The Packer Collegiate Institute

2026-27 Middle School Curriculum Guide

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Middle School Curriculum Guide 2026-27

Packer's Middle School offers a rich, challenging academic program grounded in meaningful content and structured around the development of critical skills. We aim to create engaged, reflective students who are able to work hard, make connections and find joy both with their learning and as a member of the Packer community. Our goal is to foster students' creativity and curiosity and to help them develop responsibility, self-awareness, empathy, independence, the capacity to work collaboratively, think critically and develop their own voice.

In fifth grade, our academic program centers around classes in math and science, alongside an integrated English and history core course. Additionally, students engage in year-long studies of a second language—options include Spanish, French, Latin, or Chinese—along with participation in instrumental or choral music and physical education throughout the year. Furthermore, students rotate through four arts classes (visual arts, mixed media, theater, and dance) and also take semesters of computing and design, as well as health.

Our sixth grade program parallels the fifth grade experience. In seventh and eighth grade, English and history become two separate classes, students continue to deepen their language study, and can begin to specialize in two of our four arts choices and choose among physical education electives. As students move through the Middle School, their academic program becomes increasingly sophisticated; they are introduced to more complex and abstract ideas and take on more responsibility and independence inside and outside of the classroom.

Our academic program, which is detailed below, is enriched by a thoughtful, structured advising program, significant opportunities in athletics, arts and service, clubs and organizations that channel students' developing interests and leadership, and intentional programming designed to support students' social-emotional learning and growth, their healthy identity development, and a better understanding of themselves in the context of a diverse and globally-connected world.

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English

The goal of the Middle School English curriculum is to encourage students' love of reading and writing, as well as to introduce and reinforce the skills students need in order to read critically and to express their thoughts effectively.

Students first encounter the "whole class read" in fifth grade, and this model of a shared reading experience is supported throughout Middle School. Texts selected for whole class reads are chosen carefully. Factors taken into account include: age appropriateness, literary merit, diversity of voice and experience, and student opinion. Students are taught to annotate, to identify salient passages, and to draw crucial connections, initially between ideas and, ultimately, between texts. As they move from the literal to the abstract, students receive support in analyzing and discussing texts. All students are required to read independently, as well.

Students write frequently in many analytical and creative genres. Through the use of rubrics, templates, and exemplars, teachers articulate their expectations and support students as they develop their voices as writers. Revision is taught as an integral part of the writing process. Vocabulary, punctuation, and grammar lessons support student writing.

Class activities encourage students to become confident speakers and active listeners. Oral presentations and group work are integral components of all courses.

Students have frequent experiences with project-based learning, interdisciplinary work, and the expanded classroom that is New York City. Teachers capitalize on opportunities to move beyond Packer's walls.

Grade Five English/History Core

In fifth grade, English and history are taught together as an interdisciplinary core class. The history curriculum begins with prehistory and geography and continues on to Nubia and Egypt, Greece and finally Rome. A number of the books read for English are connected to the history curriculum, including pertinent historical fiction and the Greek myths. Other age-appropriate novels, works of poetry, and short stories supplement the curriculum. Much of the work of the Core classes in English/History 5 is project-based. That is, the knowledge acquired cumulatively throughout a study is represented in a culminating project devised and executed by an individual or a small group depending on the unit. These experiences challenge students to be creative and to practice critical thinking, communication, group work, and problem solving. Additionally, the project-based approach provides many opportunities for differentiation and self-assessment.

The goal of the fifth-grade English curriculum is to encourage children to think deeply about literature, to discuss their ideas, and to write clearly about what they have read in terms of both content and their personal responses to it. In two instances in the fall, the entire fifth grade reads one book, but as the year progresses, children make their own selections and run their own book clubs. These clubs are structured discussion groups in which 3-5 students read the same novel. Students, following a system of protocols,

set reading goals, assign appropriate homework, create good discussion questions, and work together to devise and create a culminating project. In other English work, individuals present book talks on a rotating basis throughout the year.

Expository writing in English includes essay writing emphasizing organization based on a hierarchy of information; summary writing that reflects what is most important in a story; responses to literature exploring character and plot development; and the ability to substantiate one's point of view with textual "evidence." Creative writing emphasizes personal memoir, poetry, and fiction. Revision is a major part of both expository and creative writing. The vocabulary program is drawn from the history curriculum and from literature selections. The spelling program is integrated into the writing curriculum and emphasizes basic spelling rules and frequently misspelled words. Grammar work focuses on parts of speech, punctuation, complete sentences, and paragraphing as a grammatical and stylistic tool.

The fifth-grade history curriculum asks students to consider how and why civilizations developed, the ways in which they are similar or different, and how power is gained, shared or lost. Students study geography with an emphasis on the determinative role it plays in the development of civilizations. Throughout the year, they work on note-taking skills to learn how to separate main ideas from supporting detail, organize notes by categories, and summarize what has been read. In addition, they learn how to construct and develop short essays. For their research project on ancient Egypt, students choose a topic, identify sources of information, take notes, organize, write and revise a report, and compile a bibliography. The writing and presentation of ancient Greek-style plays is a culminating project of the Greek unit. In the spring, during the study of Ancient Rome, students conduct a mock trial of Julius Caesar's assassins.

Other areas of emphasis in the Core program are oral presentation skills, study and organization skills, test-taking skills, and use of the laptop to enhance learning. Throughout the course, the skills of critical reading and analytical writing are practiced at an age-appropriate level, establishing a foundation for the ongoing literacy work that is a hallmark of the intellectual development and academic achievement that define the Packer experience.

Whole-class (shared) texts include *The Watsons Go to Birmingham: 1963*, a work of historical fiction by Christopher Paul Curtis; *Heroes, Gods and Monsters of Greek Myths*, an anthology of Greek myths retold by Bernard Evslin; *The Secrets of Vesuvius*, a nonfiction account of an archaeologist's work at Mt. Vesuvius presented alongside a fictionalized story based on that same archeological evidence by Sara Bisel; an array of novels read in small groups; a variety of memoirs; and selected poetry and short stories.

Core Skills & Competencies:

- Effectively use active reading techniques to make connections, ask questions, and demonstrate understanding of texts
- Write narratives about real or imagined events using sensory details and event sequences (transitions) along with introductions and conclusions
- Write single- and multi-paragraph essays with a clear thesis supported by reasons
- Identify and incorporate sufficient relevant evidence to support ideas and claims
- Identify main ideas and supporting details in a variety of texts and summarize and condense into

own words
- Correctly record the sources of research and cite them in support of writing
- Make connections between various historical time periods and multiple cultures
- Recognize land and water forms and analyze the relationship between geography and culture
- Use voice and body to clearly communicate ideas to an audience
- Verbally articulate ideas and offer them in response to other arguments
- Listen actively in all classroom contexts and formulate a variety of responses
- Effectively engage in group work: cooperate with classmates to conduct discussions, create projects, etc.

Grade Six English/History Core

In Sixth Grade English, students are encouraged to enjoy reading through our class novels and through independent reading books. Our class novels are: *Lost Boys* by Darcey Rosenblatt; *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights* by Geraldine McCaughrean; *Beowulf* by Robert Nye; and *Flying Lessons & Other Stories*, edited by Ellen Oh. Students learn to analyze literature through class discussions, writing, artwork, and conversations with smaller groups. Students write frequently and in a variety of ways about what they have read, including comprehension and inference questions, longer essays, and free responses. They also use our class novels as mentor texts for their own creative fiction and poetry writing. The course supports students' writing skills through the use of planning strategies, grammar and punctuation instruction, and the development of clear and precise expression.

In Sixth Grade History, students study the three interrelated cultures of the Islamic world, Europe, and China during the time period between 500 and 1500 C.E. A year-long Silk Road research project, in which students choose an occupation or role to research for each of the three cultures we study, culminates in a simulation of cities along the Silk Road. Examination of the physical and cultural geography of each region studied is a significant component of the course; each unit incorporates increasingly sophisticated map skills. We also emphasize how each culture is reflected through its art. Several field trips to New York City museums and institutions supplement this aspect of the course. Additionally, independent research presentations also complement our work in History class throughout the academic year.

