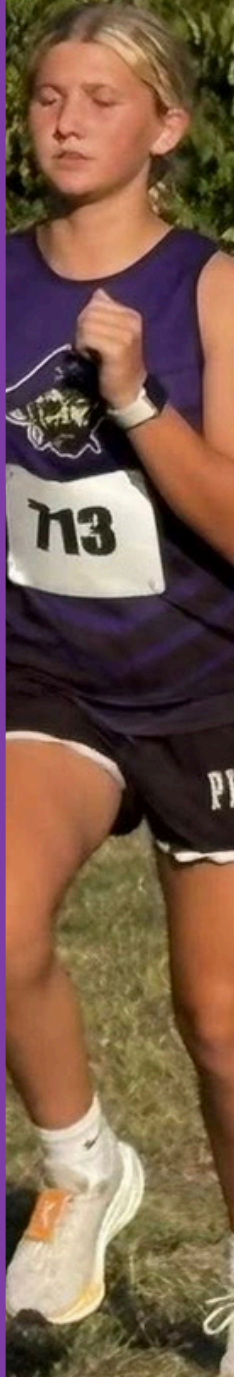
Piper Middle School

2026/2027



Contents

- Introduction
- Portrait of a Graduate
- Design Thinking
- Sixth Grade Experience
- Seventh Grade Experience
- Eighth Grade Experience
- Ignite Capstone Experiences
- Career and Technical Student Organizations
- Student Led Conferences & PathwayOS
- Our Team



IGNITE Handbook

A roadmap for middle school students to explore their strengths and growth areas through the Portrait of a Graduate and real world experiences, guiding them in selecting a high school academy and shaping future career aspirations.



Ignite is your launchpad for exploring future careers and high school academy pathways. Through hands-on learning, you will connect your interests to real-world opportunities and develop essential skills for success. Each year, you will take Academy Prep and Project Lead The Way (PLTW) courses, guiding you through every high school academy. Along the way, you will engage in design thinking challenges, industry-focused career days and field trips, and an investigation of the Portrait of a Graduate competencies, helping you grow as a critical thinker, communicator, and problem-solver. Your journey culminates with the Ignite Expo, where you will showcase your learning and skills.

PIPER MIDDLE SCHOOL IGNITE



6TH GRADE



Academy of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Systems

- Academy Prep
- American Royal Experience

Academy of Business, Entrepreneurship & Innovation

- Academy Prep
- Junior Achievement BizTown



7TH GRADE



Academy of Health & Human Services

- Academy Prep
- Event Planning
- Community Partners

Academy of Public Services

- Academy Prep
- Client Connected Project
- Speech Elective



8TH GRADE



Academy of Arts & Media

- Academy Prep
- Art Dimensions Elective

8th Grade Capstone Activities

- IGNITE Academy Night
- Academy Selection
- Welcome Aboard the Ship Night
- Elementary IGNITE Expo
- IGNITE presentations
- 8th Grade Promotion



Academy of Design, Production & Aviation

Exploration of the Design, Production & Aviation Academy is achieved through Project Lead The Way activities courses required at all grade levels: 6th Grade - Design & Modeling, 7th Grade - Automation & Robotics or Flight & Space, 8th Grade - Science of Technology or Medical Detectives





INCLUSIVITY | INNOVATION | COMMUNITY | INTEGRITY | PASSION



Portrait of a Graduate

Piper Middle School's Portrait of a Graduate competencies: resilience, initiative, social global skills, communication, and critical thinking are integral to the learning experience in Academy Prep, Project Lead the Way (PLTW), and WIN classes. Students learn through relevant and real world learning as they reflect on and grow these competencies. These classes foster critical thinking and communication as students engage in real world learning opportunities and hands-on, collaborative STEM projects that require problem-solving and innovative design. Meanwhile, WIN (What I Need) classes support these competencies by growing student's areas of strength and supporting student's areas of need.

Piper's Portrait of a Graduate competencies are deeply aligned with our elementary agilities including developing others, inspecting, innovating, judging and estimating, managing, operating objects, organizing, selling and communicating, serving and caring, and working with information. Resilience is fostered as students navigate challenges and adapt to change while inspecting and managing tasks with perseverance. Initiative drives innovation and the ability to judge and estimate solutions creatively and effectively. Social global skills are nurtured as students collaborate, serve, and care for others within diverse cultural contexts. Communication shines through opportunities to sell ideas, share perspectives, and organize projects in meaningful ways. Critical thinking is embedded in analyzing and working with information, solving problems, and making decisions that require precision and insight. Piper's Portrait of a Graduate Skills ensure that Piper graduates are equipped to succeed in an ever-evolving world and continue to be #futureready.

	DRE-K/KINDERGARTEN		1 ST	2 ND	3 RD
	INSPIRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agilities Classroom Guidance Touch-a-Truck Event Industry Partner Classroom Visits Career-Focused Field Trips Dress Up as Your Future Career Day Interactive Career Day #FutureReady Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> K-5 participation POG Competency alignment Community and Career Focused Design Thinking Challenge Student Presentation 				
8 TH	7 TH	6 TH	5 TH	4 TH	IMMERSE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RWL Round Table Event High-Wage/High Demand Career Day College Lunch Visits Resume Mock Interviews Linked In Capstone <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Required Experience, Internship, CCP, or Entrepreneurial Experience Career Research Paper POG Defense and Community Presentation Electronic Portfolio
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academy Prep 6, 7, and 8 Required PLTW 6, 7, and 8 Choice Electives aligned with Academies Annual Career Interest Survey Annual Career Investigation activity with Post-Secondary Financial Planning Fall and Spring Student-Led Conferences for IPS CTSO: HOSA, FCCLA, and TSA Clubs for all 	8th Grade IGNITE EXPO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defense of POG achievement High School Academy and Course Selection NVA Attainment Plan Post-Secondary Plan Student Presentation to HS Academy Leaders IGNITE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wall-to-Wall Career Focused Academies Embedded POG Competencies Annual Career Interest Survey Annual Career Investigation activity with Post-Secondary Financial Planning Spring Student-Led Conferences for IPS Field Experiences in Academy Courses 		
	9 TH	10 TH	11 TH	12 TH	
PIPER USD#203					

