



The
Overlake School
EST. 1967

Middle School

Course Catalog 2026-27



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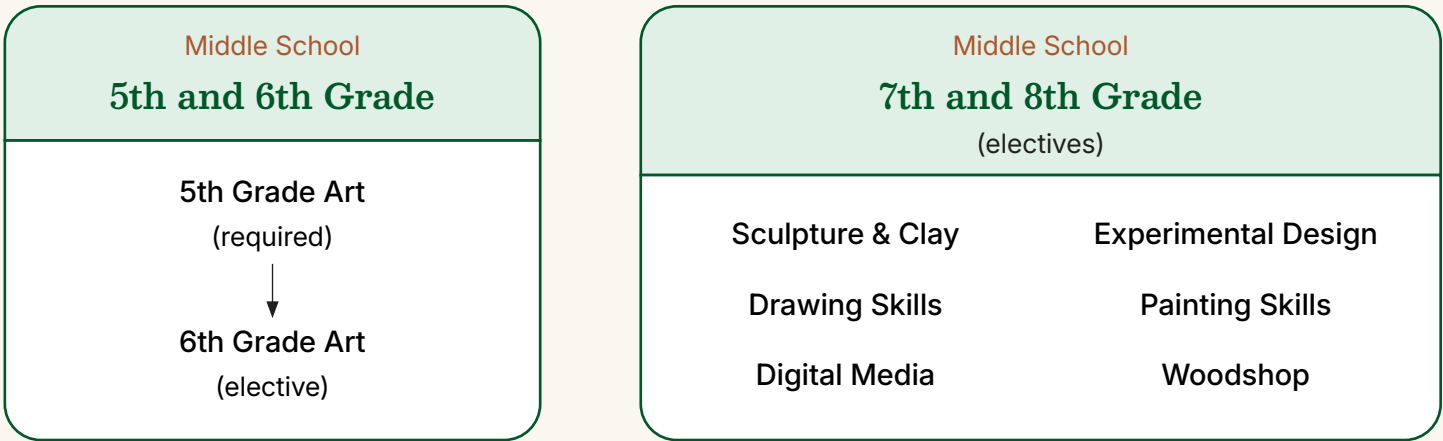
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Arts

The Overlake Arts department mission is to engage students in creative thinking through a broad spectrum of opportunities.

Visual Art



5th Grade Art

Grade Offered: 5

Required

Activities in this introductory trimester course are devoted to developing essential life skills such as creativity and innovative thinking. The primary focus of the course is to explore different mediums and approaches to making art through experimentation, practice, and play.

6th Grade Art

Grade Offered: 6

Elective

Semester elective.

This semester course aims to develop essential life skills such as creativity and innovative thinking. Students will be offered a variety of choices as they begin to shape their own artistic investigations. We will explore different mediums and approaches to making art through experimentation and practice.

Digital Media

Grades Offered: 7, 8

Elective

Semester elective.

Students will develop their creative storytelling skills and learn the fundamentals of digital video production, animation, and audio editing. Through a series of creative projects, students will develop their technical skills and artistic expression, while also understanding the ethical and responsible use of digital tools and AI-generated digital art. Students will develop creative problem-solving and project-management skills while collaborating to communicate in a digital environment. They will think critically about media consumption and production while working through the full production process from concept to publishing. Topics will include storyboarding, filming techniques, video editing, audio recording, editing, and mixing.

Drawing Skills

Grades Offered: 7, 8

Elective

Semester elective.

Drawing Skills is an introductory course, which focuses on creativity and innovative thinking. Students will practice techniques, set goals, and develop ideas through the exploration of various drawing materials such as: graphite, charcoal, ink, pastel, watercolor, and mixed media. This course provides the time and space for experimenting, taking creative risks, practicing, receiving constructive feedback, reflecting, revising, and refining work over time.

Experimental Design

Grades Offered: 7, 8

Elective

Semester elective.

This course is all about challenges! Students are given a material and a subject and challenged with constructing a 2- or 3-dimensional piece, emphasizing invention and creativity. The course will cover the fundamentals of design through experimenting, taking creative risks, practicing, receiving constructive feedback, reflecting, revising, and refining work. In this course students will use an amazing array of materials from LED lights and motors to discarded books and magazines, to cardboard boxes, wire, and fabric. Sketch books are kept throughout the term to jot down ideas and work on fun (and sometimes pretty funny) exercises.

Painting Skills

Grades Offered: 7, 8

Elective

Semester elective.

Painting is an introductory course which focuses on creativity and innovative thinking. Students will learn various acrylic painting techniques. Through the process of creating several paintings, students have the opportunity to set goals, develop skills, and communicate ideas. This course provides the time and space for experimenting, taking creative risks, practicing, receiving constructive feedback, reflecting, revising, and refining work over time.

Sculpture & Clay

Grades Offered: 7, 8

Elective

Semester elective.

Sculpture and Clay introduces students to the creative process of working in three dimensions through a variety of sculptural materials and techniques. Students learn foundational skills in ceramic handbuilding, clay construction, and additive and subtractive sculpture while developing craftsmanship, creativity, and safe studio practices. Students will also explore the work of master and contemporary artists to understand how artists use materials, techniques, and ideas to create three-dimensional work. Projects may include ceramics, carving, assemblage, and mixed-media sculpture, with opportunities for students to experiment with materials and develop original ideas.

Woodshop

Grades Offered: 7, 8

Elective

Semester elective.

Woodshop introduces students to the safe use of power and hand tools, mechanical drawing, and woodworking skills. Students learn hands-on skills while following woodshop protocols and safety precautions. Cutting boards, boxes, and step stools are examples of projects that can be made during the term. In addition, students will have the opportunity to work on a final project of their own choosing, using the skills and tools learned during the semester.

