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White Plains Middle School Advanced Courses Handbook

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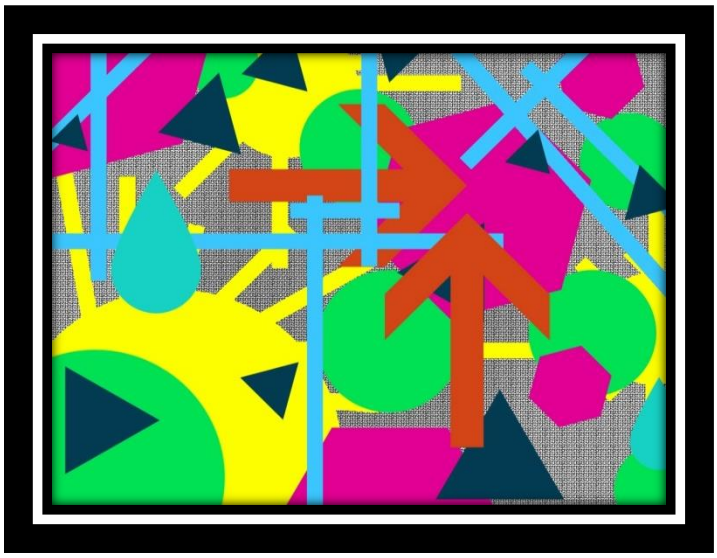
Overview

White Plains Middle School offers a variety of enrichment and acceleration opportunities at the middle school level to ensure that our strongest students are fully engaged and challenged with our curriculum, and all students have opportunities to think critically, develop strong communication skills, and effectively solve problems. Our enrichment and acceleration opportunities at the middle school level include the following:

- Visual Reasoning Enrichment & Media Arts in grade 6
- Advanced Math in grades 6 & 7
- Algebra in grades 7 & 8
- Geometry in grade 8
- ELA Enrichment in grades 7 & 8
- Advanced Art in grade 8



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Visual Reasoning Enrichment & Media Arts

The Visual Reasoning Enrichment (VRE) & Media Arts course in grade 6 builds visual communication skills and critical thinking through project-based learning. Aligned with the New York State Learning Standards for the Media Arts, this program focuses on multi-media projects, storytelling through graphics, architecture, and global awareness.

Criteria for Selection:

- Visual Reasoning Enrichment & Media Arts is available for all students in grade 6, provided it fits in the student's schedule.

Schedule:

- Students enrolled in this course meet on alternate days for one semester.

VRE & Media Arts Curriculum At-a-Glance:

Students will create projects based in the four domains of the Media Arts

Domain 1 Lens-Based	Domain 2 App-Based	Domain 3 Web-Based	Domain 4 Virtual/Time-Based
• Photography, film, and video-generated imagery and sound	• Created with specific software applications on computers, mobile devices, and/or other digital platforms	▪ Developed and produced on and/or for the internet using imagery and sometimes sound	• Unfolds virtually and/or in real-time and space, and often includes viewer interactivity

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Advanced Math

Our Advanced Mathematics courses in grades 6-7 are challenging and fast-paced programs. The 6th grade course includes the entire grade 6 curriculum and additional grade 7 topics. The 7th grade course includes the entire grade 7 curriculum and additional grade 8 topics. The intention of these courses is to provide the foundational concepts necessary to prepare students to take High School Algebra in grade 8.

Criteria for Selection:

The District uses a weighted system to rank order all students based on 2/3 test scores plus 1/3 math report card grades. In August, the district uses a combination of the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) RIT score from June, NYS Math Assessment score, and math report card grades from the current year.

The analysis includes: 1/3 report card grades from the current year, 1/3 NWEA MAP RIT score from June, and 1/3 NYS Math Assessment Score.

New entrants will be assessed using the same process.

Criteria for Continuation:

- Students are expected to earn a final course average of 75 or above to remain enrolled in advanced courses.

Schedule:

- The Advanced Math classes meet daily throughout the year.

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Advanced Math 6-7 Curriculum At-a Glance:

Grade 6	Grade 7
Quarter 1: • Operations with whole numbers, fractions and decimals and concepts of common factors and multiples • Read, write, and evaluate expressions • Ordering and operations with integers • Coordinate Plane **Quarter 2:** • Understand ratio and rate concepts and use ratio reasoning to solve problems • Write and solve proportions • Identify proportional relationships in graphs, tables, equations, and real-world problems • • Divide fractions • Operations with decimals • Evaluate and identify equivalent expressions • Simplify and factor algebraic expressions **Quarter 3:** • Write equations in 1 and 2 variables • Solve 1 and 2-step equations and inequalities • Solve percent problems • Solve problems involving area of polygons • Solve problems involving surface area and volume **Quarter 4:** • Develop understanding of statistical variability and summarize and describe statistical distributions • Develop and use probability models to determine and compare theoretical and experimental probabilities	**Quarter 1:** • Operations with rational numbers (positive and negative fractions and decimals) • Simplify algebraic expressions • Solve multi-step equations and solve and graph inequalities **Quarter 2:** • Compute unit rates • Recognize and represent proportional relationships in tables, graphs, equations, diagrams, and verbal descriptions; identify the constant of proportionality • Solve problems involving scale • Solve multi-step percent problems **Quarter 3:** • Use random sampling in statistical analysis, and use statistical measures to draw comparative inferences • Investigate chance processes and develop, use, and evaluate probability models • Properties of triangles and angle relationships (including those formed by parallel lines cut by a transversal) **Quarter 4:** • Solve problems involving the circumference and area of circles, surface area and volume of prisms, pyramids, cones, cylinders, and spheres • Rational vs. irrational numbers • Pythagorean Theorem • Transformations