Embedding design thinking in middle school classrooms is essential for developing the problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration skills students need for success in high school and beyond. By engaging in the design thinking framework—empathizing, defining, ideating, prototyping, and testing—students learn to approach challenges with curiosity and confidence. This hands-on, student-centered approach encourages critical thinking and resilience, while also building real-world skills that align with both academic and career pathways. Integrating design thinking early helps students become innovative thinkers and adaptable learners, ready to thrive in a rapidly changing world.



DESIGN THINKING FRAMEWORK

Step One: Frame and Focus

How might we _____?
How can I come up with a useful & novel idea that will solve this?

Step Two: Empathize and Define

What is the problem the user is experiencing?
How do you know?



Step Three: Ideate and Prototype

What if _____ could solve that problem?
What would that look like?
How would that work?

Step Five: Launch

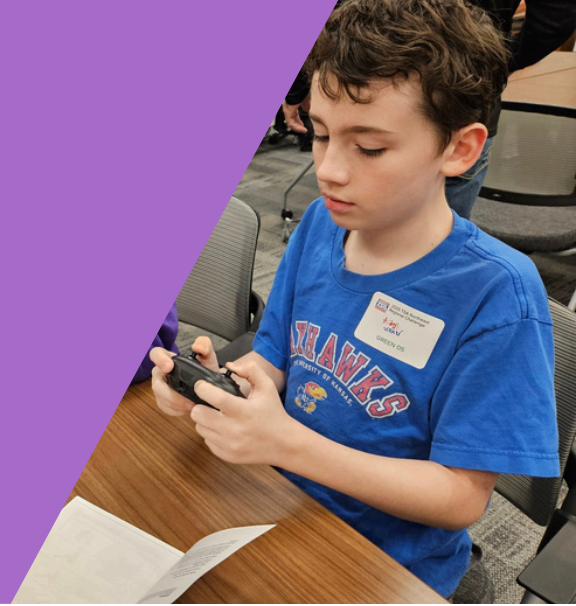
Can this idea really happen?
What resources do I need to make it work?

Step Four: Test and Iterate

What does/ does not work about my solution?
What does the testing/ feedback tell me to do next?

Sixth Grade Experience

CORE



English Language Arts

Language Arts courses build upon students' prior knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, word usage, and the mechanics of writing, and include the four aspects of language use: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Typically, these courses use various genres of literature to improve reading skills, and they link writing exercises for different purposes to those reading selections. Specific content depends upon state standards for each grade level.

Quarters 1 | 2 | 3 | 4

Science

Sixth grade science courses typically include subject matter from several strands of science, including physical science, environmental, and life science. The material is organized into four thematic units: Thermal Energy; Weather, Climate, & Water Cycling; Plate Tectonics & Rock Cycling; and Cells & Systems. Specific content and assessment is based on our identified district priority standards for grade 6.

Quarters 1 | 2 | 3 | 4

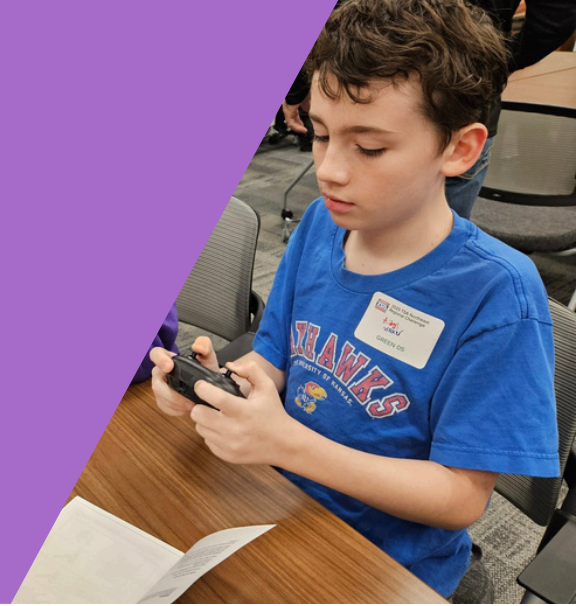
Social Studies - Ancient World History

Students learn about the period from the emergence and development of early civilizations to approximately 1300 CE. This course will include discussions on geography, agriculture, governments, economics, religion, social hierarchies, and culture. This course will also examine the spread and transformation of cultures and ideas across regions through trade and conquest. Students will look through the lens of multiple perspectives, making connections between historical and contemporary worlds.

Quarters 1 | 2 | 3 | 4

Sixth Grade Experience

CORE



Mathematics

This course builds on students' understanding of numbers and operations while introducing algebraic thinking and concepts of ratios and rates. Students also strengthen their reasoning skills in geometry and statistics. An emphasis is placed throughout the year on problem solving, mathematical reasoning, and the application of mathematics to real-world situations.

Students interested in pursuing a honors track starting in seventh grade are encouraged to speak with their teacher during sixth grade mathematics. Students take a placement exam at the end of the year and teachers can offer suggested topics and resources to better prepare students for that exam if needed.