Music

Middle School 5th Grade	Middle School 5th and 6th Grade (electives)	Middle School 7th and 8th Grade (electives)
5th Grade Music (required)	6th Grade Band 6th Grade Strings 6th Grade Choir Beginning Band Beginning Strings	7th and 8th Grade Band 7th and 8th Grade Strings 7th and 8th Grade Choir

5th Grade Music

Grade Offered: 5

Required

This trimester course provides exposure to a broad range of music skills, and an introduction to instruments and the voice. Students will actively participate in an exploration of musical styles through various games and activities designed to develop a strong foundation for future music courses. A celebration of different musical cultures will also play a key role in the curriculum of this course. Students will have the opportunity to sing as a vocal ensemble as well, with options for performance at the end of the year.

6th Grade Strings

Grade Offered: 6

Elective

Full-year elective.

6th grade strings is a course for string players just past the introductory level. Players should have at least one year of experience on violin, viola, cello, or string bass. Students will continue their instrument study, with emphasis on technical proficiency, tone production, musicianship, and ensemble-building. Opportunities for performance will be twice yearly at the Winter and Spring Orchestra concerts, with additional performances throughout the school year, as available.

6th Grade Band

Grade Offered: 6

Elective

Full-year elective.

The 6th grade band is a two-semester course designed for students just past the introductory level. The focus of this course is to increase individual and group performance skills on the following instruments: *flute, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, electric bass, keyboard percussion, bass drum, and snare drum*. Students will review the fundamentals of playing their instrument and will continue with the basics of tone quality, intonation, articulation, and dynamics. This band will perform at two concerts during the school year.

Beginning Band

Grades Offered: 5, 6, 7, 8

Elective

After school elective. Monday/Wednesday, 3 - 3:45 pm.

Beginning Band is an after school elective class designed primarily for students in the 5th - 8th grade who wish to play a concert band instrument. Students will be guided in the selection of an appropriate instrument and taught the fundamentals of tone production, counting rhythms and note accuracy. Students will perform in two concerts during the year, in December and May. The following instruments are taught: *flute, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, and percussion*. Other instruments may be added at the instructor's discretion.

6th Grade Choir

Grade Offered: 6

Elective

The 6th grade choir is a one-semester class designed for all students regardless of previous singing experience. This ensemble is an excellent foundation for students interested in vocal development during their middle school years. The study of basic music theory and sight singing will be emphasized as students prepare repertoire for one concert performance at the end of the semester, with other opportunities to be determined.

Beginning Strings

Grades Offered: 5, 6, 7, 8

Elective

Beginning Strings is an after school elective class designed for students in the 5th, 6th, 7th, or 8th grades who wish to play a string instrument (violin, viola, cello, or string bass), but have had little or no previous experience. In the first classes, students are guided in the selection of an appropriate instrument. In the early part of the first semester, we will learn the proper way to hold both the instrument and the bow. Note naming, rhythm counting, and tone production will be the foundational work, with the introduction of a variety of songs and exercises rehearsed throughout the semester. Beginning Strings will have the opportunity to perform twice during the school year, in December and May.

7th & 8th Grade Band

Grades Offered: 7, 8

Elective

Full-year elective

This course is a continuation of the band curriculum, designed for students wanting to continue their studies on their instruments in Concert Band or Jazz Band in the upper school. Students will focus on the basics of good tone quality, intonation, balance, blend, technical accuracy and musical style. The 7th and 8th grade band will perform at two school concerts per year. At least one year of playing experience is required for enrollment in this class.

7th & 8th Grade Choir

Grades Offered: 7, 8

Elective

Semester elective.

The 7th & 8th grade choir is a course designed for students with varied degrees of singing experience. Participation in this ensemble will continue to develop students' performance skills and strengthen their foundation for further exploration in vocal or choral ensembles at Overlake. As a group, we will work on the basics of healthy vocal technique, teamwork, creating a safe space for expression, good musicianship, and sight singing. Students will rehearse repertoire in preparation for one concert, with a possibility of other performance dates to be added, if time permits.

7th & 8th Grade Strings

Grades Offered: 7, 8

Elective

Full-year elective

This course is for 7th and 8th grade string players with 1-2+ years of playing experience on violin, viola, cello, or string bass. Emphasis in this course will be placed on ensemble building, as well as technical proficiency, tone production, and musicianship. The 7th/8th Strings ensemble will perform at least twice a year at the Winter and Spring Orchestra Concerts, with a variety of additional performances to be scheduled during the school year.

String Orchestra

Grades Offered: 7-12

Prerequisite Needed

Elective

Zero Block elective. Full year recommended; may be taken as a semester course.

Prerequisite: At least two years previous string playing experience; proficiency determined by instructor.

The Overlake String Orchestra is open to string players in grades 7 through 12 with at least two years of previous playing experience, or permission of the instructor. This ensemble plays three concerts a year featuring music for string orchestra and small chamber ensembles, as well as selected works including woodwinds and brass, and concertos featuring student soloists. There are opportunities to perform in solo and ensemble festivals at both the middle and upper school level. Emphasis is on developing and improving ensemble and individual performance skills, as well as sight-reading ability. Repertoire will include music from a variety of composers and genres.

Theater

Middle School

5th and 6th Grade

5th Grade Drama

6th Grade Drama

Middle School

7th and 8th Grade

(electives)

7th-8th Play or Musical
Production

Tech Theater

Improvisation

5th Grade Drama

Grade Offered: 5

Required

In this class, students will be introduced to the basic concepts of theatre arts. Students will use various creative drama techniques to build confidence, stimulate imagination, develop trust, and explore movement and role-play. Through theatre games and activities students will learn to lose inhibitions and will gain trust in themselves as well as others in their groups. Students will exhibit and reinforce their skills through individual and group presentations, performances, script and journal writing.

6th Grade Drama

Grade Offered: 6

Elective

Semester elective.

In this class, students will continue their study of the basic concepts of drama and begin to refine their presentational skills. Students will use various creative drama techniques to build ensemble, stimulate imagination, movement, and role-play with an emphasis on believability and sensory awareness. Students will exhibit and reinforce their skills through individual and group presentations, performances, and script analysis.

7th & 8th Grade Play Production

Grades Offered: 7, 8

Prerequisite Preferred

Elective

Prerequisite: Previous drama classes and/or performance experience is preferred, but not necessary. Course may be repeated.

