



Middle School **Curriculum Guide**



A Formative Bridge

Welcome to the Middle School at Pinewood.

At Pinewood American International School, Middle School is more than preparation for high school. It is a formative season, a pivotal stage where students begin shaping the judgment, character, and responsibility that define a Pinewood Graduate.

We intentionally design our Middle School as a community where every student is known, valued, seen, and heard. Our program emphasizes personalized learning, student voice, and the thoughtful use of technology so that students can explore their interests, express their ideas, and engage deeply with the world around them.

Rooted in American educational traditions and enriched by our international context, our program honors the developmental needs of early adolescence while guiding students toward lives of purpose and contribution.

Our Middle School learners are invited to:

EXPLORE who I am.

UNDERSTAND how I learn.

DISCOVER my place in the world.

Through steady encouragement and high expectations, students begin developing the habits of mind and heart that allow them not only to succeed in high school, but to flourish beyond it.

What does **powerful** learning look like at **Pinewood**?

We live in a world changing faster than our ability to predict it, and we face a future that is filled with uncertainty and complex ethical challenges.

Pinewood prepares students not only to enter the world as it is, but to shape the world as it ought to be.

We believe this begins with who students are becoming – not just what they know. Powerful learning at Pinewood lives at the intersection of character, ethics, and joy. These are not outcomes we add at the end. They are the conditions we cultivate from the beginning.

Powerful learning happens when students:

- **Judge wisely**, not just think critically
- **Engage** difference with humility and genuine curiosity
- **Contribute** to something larger than themselves
- **Grow** with intention — formed, not finished

In our classrooms, this looks like:

- **A Kindergartener** dives into messy play, learning to share space, take turns, solve small conflicts, and discover that making a mess can also create meaning.
- **A second grader** discovers their family's traditions look different from a classmate's and begins asking why, what that means, and why it matters.
- **A seventh grader** wrestles with a real community problem that has no clean solution, learning to act with integrity when the right path is unclear.
- **A senior** writes not about where he is going, but who he is becoming, and for the first time, the answer feels like their own.

This is powerful learning. This is how a student becomes someone the world needs.

Our Core Commitments

CHARACTER

We believe character is formed in community. Through strong relationships with teachers, advisors, and peers, students learn integrity, responsibility, and courage not through abstract lessons, but through daily choices – in classrooms, advisory circles, performances, competitions, and friendships. Middle School is a protected space to practice leadership, repair mistakes, and grow in self-awareness.

ETHICS

Adolescence is when students begin asking deeper questions:

Who am I? What do I stand for? How do my choices affect others?

We cultivate ethical awareness through structured reflection, perspective-taking, global inquiry, and honest dialogue. Students learn to think beyond rules – to consider consequences, relationships, and responsibility. They begin developing the judgment to ask not only “Can I?” but “Should I?”

JOY

Joy is not separate from rigor; it is evidence that learning is alive. We believe students thrive when they see purpose in what they are learning through discovery, belonging, mastery, and creative expression. Joy grows when students feel safe to take risks, when their passions are honored, and when progress is celebrated. In Middle School, learning should feel challenging, meaningful, and deeply human.

CHARACTER. ETHICS. JOY.

Together, these commitments are cultivated through three essential practices of the Middle School experience: relationships that build character, reflection that deepens ethical awareness, and resilience that sustains joy in learning.



From Principles to Practice

Walk into our Middle School and you will:

See students **collaborating** across disciplines and connecting classroom concepts to authentic, real-world **challenges**.



Feel belonging in **advisory circles** where students **reflect** on their **growth** and in Houses where **friendships** (and friendly rivalries) span grade levels.



This is a place where learning is active, challenging, joyful, and deeply personal – supported by a curriculum intentionally designed to connect ideas, skills, and real-world understanding. At the same time, Middle School at Pinewood thoughtfully preserves the spirit of childhood while guiding students toward greater independence, responsibility, and maturity.

Hear thoughtful **questions**, delightfully unexpected questions, productive struggle, and the buzz of genuine **excitement** that comes with **discovery**.



Know that students are making **meaningful choices** – pursuing their interests, taking intellectual risks, and learning that setbacks are **essential**, and often memorable, parts of **growth**.



Curriculum Frameworks

Our instructional design merges rigorous American standards with the concept-driven IB Middle Years Programme (MYP). This dual-framework approach allows students to explore big ideas and develop conceptual understanding while also building the essential knowledge and skills required for future academic success.

American Standards: A Strong Foundation for Skills-Development

Pinewood's curriculum draws on established American standards to ensure clarity, rigor, and progression across core subjects. Most courses align with the AERO Standards, while Science follows the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and Greek Language & Literature follows the national curriculum.

