

8TH GRADE PREPARATION PACKET

Center for Gifted Studies at Dunedin Highland Middle School
2026-2027 School Year



Pictures of the CGS Class of 2026 at SPIFFs, Finance Park, and other activities!

WELCOME MESSAGE

We welcome you to the 8th-grade Center for Gifted Studies team for the 2026-2027 school year. We have created this packet to help you and your family as you prepare for your final year in the Center for Gifted Studies at Dunedin Highland Middle School. We are excited to get next year moving in the right direction. Inside this packet you will find information about our classes and summer preparation activities, links to communication and curriculum, supply lists, tentative field trips, and much more. All syllabi and supply lists are subject to change. Welcome to the team, scholars!

MISSION STATEMENT

The middle school Centers for Gifted Studies provide a full-time gifted program experience for students. A challenging and rigorous, interdisciplinary curriculum will be delivered through instructional strategies that promote creative, critical, and complex thinking. Inquiry and investigation will be used as students address relevant, real-world problems. Personal strengths and interests will be developed through differentiated instruction, independent study, service learning, and extracurricular activities. The core subjects of language arts, math, science, and social studies will be taught through an interdisciplinary approach providing a rigorous and challenging learning environment.

COMMUNICATION

If you have questions or need assistance over the summer, please contact the teacher team during the summer break. We will also use REMIND to communicate team-wide information through text messages. If you would like to enroll for whole team communication through REMIND texts, please join the 8th grade CGS Class of 2027 group by texting @2027cgs to #81010. You can also sign up at www.remind.com also using the code @2027cgs.

8TH GRADE TEAM

Dr. Teresa Bergstrom	Pre-AP World History and Geography and Advanced Academics	bergstromt@pcsb.org
Ms. Kathleen Earle	English I Honors and Advanced Academics	earlek@pcsb.org
Ms. Michelle Emry	Earth Space Honors and Advanced Academics	emrym@pcsb.org
Mrs. Finch	Algebra I Honors, Geometry I Honors, and Advanced Academics	finchj@pcsb.org

TEACHER TEAM RESUME

EDUCATION

5 Bachelor's Degrees, 3 Master's Degrees, 1 Doctoral Degree

INSTRUCTIONAL EXPERIENCE

65 years overall

FLORIDA CERTIFICATION AND ENDORSEMENT

- Language Arts 6-12
- Math 5-9
- Science 5-9
- Social Studies 6-12
- Middle Grades Integrated
- Gifted Endorsement
- Reading Endorsement
- ESOL Endorsement

AWARDS

- Dunedin Highland Middle School Teacher of the Year 2015, 2017, 2019, 2020, 2026
- Irish 31 Cheers to Public Service Award Winner, 2026
- Pinellas County Schools' Top 10 Teacher of the Year Finalist 2015, 2026
- Pinellas History Day Teacher of the Year 2011 and 2026
- Gilder Lehrmann History Teacher of the Year Nominee, 2024
- City of Dunedin Visionary Leadership, 2021
- Pinellas Council for the Social Studies MS Teacher of the Year 2013 and 2020
- People's Choice Pinellas County Schools' Teacher of the Year, 2015
- Verizon Thinkfinity Grant for Instructional Technology 2012
- Florida History Day Teacher of Merit Recipient 2012

OTHER FUN FACTS

LANGUAGES

English, Spanish, Dog

COMMON POLICIES

Respect, Positive Attitude, Timeliness, Professionalism
(see team syllabus)

PERSONAL HOBBIES

Traveling, Reading, Gardening, Singing, Birding, Yoga,
Home Improvement, Writing, Running, Cycling, Swimming

WORST JOBS

Party store balloon artist, unofficial law enforcer, telemarketer selling windows, glorified
babysitter, clown costume sales, and holiday gift wrapping.