This course explores acting and collaborative ensemble work through rehearsal and performance of a PLAY or MUSICAL. Students explore voice, movement, and characterization, and then apply these skills in a dramatic context. This course culminates in a fully-staged production on the Overlake mainstage.

Improvisation

Grades Offered: 7, 8

Elective

Semester elective.

This is a perfect course for anyone wanting a deeper study of acting technique and exploration into the world of theater. Over the course of the semester, students will explore physicality and vocal work through method acting techniques, ensemble building activities, and theater games. They will continue to develop skills in building trust and confidence, listening, and teamwork through a variety of course projects including movement-based theatre, monologue study, scene work, and live performance.

Tech Theater

Grades Offered: 7, 8

Elective

Semester elective.

This class is dedicated to learning the fundamentals of theatre design and technology. Students will become familiar with the different areas of design: costume, scenic, lights and sound, and they will have time to experiment with the tools we use to bring these designs to life. Students gain a deeper understanding of how theatre technology supports a performance and will have a chance to showcase their skills by working on practical projects for school productions.

Electives

Computer Science Foundations

Grades Offered: 7, 8

Elective

Offered both semesters for 7th and 8th graders. This course can be taken once in 7th or 8th grade, and must be paired with an Arts class for the other semester.

No prerequisite computer science or programming background required.

This course is cross-listed in Mathematics and Computer Science.

In this inspiring one-semester course students will be introduced to the idea of Computer Science as a field as well as algorithmic thinking – how can we learn to give instructions that someone else can follow to complete a task. Students will have the opportunity to explore, problem solve, and create in the context of developing Android applications. Topics include event driven programming, basic algorithm development, abstraction, image manipulation, and error detection. Over the course of the semester students will use the Mobile CSP online curriculum and MIT's AppInventor online development environment to develop Android applications on their own physical devices.

Middle School Speech & Debate

Grades Offered: 7, 8

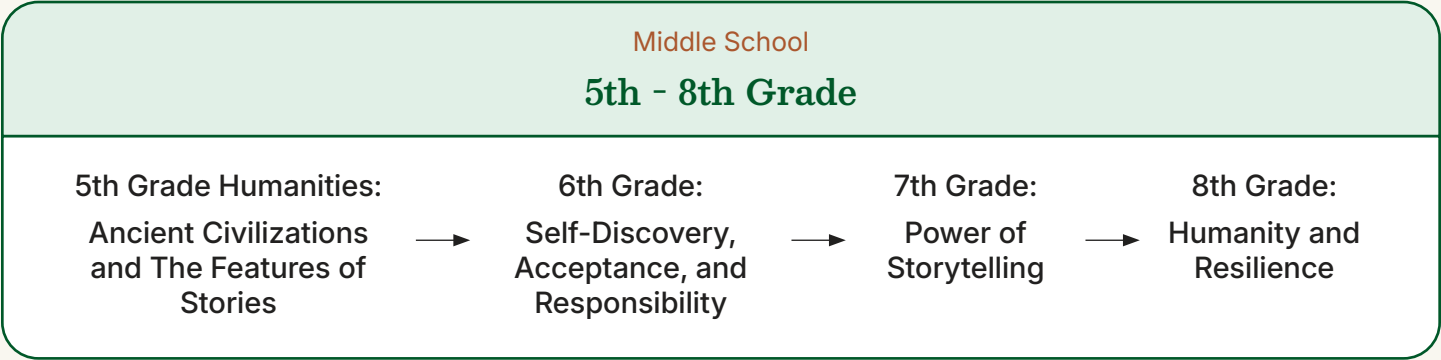
Elective

7th and 8th-grade semester elective. This course can be taken once in 7th or 8th grade, and must be paired with an Arts class for the other semester.

In this course, we will focus on strengthening public speaking skills, research skills, building an argument with evidence, and rebutting an opponent's argument. Students will have an opportunity to test out their skills by competing in a debate tournament. Students will be expected to research current events, work cooperatively in small groups and be willing to make their voice heard.

English

The Overlake English Department fosters a passion for learning through the study of literature and writing.



English 5

Grade Offered: 5

Required

5th grade English works in tandem with 5th grade social studies to create an integrated study of language arts and history. With myths, stories, and ancient civilizations as the focus, students consider the following essential questions:

What makes a good story?

- How does exposition impact a story?
- How do we determine the theme of a story?
- How does the protagonist's central conflict help us determine the climax of a story?
- What makes a true friend?
- What makes a hero?

For language arts, students practice close reading skills, strategies for vocabulary development, and effective presentation techniques. Writing focuses on developing an argument through the use of evidence and analysis. In addition, grammar is taught as a fundamental part of the writing process, and students regularly address these skills within their written work. In conjunction with the ancient civilizations curriculum, students read a selection of articles and short stories including "What is a Myth?," "The Dog of Pompeii," "The All-American Slurp," and "Ho-ichi the Earless." Students also read three novels, *Same Sun Here*, *Bamboo People*, and a retelling of *The Odyssey*.

English 6

Grade Offered: 6

Required

6th Grade English explores identity, empathy, and the power of language. In becoming critical readers and expressive writers, students will better understand who they are and discover who they want to be. Our work is guided by six thematic questions:

- How do we define who we are?
- How does the history of our families and culture impact our present?
- How do the different parts of our identity combine to make us who we are?
- How does society shape our experiences in the world?
- How do differences in power and privilege influence our relationships?
- How can we use our voices to advocate for justice and enact change?

Through exposure to a variety of texts including poetry, short stories, novels, graphic novels, and informational texts, students learn to read critically for details, recognize figurative language, and interpret developments in plot, character, setting, and theme. In class discussions and activities, students use textual evidence to support their own thinking and evaluate classmates' ideas. Texts include *New Kid*, *This Book is Anti-Racist*, *The Crossover*, *Harbor Me*, *The Best At It*, *Lucky Broken Girl*, *The Parker Inheritance*, *As Brave as You*, *Kira-Kira*, *Lily and Dunkin*, *When You Trap a Tiger*, *Marcus Vega Doesn't Speak Spanish*, and various short stories and poetry.