These standards provide clear learning benchmarks and skill progressions, ensuring that students develop the disciplinary foundations necessary for success beyond Middle School.

MYP Framework: A Concept-Based Approach

The IB Middle Years Programme (MYP) complements these standards by providing a concept-based framework that emphasizes inquiry, reflection, and global-mindedness. Rather than learning facts in isolation, students explore connections across disciplines and consider how knowledge applies to real-world contexts.

Within this framework, students engage deeply with each subject area while developing the habits of thinking, questioning, and reflection that support meaningful learning.

Core Elements of Learning

Units of learning integrate skill development from American standards with the concept-driven structure of the MYP. Three elements guide how students explore ideas and build understanding across all subjects:

- **Key Concepts:** Big ideas such as Communication, Perspective, and Relationships connect learning across disciplines and help students apply subject knowledge in broader contexts.
- **Global Contexts:** Each unit is framed through a real-world lens, encouraging students to explore personal, local, and global perspectives and consider how learning connects beyond the classroom.
- **Inquiry:** Guided questions and Statements of Inquiry drive investigation, discussion, and reflection, helping students gather evidence, evaluate ideas, and construct meaning through active learning.

Learning Across the Disciplines

At Pinewood, each subject is designed to develop both knowledge and habits of mind, helping students navigate an increasingly interconnected world. Across Grades 6–8, the curriculum emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and ethical reasoning. Assessment prioritizes authentic learning: inquiry projects, performance tasks, research investigations, and other real-world applications serve as evidence of student growth and understanding.





English Language and Literature

Middle School English develops students' ability to read critically, write thoughtfully, and communicate with clarity and confidence. Assessment emphasizes the creative process, analytical thinking, and the authentic application of language skills rather than traditional tests. Students progressively explore diverse genres and media while developing research skills, ethical reasoning, and the capacity to navigate multiple perspectives.

Grade 6: Foundations of Expression and Interpretation

Big Idea: How do authors shape meaning through language?

Learning Focus: Students investigate how authors and creators craft meaning, building foundational skills in evidence-based discussion and narrative writing.

Grade 7: Language, Perspective, and Persuasion

Big Idea: How do language and perspective influence audiences?

Learning Focus: Students analyze how writers and speakers use rhetoric, narrative, and argument to shape understanding, exploring questions of responsibility, courage, and social change.

Grade 8: Interpretation, Argument, and Voice

Big Idea: How does literature reflect identity and power?

Learning Focus: Students deepen analytical skills to examine how literature and media shape identity, power, and perspective, constructing well-supported arguments and refining their personal voice.

Greek Language and Literature

Designed for fluent speakers, this course follows a rigorous conceptual arc that mirrors the English curriculum. Students engage with the rich historical and cultural heritage of the Greek language, using it as a vehicle for thought, creativity, and ethical reasoning.

Grade 6–8: Focus on language structure, cultural context, and the analytical reading of classical and modern texts across real-world and creative contexts.

Language Acquisition (French, Greek, Spanish)

This subject develops students' ability to interact across cultures, beginning with a mandatory foundation in the host country's language. Assessment emphasizes the authentic use of language in conversation, projects, and presentations.

Grade 6: Greek Foundations:

All international students focus on practical communication and cultural curiosity within the host culture.

Grade 7–8: Choice of Pathways:

Students continue in Greek or begin studies in Spanish or French, progressing from basic fluency to sophisticated expression.



Social Studies

Middle School Social Studies develops students' understanding of human societies and the forces that shape them. Assessment emphasizes inquiry, action, and authentic application of knowledge, using projects, simulations, and research as evidence of learning. Across Grades 6–8, students explore geography, culture, power, and identity while building analytical, research, communication, and ethical reasoning skills.

Grade 6: Foundations of Civilizations and Human Organization

Big Idea: How do societies form and evolve?

Learning Focus: Students examine early civilizations through geography, society, power, and belief, comparing case studies and identifying cross-cultural connections.

Grade 7: Cultural, Political, and Economic Systems

Big Idea: How do systems shape human experience?

Learning Focus: Students investigate governance, trade, and cultural exchange, analyzing how systems interact and influence societies.

Grade 8: Continuity, Change, and Global Perspective

Big Idea: How do patterns of history influence today's world?

Learning Focus: Students explore historical and contemporary issues, evaluating patterns of change and continuity and considering the impact of human decisions locally and globally.



Mathematics

Middle School Mathematics develops students' ability to recognize patterns, reason logically, and apply mathematical thinking to real-world contexts. Assessment emphasizes authentic inquiry-based tasks – investigations, collaborative problem-solving, and modeling projects – rather than traditional tests. Students progressively build skills in number, algebra, geometry, data, and probability while developing problem-solving and representation abilities.