Quarters 1 | 2 | 3 | 4

Course Placement Note

Students who qualify may be placed in special education placements in both English Language Arts and/or Mathematics based on previous academic scoring patterns and IEP requirements. These courses are taught in small setting by special education professionals. If you believe your student qualifies for this course please communicate with your student's assigned case manager.

Sixth Grade Experience

AP/PLTW



Academy Prep

Business Entrepreneurship & Innovation | 1 Quarter: Students learn and act as business leaders and employees who offer public and private goods and services. They also get the opportunity to learn the basic fundamentals of being a citizen. Agriculture, Animal and Plant Systems | 1 Quarter: This Academy Prep Agriculture course introduces 6th grade students to the basics of plant and animal systems, food production, and how agriculture impacts everyday life. Students will explore hands-on activities, simple investigations, and real-world problem solving connected to farming, science, and technology. The course also builds foundational skills in teamwork, responsibility, and career awareness to prepare students for future learning in agricultural pathways.

Quarters 1 | 3 (Buccaneer Team) Quarters 2 | 4 (Swashbuckler Team)

PLTW Design and Modeling

Design and Modeling is a middle school STEM class that teaches students how to apply the engineering design process to creatively solve problems. Students utilize design software to create virtual models and also communicate their ideas through sketches, solid models, and mathematical representations. Students often work in teams to identify design requirements, research, and engage stakeholders to develop a functional solution; with a focus on understanding how models can be simulated to represent real-world situations. There is considerable focus on the skills of measurement, technical drawing, and applying the engineering design process. Students learn about how design can impact the environment, animals, and their community.

Academy Integration: Design, Production & Aviation | Agriculture, Animal & Plant Systems

Quarters 1 | 3 (Swashbuckler Team) Quarters 2 | 4 (Buccaneer Team)

Sixth Grade Experience

ELECTIVES



Art Concepts

In this course, students will practice and develop skills using visual art design elements and principles, participate in visual art activities/projects, and learn about art appreciation.

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Business, Entrepreneurship & Innovation

One Quarter | Not Repeatable

Art Dimensions

In this course, students will practice and develop visual art skills incorporating knowledge of cultures, history and geography, participate in visual art activities/projects, and learn about art appreciation.

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Agriculture, Animal and Plant Systems

One Quarter | Not Repeatable

Beginning Band

General Band courses develop students' technique for playing brass, woodwind, and percussion instruments and cover a variety of nonspecified band literature styles (concert, marching, orchestral, and modern styles). Never played an instrument 1st quarter.

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Business Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Quarters 2 & 4 Required | Quarters 1 & 3 Optional

Drama

In this course, students will look at different elements of storytelling, including setting, plot, and character. Students will also learn the basics of film production as they create their own short film.

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Business, Entrepreneurship & Innovation

One Quarter | Not Repeatable

Family & Consumer Sciences (FACS)

This course introduces students to basic life skills, including food safety and nutrition, personal responsibility, child development, and fashion basics. Students will build confidence, creativity, and decision-making skills through hands-on activities.

Academy Integration: Health & Human Services & Public Services

One Quarter | Not Repeatable

Sixth Grade Experience

ELECTIVES



Music in Media

In this course students will explore the impacts of music in the world. Students will study how music impacts their daily lives, how music impacts social services. This is a music appreciation course and will not require students to sing.

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Public Services

One Quarter | Not Repeatable

Physical Education and Health - Indoor

In this course, students will learn lifetime physical fitness skills and improve strength and endurance. The physical activities include individual and team sports and organized games. Team sports will include lead-up activities to a basic understanding of the sports, rules, regulations, and strategies. Physical Education activities are adapted to fit the individual needs of all students. This course will focus on indoor activities.

Academy Integration: Health & Human Services | Public Services

Quarter 2 or 3 | Not Repeatable

Physical Education and Health - Outdoor

In this course, students will learn lifetime physical fitness skills and improve strength and endurance. The physical activities include individual and team sports and organized games. Team sports will include lead-up activities to a basic understanding of the sports, rules, regulations, and strategies. Physical Education activities are adapted to fit the individual needs of all students. This course will focus on outdoor activities.

Academy Integration: Health & Human Services | Public Services

Quarter 1 or 4 | Not Repeatable

Sixth Grade Experience

ELECTIVES



Podcast Journalism

This course introduces students to the fundamentals of podcasting as a modern form of media communication. Students will learn how to:

- plan, research, and script podcast episodes;
- record high-quality audio;
- conduct effective interviews;
- edit content using industry-standard tools.

Emphasis is placed on clear communication, ethical journalism practices, audience engagement, and collaboration. By the end of the course, students will have produced original podcast episodes that demonstrate strong content development, technical proficiency, and an understanding of how podcasts inform, entertain, and influence audiences.

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Business Ent Inv

One Quarter | Not Repeatable

Vocal Music

In this course, students will practice and develop vocal music skills, explore performers' etiquette, and learn about music appreciation. Be prepared to play music games, learn to read music, sing, dance, and make music with a community of fellow musicians. Students will participate in a choir concert.

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Health & Human Services

One Quarter | Repeatable for Maximum of Two Quarters

Seventh Grade Experience

CORE



English Language Arts

Language Arts courses build upon students' prior knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, word usage, and the mechanics of writing, and include the four aspects of language use: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Typically, these courses use various genres of literature to improve reading skills, and they link writing exercises for different purposes to those reading selections. Specific content depends upon state standards for each grade level.

Honors Note:

Honors Language Arts engages students in more rigorous analysis of a wide range of literary genres. Reading selections are more complex and require higher-level critical thinking, and writing assignments demand deeper analysis, extended responses, and refined language use. Specific content aligns with state standards for seventh and eighth grade, with enrichment and increased academic rigor.