Students will build skills in both analytical and creative writing. Within each form, writing instruction emphasizes increasingly complex and varied sentence structure as well as careful word choice. With guidance, students will revise and edit their own writing as well as that of their peers, paying close attention to organization, style, and the proper grammar, usage, and mechanics of the English language. In addition, students will acquire and utilize new vocabulary through close reading as well as careful study of the vocabulary text, *Sadlier-Oxford Vocabulary Workshop Level B*.

English 7

Grade Offered: 7

Required

7th Grade English is intentionally aligned with 7th Grade American Studies, allowing students to examine key themes across history and literature. The course is organized around four thematic units:

1. Culture and Identity: Who belongs and who decides?
2. Inequality and Opportunity: How do people respond when they are denied opportunities or treated unfairly?
3. Power and Conflict: How does power shape relationships, communities, and societies?
4. Changemakers: How can individuals create meaningful change?

Students study a range of literary and informational texts, analyze author's purpose, perspective, figurative language, symbolism, and the development of key literary elements. Texts are aligned with Social Studies units to provide historical context and deepen analysis. Texts include: *The Last Cuentista*, *The Outsiders*, and *They Called Us Enemy*, as well as independent reading and literature circle novels.

Through class discussions and a variety of writing prompts, students will continue refining their ability to construct strong arguments supported by well-chosen textual evidence. This will be structured throughout the year with short, informal journal entries and reflections, formal paragraphs and essays, and interdisciplinary projects.

Vocabulary-building and grammar knowledge units will be yearlong, consisting of stand-alone lessons and practice opportunities through various assessments and writing prompts. We will develop communication and listening skills through class discussions, Socratic seminars, speeches, and presentations.

English 8

Grade Offered: 8

Required

Essential questions guide the English 8 curriculum:

- Testing our mettle: How do we show resilience?
- What does it mean to be human?

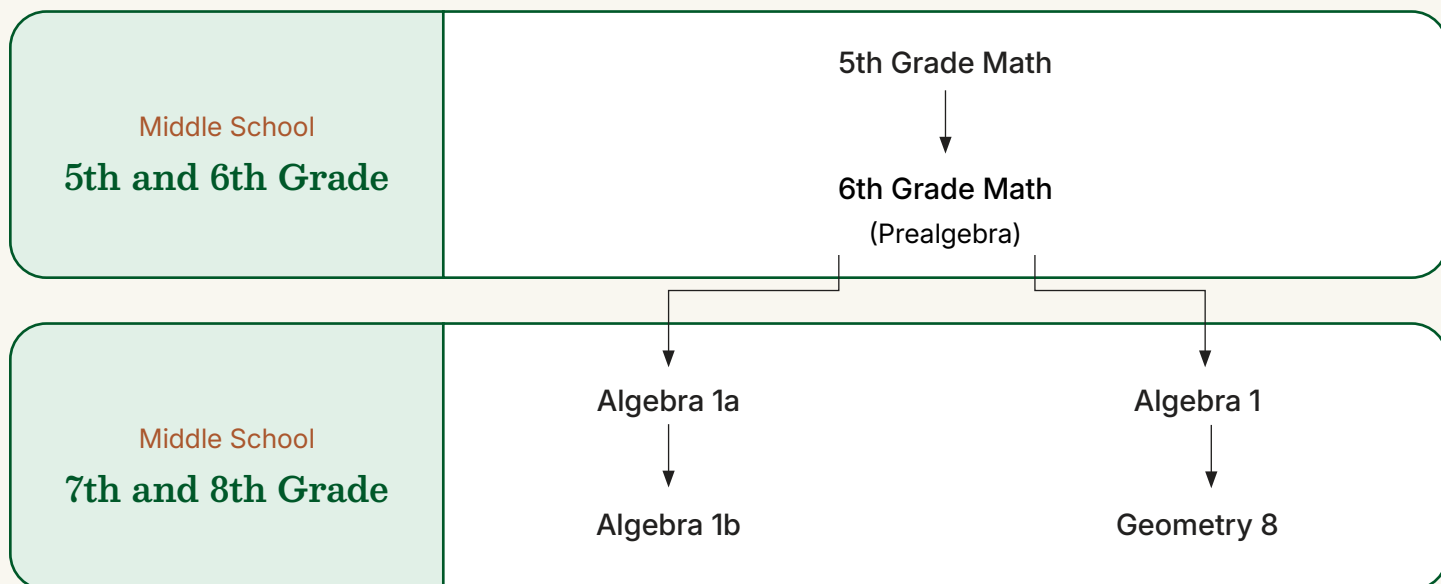
Through literature, writing assignments, and discussion, 8th graders consider these age-old questions, seeking to understand more about themselves, others, and characters in our texts. Novels typically include *A Separate Peace*, *Of Mice and Men*, *A Gathering of Old Men*, and *Half Brother*. In addition, students study other genres, which may include short stories, non-fiction, poetry, vignettes, and drama (*Romeo and Juliet*, "Thunder on Sycamore Street").

The program emphasizes a formal approach to writing via structured paragraphs and multi-paragraph essays, with special attention to word choice, sentence structure, provable root sentences, effective transitions, introductions, and conclusions. In addition, students write poetry, practicing creative writing techniques such as the use of brevity, figurative language, line breaks, and various styles of rhyme and repetition.

8th graders further develop communication skills through leading discussions, presenting their writing and delivering speeches. Literature and writing components are supplemented by continued study of grammar, usage, mechanics, and vocabulary.

Mathematics and Computer Science

The Overlake Math & Comp Sci Department provides students with the foundations necessary for college as well as 21st-century careers.