Core Skills & Competencies:

- Time management: managing long-term assignments with interim due dates and effective use of study guides
- Note-taking: writing information using students' own words, using a variety of note-taking and organizational formats, moving from whole-class note-taking towards independence
- Annotation: focusing on comprehension and analysis
- Oral presentation: speaking clearly and confidently in presentations
- Vocabulary: understanding words in context; enjoying new words and incorporating them into students' own vocabularies
- Expository writing: learning to write a thesis statement and support it in essay format

- Self-editing and revision of writing, incorporating feedback from teacher and peers
- Group work: cooperating with classmates to conduct discussions, create projects, etc.
- Technology: becoming familiar with online encyclopedias, reliable websites, introduction of new applications, etc.
- Transfer of skills between disciplines: English and history activities emphasize interdisciplinary connections to health, art, music, language, and computing and design

Grade Seven English

Seventh grade students are introduced to adult literature with a focus on developing critical reading skills through literary analysis with a strong emphasis on close reading and annotation. Students examine the language, narrative, syntax, and context of a text while annotating for literary elements encountered in both classic and contemporary works, including: theme, symbolism, foreshadowing, figurative language, sensory details, characterization, conflict, and setting. Students hone inferences, predictions, and connections both within and across texts, using annotations as evidence to substantiate claims in verbal and written responses.

William Shakespeare is introduced for the first time as a whole class text in the seventh grade. The study of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* allows for explicit teaching of skills such as: making effective use of textual features; paraphrasing; utilizing punctuation as a guide for interpreting tone and intonation; and comprehension and interpretation of a text through performance.

Written expression, both expository and imaginative, is developed through shared experience with a variety of genres including: journal entries, paragraphs, essays, poetry, short stories, and short narratives. Expository writing focuses on perfecting an analytical paragraph: crafting and developing topic sentences; choosing, categorizing, and analyzing quotations to support an argument; contextualizing quotations; transitioning between ideas; and utilizing a variety of sentence structures and lengths. Creative writing focuses on the genre of poetry and flash-fiction, and students are taught how to craft figurative language, sensory detail, and sound devices, as well as to develop point-of-view, setting, conflict, and character. The use of mentor texts serve as an effective tool for exploration of a variety of styles and creative writing techniques. In addition, students focus on voice, writing conventions, organization, and word choice. Seventh graders study vocabulary using Membean, an online vocabulary program. Grammar is taught using a sentence composition approach through the examination of model sentences and the exploration of syntax and structure. Students practice crafting rich, fresh, and grammatically correct sentences that feature voice and creativity.

Core Skills & Competencies:

- Analyze elements of literature within a text
- Explore themes and messages in literature
- Craft theme statements based on their own interpretations of text

- Dissect notable passages through annotation, discussion, and analytical writing
- Present theories of text while critically and empathically engaging with divergent positions
- Research and identify the social/historical context of a text
- Produce focused, well-organized paragraphs supported by relevant evidence
- Engage with multiple points of view
- Write cogently and with personal voice
- Read and respond to the work of peers
- Share work with the school community and beyond

Texts include: *House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare; *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck; and selected poetry, short stories, and non-fiction pieces.

Grade Eight English

In Eighth Grade English we set out to develop strong and passionate readers, writers, and thinkers who take pleasure in grappling with texts, sharing and arguing ideas and interpretations, and articulating their thinking in writing that is both cohesive and eloquent. Students are expected to arrive to class prepared, acquire new vocabulary and shared language, and engage wholeheartedly in class discussion and collaborative work.

The first unit of the year is called An Introduction to Literary Intersectionality: Understanding Self and Narrative. During this unit, the class engages with team building and norming. At the end of September, students start the unit titled Journey Through Time: Octavia Butler's *Kindred* and the Art of Historical Fiction. They dive right into researching topics and building their own narratives grounded in a historical time period of their choosing. This creative project situates them well to begin reading *Kindred* through the lens of historical fiction writers. Throughout the unit, they continue their research, write literary analysis paragraphs, take notes, complete quizzes, and lead and engage in discussions.

The second semester begins with a nonfiction unit. Students read and analyze a series of op-ed essays and open letters before creating an open letter of their own. In analyzing published letters like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, students identify major claims, consider context and reasoning, assess evidence, and analyze rhetorical techniques and their persuasiveness. Students apply their aptitude with these skills by writing an original open letter on a topic of their choice (which gets submitted to *The New York Times*' Annual Student Open Letter Competition). During this same period, students meet cyclically in Book Clubs to explore a novel of their choosing. Choices include *Parable of the Sower* by Octavia Butler, *Born a Crime* by Trever Noah, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, and *Firekeeper's Daughter* by Angeline Boulley. Groups are provided with structured roles and note-taking guides to facilitate dialogue around theme, character, and symbolism.

Students finish the year reading the graphic novel *Maus* by Art Spiegleman, exploring graphic text terms and building on their ability to analyze literature by writing analytical paragraphs. The culminating project is a miniature graphic novel that centers on their relationship to a significant person.

Eighth graders study vocabulary independently, using Membean, an online vocabulary program. Grammar is taught through the examination of model sentences and the exploration of syntax and structure.

Eighth grade is a year where we seek to develop sound academic habits of mind, critical reading and analytical writing skills that we consider a hallmark of intellectual adolescent development.

Core Skills & Competencies:

- Analyze elements of literature within a text, connecting a part to the whole
- Present theories of text while critically and empathically engaging with others' positions
- Research and situate the social/historical context of a text
- Explore themes and messages in literature
- Dissect rich and relevant passages through annotation, discussion, and analytical writing
- Evaluate non-fiction texts in the context within which they were written
- Evaluate the use of rhetorical devices and their effect on the reader
- Speak, actively listen, and engage with multiple points of view
- Analyze works of fiction with a focus on character development and theme
- Write with organization, point of view, and voice
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience
- Publish work to share with the school community and beyond
- Use reading and writing as thinking tools in order to begin to develop an identity as a school and global citizen

History

Packer's Middle School History Department encourages students to enjoy the study of history and to grasp its relevance to the present. We want our students to participate actively in the study of History – to ask questions, challenge assumptions, examine multiple perspectives, analyze sources, make connections between what they already know and what they are learning, make judgments, and express opinions. In the process, we use a range of pedagogical strategies such as simulations, debate, and project based learning to excite students about the study of history and engage them in multiple modes of learning.

The History Department develops these skills and habits of mind, which undergird further study of the discipline and inform participation in local, national and global communities:

- To analyze primary and secondary sources
- To write persuasively using specific supporting evidence
- To present clear and logical ideas orally
- To research effectively
- To develop study skills such as time management, note taking, and awareness of different learning styles

- To learn and appreciate how geography shapes human interaction and influences history
- To work independently and collaborate with others
- To understand current events and their relationship to history
- To connect personal experiences with a deeper understanding of the range of human experience
- To understand and appreciate experiences that differ from personal experiences and values

In the Fifth and Sixth Grades, each English and History course is taught together by one teacher as a Core class. In the Seventh and Eighth Grades, the two disciplines make appropriate interdisciplinary connections. Project-based work and excursions into the city are integral to the program.

Grade Five/Six History

See under Grade Five/Six English/History Core

Grade Seven History: U.S. History, Colonization to Reconstruction

Seventh Grade History introduces students to the idea that historical narratives should be questioned and interpreted. With a focus on practices that develop inquiry, deliberation, analysis, and empathy, the course encourages students to recognize how events from the past continue to shape the present. This course, the first in a two-year sequence of U.S. history, covers the period from English colonization through the Civil War and Reconstruction. Essential questions include: How did colonization transform the people, cultures, and environment of North America? What are the foundational principles of the American government, and how does our government operate? What tensions exist between individual freedom and collective responsibility? What are the relationships among land, money, and power in the American context? Students explore these questions through primary and secondary source analysis, thesis-driven essays, discussion, debate, simulations, research, expository writing, and creative expression.

Texts include: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, by Frederick Douglass; *A Young People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn; *STAMPED* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi

Grade Eight History: Post-Reconstruction U.S. History

Throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth century, the United States experienced a series of profound changes that impacted society at home and abroad. This course will focus on the key ideas, issues, people, and events that transformed the country and the world during this time. Students will identify relevant themes that will help them to make connections between the past and our modern world. We will examine industrialization and imperialism as historical events, and then analyze and evaluate their long-term impacts. We will study Progressivism and the New Deal and consider the role government should play in the lives of ordinary citizens. During the second semester, the wars of the twentieth century will provide a foundation for looking at how our nation has procured resources, wielded its growing power, and defined "the other." Students will engage in discussions and continue to develop listening, note-taking, and

historical thinking skills. Additionally, students will continue to practice the essential skills of source analysis and analytical writing through a variety of projects that involve collaboration, role-play, debate, research, and oral presentations.

Texts: *A Young People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn; *STAMPED* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi

Mathematics

The Middle School Mathematics curriculum is structured to gradually develop students' knowledge of basic math operations and algebra and to enhance their critical thinking skills. The Middle School Mathematics Department has developed a sequence of courses that both build on students' knowledge from Lower School and expand this foundation in preparation for more complex math studies in future courses. In addition, our curriculum promotes student inquiry, critical thinking, and problem solving by exploring mathematics in a multitude of ways. Students have several opportunities through their Middle School years to discover concepts independently, while solidifying their understanding by applying problem-solving techniques to real-world situations and sharing their understanding with their peers.