Quarters 1 | 2 | 3 | 4

Social Studies - World Geography

The middle-level global geography course teaches students how the world is connected using the Five Themes of Geography: location, place, human–environment interaction, movement, and region. The course focuses on both physical and human geography and uses state standards to compare these themes across all continents and regions. Students will learn to read and interpret geographic information, use geography tools and technology, and understand how geographers study the world. The course will help students build geographic literacy, historical thinking skills, and an understanding of global issues and patterns.

Quarters 1 | 2

Social Studies - Kansas History

The Kansas History course explores the state's past from its geologic beginnings and early inhabitants through the present day. Students study major events, influential individuals and groups, key innovations, geographic regions, and important political, social, and economic movements. The course emphasizes critical thinking, historical analysis, literacy, and inquiry, helping students connect their learning to their roles as active and informed citizens. This course recognizes the importance of including students' cultural and experiential references in learning about Kansas.

Quarters 3 | 4

Seventh Grade Experience

CORE



Mathematics

This course strengthens students' understanding of ratios, proportional relationships, and operations with rational numbers. Students solve multi-step expressions and equations, explore geometry concepts such as area, surface area, and volume, and analyze data and probability. Emphasis is placed on problem solving, mathematical reasoning, and real-world applications to prepare students for Pre-Algebra and Algebra.

Honors Note:

This course strengthens students' understanding of solving multi-step expressions and equations, explores geometry concepts such as area, surface area, and volume, and analyzes data and probability. In addition, students will strengthen their knowledge and understanding of 8th grade standards consisting of linear equations and systems of equations, functions, and real numbers, including irrational numbers. Emphasis is placed on problem solving, critical thinking, and real-world applications to build a strong foundation for Algebra I.

Quarters 1 | 2 | 3 | 4

Science

Science courses build on previous years of scientific inquiry and typically include subject matter from several strands of science, including physical sciences, and life or environmental sciences, and may organize material around thematic units. Specific content depends upon state standards for grade 7.

Quarters 1 | 2 | 3 | 4

Course Placement Note

Students who qualify may be placed in honors or special education placements in both English Language Arts and/or Mathematics based on previous academic scoring patterns and IEP requirements. These courses are taught in small setting by special education professionals. If you believe your student qualifies for this course please communicate with your student's assigned case manager.

Seventh Grade Experience

AP/PLTW



Academy Prep

Piper's 7th Grade Academy Prep program offers students an engaging opportunity to explore careers in public services and health & human services through engaging, hands-on learning experiences. By connecting with professionals in these fields, students gain valuable insights into real-world applications of their studies. Design thinking projects help students build problem-solving skills while fostering creativity and collaboration. A culminating field trip allows students to witness how various career pathways from all academies can converge in a single workplace, providing a comprehensive perspective on interdisciplinary collaboration. Throughout the program, students reflect on how Piper's Portrait of a Graduate (POG) competencies, such as resilience, initiative, communication and critical thinking, contribute to their future success. At the end of each quarter student's take a career interest survey to help them identify their personal interests.

Quarters 1 | 3 (Buccaneer Team) Quarters 2 | 4 (Swashbuckler Team)

Students indicate their preference for one of these two PLTW options:

Automation & Robotics

Students are given the opportunity to combine mechanisms with input and output devices to automate the mechanisms. Students take on the role of interns, and work in teams to identify design requirements and create prototypes to meet the needs of clients. They also explore different aspects of automation and robotics, and experience how solving real-life problems involves the teamwork of mechanical engineers, software developers, and electrical engineers. **sales and marketing of their robot

Academy Integration: Design, Production, & Aviation | Business Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Quarters 1 | 3 (Swashbuckler Team) Quarters 2 | 4 (Buccaneer Team)

Flight & Space

The exciting world of aerospace comes alive through the Flight and Space (FS) course. Students become engineers as they design, prototype, and test models to learn about the science of flight and what it takes to travel and live in space. They solve real-world aviation and space challenges and plan a mission to Mars. **create an airline

Academy Integration: Design, Production, & Aviation | Business Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Quarters 1 | 3 (Swashbuckler Team) Quarters 2 | 4 (Buccaneer Team)

Seventh Grade Experience

ELECTIVES



Advanced Band

General Band courses develop students' technique for playing brass, woodwind, and percussion instruments and cover a variety of nonspecified band literature styles (concert, marching, orchestral, and modern styles). 7th and 8th unless you haven't played before

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Health & Human Services

Quarters 2 & 4 Required | Quarters 1 & 3 Optional

Art Concepts

In this course, students will practice and develop skills using visual art design elements and principles, participate in visual art activities/projects, and learn about art appreciation.

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Health & Human Services

One Quarter | Not Repeatable

Art Dimensions

In this course, students will practice and develop visual art skills incorporating knowledge of cultures, history and geography, participate in visual art activities/projects, and learn about art appreciation.

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Agriculture, Animal & Plant Systems

One Quarter | Not Repeatable

Beginning Band

General Band courses develop students' technique for playing brass, woodwind, and percussion instruments and cover a variety of nonspecified band literature styles (concert, marching, orchestral, and modern styles). First quarter if not played.

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Business Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Quarters 2 & 4 Required | Quarters 1 & 3 Optional

Drama 7

In this course, students will look at the origins of drama, explore differences between stage and film productions, and use movement and voice to bring life to a partner scene. Course topics include basic stage movement, role-playing, improvisation, auditions, and much more!