Math 5

Grade Offered: 5

Required

All 5th grade students take Math 5. Computation with whole numbers, decimals, and fractions is honed. Keen attention is paid to understanding the effect of operations on quantities in order to develop estimation skills and improve number sense. Students examine algorithms and number composition to enhance understanding of arithmetic properties. Geometry, number theory, ratio, percent, measurement, and pre-algebra concepts are explored through hands-on activities, problem solving, and practice workbooks. 5th graders also have math labs during which they explore open-ended problems, participate in Math Olympiad contests, and extend their study of topics. Students are regularly prompted to reflect on, prove, or justify solutions during focused discussions. Whole class instruction and smaller skill-group lessons meet varied student abilities. Students continually revisit learned concepts through classroom routines and mathematical games.

Math 6

Grade Offered: 6

Required

As students solidify a foundation in decimals, fractions, percent, ratio and proportion, they will become more comfortable with how variables can be incorporated within these concepts. Topics include operations with rational numbers, simplifying algebraic expressions, solving equations and basic geometry. Problem solving techniques and algebraic processes are emphasized throughout the year

as students learn to communicate their solutions. Reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills are stressed as students learn to express mathematical ideas just as they would in other subject areas. There is a focus on developing a breadth and depth of mathematical knowledge and skills, with a strong emphasis on conceptual understanding. An equal emphasis is placed on conceptual understanding and skill development – the “why” as well as the “how”.

Algebra 1

Grade Offered: 7

Prerequisite(s) Needed

One-year Algebra 1 course, to be taken in 7th grade.

Prerequisite: There are two options for completing Algebra 1: a two-year course and a one-year course. Placement into these courses is done by the middle school math faculty in conjunction with the department head.

This is a rigorous, complete Algebra 1 course. The course content includes solving of linear and quadratic equations, graphing linear equations and inequalities, exponents, radicals, polynomials, systems of equations, and some rational expressions. Because it includes all of the abstract concepts through the solving of quadratics, placement into this course is not solely based on strength in arithmetic, but is also based on evaluation of abstract thinking, academic maturity, and a student's intellectual drive. Applications to science, in addition to other real-world situations, are integrated throughout the course.

Algebra 1A

Grade Offered: 7

Prerequisite(s) Needed

Part one of a two-year course sequence, to be taken in 7th grade.

Prerequisite: There are two options for completing Algebra 1: a two-year course and a one-year course. Placement into these courses is done by the middle school math faculty in conjunction with the department head.

This course provides exposure to the more concrete topics of Algebra. Students will explore the basic principles and skills of simplifying expressions, polynomials, exponents, radicals, and solving and graphing linear equations and inequalities.

Algebra 1B

Grade Offered: 8

Prerequisite(s) Needed

Prerequisite: Algebra 1A. There are two options for completing Algebra 1: a two-year course and a one-year course. Placement into these courses is done by the middle school math faculty in conjunction with the department head.

This course provides exposure to the more abstract topics of Algebra, building from the foundation created in Algebra 1A. The primary course content will be solving quadratics, graphing linear and quadratic equations, manipulating polynomials, solving systems of equations, and simplifying rational expressions.

Geometry 8

Grade Offered: 8

Prerequisite(s) Needed

Prerequisite: Algebra 7.

This course is for students who successfully complete Algebra 1 by the end of 7th grade. Through independent work, small group work, and guided lectures, students study the properties and relationships of points, lines, planes, circles, polygons and solids in both two and three dimensions. These topics are explored through the integration of arithmetic and algebraic properties along with deductive and inductive reasoning. As students study definitions, postulates, and theorems, they will develop logical and critical thinking skills that transfer to other academic studies. The first semester provides a thorough exposure to using proofs as a means of drawing conclusions. The second semester is more computation and invokes key concepts from Algebra.

Computer Science Foundations

Grades Offered: 7, 8

Offered both semesters for 7th and 8th graders. This course can be taken once in 7th or 8th grade, and must be paired with an Arts class for the other semester.

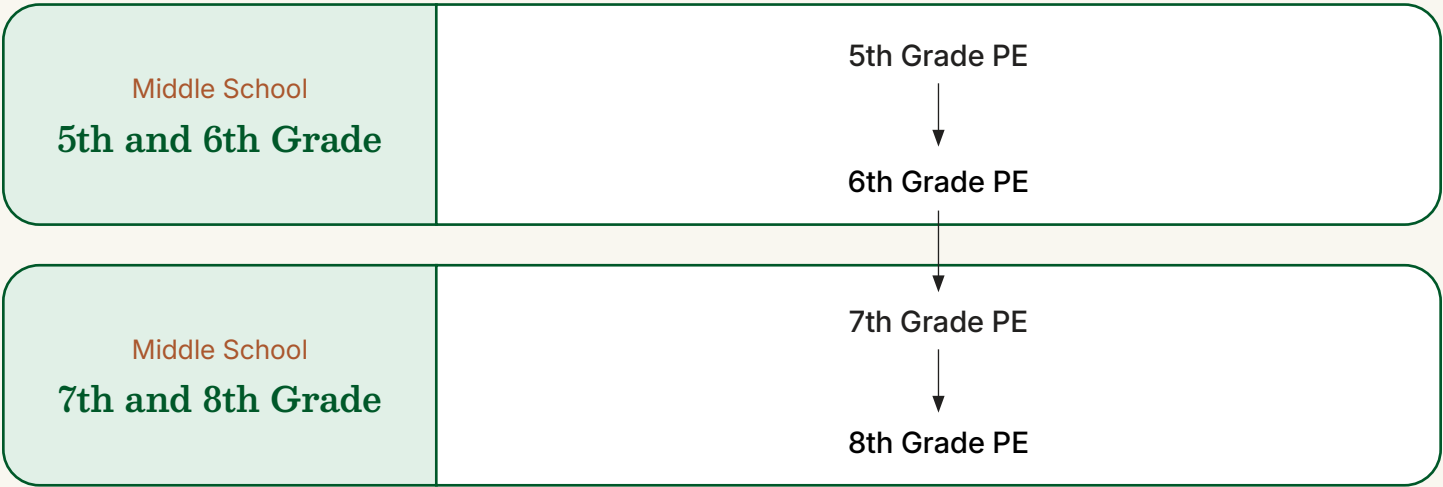
No prerequisite computer science or programming background required.