Grade 6: Foundations of Reasoning and Relationships

Big Idea: How do patterns and relationships help us understand the world?

Learning Focus: Students explore number systems, operations, and basic geometry, identifying patterns, describing relationships, and representing ideas clearly.

Grade 7: Systems, Proportionality, and Algebraic Thinking

Big Idea: How can mathematics model relationships?

Learning Focus: Students extend understanding of ratios, rates, and linear relationships, representing mathematical structures symbolically, graphically, and numerically.

Grade 8: Functions, Modeling, and Prediction

Big Idea: How can models help predict outcomes?

Learning Focus: Students deepen algebraic reasoning and apply models to analyze complex situations, preparing for high school specialization.



Sciences

Middle School Science develops curiosity about the natural world while cultivating scientific habits of mind: questioning, investigating, and analyzing evidence. Assessment emphasizes inquiry-based labs, research projects, and collaborative problem-solving. Students explore life, physical, chemistry, and earth sciences while learning to evaluate claims and apply scientific thinking to challenges such as sustainability and health.

Grade 6: Foundations of Scientific Thinking

Big Idea: What does it mean to think like a scientist?

Learning Focus: Students explore patterns across chemistry, energy, and earth systems, developing foundational inquiry and evidence-based reasoning skills.

Grade 7: Systems in Living and Environmental Science

Big Idea: How do living and environmental systems function and change?

Learning Focus: Students investigate biological and ecological systems, analyzing cell and ecosystem processes while considering human impacts on the environment.

Grade 8: Physical Systems and Scientific Models

Big Idea: How can models explain natural phenomena?

Learning Focus: Students explore laws and models of motion, energy, and atomic structure to understand complex systems and predict processes.



Visual and Performing Arts

Arts courses develop creativity, self-expression, and technical skill across visual, performing, and media arts. Assessment emphasizes the creative process, iteration, and reflection, allowing students to connect artistic exploration with interdisciplinary thinking.

Grade 6: Artistic Foundations

Big Idea: How do we use materials and movement to express ourselves?

Learning Focus: Students explore a wide range of materials, techniques, and visual concepts, developing creative confidence and visual literacy through joyful experimentation and observation in movement, rhythm, and visual tasks.

Grade 7: Development & Choice

Big Idea: How does choice and collaboration refine an artistic message?

Learning Focus: Students deepen technical skills while making independent creative decisions, exploring themes and styles through choreography, collaborative performance, and peer critique.

Grade 8: Voice & Practice

Big Idea: How do we use an artistic voice to engage an audience?

Learning Focus: Students develop a personal artistic voice through sustained projects and performances for authentic audience.

Physical and Health Education

Students explore physical development, health perspectives, and social interaction across team sports, individual fitness, and health-related concepts. Assessment emphasizes authentic tasks – performance assessments, tactical simulations, officiating roles, and collaborative challenges. Students learn to connect physical activity to personal wellbeing, interpersonal skills, and global perspectives.

Grade 6–8:

Big Idea: How do physical activity, health, and teamwork influence lifelong wellbeing?

Learning Focus: Students develop fitness, coordination, strategic thinking, and communication skills while understanding the value of balanced lifestyle choices.



Design

Design courses focus on creative problem-solving, prototyping, and iterative design processes. Assessment emphasizes real-world projects, collaboration, and reflective practice to connect design thinking with broader academic and personal skills.

Grade 6: Robotics

Big Idea: How do designers turn ideas into solutions?

Learning Focus: Students solve hands-on challenges that involve creativity, planning, and iteration, emphasizing experimentation and learning from failure in simple engineering and sustainability tasks.

Grade 7: E-Shop

Big Idea: How can design thinking solve real-world problems?