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Algebra

The opportunity to accelerate into a high school-level Algebra course is available to students in grades 7 and 8. This course culminates with the NYS Algebra Regents exam.

Criteria for Selection:

Grade 7 (Double Acceleration)

The District uses a weighted system to rank order all students based on 2/3 test scores plus 1/3 math report card grades. In August, the district uses a combination of the NWEA MAP RIT score from June, NYS Math Assessment score, and math report card grades from the current year.

The analysis includes: 1/3 report card grades from the current year, 1/3 NWEA MAP RIT score from June, and 1/3 NYS Math Assessment Score.

Grade 8 (Regular Acceleration)

Students who earn a final course average of 75 or above in Advanced Math 7 will be enrolled in Algebra 8. Available seats will be offered to students using the weighted system described above.

Criteria for Continuation:

Grade 7

- Students are expected to maintain a course average of 75 or above in this accelerated course.

Grade 8

- Students are expected to earn a final course average of 85 or above to be enrolled in Honors Geometry in grade 9.

Schedule:

- Algebra classes meet daily throughout the year. Students in double accelerated Algebra 7 must also take a second period of math daily. Since they will be completing 3 years of content in one year, the second period of math instruction provides additional time to master not only the NYS Next Generation Mathematics Learning Standards for Algebra 1, but also the foundational Grade 7 and Grade 8 NYS Next Generation Mathematics Learning Standards.

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Algebra Curriculum At-a-Glance:

Algebra 7	Algebra 8
Quarter 1: • Compute unit rates associated with ratios of fractions. • Recognize and represent proportional relationships in graphs, tables, equations, diagrams, and verbal descriptions. Use proportional reasoning to solve percent problems • Solve, write, and graph linear equations (all forms) and understand the meaning of slope • Use proportional relationships to solve multi step percent problems. • Solve problems involving statistical analysis and investigate chance processes by using probability models **Quarter 2:** • Solve problems involving the circumference and area of circles, and the surface area and volume of solids. • Solve problems involving scale drawings of geometric figures • Angle relationships (including those formed by parallel lines cut by a transversal) • Solve multi-step linear equations and inequalities • Solve systems of linear equations and inequalities • Functions **Quarter 3:** • Data analysis and displays • Laws of exponents, scientific notation, exponential functions • Polynomial equations and factoring • Graphing and solving quadratic functions **Quarter 4:** • Rational vs. irrational and the Pythagorean Theorem • Radical functions and equations • Regents Review	**Quarter 1:** • Solve multi-step linear equations • Solve multi-step inequalities and graph solutions • Graph linear functions **Quarter 2:** • Write linear functions • Solve systems of equations and inequalities • Exponential functions and sequences **Quarter 3:** • Operations with and factoring polynomial expressions • Polynomial equations and factoring • Graph quadratic functions **Quarter 4:** • Solve quadratic equations • Properties and operations of radicals • Data analysis • Regents Review

Geometry

The opportunity to double accelerate into a high school-level Geometry course is available to math students in grade 8. This course culminates with the NYS Geometry Regents exam.

Criteria for Selection:

- Students are expected to earn a final course average of 75 or above in Algebra 7 and score a 75 or above on the NYS Algebra 1 Regents exam to be enrolled in Geometry 8.

Criteria for Continuation:

- Students are expected to earn a final course average of 85 or above in Geometry 8 to be enrolled in Algebra 2 Trigonometry Honors in grade 9.

Schedule:

- The Geometry 8 class meets daily throughout the year.

Geometry 8 Curriculum At-a-Glance:

Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
• Logic • Foundations of Geometry • Beginner Proofs • Triangle Properties	• Triangle Proofs • Parallel Lines • Polygons and Quadrilaterals • Coordinate Geometry	• Transformations (to be completed before Grade 8 NYS Assessment) • Similarity • Trigonometry	• Circles • Constructions • Review Measurement • Regents Review

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English Language Arts

Our grade 6–8 ELA courses are aligned with the NY State Next Generation ELA Learning Standards and are designed to provide access points for all students through instruction that provides enriching learning opportunities. Students are consistently exposed to rich and complex texts across a variety of genres, including novels and informational texts, and are held to high expectations in their written work. Through standards-aligned instruction and differentiation based on student-specific learning needs, learners engage in collaboration, one-on-one and small group conferencing, independent exploration, and student choice. In grades 7-8, the workshop structure supports opportunities for expression within writing and speaking, with individualized writing goals guiding instruction. Extension and acceleration are embedded within the writing progressions of the class. The model promotes and thrives on a diverse community of writers, who grow together through the sharing of ideas, experiences, and authentic voice.