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Public Services

One Quarter | Not Repeatable

Seventh Grade Experience

ELECTIVES



Family & Consumer Sciences

This course emphasizes personal responsibility for the demands of multiple life roles through hands-on, project-based instruction. Students learn fashion terminology and basic concepts of design. Hand sewing & interior.

Academy Exposure: Health & Human Services | Arts and Media

One Quarter | Not Repeatable

Music & Media

In this course students will explore the impacts of music in the world. Students will study how music impacts their daily lives, how music impacts human services. This is a music appreciation course and will not require students to sing or perform.

Academy Exposure: Arts & Media | Health & Human Services

One Quarter | Not Repeatable

Physical Education and Health - Indoor

In this course, students will learn lifetime physical fitness skills and improve strength and endurance. The physical activities include individual and team sports and organized games. Team sports will include lead-up activities to a basic understanding of the sports, rules, regulations, and strategies. Physical Education activities are adapted to fit the individual needs of all students. This course will focus on indoor activities.

Academy Exposure: Health & Human Services | Public Services

Quarter 2 or 3 | Not Repeatable

Physical Education and Health - Outdoor

In this course, students will learn lifetime physical fitness skills and improve strength and endurance. The physical activities include individual and team sports and organized games. Team sports will include lead-up activities to a basic understanding of the sports, rules, regulations, and strategies. Physical Education activities are adapted to fit the individual needs of all students. This course will focus on outdoor activities.

Academy Exposure: Health & Human Services | Public Services

Quarter 1 or 4 | Not Repeatable

Seventh Grade Experience

ELECTIVES



Print Journalism

Students in this course are exposed to all aspects of developing, writing, and producing the middle school yearbook. Students may take pictures, develop advertisements, edit stories, or work through business and marketing aspects of production. This course is two quarters.

Academy Exposure: Business, Entrepreneurship & Innovation | Public Services

Quarters Two & Three Required

Vocal Music

In this course, students will practice and develop vocal music skills, explore performers' etiquette, and learn about music appreciation. Be prepared to play music games, learn to read music, sing, dance, and make music with a community of fellow musicians. Students will participate in a choir concert

Academy Exposure: Arts & Media | Health & Human Services

One Quarter | Repeatable for Maximum of Two Quarters

Eighth Grade Experience

CORE



English Language Arts

Language Arts courses build upon students' prior knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, word usage, and the mechanics of writing, and include the four aspects of language use: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Typically, these courses use various genres of literature to improve reading skills, and they link writing exercises for different purposes to those reading selections. Specific content depends upon state standards for each grade level.

Honors Note:

Honors Language Arts engages students in more rigorous analysis of a wide range of literary genres. Reading selections are more complex and require higher-level critical thinking, and writing assignments demand deeper analysis, extended responses, and refined language use. Specific content aligns with state standards for seventh and eighth grade, with enrichment and increased academic rigor appropriate for honors-level study.

Quarters 1 | 2 | 3 | 4

Social Studies - United States History

Students learn about the history of the United States from early human migrations to approximately the beginning of the 20th century. Themes will include cultural relationships and conflicts, individual rights and government, expansion, and industrialization. Students will develop skills in source analysis and constructing claims and arguments.

Quarters 1 | 2 | 3 | 4

Eighth Grade Experience

CORE



Mathematics

The 8th Grade Math course focuses on developing a strong foundation in algebra, geometry, and data analysis in alignment with the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards. Students will explore linear equations, functions, exponents, and the Pythagorean Theorem while strengthening problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. Through real-world applications, collaborative activities, and technology integration, students will build the mathematical understanding necessary for success in high school mathematics.

Honors Note:

Honors 8th Grade Math is an accelerated course aligned to the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards that integrates 8th grade mathematics standards with key Algebra 1 concepts. Students will deepen their understanding of geometry topics such as the Pythagorean Theorem, angles, surface area, and volume while also solving linear equations and inequalities, analyzing functions, and exploring systems of equations. This rigorous course emphasizes advanced problem-solving, mathematical reasoning, and real-world applications to prepare students for high school-level mathematics.

Quarters 1 | 2 | 3 | 4

Science

OpenSciEd 8th Grade is a phenomena-based science course aligned to NGSS and KS State Standards that engages students in figuring out real-world problems through investigation, modeling, and evidence-based reasoning. Students learn core science concepts in physical science, earth and space, and life science by asking questions, analyzing data, and collaborating to make sense of how and why things happen.

Quarters 1 | 2 | 3 | 4

Course Placement Note

Students who qualify may be placed in honors or special education placements in both English Language Arts and/or Mathematics based on previous academic scoring patterns and IEP requirements. These courses are taught in small setting by special education professionals. If you believe your student qualifies for this course please communicate with your student's assigned case manager.

Eighth Grade Experience

AP/PLTW



Academy Prep

The Arts & Media Academy Prep course will focus on various sectors within the Arts & Media academy including: design essentials, performing arts, and multimedia experiences. Students will complete a design thinking challenge that promotes additional exposure to each of the sectors. Students will also start organizing media for their Ignite Presentations. The second quarter, which occurs after student academy selection, focuses on self-reflection, career exploration, skills assessments, and a final Ignite Presentation at Piper High School that serves as the student's middle school capstone experience.

Quarters 1 | 3 (Buccaneer Team) Quarters 2 | 4 (Swashbuckler Team)

Students indicate their preference for one of these two PLTW options:

Medical Detectives

Students play the role of real-life medical detectives as they collect and analyze medical data to diagnose disease. They solve medical mysteries through hands-on projects and labs, measure and interpret vital signs, examine nervous system structure and function, and investigate disease outbreaks.