Grade Five Mathematics

Fifth grade mathematics is a discovery-oriented course that builds on concepts and skills learned in fourth grade. Students develop computational fluency with operations on whole numbers and further solidify their understanding of operations with fractions and decimals. They study ratios and percents, exponential notation, elementary number theory (primes, composite numbers, factors, and multiples), plane and coordinate geometry, measurement, probability and statistics, and introductory algebra. Students practice computation, estimation, and problem solving, and they apply these skills through a variety of explorations and projects.

Text: *Bridges Mathematics Grade 5*

Grade Six Mathematics

Students in sixth grade learn math through an inquiry-based approach. Units are comprised of investigations that offer students the opportunity to explore problems in groups and then solidify their understanding afterwards through teacher-guided class discussions. Sixth grade students master operations of whole numbers, decimals and fractions; the year also includes extensive work with number theory, rates and ratios, percents, plane geometry, and introductory algebra.

Text: *Connected Mathematics 3, Grade 6*

Beginning in the 7th grade, students are grouped into different course levels, standard or advanced, based on their previous achievement in 5th and 6th grade.

Grade Seven Pre-Algebra

Students in seventh grade learn math through an inquiry-based approach. Units are comprised of investigations that offer students the opportunity to explore problems in groups and then solidify their understanding afterwards through teacher-guided class discussions. Seventh grade students master integer operations and deepen their understanding of ratios, percents and proportions. They learn to solve linear equations and also explore linear relationships by considering their associated equations, graphs, and story problems. The second half of the year, students complete units on plane and 3-D geometry, and learn about experimental and theoretical probability.

Text: *Connected Mathematics 3, Grade 7*

Grade Eight Mathematics: Algebra I

Students in eighth grade learn math through an inquiry-based approach. Units consist of investigations that offer students the opportunity to explore problems in groups and then solidify their understanding afterwards through teacher-guided class discussions. Students do extensive work with the Pythagorean theorem and radicals, and they deepen their understanding of linear and non-linear relationships. They are also introduced to exponential and quadratic functions, studying the equations, graphs, and contexts associated with those relationships. They close the year with a unit on solving linear systems of equations and inequalities.

Text: *Connected Mathematics 3, Grade 8*

Science

The Middle School Science Program emphasizes the development of critical thinking, collaboration, scientific experimentation, and research and design. Within each grade, concepts involving earth, physical, and life sciences are organized around major themes to enable the application and development of these important and practical skills. Curricular activities are centered around student inquiry and are designed to support age-appropriate development of independence. Each year, student progress is presented at the 5th & 7th Grade Science Expo in January and the 6th & 8th Grade Science Expo in May.

Grade Five Science

Earth science is used as a vehicle for the development of scientific literacy in fifth grade. The overarching goal of the fifth grade science curriculum is to provide students with opportunities to develop the skills and behaviors of a scientist such as making observations and measurements, collecting and analyzing data, making inferences, problem-solving, working collaboratively, and model-making. The course

purposely intertwines science, history, math, and technology and demonstrates that science is an invaluable process that is never practiced in isolation. Students begin the school year by distinguishing between the different types of measurement systems. Students then dive into learning how to use different measuring tools and distinguishing between them. They tackle the Scientific Method through various labs and investigations. Students are introduced to the Design Process which they will apply during their three major STEM Projects. We then move on to Earth's place within the solar system. Students are introduced to basic physics concepts of force and motion, and light and its properties. As the year progresses, students look inward and study the atmospheric, hydrologic, and geologic systems of planet Earth. Students study the causes of and solutions to global warming, ocean acidification, and climate change. With each Earth science topic, students learn about the history and technologies surrounding those topics. Throughout the year, students are challenged to synthesize what they have learned by collaborating on three major STEM projects: satellite telescopes, buoys and submersibles, and earthquake resistant schools.

Grade Six Science

In sixth grade science, students learn about the methodology of engineers, from interviewing to prototyping. Throughout the year-long class, students learn the basic principles of physics, including kinematics and motion, forces, Newton's Laws, energy, electricity, and simple machines. Learning is centered around lab work in order to teach the scientific method in a hands-on fashion. During each unit, the 6th graders also apply their understanding of physics and the design process to a number of projects, including the parachute egg drop, electric dollhouse construction, and balloon-powered car competition. The final project of the year consists of students interviewing a 2nd grader to identify every-day challenges they face, after which they design and build a machine which will make the younger student's life easier. Students present their creations (along with a poster board!) at the annual Science Expo each spring.

Grade Seven Science

In seventh-grade science, students begin by exploring the biotic and abiotic factors that make up the Hudson River ecosystem, examining how these elements are interconnected. Through a variety of hands-on activities, students build their skills in designing effective scientific experiments. They also investigate the characteristics of life by gathering evidence to determine what defines something as living or nonliving, while exploring how evolution influences the ever-changing nature of life on Earth. As the unit progresses, students deepen their understanding of ecosystems by studying food webs, carrying capacity, and energy pyramids. This foundation prepares them for the Hudson Data Jam, a student-led group project in which they analyze published scientific data and take charge of the project's focus, planning, and execution. The unit culminates in the Science Expo, where students present their findings and creative projects to parents and the school community. In the second semester, the focus shifts to DNA and its role in heredity. Students use this knowledge to explore natural selection and speciation through a genetic lens. The year concludes with a real-world scientific investigation: local bird studies conducted on neighborhood field trips. The data collected is submitted to the NYC Parks Department and Cornell University's Celebrate Urban Birds initiative, contributing to ongoing research in urban ecology.

Grade Eight Science

In eighth grade science, students delve into the world of environmental chemistry. Students are introduced to the concept of matter and learn to describe, analyze, and observe physical and chemical properties of matter. Students will extend their study of matter by exploring basic thermodynamics and climate change. During a series of experiments and simulations, students will gain an understanding of the causes and effects of global warming and identify potential solutions to this problem. After considering this large-scale theme, students will return to the micro-level to investigate atoms, elements, and the periodic table by designing experiments, classifying types of chemical reactions, and exploring the Law of Conservation of Matter. Students will synthesize and apply their understanding of these concepts as they examine the chemistry of sustainable agriculture. Experiments are integral within the year and not only will the students be coming into contact with a wide range of chemicals and scientific equipment, but they will be learning how to design an experiment in order to attain accurate and reliable data. In line with the practical aspect of the year, students will be also working on several STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) projects that involve designing and testing prototypes. The year culminates with the Science Expo where students bring all their practical and theoretical knowledge into practice and develop their understanding of a topic in which they are particularly interested.

World Language

The faculty of the World Language Department are committed to providing a curriculum through which students develop the skills necessary for comprehension and effective communication in Chinese, French, Latin, and Spanish. Each successive level of instruction is aimed at building upon the skills of the previous year. In addition, our faculty believe that the study of people and culture is a critical part of investigating the world, recognizing perspectives, and communicating ideas in another language. Therefore, appropriate historical and cultural material is integrated into the curriculum at each level of the program.

Mandarin Chinese

Grade 5- Chinese 1A: Introduction to Mandarin Chinese

This is a yearlong course in the introductory level of Mandarin Chinese. This course is intended primarily for students with no previous knowledge of Chinese. While the course is designed for students to develop all four skills in the language, more emphasis is placed on pronunciation with accurate intonation. The overall goal is to provide students with a solid foundation in Mandarin Chinese and to prepare them for the next level of study. At the end of Year 1 Chinese, students will be able to recognize 50 basic radicals,

make a self-introduction (name, age, birthday, family members, etc), grasp the vocabulary of countries and continents, learn and celebrate Chinese festivals, and compare school systems in China and in the United States.

Text: *Chinese Made Easy, Book 1, 2nd edition, Simplified Characters, Joint Publish, Hong Kong; Textbook & Workbook.*

At the end of Chinese 1A, students will be approaching a Novice Mid Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Grade 6- Chinese 1B: Fundamentals in Chinese

This is the second-year course in Mandarin Chinese. This course is intended primarily for students who have completed Year 1 Chinese. The course continues to stress the development of all four skills in the language: listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is designed to help students develop proficiency in verbal communication, reading comprehension and simple writing skills. The overall goal is to provide students with a solid foundation in the Chinese language and to prepare them for a higher level of study. At the end of Year 2 Chinese, students will be able to talk about hobbies, sports, weather, clothing, travels and their personal preferences. They will also learn adjectives for describing actions, clothing, weather and physical features.