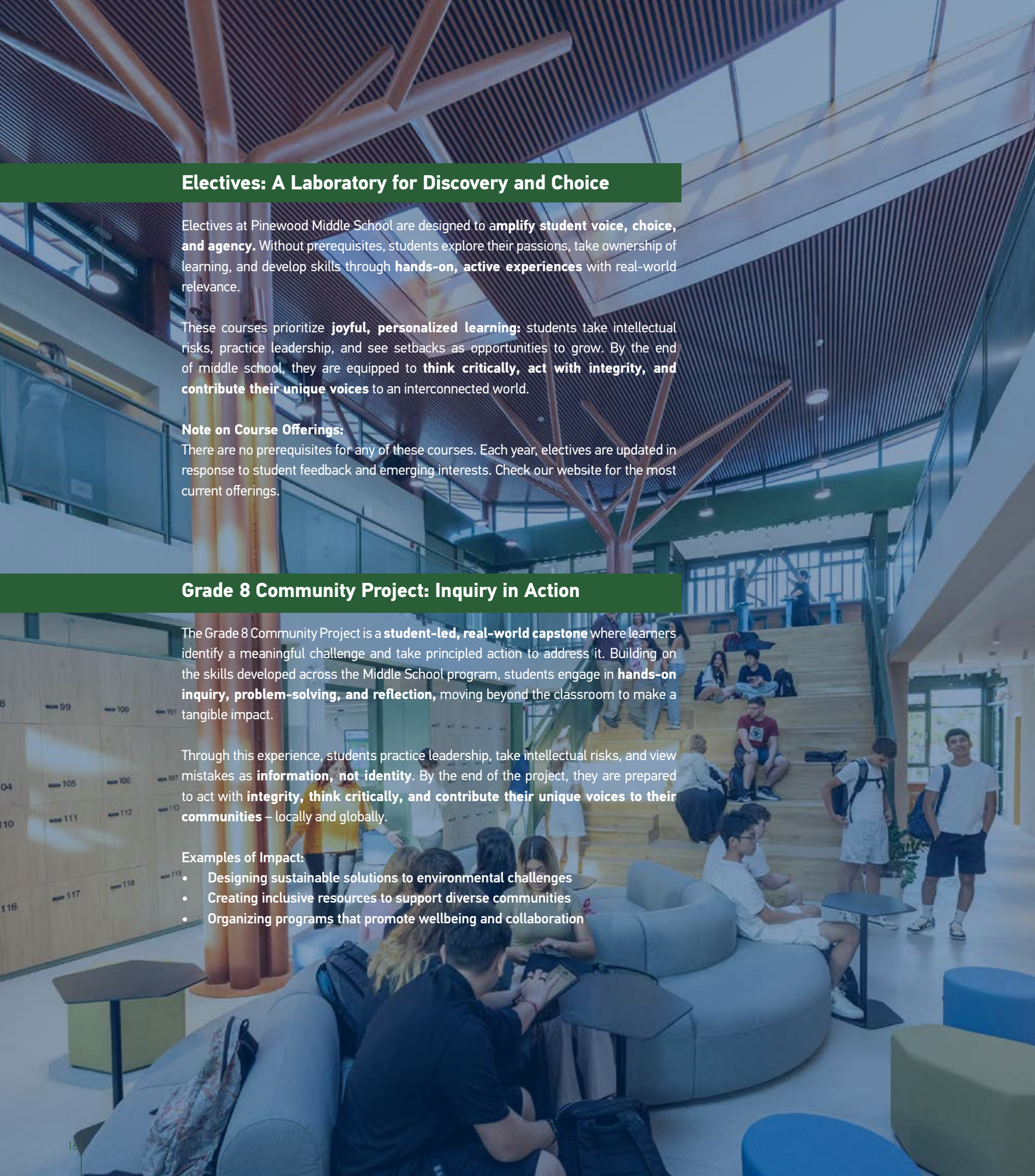
Learning Focus: Students identify community needs or opportunities and develop solutions that consider users, resources, and impact, emphasizing problem-solving and iterative improvement.

Grade 8: Formula 1

Big Idea: How can engineering systems and advocacy make a difference?

Learning Focus: Students tackle complex challenges that integrate systems thinking and technical skill, developing solutions that respond to real constraints and address environmental or social issues.





Electives: A Laboratory for Discovery and Choice

Electives at Pinewood Middle School are designed to **amplify student voice, choice, and agency**. Without prerequisites, students explore their passions, take ownership of learning, and develop skills through **hands-on, active experiences** with real-world relevance.

These courses prioritize **joyful, personalized learning**: students take intellectual risks, practice leadership, and see setbacks as opportunities to grow. By the end of middle school, they are equipped to **think critically, act with integrity, and contribute their unique voices** to an interconnected world.

Note on Course Offerings:

There are no prerequisites for any of these courses. Each year, electives are updated in response to student feedback and emerging interests. Check our website for the most current offerings.

Grade 8 Community Project: Inquiry in Action

The Grade 8 Community Project is a **student-led, real-world capstone** where learners identify a meaningful challenge and take principled action to address it. Building on the skills developed across the Middle School program, students engage in **hands-on inquiry, problem-solving, and reflection**, moving beyond the classroom to make a tangible impact.

Through this experience, students practice leadership, take intellectual risks, and view mistakes as **information, not identity**. By the end of the project, they are prepared to act with **integrity, think critically, and contribute their unique voices to their communities** – locally and globally.