Academy Integration: Design, Production, & Aviation | Health & Human Services

Quarters 1 | 3 (Swashbuckler Team) Quarters 2 | 4 (Buccaneer Team)

Science of Technology/Forensic Science

Science impacts the technology of yesterday, today, and the future. Students apply the concepts of physics and chemistry to real-world scenarios. Students explore concepts of science as it relates to forensic science and public service.

Academy Integration: Design, Production, & Aviation | Public Services

Quarters 1 | 3 (Swashbuckler Team) Quarters 2 | 4 (Buccaneer Team)

Eighth Grade Experience

ELECTIVES



Advanced Band

General Band courses develop students' technique for playing brass, woodwind, and percussion instruments and cover a variety of nonspecified band literature styles (concert, marching, orchestral, and modern styles).

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Design, Production, & Aviation

Quarters 2 & 4 Required | Quarters 1 & 3 Optional

Art Concepts

In this course, students will practice and develop skills using visual art design elements and principles, participate in visual art activities/projects, and learn about art appreciation.

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Health & Human Services

One Quarter | Not Repeatable

Beginning Band

General Band courses develop students' technique for playing brass, woodwind, and percussion instruments and cover a variety of nonspecified band literature styles (concert, marching, orchestral, and modern styles).

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Business Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Quarters 2 & 4 Required | Quarters 1 & 3 Optional

Broadcast Journalism

Students in this course produce our First Watch Weekly video programming for the school and larger community. Students write, produce, and record features, segments, and stories. This course is 2 quarters.

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Public Services

Quarter 1 & 2 | Quarters 3 & 4

Drama 8

In this course, students will explore how storytellers use patterns and symbols to enrich drama. Course topics include psychology in drama, character analysis, and production team jobs.

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Health & Human Services

One Quarter | Not Repeatable

Eighth Grade Experience

ELECTIVES



Family and Consumer Sciences

This hands-on course focuses on developing essential life skills in two key areas: culinary arts and child development. In the culinary skills portion, students will learn the fundamentals of kitchen safety, proper food handling, and measuring techniques. In the child development segment, students will gain insights into the stages of growth and development, understand the responsibilities of caring for young children, and explore the importance of nurturing healthy relationships.

Academy Integration: Health & Human Services | Business, Entrepreneurship & Innovation

One Quarter | Not Repeatable

Music in Media

In this course students will explore the impacts of music in the world. Students will study how music impacts their daily lives, how music impacts marketing and business. This is a music appreciation course and will not require students to sing or perform.

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Business, Entrepreneurship, & Innovation

One Quarter | Not Repeatable

Physical Education and Health - Indoor

In this course, students will learn lifetime physical fitness skills and improve strength and endurance. The physical activities include individual and team sports and organized games. Team sports will include lead-up activities to a basic understanding of the sports, rules, regulations, and strategies. Physical Education activities are adapted to fit the individual needs of all students. This course will focus on indoor activities.

Academy Integration: Public Services | Health & Human Services

Quarters 2 or 3 | Not Repeatable

Physical Education and Health - Outdoor

In this course, students will learn lifetime physical fitness skills and improve strength and endurance. The physical activities include individual and team sports and organized games. Team sports will include lead-up activities to a basic understanding of the sports, rules, regulations, and strategies. Physical Education activities are adapted to fit the individual needs of all students. This course will focus on outdoor activities.

Academy Integration: Public Services | Health & Human Services

Quarters 1 or 4 | Not Repeatable

Eighth Grade Experience

ELECTIVES



Sculpture

In this course, students will practice art concepts through clay sculpting. Students will engage in practical experience creating 3D art through sculptural works.

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Agriculture, Animal & Plant Systems

One Quarter | Not Repeatable

Vocal Music

In this course, students will practice and develop vocal music skills, explore performers' etiquette, and learn about music appreciation. Be prepared to play music games, learn to read music, sing, dance, and make music with a community of fellow musicians. Students will participate in a choir concert.

Academy Integration: Arts & Media | Health & Human Services

One Quarter | Repeatable for Maximum of Two Quarters

Eighth Grade Experience

IGNITE



Ignite Experiences Overview: Preparing 8th Graders for High School Success

The IGNITE program provides 8th-grade students with a dynamic, year-long series of experiences designed to celebrate their journey through middle school, reinforce their understanding of the Academy model, and prepare them for the exciting transition to high school. These key experiences include:

- Academy Night: Families and students attend an evening event to explore Piper High School's Academies. They meet Academy teachers and current students, tour lab spaces, and learn about clubs, activities, and real-world learning opportunities aligned with each Academy pathway.
- Academy Roundtable: Students engage directly with current high school students representing all six academies, gaining first-hand insight into the opportunities connected to each pathway. This interactive event bridges classroom learning with first-hand knowledge where students can get their questions answered.
- Academy Selection: After three years of exploratory experiences in all six Academies, 8th grade students officially select and are celebrated for entering their chosen Academy at the high school level, marking a major milestone in their Individual Plan of Study.
- 4th and 5th Grade IGNITE Presentations: Eighth graders prepare and present their capstone projects to elementary students, building communication skills and showcasing the value of middle school Academy prep courses. These presentations inspire younger students and provide a glimpse of what's ahead.
- 8th Grade Promotion: In a formal ceremony, students are honored for their accomplishments and officially promoted into their high school Academy, marking both an ending and a new beginning on their educational and career journey.

Together, these IGNITE experiences empower students with clarity, confidence, and connection as they move into high school ready to explore and pursue their passions

Eighth Grade Experience

IGNITE



IGNITE Presentation

The IGNITE Presentation is a culmination of students' exposure to all six academies at Piper Middle School. Middle school serves as a crucial bridge between the foundational skills developed in elementary school and the opportunities that high school will offer. While students may not yet have a clear vision of their future careers, this is a time of self-discovery—where talents, interests, and strengths begin to take shape.