Text: *Chinese Made Easy, Book 2, 2nd edition, Simplified Characters, Joint Publish, Hong Kong; Textbook & Workbook.*

At the end of Chinese 1B, students will be approaching a Novice High Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Grade 7- Chinese 1B: Fundamentals in Chinese

This is the second-year course in Mandarin Chinese. This course is intended primarily for students who have completed Year 1 Chinese. The course continues to stress the development of all four skills in the language: listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is designed to help students develop proficiency in verbal communication, reading comprehension and simple writing skills. The overall goal is to provide students with a solid foundation in the Chinese language and to prepare them for a higher level of study. At the end of Year 2 Chinese, students will be able to talk about hobbies, sports, weather, clothing, travels and their personal preferences. They will also learn adjectives for describing actions, clothing, weather and physical features.

Text: *Chinese Made Easy, Book 2, 2nd edition, Simplified Characters, Joint Publish, Hong Kong; Textbook & Workbook.*

At the end of Chinese 1B, students will be approaching a Novice High Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Grade 8- Chinese 2: Foundations in Chinese

This course is intended for students who have completed Year 1 and Year 2 Chinese. This course aims to develop the students' intermediate language skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students will be able to recognize and reproduce at least one hundred and fifty Chinese characters. They will also be able to write short essays, dialogues, and simple descriptive/narrative texts covering everyday topics. Through a series of culture‑based activities, students will not only learn about Chinese culture, but also develop a basic awareness of cultural commonality and diversity.

Text: *Integrated Chinese (simplified edition): Level 1, Part 1, Cheng & Tsui Company, 3rd Edition*
At the end of Chinese 2, students will be approaching an Intermediate Low Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

French

Grade 5- French 1A: Introduction to French

This Middle School course is designed to build a foundation in the French language and to introduce students to various aspects of French and Francophone culture. Students learn to introduce themselves, ask questions about people's identities as they investigate and reflect on the role of language in shaping identities. Students also learn to exchange information about their lives at school, and how school schedules reflect educational values of different communities. Finally, students study how to present their families, talk about their lives at home, and explore family life in different francophone cultures.

Text: *Entre Cultures 1A, 2nd Edition*
At the end of French 1A, students will be approaching a Novice Mid Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Grade 6- French 1B: Fundamentals in French

Students build on the skills they acquired during their first year of French, starting with who the members of a family are, and what constitutes a home. Students learn to recognize the diversity of family structures, and explain relationships between people. They investigate how people gather together and why, and what functions different parts of the house serve. Moving on to our *Bon Appétit* unit, students learn to share preferences, opinions, and habits about food choices, and food purchases. They look at the role of food in everyday life, how cuisine defines cultures, and what habits and traditions are associated with meals in the Francophone world. In the second half of the year, students learn to exchange information about leisure, activities, sports, and what their impacts are on everyday life. Finally, students reflect on how their surroundings shape their identities with the unit entitled *En ville*.

Text: *Entre Cultures 1B, 2nd Edition*

At the end of French 1B, students will be approaching a Novice High Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Grade 7- French 1B: Fundamentals in French

Students build on the skills they acquired during their first year of French, starting with who the members of a family are, and what constitutes a home. Students learn to recognize the diversity of family structures, and explain relationships between people. They investigate how people gather together and why, and what functions different parts of the house serve. Moving on to our *Bon Appétit* unit, students learn to share preferences, opinions, and habits about food choices, and food purchases. They look at the role of food in everyday life, how cuisine defines cultures, and what habits and traditions are associated with meals in the Francophone world. In the second half of the year, students learn to exchange information about leisure, activities, sports, and what their impacts are on everyday life. Finally, students reflect on how their surroundings shape their identities with the unit entitled *En ville*.

Text: *Entre Cultures 1B, 2nd Edition*

At the end of French 1B, students will be approaching a Novice High Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Grade 8- French 2: Foundations in French

This intermediate Middle School course reviews and consolidates the grammatical topics and vocabulary studied in Year 1 and Year 2 French. Students will begin to express themselves in the past and the future, and expand their vocabulary to be able to ask questions to satisfy basic needs. Students read several short stories and poems in French and explore the worlds of France and French-speaking countries through readings, music, films and projects.

Text: *Entre Cultures 2, 2nd Edition*
At the end of French 2, students will be at an Intermediate Low Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Latin

Grade 5- Latin 1A: Introduction to Latin

In the introductory Latin class, students work toward the ultimate goal of reading and comprehending Latin in a meaningful context. In pursuing this goal, students will also acquire historical and cultural knowledge about antiquity. Students will also gain an enriched understanding of English vocabulary and grammar. The class will focus on acquiring Latin vocabulary, making connections with English derivatives, and memorizing basic Latin grammatical forms and functions. Students gain an understanding of how the structures of Latin words and sentences impart meaning in a way that's different from English. Students will then learn how to apply this knowledge to understanding stories written in Latin, that increase in sophistication as the year progresses.

Text: *Cambridge Latin Course, Unit I*

At the end of Latin 1A, students will be approaching a Novice High proficiency in interpretive reading and presentational writing on the ACTFL scale.

Grade 6- Latin 1B: Fundamentals in Latin

This Middle School course is a continuation of the skills introduced and mastered in Year 1 Latin. During the year students will further their exploration of the grammatical forms and functions of the Latin language, while exploring the history and culture of Rome. Students will continue to develop and sharpen their ability to read Latin with comprehension, to translate with accuracy, and to write original Latin compositions using the vocabulary and structures we are learning. For the purpose of enriching the students' English vocabulary, emphasis will continue to be placed upon the roots and derivations of the Latin vocabulary encountered. Emphasis will likewise be placed upon the rich historical and cultural aspects of antiquity so that students may gain an understanding of and appreciation for the impact of the ancient world upon our own heritage.

Text: *Suburani, Book I*

At the end of Latin 1B, students will be approaching an Intermediate Low proficiency in interpretive reading and presentational writing on the ACTFL scale

Grade 7- Latin 1B: Fundamentals in Latin

This Middle School course is a continuation of the skills introduced and mastered in Year 1 Latin. During the year students will further their exploration of the grammatical forms and functions of the Latin language, while exploring the history and culture of Rome. Students will continue to develop and sharpen their ability to read Latin with comprehension, to translate with accuracy, and to write original Latin compositions using the vocabulary and structures we are learning. For the purpose of enriching the students' English vocabulary, emphasis will continue to be placed upon the roots and derivations of the Latin vocabulary encountered. Emphasis will likewise be placed upon the rich historical and cultural aspects of antiquity so that students may gain an understanding of and appreciation for the impact of the ancient world upon our own heritage.

Text: *Suburani, Book I*

At the end of Latin 1B, students will be approaching an Intermediate Low proficiency in interpretive reading and presentational writing on the ACTFL scale

Grade 8- Latin 2: Foundations in Latin

This Middle School course is a continuation of all of the basic skills introduced and mastered in the previous year. During the course of the year students further their exploration of the grammatical forms and functions of the Latin language, sharpening their skills at reading, and translation with an informed grammatical analysis of the language. New vocabulary, grammar and syntax are studied within the meaningful context of continuous passages of Latin prose. For the purpose of enriching the students' English vocabulary, emphasis will continue to be placed upon the roots and derivations of the Latin vocabulary for each successive chapter in our ongoing stories in *Suburani*. A focus upon the culture and history of Rome reinforces the link between their civilization and our own.

Text: *Suburani, Books I + II*

At the end of Latin 2, students will be approaching an Intermediate High proficiency in interpretive reading and presentational writing on the ACTFL scale

Grade 5- Spanish 1A: Introduction to Spanish

Introduction to Spanish is designed to build a foundation in the Spanish language and to introduce students to Spanish-speaking cultures. From the start, students will develop listening, speaking, writing, reading and conversational skills in Spanish. All of these skills are equally important in this course. Students will focus on simple sentence structures and verbs in the present tense. Throughout this year students will explore the diversity of the Spanish speaking world and learn how to discuss their own identities, cultures and families. Students will do this through an array of activities that activate all modes of communication. .

Text: *Entre Culturas 1A, 2nd Edition*

At the end of Spanish 1A, students will be approaching a Novice Mid Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Grade 6- Spanish 1B: Fundamentals in Spanish

In this course students build upon the foundation developed during their year in Year 1 Spanish. Units include daily life in the home, travel, celebrations, food, and how to make plans for the future. Students expand their knowledge of basic grammar and further develop their proficiency in all areas of the language. This course aims to build student confidence and the ability to express themselves in the target language. Students will demonstrate their language proficiency through comprehensive presentations, cooperative projects, and written and oral activities. Extensive use of authentic materials and technology will enhance student learning.