Grade 6 ELA At a Glance:

Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
• The Great Depression How do people persevere through hardship?	• Free to Learn How do convictions inspire action?	• Jade and Water How does tradition influence art?	• Epic Journeys How does the hero's journey endure?
• Narrative Writing	• Informative Writing	• Argumentative Writing	• Research Writing

ELA: Writer's Workshop 7-8 Curriculum At-a-Glance:

Grade 7	Grade 8
Unit 1: Writing Realistic Fiction **Unit 2:** Literary Analysis **Unit 3:** The Art of Argument **Unit 4:** Creative Writing **Unit 5:** Memoirs & Soundtrack of My Life	**Unit 1:** Defining a Hero **Unit 2:** Your Utopia, My Dystopia **Unit 3:** Can One Voice Make a Difference? **Unit 4:** Investigating the Next Chapter

English Language Arts Enrichment

The English Language Arts (ELA) enrichment classes, called *Critical Literacy,* are provided in addition to core ELA classes in grades 7-8 and are aligned to the Next Generation ELA Standards. Using a wide range of texts from a variety of interdisciplinary sources, the Critical Literacy classes promote close reading and critical thinking through discussions, written reflections, literary essays and project-based learning.

Criteria for Selection:

- All students will be enrolled in *Critical Literacy* classes in grades 7-8.

Schedule:

- In seventh grade, the *Critical Literacy* classes meet daily throughout the year. In eighth grade the *Critical Literacy* classes meet every other day throughout the year.

Critical Literacy Curriculum At-a-Glance:

Grade 7	Grade 8
Unit 1: Developing a Community of Readers **Unit 2:** Investigating Characters **Unit 3:** Facing Challenges Book Clubs **Unit 4:** Social Commentary **Unit 5:** Poetry and Perspectives **Unit 6:** Human Rights and Essential Research Skills	**Unit 1:** What's Your Reading History? **Unit 2:** Good vs. Evil (What makes a villain?) **Unit 3:** When is the Right Time to Take a Risk? **Unit 4:** Masks – Choosing Hope Over Fear **Unit 5:** Defining Success?

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8th Grade Advanced Art (Grade 8)

This year-long studio course is designed for highly motivated art students who demonstrate a commitment to artistic growth. Students will engage in an in-depth thematic exploration in each project. Emphasis is placed on refining technical skills alongside creative thinking, observation, experimentation, and personal expression. Students will investigate both historical and contemporary artists, maintain sketchbooks, participate in critiques, and develop artwork that communicates their chosen artistic theme. Throughout the year, students will create a portfolio of original work and will exhibit their work at the end of the year art show at Highlands.

Criteria for Selection:

- The prerequisite for taking Advanced Art is an application consisting of a written essay and a portfolio of artwork (3 required and up to 2 additional choice pieces) to be reviewed by a panel of art teachers.

Schedule:

- The 8th Grade Advanced Art class meets on alternate days during 10th period.

8th Grade Advanced Art Curriculum At-a-Glance:

Sample Units		
• **Drawing** Students strengthen their ability to observe and interpret the world around them. Through drawing from life and photographic references, students explore composition, value, texture, and contrast while honing technical drawing skills. Students develop perseverance and focus while learning how to refine and render their chosen subject matter and learn from mistakes through revision and observation.	• **Painting** Students investigate a variety of painting techniques while building an understanding of color theory, composition, brushwork, and visual expression. Projects may include both representational and expressive approaches to painting. Students make creative choices and experiment with solutions while experiencing a long-term multi-layered large-scale painting process.	• **Printmaking** Students explore the art of printmaking through planning, carving or engraving, inking, and editioning original prints. There is an emphasis on craftsmanship, design, and problem-solving. Students experience collaborative studio habits by working together to use the printing press in this multi-step process.

Appeals Process

The following procedures shall apply when a parent/guardian/staff member requests that a selection decision be reconsidered.

Reasons for Appeals:

- A circumstance believed to have caused a misinterpretation of the results exists; or
- There is an extenuating circumstance (e.g., extended illness, personal tragedy) believed to have impacted student performance.

Steps for Appeals:

1) Parent/guardian/staff member submits a written request to the principal outlining the reason for the appeal. Within two weeks of receiving the written request, the principal and the curriculum coordinator/director will schedule a meeting to discuss the reason for the appeal and to review the data with the parent/guardian/staff member. The principal and coordinator/director will notify the parent in writing of the decision (cc to Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction and Superintendent).

2) If the parent/guardian/staff member wishes to take the appeal to the next level, a written request must be submitted to the Superintendent of Schools within two weeks of receiving the written decision from the principal/curriculum coordinator/director. The Superintendent or his/her designee will schedule a meeting to discuss the reason for the appeal with the parent/guardian/ staff member within two weeks of receiving the written request for the second level of appeal. The Superintendent or designee will issue a final decision regarding the appeal and will notify the parent in writing (cc to Principal, Coordinator/Director and Assistant Superintendent).