Examples of Impact:

- Designing sustainable solutions to environmental challenges
- Creating inclusive resources to support diverse communities
- Organizing programs that promote wellbeing and collaboration

Assessment

The Purpose of Assessment

At Pinewood, assessment in Middle School is centered on process – how students **learn, grow, and develop** their skills over time. In classrooms, students receive ongoing feedback through discussion, drafts, practice, and reflection. There are no final exams. Instead, teachers provide multiple opportunities for students to engage with course material, demonstrate understanding in different ways, and improve through revision. **This approach prioritizes growth, skill development, and confidence**, helping students take ownership of their learning.

Alongside this daily process, students build portfolios that serve as a product of their learning process. These curated collections showcase progress across subjects and highlight meaningful work, reflection, and real-world application. Using a range of approaches – including different ways to engage, represent ideas, and express understanding – students demonstrate what they know and can do in ways that are both rigorous and personal. Together, process and portfolio provide a more complete and authentic picture of student learning.

Understanding Grading at Pinewood

At Pinewood, assessment is more than measuring achievement – **it is a tool for growth, reflection, and meaningful learning**. The IB Middle Years Programme (MYP) evaluates students across **knowledge, skills, and real-world application, emphasizing inquiry, creativity, and ethical reasoning**.

Criterion Grading: How MYP Scoring Works

Each course interprets the four MYP criteria (A–D) in ways that reflect the **skills and goals of that subject**. For example, “Criterion D: Applying Skills” may focus on oral argumentation in English or design solutions in Design. Despite these differences, all courses share common elements: **students are assessed on understanding, inquiry, communication, and application**, ensuring we see consistent expectations across subjects.

Criterion	What it Measures
A: Knowledge and Understanding	Depth of insight and ability to connect ideas.
B: Investigating / Thinking Critically	Inquiry skills: analyzing and evaluating information.
C: Communicating	Clear and effective expression in multiple formats.
D: Applying Skills / Taking Action	Real-world application, problem-solving, and student agency.

- Each criterion is scored **1–8**, with a maximum total of 32 points per subject.
- The **four criterion grades** are added together for a total score that is converted to a **final MYP grade of 1–7**.

Calculating Final Grades in the MYP

Total Score (Out of 32)	Final MYP Grade (1-7)
28-32	7 - Exceptional conceptual understanding, creativity, and skill application across multiple contexts.
24-27	6 - High-level competence, independent thinking, and insightful connections.
19-23	5 - Strong grasp of concepts with effective application.
15-18	4 - Meets standard expectations with clear understanding and engagement.
10-14	3 - Basic comprehension but requires further support to deepen learning.
6-9	2 - Limited understanding with emerging skills.
1-5	1 - Minimal achievement, significant support needed for progress.

From Criterion Scores to Final Grade

Here is a real example of how MYP Criterion scores translate to the final grade in a course:
A Grade 7 student researching renewable energy designs a small-scale solar oven. They score 6 in Criterion D for real-world application, 5 in Criterion C for clear written explanation, and 6–7 in other criteria for knowledge and critical thinking. The final MYP grade reflects both their conceptual understanding and practical impact, giving a full picture of their learning.

Example: Criterion A: 6 | Criterion B: 7 | Criterion C: 5 | Criterion D: 6
Total Score: 24 / 32
Final MYP Grade: 6

How We Make This Possible

At the heart of our instructional design is **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**, which ensures that every student can access rigorous, meaningful learning through multiple pathways of engagement, representation, and expression. By intentionally removing barriers, we empower students to understand how they learn best and to take increasing ownership of their progress.

Our program is guided by the **IB Middle Years Programme (MYP)** framework, which emphasizes inquiry, conceptual understanding, global-mindedness, and reflection. Through interdisciplinary units, project-based learning, engaging electives, and signature experiences like Week Without Walls, students discover that knowledge is interconnected and relevant.

We leverage **technology and artificial intelligence** thoughtfully — building digital literacy while maintaining human-centered relationships and ethical responsibility. Students learn not only how to use powerful tools, but how to use them wisely.

A Safe Place to Become

Middle School is
a laboratory for becoming.

Here, students are encouraged to try, stumble, reflect, and try again. They practice leadership before they feel ready. They navigate friendship and disagreement. They discover strengths they did not know they had. They learn that identity is not fixed — it is formed through choices.

By the time our students leave Middle School, they are not finished — but they are becoming:

More self-aware
More resilient
More ethically grounded
More confident in their voice
More prepared to contribute to an interconnected world

They are well on their way to becoming
Pinewood Graduates.



PINEWOOD

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