8th GRADE CGS SUPPLY LIST

GENERAL SUPPLIES FOR ALL CLASSES

DHMS Locker/Lock (purchases available in mid-August)
 Pencil pouch
 5 reams of college rule notebook paper (for all classes)
 24 pack of #2 pencils
 Blue/Black pens
 Highlighters (yellow, blue, green, and pink)
 Wired earbuds
 Colored pencils/markers (optional)

ADVANCED ACADEMICS ELECTIVE with CGS 8th Grade Teacher Team

1 subject spiral notebook
 1 unopened box of tissues (for an upcoming assignment)
 1 container of Lysol/Clorox wipes*
 1 bottle of hand sanitizer*

ALGEBRA/GEOMETRY I HONORS (tentative)

1 1-inch binder
 Scientific calculator - Casio fx-260 Solar II
 Graph paper
 Dry-erase marker
 Ruler, compass, & protractor (Geometry only)

ENGLISH I HONORS with Ms. Earle

1 1-inch binder (clear cover insert preferred)
 5 dividers for binder
 1 single package of standard sized post-its (for first novel)
 1 composition book

EARTH SPACE SCIENCE I HONORS with Ms. Emry

1 150-page college ruled spiral notebook (no composition books please)

PRE-AP WORLD HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY with Dr. Bergstrom

1" Binder (clear cover insert preferred)
 1 single pack of standard sized post-its

Asterisk (*) notes that teacher will collect for team use.

Teacher Wish Lists: Links will be sent out during the summer months as we prepare for the start of the 2026-2027 school year. Please enroll in the @2027cgs REMIND to get notifications from the team during June and July. Wishlists will also be published on the Dunedin Middle New Friends Facebook group.

8TH GRADE CGS TEAM SYLLABUS**TEAM CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS**

1. Actively participate in all classroom processes.
2. Learn all required curriculum as per FLDOE Curriculum Standards.
3. Arrive at classes prepared every day for class with required materials.
4. Treat you, others, and our school with respect.

TEAM CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

1. Bathroom breaks are restricted during the first and last ten minutes of class. Students are advised to use the bathroom between class periods.
2. Complete all assignments within the given time restrictions. Turn in make-up work in a timely manner. Tests and quizzes should be made up before school. It is the student's responsibility to schedule based on teacher availability.
3. Sharpen pencils, turn in homework, and begin bell work before the tardy bell.
4. The bell does not dismiss class; teachers will dismiss the class.
5. Listen during instruction. All academic questions will be answered after instructions are given.
6. Personal concerns/questions should be shared privately with your teachers during silent activities or between classes.
7. Politely ask permission to move or leave class during instruction. Movement around the classroom should be made quickly, quietly, and safely.
8. Just because a rule or procedure might not be included in this list does not mean that it doesn't exist! Reference the Pinellas County Student Code of Conduct for more details.

CONSEQUENCES (per teacher discretion/degree of infraction)

1. Warning
2. Time out or detention with parent contact
3. Infraction form submitted to administration
4. Administrative referral

LATE WORK POLICY

Our team's late work policy will be revised in time for the start of the 2026-2027 school year. Please see our class syllabi in August for these updates.

EXTRA CREDIT

Attempts at "extra credit" when offered is highly recommended but not mandatory; Extra Credit assignments count as bonus points added to your cumulative grade each marking period.

USE OF PLANNERS

We highly recommend that all students utilize a planner to remain organized and manage deadlines. While planners could be digital or hardbound in nature, hardbound planners should be kept inside the student's backpack.

LOCKERS

We recommend that our 8th graders check out and use their locker daily to help reduce the number of bulky backpacks in our classrooms and the weight on our students' shoulders throughout the school day. Locks will be sold during the first weeks of school, and students may use a previously bought DHMS lock on our campus.