Text: *Entre Culturas 1B, 2nd Edition*

At the end of Spanish 1B, students will be at a Novice High Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Grade 7- Spanish 1B: Fundamentals in Spanish

In this course students build upon the foundation developed during their year in Year 1 Spanish. Units include daily life in the home, travel, celebrations, food, and how to make plans for the future. Students expand their knowledge of basic grammar and further develop their proficiency in all areas of the language. This course aims to build student confidence and the ability to express themselves in the target language. Students will demonstrate their language proficiency through comprehensive presentations, cooperative projects, and written and oral activities. Extensive use of authentic materials and technology will enhance student learning.

Text: *Entre Culturas 1B, 2nd Edition*

At the end of Spanish 1B, students will be at a Novice High Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Grade 8- Spanish 2: Foundations in Spanish

This intermediate Middle School course reviews and consolidates the grammatical topics and vocabulary studied in Year 1 and Year 2 Spanish. Students will begin to express themselves in the past and the future, and expand their vocabulary to be able to ask questions to satisfy basic needs. Extensive use of authentic materials and technology will enhance student learning.

Text: *Entre Culturas 2, 2nd Edition*
At the end of Spanish2, students will be at an Intermediate Low Proficiency Level on the ACTFL scale

Learning Support

Middle School Learning Specialists teach Learning Support classes, which are offered for students who need to strengthen their fundamental language and math skills. The ultimate goal for students in these classes is for them to transfer these skills across content areas and apply them independently. In sixth through eighth grade, Learning Specialists meet with a small number of students individually or in small groups to support their learning needs. This support focuses on developing academic skills in specific content areas, coaching students with executive function skills such as time management and organization, and directly teaching learning strategies. Middle School Learning Specialists collaborate with teachers regularly, attend team meetings, and support our students by being present in many classes.

Grade 5: Learning Support

Literacy Lab:

The fifth grade Literacy Lab focuses on developing foundational reading and writing skills. Courses are aligned with the English/History Core class curriculum and are adjusted based on student needs. They include practice in basic grammar, paragraph organization, the writing process, decoding, encoding, reading comprehension, and note-taking, among other key skills. Literacy Lab classes also support students' developing thinking skills, as well as metacognitive awareness to allow students to reflect on themselves as learners. The Learning Specialist teaching the course also supports students through a push-in model in their Core classes.

Math Lab:

Similar to the Literacy Lab, fifth grade Math Lab consolidates and expands students' skills in key mathematical areas. The Math Lab curriculum is closely aligned with the fifth grade math program, providing time to reinforce and extend concepts covered as well as target additional areas where students need support. Math Lab also supports students' developing thinking skills, as well as metacognitive awareness to allow students to reflect on themselves as learners and begin to self-monitor their study habits. The Learning Specialist teaching the course also supports students through a push-in model in their Math classes.

Grade 6: Learning Support

Literacy Lab:

Literacy Lab consolidates and expands the complexity of reading, writing, and study skills begun in fifth grade. Aligned with sixth grade English/History Core and adjusted based on student needs, the curriculum includes writing compound and complex sentences, essay organization, editing, revision, reading, annotation, and note-taking skills that are utilized in all classes. The Learning Specialist teaching the course also supports students through a push-in model in their Core classes.

Math Lab:

Similar to the Literacy Lab, sixth grade Math Lab consolidates and expands students' skills in key mathematical areas. Students build their fluency with number facts, explore mathematical concepts, and gain practice using efficient algorithms for problem solving. The Math Lab curriculum is closely aligned with the sixth grade math program, providing time to reinforce and extend concepts covered as well as target additional areas where students need support. The Learning Specialist teaching the course also supports students through a push-in model in their Math classes.

Grade 7 and 8: Learning Support

Literacy Lab:

Aligned with 7th and 8th grade English, Literacy Lab offers students an opportunity to expand and improve their English reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, text analysis and Middle School study skills. The Learning Specialist teaching the course also supports students through a push-in model in their English classes.

Math Support:
In 7th and 8th Grade, Math Support is taught by a member of the Math Department. Students whose prior work and/or standardized tests indicate that they would benefit from ongoing, structured support in their math learning may be recommended for a Math Support class. These mandatory classes meet twice per week with a Math Department member so that students can receive additional support with math in a small group setting.The Math Support curriculum is closely aligned with the seventh and eighth grade math program, providing time to reinforce and extend concepts covered as well as target additional areas where students need support. Additionally, students in Math Support receive push-in support in their math class once per week.

Grade 6-8: Learning Support:

Students in grades 6th - 8th may be recommended to take a World Language Waiver and instead, take a full band of learning support. The Learning Support class focuses on academic and executive function skills including time management, work prioritization, organization, self-advocacy, and study skills in all subject areas. Students in the class are required to maintain a planner for their work. The goal is for students in the class to gain independence in their work and study habits by the time they leave Middle School.

Digital Wellness

Digital Wellness is a holistic approach to technology that recognizes the power of digital tools and practices in supporting learning, being productive, and tackling real world problems. We also know that technology can be distracting and sometimes leads to negative impacts on students and society as a whole. By finding the right balance of technology use in our program and helping students individually strive for balance we aim to prepare them for the world beyond Packer.

We infuse technology in our program to enhance curriculum across disciplines and grade levels, and further innovation, design, computational thinking, and digital fluency. These values are realized through our 1:1 computing program, our Google Classroom learning platform, and the use of technological tools and approaches across the curriculums. Our goal is for students to embrace technological tools and processes so they can become active digital creators and thoughtful, responsible users of technology.

In grade five students begin the Packer Laptop Program. Each student is provided a laptop to learn to use the device effectively and responsibly for meaningful learning. Students will use these devices to: conduct online research, create videos and music, produce written documents, manipulate and visualize data, and engage in programming and robotics. Students begin bringing home the computer in the fifth grade and use the same device throughout their middle school career.

Students use the Google Classroom platform to manage classwork and assignments, collaborate with peers and interact digitally with their teachers. All middle school homework is posted in Google Classroom, whether the assignment is done digitally or by hand.

Packer's Digital Wellness program supports students to think critically, behave safely, and participate responsibly in our digital world. Digital Wellness activities take place in Computing & Design, Health, Library, Advisory and across the curriculum. The Digital Wellness program uses many materials from Common Sense Media, and parents are encouraged to visit their website.

Computing and Design

Students in grades five through eight are introduced to the important field of computer science and the design thinking process through a required yearly semester-long course. The Middle School computing and design curriculum is designed to expose students to key concepts in the field including computational thinking, physical computing, and the design process. Through the development of engaging software and hardware projects students develop their creativity and critical thinking.

Grade 5 Computing & Design

Students begin the course by receiving their laptop and exploring how they will use it throughout their time in Middle School. This includes learning essential skills such as writing emails and backing up data in Google Drive. Next, they learn about Digital Citizenship and responsible online behavior using resources from Common Sense Media. In the third unit, students examine the hardware components of their laptop, enhancing their understanding of how these parts work together. In the second half of the semester, the focus shifts to developing computational and design thinking skills using the Scratch platforms. Through building and programming various projects, students will finish the semester by learning concepts such as loops, variables, conditionals, modularity, and debugging.

Grades 6 Computing & Design

This course begins with students reviewing computational concepts by creating interactive games in Scratch, encouraging them to consider how players and users will interact with their program. After this review, students delve deeper into Digital Citizenship, addressing topics such as cyberbullying, online communication, racial and gender stereotypes, and plagiarism/copyright issues. The third unit introduces 3D modeling through Tinkercad, where students create models of items, buildings, and landscapes from the Middle Ages, based on research from their English/History class. For the final project of the semester, students work in pairs to envision and design phones of the future using Tinkercad and Scratch. This design thinking project is presented in each class and showcased to the entire grade, allowing students to see the various innovative phone designs and user interfaces created by their peers.

Grades 7 Computing & Design

In the seventh grade, students begin the semester by exploring digital wellness and literacy, focusing on the impact and management of digital footprints and personal data privacy. They delve into AI and algorithms, learning how these technologies shape digital experiences and societal structures, and they apply these concepts in Google Sheets as part of the Hudson Data Jam project in Science. This segment allows students to analyze real-world data sets, using Sheets to manage and visualize their findings.

For the last segment of the semester, students transition to MakeCode, where they engage in game design and development. They build on the coding concepts previously learned such as variables, functions, logic, if statements, and loops and apply them in creating interactive and fun video games. They start with designing simple game mechanics and progress to more complex game interactions and environments using block-based code. The semester culminates with a project where students design and develop a game that reflects a personal theme or story, integrating art and coding in a creative expression of their identities. This project not only showcases their programming skills but also their ability to think critically and creatively about technology and media.