This course is cross-listed in Electives.

In this inspiring one-semester course, students will be introduced to the idea of Computer Science as a field as well as algorithmic thinking – how can we learn to give instructions that someone else can follow to complete a task. Students will have the opportunity to explore, problem solve, and create in the context of developing Android applications. Topics include event driven programming, basic algorithm development, abstraction, image manipulation, and error detection. Over the course of the semester students will use the Mobile CSP online curriculum and MIT's AppInventor online development environment to develop Android applications on their own physical devices.

Physical Education

Physical Education is an essential part of the total Overlake educational process.



Physical Education 5

Grade Offered: 5 Required

The curriculum in grade five is intentionally designed to include a wide variety of fitness-related activities and sports. The goal of each activity is to provide maximal participation to enhance both fitness and the basic movement skills of throwing, catching, striking, kicking, balance, agility, and eye-hand coordination. Games are modified to ensure success and keep the skills and expectations age-appropriate. Individual progress is measured using rubrics, self-evaluation, peer evaluation, teacher evaluation, fitness tests, and the medals program. The Fitnessgram test is administered twice each year and is used to measure the effectiveness of their work in accomplishing a healthy level of fitness. Special activities for the 5th grade include lawn games, badminton, circus arts, bowling, bouldering, cricket, pillow polo, rope skipping, tumbling, volleyball, lacrosse, table tennis, and wiffleball. Swimming is offered as available on a year-by-year basis.

Physical Education 6

Grade Offered: 6 Required

Through the use of small and large group games and cooperative activities, 6th grade students develop more skills specific to games and sports. Fitness remains a top priority of each day's activities and low-level competition is introduced with a strong emphasis placed on sportsmanship. 6th grade students are evaluated on a pass/fail basis. Each student's progress is monitored and demonstrated using rubrics, self-evaluations, peer evaluations, and fitness activities. Special units for the 6th grade are archery, floor hockey, pickleball, fistball, and tennis. Each class completes two fitness evaluations throughout the year. The Fitnessgram evaluation is used to measure the effectiveness of their work in accomplishing a healthy level of fitness.

Physical Education 7

Grade Offered: 7 Required

In 7th grade, a more technical approach is used toward game skills. Game strategies are introduced and alternative warm-ups and games are a part of each day. These non-traditional activities keep the program active and fun while ensuring fitness and skill development. Additionally, at this level students are assigned grades that reflect their class participation, effort, contributions to the group, sportsmanship, and attitude. Skills are evaluated using goal setting, rubrics, self-evaluation, peer evaluation, video review, and fitness activities, in order to demonstrate individual progress. Many units are re-visited in the 7th grade and include archery, soccer, basketball, volleyball, football, hockey, and more advanced skills/tactics are taught and practiced. Special units include multi-cultural games taught by the students, and leadership challenges to develop communication skills. There is an introduction to the fitness center, where students learn more about muscular endurance training. In addition, each class section works collaboratively and cooperatively to choose four additional units they would like to explore during their 7th grade year. Each class completes The Fitnessgram evaluation twice per year and the results are used to measure the effectiveness of their work in accomplishing a healthy level of fitness.

Physical Education 8

Grade Offered: 8

Required

8th grade students spend one quarter in each of the following classes: health, conditioning, recreational sports, and team sports. Each class focuses on topics and skills that are fundamental to the overall health and well-being of each student.

Health

The study of all aspects of healthy well-being is one unit of the physical education curriculum. Students rotate through the health portion of Health/PE class for one quarter in the four units. Study includes:

1. **Social-Emotional Health:** brain development, mindfulness, communication skills & emotional vocabulary
2. **Physical Health:** nutrition, healthy body-image and CPR
3. **Sexual Health:** reproductive and sexual anatomy, sexually transmitted diseases, birth control, and communication
4. **Mental Health:** suicide prevention, stress management and preventative practices

All of the above topics are taught and discussed keeping in mind the all-encompassing themes of choice, responsibility, and consequences.

Conditioning

Students are introduced to training principles in the fitness center and spend the quarter learning many different fitness training techniques. Students learn to individualize their workouts, practice exercises specific to their activity goals. Each student completes the Fitnessgram evaluation to measure the effectiveness of their work in accomplishing a healthy level of fitness. The overall goal is to help students exercise "smarter" to help them reach their personal fitness and performance goals and to complete a dynamic workout each day of class.

Team Sports

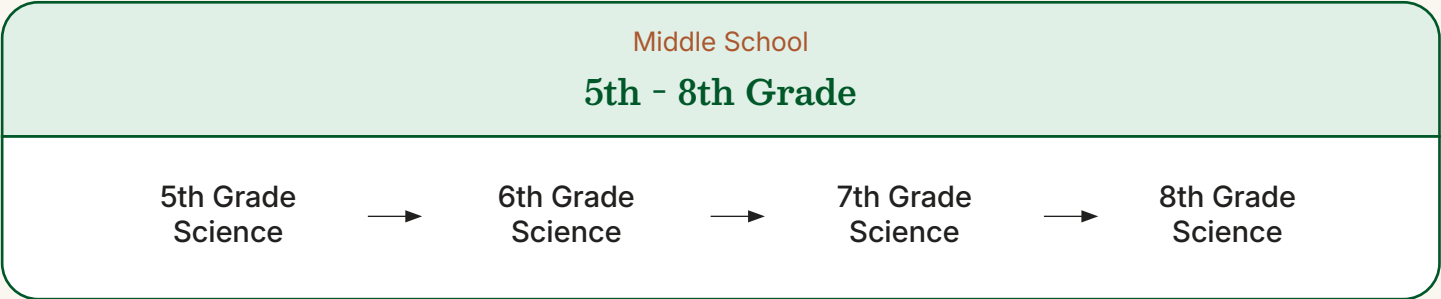
In team sports, each student will have the opportunity to be involved in 2-3 different specific team sports. Each sport is broken down into a season. The season is set up with a coach that helps divide the class into a designated number of teams, focusing on each student's level of exposure to the activity, current skill level, and overall participation in-class activities. Each coach leads their team in daily practice and by helping their team work together to accomplish a common goal for the season. Every additional member of the team will be given a specific role to carry out throughout the season. Each sport is chosen by the class. The teaching and practicing of social responsibility/teamwork is the main theme in this class. Everything is done with a team as a team.