ASSIGNMENT HEADING

Head all notebook paper-based and digitally submitted assignments with the following information: Full student name, teacher name, period, and date. All assignments without a proper heading could receive incomplete credit; resulting in a zero if the issue continues regularly. Notebooks and binders should have the students' first and last name clearly written so that it will not wear off. Names often rub or wear off plastic covers. The name should then be written on the back of the notebook/binder, if possible.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

We strictly adhere to the PCS Code of Conduct as it concerns academic honesty and all cases of plagiarism and cheating. While these incidents can stem from external or internal pressures, we would rather have students communicate requests for extension, rather than make irrational decisions that lead to consequences due to cheating or plagiarism. The consequences of engaging in academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will vary on a case-by-case basis, but administrative referrals could be issued and reflect on a student's permanent record. We expect all student work to be authentic. Work should not be shared between students, unless approved by the teacher.

SCHOLARLY DISPOSITION

As Gifted Center students, professionalism is always expected while students are on campus or representing the Gifted Center off campus. Work should be neat, accurate, and thoughtful in effort and completion. Actively play the role of the exemplary DHMS Gifted Center student to ensure that the culture of our center maintains its stellar reputation for academic and behavioral excellence. Take the initiative to keep team classrooms clean and organized. You are the leading example for those who follow.

FIELD TRIPS

While the following trips are tentative, we are currently making plans to attend the following functions as a CGS 8th Grade Team:

- St. Petersburg International Folk Festival (Friday, October 18th)
- Finance Park at the Stavros Center (to be determined)
- Gradventure at Universal Studios and Islands of Adventure (optional; May 9th)
- And more...

SUMMER MESSAGES AND ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

ADVANCED ACADEMICS ELECTIVE with the 8th Grade CGS Teacher Team

As a team, we will facilitate the 8th grade Advanced Academics CGS class elective for gifted students. With a unified vision, the team members will facilitate instruction that will support the needs of the whole gifted child. Many of our units will serve the social-emotional needs, as well as the academic needs of students with the goal of successfully preparing them for their transition to high school.

In the Advanced Academics class, students will complete units related to the following topics or concepts of study:

- Develop creative and critical thinking skills
- Brainstorm and solve teen-related issues and real-world issues
- Address relevant topics related to current events
- Discuss topics of social-emotional growth with gifted students
- Research High School programming and University/College interests
- Complete Finance Park and Career Planning unit with accompanying field trip to the Stavros Center
- Interdisciplinary study and student-interest projects
- Conceptual integration of "Conflict" within AA curriculum and core subject-area interdisciplinary study.

Along with the AA curriculum, students will also have opportunities to nurture and sustain healthy habits for academic success through practices related to organization, time management, and support for healthy balances between academic and personal growth. It is imperative that students are willing to work for their highest academic potential, while discovering and determining the healthiest path toward their high school experience.

ALGEBRA I HONORS -or- GEOMETRY HONORS with Mrs. Finch

Welcome to the start of a new school year! This year, students will be studying Algebra I Honors or Geometry Honors using the McGraw-Hill *Reveal* series. The curriculum is problem-centered, meaning students will investigate mathematical ideas within the context of meaningful problems rather than focusing only on numbers and procedures. Some problems involve real-world applications, while others challenge students to think critically and reason mathematically.

My goal is for students to build confidence, strengthen problem-solving skills, and develop a deeper understanding of mathematics throughout the year.

BACKGROUND

To successfully complete this course, students must demonstrate an understanding of various algebraic and geometric concepts through classwork, homework, quizzes, and tests throughout the 2026–2027 school year.

Students will also be required to take and pass the Florida Department of Education Algebra I or Geometry End-of-Course (EOC) Assessment.

SUMMER PREPARATION

The following skills and practice activities can help students be successful in both Algebra and Geometry:

- Memorizing multiplication facts (times tables)
- Practicing factoring numbers using factor trees
- Memorizing squares/square roots through 15/225
- Memorizing cubes/cube roots through 10/1000
- Reviewing integer operations and fraction operations
- Practicing basic equation-solving skills

Consistent practice with foundational math skills over the summer can greatly improve confidence and success during the school year.