Through the IGNITE Presentation, students will reflect on their personal growth and aspirations, gaining valuable insights that will guide them toward informed choices in high school and beyond. Each student's presentation will include:

- Portrait of a Graduate Defense
- Declaration of their High School Academy and Sector
- Market Value Assets and Post Secondary Assets
- Academy Networking
- High School Career Pathway
- PMS Preparation Reflection
- Pathway OS

This presentation is a meaningful step in helping students connect their interests and abilities to potential career pathways, empowering them to make thoughtful decisions about their academic and professional futures.

Career and Technical Student Organizations

Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA)

FCCLA is a student-led organization that empowers middle school students to develop leadership skills, explore careers, and make a positive impact in their communities. Members participate in hands-on projects, community service, and STAR (Students Taking Action with Recognition) competitions, focusing on real-world topics like food safety, financial literacy, and personal development. FCCLA prepares students to lead with purpose and succeed as future family members, community leaders, and professionals.

National Qualifying Students: 2024 | 2025

Technology Student Association (TSA)

The Technology Student Association is a national non-profit career and technical student organization of middle and high school students engaged in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The Technology Student Association enhances personal development, leadership, and career opportunities in STEM, whereby members apply and integrate these concepts through intracurricular activities, competitions, and related programs. The Technology Student Association is accelerating student achievement and supporting teachers by providing engaging opportunities to develop STEM skills.

National Qualifying Students: 2025

HOSA

The 7th grade HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America) club is an organization designed to inspire future leaders in the healthcare field. Students explore various health science careers, develop teamwork and leadership skills, and engage in hands-on activities such as first aid, CPR, and health-related challenges. The club promotes critical thinking and problem-solving through community service projects and participation in local or state HOSA competitions. HOSA provides a supportive environment for students to connect with peers who share a passion for health sciences while preparing for future success.

National Qualifying Students: 2025 | 2026

Student Led Conferences



Students at Piper Middle School are expected to prepare and present a student led conference with their parent and guardian two times per year. Students are assigned to a homeroom teacher that tracks their progress, along with their parents/guardians, throughout all three years at Piper Middle School. Once in the fall and once in the spring students organize a presentation focused on the following tenets:

Reflection

At each conference students have the opportunity to discuss their progress in middle school, reflect on their current interests, and highlight their academy exposure.

Goal Setting

Students are expected to set academic and social-emotional goals at each conference. Students are encouraged to develop action steps to meet their goals and report on their progress.

Incremental Changes

Each conference has unique slides designed to preview the incremental changes students experience throughout middle school to keep students and parents/guardians informed.

Sixth Grade

Students complete career interest surveys to determine how their interests align with potential career paths. Students learn to navigate the system.

Seventh Grade

Students complete career interest surveys to determine how their interests align with potential career paths. Some students begin to log their community service hours within the program.

Eighth Grade

Students complete career interest surveys to determine how their interests align with potential career paths. All students are required to have their parent or guardian sign off on the Individual Plan of Study acknowledgment.

Meet Our Team

The Ignite Team is a dedicated group of experienced educators focused on creating seamless connections between their middle school courses and the high school academies within our district. Comprising a diverse team of elective, academy prep, and PLTW (Project Lead The Way) teachers, we work collaboratively to ensure a smooth transition for students as they progress through their educational journey. By leveraging our expertise in specialized subject areas, we design and implement innovative programs that engage and challenge students, preparing them for success in their future academic and career pathways. Our goal is to foster a cohesive learning experience that bridges the gap between middle and high school, empowering students to explore their interests and talents in meaningful ways.



Baxter, Josh Visual Arts

Josh Baxter has been an art teacher at Piper Middle School since 2005, where he is dedicated to helping students discover and develop their creative potential. With a focus on encouraging self-expression, he inspires students to explore various artistic techniques and build confidence in their abilities. Outside of the classroom, Mr. Baxter is also deeply involved in athletics, coaching 8th grade football and high school track and field. His coaching emphasizes teamwork, discipline, and personal growth, allowing students to thrive both academically and athletically.



Crowley, Emilie Academy Prep 8

This year will be Ms. Crowley's second year as the 8th Grade Academy Prep Teacher at Piper Middle School, and she could not be more excited. Ms. Crowley is a Pittsburg State Gorilla, gluten free foodie, and avid reader. She loves spending time with my friends, family, and two perfectly insane doggos. She cannot wait to see students ignite their passions as we explore careers and pathways. Ms. Crowley is the proud sponsor of Piper Middle School FCCLA.



Davis, Tesa Academy Prep 7

Mrs. Davis is a dedicated 7th grade Health, Human, and Public Services teacher who is passionate about connecting classroom content to the real world in meaningful ways. She believes students learn best when they see the relevance of their learning and feel supported by a trusted, and caring adult. Mrs. Davis helps students build on their areas of strength while recognizing and embracing areas of growth. One of her main goals is to widen students' lenses through hands-on learning about different careers within health science and arts and media. Her teaching revolves around building relationships as well as Piper's Portrait of a Graduate Competencies as there skills that can be used in all areas of life and career pathways.



Friesen, Julie

Project Lead The Way 8

Mrs. Friesen is a passionate educator who is dedicated to making learning exciting and meaningful for every student. A dedicated educator with 28 years of teaching experience and 18 years at Piper, who strives to create a classroom that's both innovative and engaging, filled with hands-on activities and real-world learning experiences. Beyond the classroom, she is dedicated to building strong relationships with students, helping them grow not only academically but as individuals. Ms. Friesen is also a throws coach for the PHS track & field team.