Recreational Sports

The recreational sports class focuses on recreational and lifetime activities. The emphasis is on low-organized participation and not competition. Students learn skills, rules, and strategies while participating in individual and group activities. Activities may include: badminton, volleyball, archery, tennis, pickleball, bocce ball, table tennis, spike ball, fistball, ultimate, Gola, and gym games. Games are designed to teach sportsmanship, cooperation, leadership, respect for diversity of abilities, problem-solving, and proper game etiquette. Rules are often modified to ensure success and games are played in small groups to maximize participation.

Science

The aim of the Overlake Science department is to capitalize on students' curiosity to engage them in a rich exploration of the natural world.



Science 5

Grade Offered: 5

Required

5th grade science begins with an introduction to Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) Science Practices and then applies them using the scientific method. The students use an inquiry-based approach to explore topics in the areas of physical science, earth science, and biological science. Students utilize investigatory skills to look for patterns, relationships, and connections between various topics of the different disciplines of science. Topics covered include: the nature of properly designed experimental procedures, properties of the Earth, interaction of species and their environments, and environmental awareness and stewardship.

Science 6

Grade Offered: 6

Required

In 6th grade science, students learn about the fundamentals of Chemistry before applying that knowledge to Biological systems. Topics covered include forensic science, medical phenomena, how organisms sustain life, and how traits are passed through generations. Students examine a range of phenomena within living systems, which they explain by gathering, interpreting, and communicating evidence. Students develop skills in the Science Practices of modeling, data analysis, arguing based on evidence, and constructing explanations.

Science 7

Grade Offered: 7

Required

7th grade science focuses on understanding what is happening in and on our Earth. Areas studied include rocks and landforms, earthquakes and volcanoes, weather and climate, and ecosystem interactions. The course uses an inquiry-based approach with students engaging in hands-on, collaborative investigations and practicing skills including modeling and scientific writing. There is also an emphasis placed on technology and using online resources to study our earth. The 7th grade course continues to build on the Science Practices developed in 6th grade.

Science 8

Grade Offered: 8

Required

This is the final course in the middle school science program. 8th grade science concentrates on the study of physics through investigation of the concepts of motion, Newton's Laws, work, and energy, thermodynamics, sound and light waves, magnetism, and Earth's interactions with celestial bodies near and far. 8th grade science emphasizes scientific inquiry and experimentation with heavy focus on common scientific phenomena students see every day, but cannot explain. "How does this work?" is the central theme.

Social Studies

The mission of the Overlake Social Studies department is to create a challenging, relevant, and engaging curriculum to inspire our students to become critical thinkers, effective communicators, and active and open-minded citizens of the world.

Middle School

5th - 8th Grade

5th Grade Humanities:

Society and Self



6th Grade:

Communities and
Change in the
Pacific Northwest



7th Grade:

American
Studies



8th Grade:

Civics and
Citizenship

Social Studies 5: Society and Self

Grade Offered: 5

Required

Grade 5 Social Studies dovetails with English in a humanities course that integrates the study of stories and cultures. Students explore the relationship between past and present using maps, charts, and other geographic tools to better understand people, places, resources, and environments on earth. They observe and analyze the interaction between people, the environment, and culture, in order to understand what constitutes a civilization. Students develop critical thinking skills, such as supporting a claim with facts and transferring knowledge to new scenarios, through study of these essential questions:

- Who am I? How do I express myself?
- Where am I in place and time? What are necessary human stories to be heard?
- Who are the change makers? How do our stories prompt change, growth and revolution? How does the world work?
- How do we organize ourselves? How is the natural world organized? What human needs require structure?
- Who are the stakeholders in sharing? How can we share the planet? What are planetary outcomes in sharing?

Within the context of these questions, student work focuses on literature studies, vocabulary activities, and the writing process. Students also complete projects, presentations, simulations, essays, and contests in geography, spelling, poetry, and short stories, including Battle of the Books. Resources include our class young adult fiction books, a teacher-made anthology of poems and short stories, references to the *History Alive* textbook, and guest speakers, in addition to a wide range of articles and texts in our extensive online databases.

Social Studies 6: Communities and Change in the Pacific Northwest

Grade Offered: 6

Required

Sixth graders will build their social studies skills through investigations of Washington State's past and present.

The curricular year is divided into five learning units with the following general topics:

- Geography with a focus on Washington state;
- Culture, laws, and social practices of the First Americans of the Pacific Northwest;
- Exploration and expansion of territorial boundaries
- Population growth from immigration; and
- Washington and Northwest history as case studies for American experiences.

Units are interdisciplinary and incorporate primary document study, map work, writing, discussion, and performance. Students engage in a variety of learning activities, including debate, essay writing, roleplay, and creating brochures and posters.

Issues of identity, culture, and change frame the course. When appropriate, current events are addressed and compared to the past to help students construct a framework for understanding social studies across time and place. Readings come from narratives that capture the sense and feel of historical periods and cultural change and from a variety of textual resources. When possible, primary sources and narratives are used to give students exposure to authentic voice and experience. Students participate in individual and cooperative projects throughout the school year. Projects are designed to hone the students' research and presentation skills and develop creative abilities through visual and verbal expression.

Social Studies 7: American Studies

Grade Offered: 7

Required

American Studies is a thematic, inquiry-driven social studies course that asks students to examine the United States - its promises, its contradictions, and the ongoing tension between what this country says it is and what it has been.