Grade 8 Computing & Design

In the eighth grade, students continue to expand their understanding of digital technology that builds upon their seventh grade foundations. The semester begins with a deeper dive into digital wellness and literacy, where students explore more complex issues such as cybersecurity, digital ethics, and the socio-economic impacts of technology. This section prepares them for responsible and informed interactions within digital environments.

In this hands-on course, students explore the intersection of art, engineering, and programming using Hummingbird robotics kits. Designed to foster creativity and problem-solving, the course introduces students to basic electronics, mechanical design, and block-based or text-based programming (such as MakeCode or Python, depending on experience level). Students will work collaboratively to design and build interactive robotic creations that incorporate lights, sensors, and motors. Through iterative design challenges, students will develop skills in physical computing, logical thinking, and digital creativity, culminating in a capstone project that showcases their unique robotic inventions.

Fine and Performing Arts

The Arts department offers artistic opportunities to inspire, develop and foster our student's creative voice. Middle School Arts is a joyful collaboration between teachers and students with opportunities for work that are playful and meaningful, and challenges that encourage risk-taking with an emphasis on exploring new ideas in an imaginative way. The arts scaffolds the curriculum by providing the practical

tools necessary to help students create, explore, and experiment in any medium they may choose. The span between fifth and eighth grade are significant transitional years and through the arts we embrace those transitions as we address our students' increasing ability to see more clearly and think more deeply.

Using both traditional and innovative techniques, we encourage students to take creative risks, we support our students when they meet with setbacks, and we encourage the rigors of disciplined craft and development of both technical skills and artistic experience in all specialties.

In all of our arts (Dance, Digital Video, Theatre and Visual Arts) and music (both Choral and Instrumental) classes, we foster both the formal studio/class experience, and the co-curricular experience, in which students share their work in a supportive environment, both within and beyond Packer's walls.

Dance

Grade 5 Dance

In 5th Grade we highlight the connection between culture and dance. We explore the differences in music, rhythm, dress, patterns and techniques of different countries, dancing everything from breakdancing to salsa to Bhangra dance. Through celebrating the differences between movement styles and cultures, we hope to discover similarities that help us all to connect.

Grade 6 Dance

At the 6th grade level, dance class gives students the opportunity to learn exciting new dance techniques through a look at dance and music history of the turn of the century in America! In this "Journey Through Jazz" we will explore body percussion, tap dance, swing and jazz dance. The hard work of the students is showcased at the end of each quarter with a swingin' live performance share.

Grade 7 Dance

Students in 7th grade explore rhythm, cultivate coordination and focus on grounded movement through the exciting studies of both Hip Hop and African dance. The course will combine the best of dance technique, tradition, pop culture, and self-expression. In the beginning students will learn basic stationary and locomotor movements, challenging themselves to find the joy and authenticity in every moment. Once mastered, we will start to integrate more intricate patterns and sequencing. An emphasis on improvisation and finding one's own voice is structured into each class as well, furthering their experience as a performer of movement.

Grade 8 Dance

Students in 8th grade dance will learn a variety of dance techniques through the study and performance of works by noteworthy choreographers. We will discuss the history of the choreographer and their contribution to the dance world, while learning original dance pieces that will be presented at a share at the end of each semester. Choreographers may include Doris Humphrey (modern), Bob Fosse (jazz/theater dance), Alvin Ailey (modern dance), Rennie Harris (hip-hop), Agnes de Mille (ballet), Busby Berkeley (dance on film), and others.

Digital Video

How do we use the moving image to shape our world? How can sound add life to image and text? How can I make it look like I am flying? These are just a few of the driving questions that shape and inspire our journey through lights, camera and action. Packer Middle school video is hands-on in its approach to making art. Students write, act, direct, and edit completely original work that is inspired by theme-based assignments designed to develop their sense of video storytelling.

Grade 6 Digital Video

6th grade builds on their skills as students use sound and image to create a movie that is inspired by what would be their *Best Day Ever*! Their imagination is given free reign as students are introduced to stop-motion animation. They work in groups and use themselves as animated objects in the stories they tell as they find creative ways to move their bodies through the school using animation and sound.

Grade 7 Digital Video

The 7th grade continues with animation as students create fluid hand drawn stop motion animations with sound. Students further develop their technical skills of video production by creating a silent movie. At the heart of this experience is recognizing the importance of sound as it relates to the moving image.

Grade 8 Digital Video

The 8th grade semester continues with growth and creativity that are at the core of the middle school video experience. The 24-second movie inspired by a shoe draws on the animation, video production, and sound design skills that students have learned in the media arts program up to this point. Students then create a music video that pushes their imagination to the limit. The final project, which is at the pinnacle of the program, is to make a longer movie inspired by the techniques of Film Noir.

Theatre

Grade 5 Theatre

In the 5th grade, students will experience what it means to work as an ensemble. They will begin their session with activities that will garner a sense of comfort, creating a safe space for risk-taking. Once they are comfortable within the group, students are free to experience the joyful process of creating small, group theatrical pieces at each class meeting involving tableau, storytelling, pantomime and improvisation. Creating work and performing for their fellow classmates will fill students with confidence that will carry into all disciplines, and will prepare them for continuing their theatre studies in 6th grade. Finally, students will be cast in a short, scripted performance piece that will be shared at an end of quarter Arts Share with the dance class.

Grade 6 Theatre

6th grade theatre requires an increased awareness of stage presence, story structure and theatre production. Students will begin by continuing to hone their improvisational devising skills built in 5th grade theatre through various acting exercises. They will then be introduced to the process of “adapting” for the theater, and will create original works based on a novel from their 6th grade core English class. Students will write the scenes, learn the basics of staging and then direct another group of actors to perform them. Realizing original work in the classroom will foster a sense of students' pride in their projects, and at the same time will embolden them to take responsibility for their work. All students will perform their plays at an end-of-quarter showing.

Grade 7 Theatre

7th grade theatre focuses on the individual actor as an instrument of theatre. Students will be introduced to a variety of breath, body, vocal and diction warm-up techniques that they will use to craft their own ‘personal warm-up’ by the close of the semester. They will dig deeply into the actor’s process of preparing a role, building a character and how to effectively use the actor's tools of body and voice to communicate ideas to an audience. A fully developed ‘Character Study’ will be conducted based upon characters created from a repertoire of exercises crafted from Uta Hagen’s celebrated technique. Through this work, students will generate an original monologue that will be presented at the end of the semester. The emphasis of the approach will not only be on how to break down the text for analysis, but also on applying the vocal and stage movement techniques of the actor’s process learned at the beginning of the semester.

Grade 8 Theatre

8th grade theatre students focus on building the skills necessary to analyze a text while also being able to live ‘in the moment’ on stage when working creatively off of an acting partner. They will learn how to approach a role and create a character, how to listen to their acting partner with not only their ears but their eyes, and begin to learn the techniques necessary to remain fully engaged and invested in a given set of imaginary circumstances. We will also touch on the various styles of text and acting techniques found throughout theatre history and ultimately select scenes to explore and interpret that represent a diverse selection of life experiences. Through several neutral dialogue scene exercises students will also be asked to sit in the director’s chair in order to begin learning how to tell a story visually while focusing on relationship, circumstance, emotional life and subtext inherent in a scene. In this rich workshop that allows students to utilize all that they have experienced in Middle School theater thus far, students are given the unique and challenging opportunity to carry a role from page to stage. Every student will be cast in a short scene from a larger dramatic work, and will have the opportunity to perform at an end-of-quarter showing.

Visual Arts

Grade 5 Visual Arts and Mixed Media

The 5th Grade Visual Arts program is grounded in identifying a personal artistic voice and practicing risk-taking through fine art processes. This includes the exploration of materials, moving through a variety of drawing and artmaking processes, and learning a new vocabulary to be able to look at and talk about art. Students will have two experiences: In the Visual Arts section students pursue an array of projects, including problem-solving through observational drawing, experimenting with tonal value and scale, and translating their ideas from imagination into visual images. Students practice transforming two-dimensional work into three-dimensional pieces. In the Mixed Media section students' explorations include comparing and contrasting how visual elements–line, shape, texture, color, motion, etc.–are conveyed through different materials and media, idea generation, and project refinement through repetition. Explorations include printmaking, collage, drawing, and conceptual approaches to self-expression.

Grade 6 Visual Arts

In the 6th Grade Visual Arts program students explore a variety of materials through printmaking, drawing and painting. They are introduced to mixed media, in which students combine many different processes that culminate into one final project. They are introduced to pattern and design and challenged by observational drawing using an array of tools ranging from pencils to charcoal and brushes for ink washes. They are taken through a series of exercises that invite them to have to use their analytical thinking skills to understand composition and space as well as scale and the power of line.