Hasenkamp, Parker

Project Lead The Way 7

Parker Hasenkamp is a dedicated Teacher and Coach at Piper Middle School. Mr. Hasenkamp is the 7th grade Project Lead the Way Teacher who teaches Flight and Space and Automation and Robotics. With both classes, Mr. Hasenkamp engages the students in a fun and engaging way to push the students to think critically and use their innovative creation skills to do multiple hands-on projects. As well as teaching, Mr. Hasenkamp coaches high school football, middle school wrestling, and is the Head Coach for middle school track and field.

Kelley, Josh

Band

Joshua Kelley, our band teacher, was born in Akron, Ohio, and raised in Junction City, Kansas, where he began playing the trumpet in fifth grade before switching to euphonium and trombone in high school. He earned both his undergraduate and graduate degrees in Music from Emporia State University. While in college, he assisted with the Emporia High School band and served as a graduate teaching assistant for the university's marching band. Since 2008, he has been a dedicated member of the Piper School District, sharing a passion for music.



Miller, Grant

Project Lead The Way 6

Grant Miller has been teaching technology and design courses in various capacities in the Piper district since 2008. During this time, the curriculum has undergone many changes to better serve the students as they seek new and relevant opportunities to expand their background in technical fields. Mr. Miller is currently teaching 6th Grade Design and Modeling and also sponsors the Technology Student Association for students in grades 6th through 8th.



Ruiz, Riley

Family & Consumer Sciences

Riley Ruiz (formerly O'Brien) is a passionate and student-focused educator dedicated to empowering the next generation with essential life skills through a broad range of Family and Consumer Science classes. She also serves as the assistant coach for both 8th grade girls volleyball, and 7th grade girls track and field. Her dedication to education was recognized in 2024 when she was nominated for the KSDE Horizon Award.



Shelley, Bryan

Physical Education & Health

Bryan Shelley has been a dedicated Physical Education teacher at Piper Middle School for nearly 2 decades. A proud member of the Piper community, he lives in Piper with his wife, Afton, and their three children—Tyren, a 2020 Piper graduate, along with Taysen and Tinley, who currently attend Piper. Bryan is deeply involved in athletics, currently serving as the Head Tennis Coach at Piper High School and the 8th Grade Basketball Coach. His coaching experience spans multiple sports, including 15 years of high school football, track, volleyball, and basketball. His passion for teaching and coaching extends beyond the game, as he enjoys getting to know his students and watching them grow through physical achievements and goal-setting.

Traffis, Mike

Academy Prep 6

Mike Traffis is a dedicated educator who is passionate about helping students learn through real-world connections and hands-on experiences. He strives to create a supportive classroom environment where students feel encouraged to ask questions, think critically, and take responsibility for their learning. Mr. Traffis is committed to preparing students for future success by building strong academic skills, teamwork, and curiosity about agriculture and the world around them. He began teaching in 2002 and moved to Piper in 2021.



Smith, Jordan

Drama & Journalism

Jordan P Smith teaches Drama, and Journalism here at Piper Middle School. He fosters a dynamic classroom where students build confidence, think critically, and express themselves creatively through hands-on learning and practical application of skills. With an enthusiasm for teaching and a commitment to lifelong learning, he continuously seeks new ways to engage and inspire his students. Beyond classroom activities, he coaches boys and girls basketball, sponsors the yearbook, and directs the school play.



Villaca, Ashlynn

Vocal Music & Music in Media

Ashlynn Villaca, the Vocal Music and Music in Media teacher who makes music inclusive, dynamic, engaging, and totally unforgettable. With a degree in Music Education and a minor in Ethnic and Identity Studies, Mrs. Villaca prioritizes creating diverse musical experiences, fostering meaningful connections, and providing enriching musical opportunities for students of all musical abilities. Mrs. Villaca has taken students to perform in District and State Honor Choirs, compete in the KVL Choir Contest, and watch Opera Performances at the Kauffman Center. Ashlynn Villaca is an active member of the Kansas Music Educators Association and the Kansas Choral Directors Association, as well as a singer in the semi-professional William Baker Festival Singers choir.



Vader, Polly

Real World Learning Coordinator

Polly Vader serves as the Coordinator of Real World Learning and Career and Technical Education (CTE) at Piper USD 203. With a strong commitment to connecting students with industry opportunities and vice versa, she plays a pivotal role in developing and implementing career-focused pathways and capstone experiences that prepare students for success beyond high school. Under her leadership, Piper's Individual Plan of Study (IPS) process has garnered recognition, including a Gold Star in the Kansas Can Star Recognition Program, for its effectiveness in aligning student interests with post-secondary goals and workforce readiness.



Wallace, Steve

Physical Education & Health

Steve Wallace is a dedicated Physical Education teacher at Piper Middle School with a passion for promoting fitness, teamwork, and lifelong healthy habits. With years of experience in coaching and teaching, he creates engaging and dynamic PE lessons that encourage students to stay active while having fun. Mr. Wallace believes in the importance of sportsmanship, goal-setting, and personal growth, helping students develop both physical skills and confidence. Mr. Wallace is also the head boys basketball coach at Piper High School.



Anselmi, Kelsey

Building Principal

Kelsey Anselmi will be serving in her first year as Principal of Piper Middle School during the 2026-2027 academic year. She believes that true mastery occurs when students apply foundational skills, such as literacy and mathematics, to solve authentic, complex problems. Her commitment to RWL is driven by the belief that education should be an active bridge to future careers, fostering both technical skill and critical thinking. Kelsey is proud to support the Piper community in building an educational environment where "learning" and "doing" are one and the same.