ENGLISH I HONORS with Ms. Earle

English 1 Honors in the Center for Gifted Studies is an accelerated course that will result in high school credit. It also incorporates curriculum specifically designed for gifted students. We will work with the PCS Middle School curriculum for English 1 Honors, materials purchased through PCS Gifted Education Services, and selected beyond-grade-level texts, emphasizing Florida Department of Education B.E.S.T. texts. Doing so will ensure the accelerated differentiation of materials, content, and products necessary for our CGS students to actualize their literary and analytical potential. Our work will be rigorous, above-grade-level work that encourages critical, interdisciplinary, and abstract thinking. Our curriculum spans multiple "genres"—poetry, epics, novels, short stories, and informational texts. We will focus on writing detailed analyses, arguments, and honing higher-level essay-writing skills, while paying strict attention to organization/focus/purpose, evidence and elaboration, and conventions (spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and varied sentence structure). This course is thematic with texts and tasks assigned according to modules.

Full-length we will engage with this year include:

- ***I Will Always Write Back: How One Letter Changed Two Lives***
- ***The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet***
- ***The Odyssey***
- ***To Kill a Mockingbird***
- ***Animal Farm***

Suggested Summer Reading for English I Honors:

- ***I Will Always Write Back: How One Letter Changed Two Lives*** by Martin Ganda, et al. Caitlin Alifirenka, and Liz Welch (2016)

Any of the following Florida Department of Education B.E.S.T. texts:

- *Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank
- *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson
- *Long Walk to Freedom* by Nelson Mandela
- *Rip Van Winkle* by Washington Irvin
- *Shane* by Jack Schaefer
- *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* by the Gawain Poet (unknown)
- *Swiss Family Robinson* by Johann Davis Weiss
- *Team Moon: How 40,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon* by C. Thimmes
- *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien
- *The Princess and the Goblin* by George MacDonald
- *The Wright Brothers: How they invented the Airplane* by Russell Freedman
- *The Chosen* by Chaim Potok
- *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe
- *The Call of the Wild* by Jack London
- *Trapped: How the World Rescued 33 Miners from 2,000 Feet Below the Chilean Desert* by Marc Aronson

Please email Ms. Earle at earlek@pcsb.org with any questions. I look forward to working with you!

EARTH SPACE SCIENCE HONORS with Ms. Emry**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The Earth Space Science Honors is a high school level advanced science course that explores Earth's systems, the universe, and the dynamic processes that shape our planet. We will investigate topics in astronomy, geology, meteorology, oceanography, and environmental science through inquiry-based learning, experimentation, data analysis, and scientific modeling. With emphasis on critical thinking, problem-solving, independent research, and real-world scientific applications.

Students will also be assessed on their retention of concepts learned in 6th and 7th grade. We will remediate benchmarks as both a whole group and as individual work to support all science clusters that will be assessed on the 8th grade Science Standards Assessment.

GRADING

Interactive Notebook, Tests, Projects

CURRICULUM

We will be using the College of William and Mary text, *Nuclear Energy: Friend or Foe?* for our end of the year unit.

WAYS of WORK

We will be working in our notebook almost every day and students are expected to bring their notebooks every day. Notebooks are collected and graded on test days. Grades are posted as a unit. There will be times when grades are not being entered as we are working through a unit. Some units can take up to 3 weeks to complete.

PROJECTS

Projects that support the curriculum will be assigned periodically throughout the year.

PRE-AP WORLD HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY with Dr. Bergstrom

What is Pre-AP World History and Geography (Pre-AP WHG)?

Pre-AP World History and Geography is a high school level social studies course that focuses on the evaluation of evidence, explaining historical and geographic relationships, incorporating evidence, and presenting information in a variety of written, oral, or project-based work products. As part of the Center for Gifted Studies, additional differentiation is facilitated to meet the needs of gifted learners.