Grade 7 Visual Arts

In the 7th Grade Visual Arts program the students explore the theme of identity through an array of approaches to self-portraiture: traditional drawings, autobiographical storytelling, and three- dimensional visual narratives using symbols, object, color and texture. The students work through many different processes where they are asked to dream, experiment, build, and reflect about their experience of going through the process. Presentation is also part of the program where students share their work with other members of their grade for feedback about their work.

Grade 8 Visual Arts

In the 8th grade visual art program students explore media and ideas with increasing skill and depth. In drawing they become more expert in rendering the subtleties of three-dimensional form. In painting they develop a more sophisticated and nuanced color palette as they explore still life and landscape painting. Finally, they experiment with materials in more open-ended ways using their capacity to think with more precision in combination with the freshness of the child's perspective that is still alive in them.

Choral Music

Middle School Chorus is a performance-based class where students develop healthy vocal technique, music literacy, and ensemble skills through diverse repertoire from many cultures and styles. Emphasizing expression, independence, and collaboration, students rehearse three times per cycle and prepare music for two major concerts each year. Guided by themes like teamwork, listening, and empathy, the class fosters confident, expressive singers who appreciate music deeply.

Chorus 5

5th Grade Chorus is a performance-based class where students build independence as singers while strengthening their vocal technique, music literacy, and ensemble skills. Under the theme, "Growing Our Musical Skills," students review singer's posture, develop breath support, and explore part-singing through rounds, drones, and two-part repertoire. Students also continue building solfege and rhythm reading skills, and practice expressive tools like dynamics, phrasing, and tempo. Through a diverse repertoire including: folk songs, holiday music, popular tunes, and music from around the world.

Chorus 6

6th Grade Chorus is a performance based class where students focus on expanding their vocal range, refining ensemble skills, and building independence as young musicians. Under the theme, "Strengthening Our Voices," students review healthy posture and breath support, explore dynamic and vocal range, and begin blending head and chest voice. They advance their music literacy with solfege, key signatures, rhythmic reading, and simple two-part sight-reading. Through a variety of repertoire;

including folk, classical, and popular songs, singers develop confidence with part-singing, musical interpretation, and performance etiquette

Chorus 7

7th Grade Chorus is a performance-based class where students deepen their skills as independent musicians while building vocal strength, musical expression, and ensemble confidence. Under the theme, “Becoming Independent Musicians,” students review posture and breath support, explore head and chest voice blending, and expand their vocal range, including voice changes for developing baritones. They strengthen music literacy through solfege, rhythmic reading, and sight-singing, and grow as performers by singing three-part repertoire and continuing a cappella and triadic harmonic work. Repertoire includes folk songs, classical arrangements, holiday music, and popular songs

Chorus 8

8th Grade Chorus is a performance-based class focused on the theme “Confident, Artistic Singers.” Students take greater ownership of their musicianship through leadership opportunities, advanced vocal technique, and artistic interpretation. They refine tone blending, breath support, and dynamic control while strengthening music literacy through independent sight-singing and more complex notation reading. Repertoire includes folk songs, classical arrangements, holiday music, and popular songs.

Instrumental Music

The predominant feature of our program is applicable literacy. Beginning with an elementary understanding of the workings of a student’s chosen instrument, historical significance and methodology then align with creatively rich and rewarding performance opportunities. In the middle school, the primary work is concentrated in methods. By necessity, each skill taught must be given ample pertinence in three ways: short studies, more expansive etudes, and in-class performance.

Brass Program

In the middle school brass and percussion classes, the primary work is concentrated in methods. By necessity, each skill is given ample pertinence in three ways: short studies, more expansive etudes, and in-class performance.

Grade 5 Brass

At these earliest levels in Brass 5, each discipline informs the proper handling, care and maintenance of the instrument, basic note reading, articulate rhythm, tone quality and intonation (pitch assimilation). Culmination of our work together allows our students to invest in the process and perform at year's end for our parents.

Grade 6 Brass

As we progress through the next few years, we allow sensory thinking to help sculpt the imagination, making discovery possible. In Brass 6 our musicians work to invariably invent and play with patterns, using elementary phrasing to affect the beginnings of musical nuance. We begin working with scales, allowing specific notation to dictate melodic content. At year's end, the goal of concertizing becomes possible. We are able to enjoy our class with those of the woodwinds. Seizing the opportunity to pool our talents, we collectively learn proper ensemble etiquette, the role of the conductor, section playing and how multiple parts must fit together within a performance ensemble. (At this point, the possibility for inclusion in the MS Jazz program becomes possible as well.)

Grade 7 Brass

A continuation of study in Brass/Percussion 7 includes the exploration of multiple key signatures and more complex meters as we continue to use patterns (albeit level appropriate) to build range, endurance and fingering/slide position familiarity. From the student's perspective, there will now occur the semblance of a cohesiveness of sound, especially found in Brass ensembles, since the process involved in producing a musical sound is the same from the highest to the lowest pitched instruments. As we have already introduced full concert band playing to our students, we can assume a continued progression of canonic literature for our students.

Grade 8 Brass

At the 8th grade level, our Brass students are poised for new discovery, the roles of the interpreter and the composer. With this study, a new lexicon comes into play as well, specifically referencing timbre, texture, and style. Our work includes comparative studies to other art forms, especially dance, as it applies to world music. We trace the development of our own music through the cultural exploration of the major eras in the arts. We continue to expand the parameters of technique, especially as so many of our students continue their work through performance in the upper school ensembles.

Winds Program

Grade 5 Woodwinds

5th Grade Woodwind students learn the fundamentals of playing, beginning with instrument and reed care (clarinets and oboes). Divided into Flute/Oboe and Clarinet classes, students learn to produce a sound by studying proper embouchure, breath support, playing position, articulation, and fingerings. Much of the material is learned by rote in a "call and response" fashion at first, and this methodology continues so each student develops her/his ear as much as the ability to read musical notation. Basic written rhythms, pitches, and expressive devices are mastered through the study of Classical, Folk, Pop, and Jazz genres. The creation of music is emphasized as early as possible through the study of simple improvisation and

composition. Students learn how to rehearse and perform as a "Band" - culminating in a musical performance for parents in the spring, or a community outreach concert in a local nursing/residential home.

Grade 6 Woodwinds

In the 6th Grade students expand their musical literacy by incorporating new notes and fingerings, additional time signatures (including "Cut" Time), and more complicated rhythms and subdivisions. Through the study of basic scales, students expand their range into higher and lower areas of the instrument, while increasing finger speed and facility. Proper embouchure, intonation, and hand position continue to be emphasized, as does varied articulation. Repertoire expands into more intricate duets and rounds, and larger ensembles begin in two forms: students perform their first full "Band" piece in combination with the brass and percussion sections at the final spring concert.

Grade 7 Woodwinds

7th Grade students continue to increase their instrumental range and knowledge of key signatures through the study of scales and etudes. Their musical literacy expands as they cover 6/8 time, syncopation, chromatics, enharmonics and varied articulation. Students begin using the Garage Band program as a tool for practice and composition. An even greater emphasis is placed on ensemble playing, including dynamics, intonation, and blend. New ensemble opportunities include the 7/8 Jazz Band, in which interested students learn to play and improvise in the jazz "big-band" tradition in addition to the 7/8 Concert Band. Continuing the 6th Grade Band concept, this large ensemble rehearses regularly and performs bi-annually, covering classic band literature as well as Jazz, Latin, and even Pop idioms.

Grade 8 Woodwinds

As 8th Graders, students begin to shift to a mentoring role as they continue to master the intricacies of reading and performing music. This expanded role is particularly emphasized in the combined 7/8 Concert Band and 7/8 Jazz Band, where they lead by example. During woodwinds class, students expand their musical literacy through the continued study of scales - now striving for memorization and expansion into more complicated keys, as well as a basic understanding of the "Circle of 5ths". Their instrumental technique increases by mastering etudes, articulation exercises, and embouchure studies, all at increasingly faster tempos. Repertoire gets more challenging as they cover longer excerpts from Classical, March, Jazz (including improvisation), World, and Pop idioms. Emphasis is placed on preparation for Upper School ensembles as select students begin rehearsing and performing with those ensembles. This involvement raises the individual playing level while introducing them to standard Symphonic Band repertoire.

Strings Program

Grade 5 Strings

In Strings 5, students explore the many uses of music and how it affects their daily lives. Students also discover their own capabilities for making their own music. Through the learning and expansion of different techniques on their instrument, they create unconventional sounds on their instruments to create a soundtrack. By following specific criteria, students also begin to explore the different components of composition and improvisation, and they begin to write their own musical works.

