



Barnhart School

Middle School Studios

6th-8th Grade: Afternoons 1-3pm



Learning Beyond the Classroom

Philosophy

Barnhart Middle School Studios are immersive, interdisciplinary learning experiences that transform the afternoon into a time for creativity, innovation, leadership, and real-world problem solving. Rather than traditional elective classes, Studios provide students with opportunities to explore their passions, collaborate across grade levels, develop new skills, and apply academic learning in meaningful ways.

The Studio model reflects the belief that students learn best when they are actively engaged in designing, creating, performing, building, investigating, and serving others. Each Studio integrates project-based learning, design thinking, collaboration, communication, and reflection while encouraging students to take ownership of their learning.

Mixed-age cohorts of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students foster mentorship, leadership, and community. Older students develop leadership skills by guiding younger peers, while younger students gain confidence by learning alongside experienced classmates. Studio offerings rotate every eight weeks, allowing students to experience a wide range of disciplines and discover new interests throughout the school year.

The Purpose of Middle School Studios

Middle School Studios are designed to:

- Connect classroom learning to authentic real-world experiences
- Foster creativity, curiosity, and innovation
- Develop leadership and collaboration through mixed-grade learning
- Encourage problem solving using Design Thinking
- Build confidence through student choice and voice
- Strengthen communication and presentation skills
- Cultivate empathy, service, and global citizenship
- Prepare students with the durable skills needed for high school, college, and future careers
- Reduce class size

Design Principles

Every Studio is intentionally designed to include:

- Student-centered learning
- Inquiry and exploration
- Project-based learning
- Design Thinking
- Collaboration
- Reflection and revision
- Public exhibitions of learning
- Authentic audiences
- Integration of technology
- Opportunities for creativity and innovation

Sample Studio Pathways

Innovation Lab

Students investigate real-world challenges by designing, prototyping, testing, and refining solutions through engineering, technology, robotics, coding, and entrepreneurship.

Design Lab

Students use the Design Thinking process to solve authentic campus and community challenges, such as designing playgrounds, outdoor learning spaces, sustainability projects, or assistive devices.

Guardian Project

Barnhart's signature leadership and service-learning experience where students identify community needs, design service initiatives, partner with nonprofit organizations, and develop leadership through meaningful action.

Visual Arts Studio

Students explore drawing, painting, sculpture, mixed media, graphic design, and digital art while developing artistic technique and creative expression.

Sample Studio Pathways

Performing Arts Studio

Students engage in theatre, music, dance, vocal performance, stage production, and public performance, building confidence, collaboration, and communication skills.

Beginning String Class

The Beginning String class focuses on the fundamental techniques of playing the Violin, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass while providing a foundation in music reading, rhythm, note reading, practice habits, instrument maintenance, bowing/plucking, rehearsal etiquette, and performance practice.

Piano & Electric Instruments Studio

We will attempt to gain comfort on the piano and other electric instruments; learn the function of a keyboard, read music, sight-read music, and play songs. Lastly, this is a piano group class, so the students will learn with other students.

Public Speaking & Debate Studio

Students strengthen communication through speech writing, debate, presentations, podcasts, interviews, and persuasive communication while developing confidence and leadership.

Advanced Mathematics Studio

Students extend mathematical thinking through logic, puzzles, engineering challenges, coding applications, and mathematical modeling.

Spanish Culture Studio

Students will be immersed in the rich traditions, art, and cultural expressions of the Spanish-speaking world while exploring design, creativity, and craftsmanship through the process of designing and creating their own colorful traditional piñatas.

Leadership Studio

Students explore hands-on current events, constitutional and government principles, and civic engagement while learning how informed citizens shape their communities.

Life Skills Studio

Students gain practical skills for independence and success, including organization, communication, community service, decision-making, problem-solving, wellness, self-advocacy, time management, and responsible citizenship.



Studio Learning Cycle

Every Studio follows a common learning cycle:

- Explore
 - *Students investigate a compelling question or challenge*
- Imagine
 - *Students brainstorm possibilities, research, and generate creative ideas.*
- Improve
 - *Students gather feedback, revise their work, and reflect on their learning.*
- Share
 - *Students present their work to authentic audiences including families, peers, community members, and school leadership.*

Assessments

Student growth is evaluated through authentic performance rather than traditional tests. Assessments include:

- Collaboration
- Creativity
- Critical Thinking
- Communication
- Problem Solving
- Leadership
- Reflection
- Project Quality
- Presentation Skills

Students maintain digital portfolios that document their work, reflections, and accomplishments throughout the year.





The Barnhart Difference

The Middle School Studios embody Barnhart's mission of *We Grow Difference-Makers*. By blending high academic expectations with creativity, service, innovation, and leadership, students become confident learners who are prepared to think critically, collaborate effectively, and make meaningful contributions to their communities.

Rather than asking, "What did students memorize today?" The Studio model takes a deeper academic dive, "What did students create? What problems did they solve? Whom did they serve? How did they grow?"

These experiences prepare students not only for success in high school but for thoughtful leadership and lifelong learning in an ever-changing world.