This course includes four units of study, each dedicated to one of the four grading periods of the school year:

- 1) Geography and World Regions (a conceptual survey),
- 2) the Ancient Period (to 600 BCE),
- 3) the Classical Period (600 BCE – 600 CE), and
- 4) the Postclassical Period (600-1450 CE).

Pre-AP WHG students will earn honors high school social studies credit (4.5) with the completion of this class and their overall academic grade will reflect on their high school transcript.

SUMMER PREPARATION FOR PRE-AP WHG

#1 – Explore National History Day (www.nhd.org)

Each school year, 8th grade CGS students are required to complete a National History Day (NHD) project in Dr. Bergstrom's class. With the 2027 annual theme of **Innovations in History: Impact, Influence, Change**, we welcome a wide array of topics that could originate from various genres and time periods, whether they are regional, national, or international in scope. While more detailed information about the project will be delivered in the first week of school, I ask students to begin the exciting opportunity to branch out and explore possible topics.

But DO NOT decide your topic yet. Key criteria for strong NHD topics include strong multiple connections to the annual theme and expansive historical impact and significance to our world. Just start brainstorming!

#2 – Review World Geography

The first unit of study in the Pre-AP WHG curriculum will be a survey of world geography and its relation to humans. Students can begin to explore and familiarize themselves with the natural/physical and political geography of the following regions of the world: Mesopotamia, Egypt, Sub-Saharan Africa, West Africa, Arabian Peninsula and the Middle East, India, China, Meso and South America, Greece, Rome, and European nations. In preparation, students can use the *AP Human Geography World Regions Maps* for study purposes. The World Regions Map can be found through a basic Google search.

#3 – Extra Credit Summer Reading

To prepare for your first Pre-Advanced Placement class in World History and Geography (Pre-AP WHG), it is imperative for students to begin exploring how it will feel to manage summer reading responsibilities that they will experience as they transition to different specialized programs in high school. Two books have been highly recommended by my colleagues who facilitate the Pre-AP WHG class from across the country. While these books are not mandatory, I will offer extra credit to students who complete one of the two books listed below, which will be included in the gradebook for either the 1st or 2nd grading periods.

Both books are wonderful introductions to our study of the Ancient World, focusing on the first of many characteristics of a civilization that will be a constant thematic connection in the curriculum for the Pre-AP WHG curriculum: ***stable food supply***. While a stable food supply is in large part the essence of this literature, students will also explore connections with the other characteristics of a civilization: written language, technology, government, religion, the arts, and social structures.

- Standage, Tom. (2005). *A History of the World in 6 Glasses*. Bloomsbury Press. New York, NY. (Amazon Link: <https://www.amazon.com/History-World-6-Glasses/dp/0802715524>)
- Standage, Tom. (2009). *An Edible History of Humanity*. Bloomsbury Press. New York, NY. (Amazon Link: <https://www.amazon.com/Edible-History-Humanity-Tom-Standage/dp/0802719910>)

To showcase this assignment's completion, students will need to complete Cornell Notes for the book that focuses on the major concepts and patterns that students identify while they read their selection. (10 handwritten pages max) Dr. Bergstrom will announce the submission date and instructions during the first week of class.

Summer Reading Assignment Expectations:

1. Select and completely read one of the two books by Tom Standage.
2. As the student reads the book, they should complete Cornell Notes that focus on the main concepts and connections/patterns presented in the material. The Cornell Notes will be submitted for extra credit at the beginning of the school year. For more information on how to take Cornell Notes, use a Google search. There are many tutorial videos available.

These books extend beyond the Pre-AP curriculum and are offered for higher-level readers seeking deeper study. *A History of the World in 6 Glasses* includes references to alcoholic beverages, which were often safer than unfiltered water in ancient times. Both books are equally strong in historical content and align with our curriculum. Students and families may choose whether to participate and select a book based on preference. For questions, please contact Dr. Bergstrom at bergstromt@pcsb.org.