Grade 6 Strings

In Strings 6, students learn about the use and function of music in different cultures around the world. In conjunction with the Silk Road studies in their English and History classes, students will expand their technique on their instruments through the rehearsal and performance of music from different world cultures. Through learning the different purposes of music within these civilizations, students also discover the function of scales and harmony in the Western Musical Canon and elsewhere.

Grade 7 Strings

In Strings 7, students begin to rehearse and perform in small ensembles. Through the experience, students learn about the accountability of being in a small ensemble along with teamwork, trust, and respect. In addition to this work, students continue to work on listening skills by improving their intonation and tone production.

Grade 8 Strings

In Strings 8, students reflect on the use and function of music in their own lives. Through listening exercises and listening to music of different styles, students begin to determine the aesthetics of music, what about music they find pleasing and why these aspects of music are pleasing to them. Students also explore performing music as a soloist, as the year culminates with solo performances within the classes.

Health Education

Packer's Middle School Health Education program embraces and supports the social and emotional challenges facing middle school students. For one semester in grades five through eight, Health Education courses are held three times per cycle. Content areas, such as nutrition, substance abuse prevention, human sexuality and family life are revisited each year with a cumulative emphasis on helping students make intelligent, informed decisions about their own lives. Individuality and mutual respect are central to all Health Education courses at Packer.

Grade 5 Health

A one-semester course that meets three times per cycle throughout the spring, Health 5 introduces concepts related to social, emotional and physical health. The course is designed to help students draw connections between their emotions and their behaviors. Through a series of group-bonding activities, class discussions, scenario work, journal entries, and videos, students explore emotional expression, identity, self-esteem, peer pressure, cliques, and bullying. A highlight of the curriculum is the introduction of a fictional character whose life unfolds through the discovery of personal artifacts (letters, a journal, a soccer jersey) within a life-sized blueprint of a child's bedroom. Health 5 includes four lessons from the Prepare, Inc. personal safety curriculum. Prepare, Inc. instructors visit our class to teach concepts, skills, and application for safety in real world situations. The goal is to increase children's ability to stop behavior that is uncomfortable, unwanted or dangerous. We finish the semester with a unit on puberty and human reproduction.

Grade 6 Health

Sixth Grade Health is a one semester course that meets three times per cycle throughout the fall semester. The first quarter of Sixth Grade Health focuses primarily on Nourishment and Food. Students learn about the food system and how food impacts our bodies. Students explore basic nutrients while learning how to read food labels and considering personal connection to food. The unit culminates with the creation of a class cookbook, to which each student submits a snack or meal recipe (final copies of the book are distributed at the end of the semester). The curriculum also covers the complicated nature of getting older. This includes healthy relationships, time management, mental health, stress, decision-making, values, stress relief, body image, boundaries, puberty, identity terms and human reproduction.

Grade 7 Health

Health 7 meets three times per cycle throughout the spring semester. Designed to cultivate a deeper understanding of self and community, students engage in a variety of group-bonding activities, class discussions, written reflections, and self-assessments. The first few weeks focus on Identity Development and how it intersects with well-being. After this, we explore a mini unit on mental health and helping a friend in need. The fourth quarter spans a unit on alcohol and drug education. The primary goal is to help students build effective decision-making skills when it comes to critical choices around alcohol and drugs.

Grade 8 Health

The first quarter of Health 8 focuses on human sexuality, including reproductive anatomy and physiology, sexual identity and gender. Topics also include relationships, intimacy, sense of self, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), contraception, consent and decisions about sexual behavior. Eighth graders wrap up the unit by analyzing recent news headlines around sexuality and consent and design an advocacy project.

Physical Education

The Middle School Physical Education curriculum aims to provide students with a variety of physical activity experiences, in the hopes of fostering a love for team sports and/ or overall physical fitness. Students in the Middle School will be introduced to team sports such as Soccer, Volleyball, Basketball, Floor Hockey, Flag Football and a variety of Diamond Games. Along with traditional team sports, an emphasis will be placed on the importance of physical fitness, teamwork, and cooperation. Additional units in Project Adventure, Track and Field, International Games, and Wellness activities, which could include elements of yoga, pilates, and use of the fitness center, will be offered as the students progress throughout the curriculum.

We understand that each student enters the class with their own individual strengths. It is our hope that they not only develop their skills, but also develop an appreciation for other students' abilities in working toward individual and team goals. Cooperation, sportsmanship, safety, and accountability are emphasized throughout the entire year.

Grade 5 Physical Education

It is the goal of the Physical Education Department to expose students to a variety of sports and activities in the 5th grade. The 5th grade curriculum focuses on introducing an array of team sports to the students, many of which align with our athletic team offerings. Additionally, units in Project Adventure, Track and Field, Flag Football, Hockey, and fitness are used to develop fitness in an age appropriate manner.

To start the year, classes will include large group activities and games to help with the students' transition into the Middle School. We will then go through a series of rotations, where smaller groups of students will be introduced to the following sports and activities: volleyball, soccer, Project Adventure, basketball, field hockey, and Diamond Games.

Each class will start with dynamic stretching or a warm-up game. We will then introduce game specific skills and reinforce skill development through a variety of drills. As the unit progresses, students will be given the opportunity to apply these skills in short-sided or modified games. Problem solving and cooperative games make up the Project Adventure unit, where it is our goal to have every student boulder across the rockwall.

Grade 6 Physical Education

The 6th grade Physical Education curriculum builds upon the team sport foundation offered in the 5th grade, while challenging students with more advanced skills and drills. Teachers will introduce strategies such as defensive positions and formations, offensive sets and game situations, as students are asked to

apply their skills in more realistic game settings. As the class advances, small tournaments may be created to foster healthy competition.

Grade 7 and 8 Physical Education

Having been introduced to team sports and fitness activities in the 5th and 6th grades, students in 7th and 8th grade will be given more freedom to choose what activities they wish to participate in during Physical Education. In each quarter, students will be given 5 different activities from which to choose, giving them greater accountability in their continued athletic and fitness development. The 5 choices will include individual and team sports, Wellness, Project Adventure, International Games, and Fitness. Students will not be allowed to choose the same elective for the entire year, with preference being given to students choosing it for the first time.

The sports units will include sports offered in our Middle School athletics program, as well others we do not offer, allowing students to continue playing a sport they enjoy. Classes will be run at a quicker pace, as students will be introduced to more advanced skills and drills. Games and mini-tournaments will be run to allow the students to apply what they learned in a controlled environment.

The Project Adventure unit will consist of a variety of cooperative games, where problem solving and listening skills are stressed. Students will also be introduced to the various pieces of equipment we have in order to foster these skills. We will use the Spider Web, Wildside Kit, Islands, and rope swings before venturing up the rockwall. We hope to introduce a single person belaying depending on how the class progresses.

During the fitness units, students will be introduced to both cardiovascular and strength training. They will learn the components of fitness, as well as being shown different methods of training. They will be given specific workouts that target each component. If students continue in the fitness unit, they may be able to develop their own workout routine in collaboration with the teacher.

Students in wellness will be introduced to beginner pilates and yoga. The focus will be on poses, balancing postures, breathing techniques, and mindfulness exercises to reduce stress and promote overall wellness. Each class will focus on a specific muscle group or peak pose, and oftentimes students will participate in balance challenges to test how long they can maintain a yoga pose. This course will build self-awareness, muscle strength and elasticity, and confidence.

Library

The Library curriculum focuses on the teaching of research skills, the evaluation of Internet sources, and the promotion of independent reading. In collaboration with teachers, librarians teach Middle School students the skills necessary to define a question and acquire background information, identify possible subject terms and sources, locate both print and electronic resources, and evaluate the usefulness of the

sources for information. Students learn the principles of academic integrity through proper citation and note-taking. To support this learning, the Library maintains a robust online presence, which includes an online catalog and website with access to an extensive range of databases. Specific curricular components of the Middle School Library program include:

Library 5 - Fifth graders have Library once per cycle during community time. The focus of this course is twofold: First, students develop the skills necessary to navigate the Blackburne Library's resources, both online and in the physical collection. Second, students explore who they are as readers, what types of materials they gravitate towards, and experiment with reading new genres and formats.

Sixth Grade Independent Research Projects - As part of Sixth Grade Core, students engage in a year-long research project about a topic of their choosing. Students meet once each cycle with a librarian to develop research questions, evaluate information sources, practice note taking and citation skills, and synthesize their research into a short presentation.

Summer Reading - The librarians prepare annual lists of fiction and nonfiction books designed to encourage students to become independent readers. The Summer Reading lists reflect student interest, diverse points of view, and outstanding quality in writing for young people.

Throughout all four years of Middle School, the librarians collaborate with teachers across departments to enrich information literacy instruction so that students will be competent researchers and ethical users of information.