The course is organized into four quarter long units, each centered on a different dimension of American life and each driven by its own essential questions. The year opens with a foundational unit on American geography, government, and economics - the systems and structures that shape how the country works. From there, students move into an extended examination of American identity: who has been counted as fully American throughout history, who has been excluded, and how those decisions have been made and contested. Case studies include Reconstruction and Jim Crow, immigration movements, Japanese American incarceration during World War II, the Civil Rights Movement, LGBTQ+ rights, and the post-9/11 era. The second unit turns to inequality and opportunity — how wealth and advantage have been distributed (and withheld) through systems like redlining, the GI Bill, school funding, and labor law. The third unit examines power, conflict, and the ethics of war: when force is justified, who bears its costs, and how nations reckon with the moral consequences of their decisions. The course concludes with a unit on social change — how movements form, what tactics they use, what they achieve, and what they cost the people who make them.

Throughout the year, students work with primary sources, competing historical interpretations, and real data. They write analytically, argue from evidence, and develop the skills of historical thinking that carry across disciplines. American Studies shares essential questions and thematic units with 7th-grade English — the two courses are designed to reinforce each other, and students will find the ideas they encounter in one showing up in the other. The two classes also share a collapsible wall that allows for combined experiences, simulations, and discussions.

This is a course for students who are ready to engage with complicated, sometimes uncomfortable questions about the country they live in — and who want to understand how it got this way and what that means for what comes next.

Social Studies 8: Civics & Citizenship

Grade Offered: 8

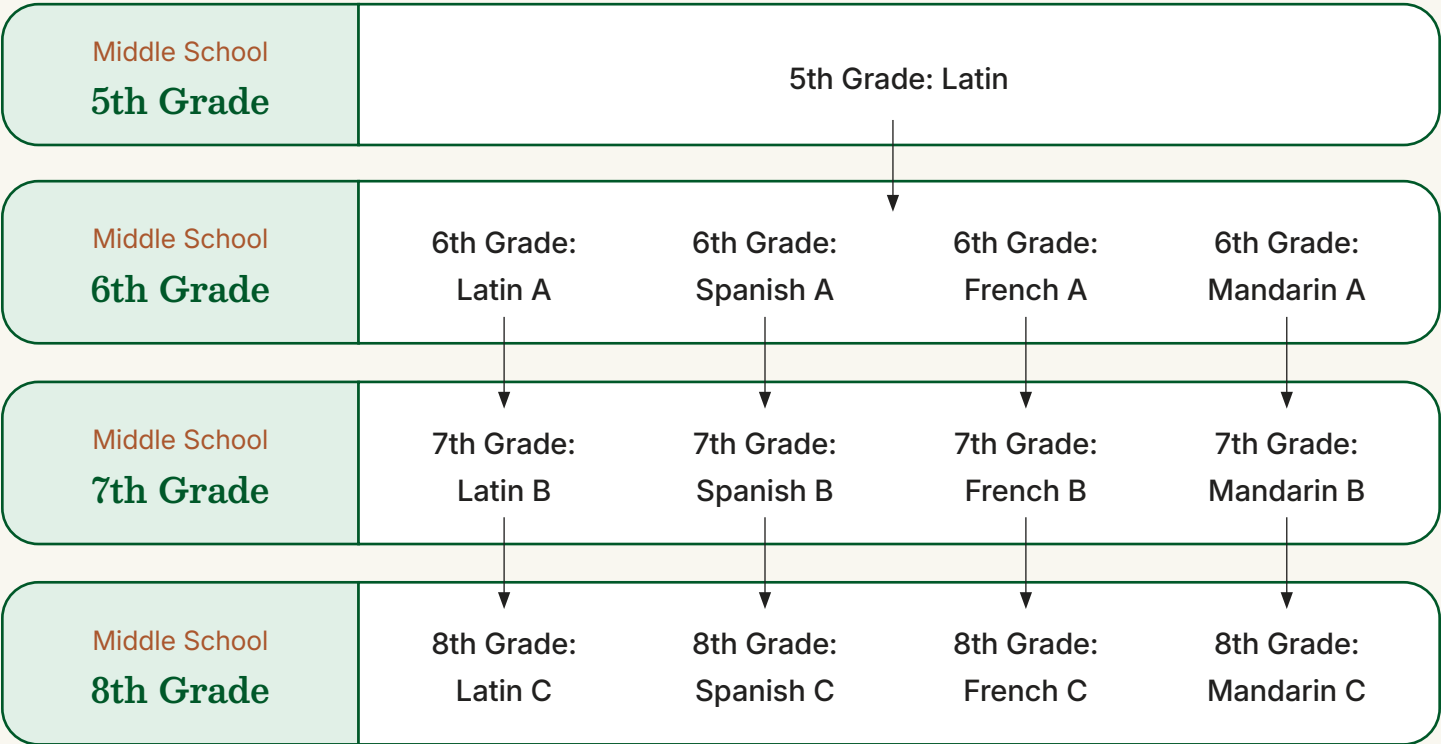
Required

Grade 8 Social Studies fosters informed and active citizenship through study of democracy, propaganda, and the political and legal system created by the United States Constitution, including governments at the local, state, and national level. Students investigate individual rights and explore historical and current political and social issues. They learn that citizenship involves forms of civic engagement that go beyond the academics and the simple act of voting: each student engages in a personal challenge for 30 days to learn about something of community importance that they want to help improve, change, or explore.

The course asks students to do considerable analytical work through their written and oral expression. They develop their note-taking skills and ability to read critically, conduct extensive research to support their ideas, and are challenged to write persuasive pieces. Students express in a variety of written and oral forms throughout the year, including a formal debate and many discussion opportunities. Students are asked to continually work on exploring a variety of perspectives, challenge their opinions, and consider many points of view. Students are also expected to engage with current events and consider their stands on issues that affect us all.

World Languages

The Overlake World Languages program is designed to broaden students' understanding and appreciation for the diversity of world cultures by building linguistic and cultural competence through the study of language.



5th Grade Latin

Grade Offered: 5 Required

This is a full-year course designed to give students a basic introduction to studying a world language and to the principles of language in general. Students will learn the building blocks and patterns of language through simple Latin grammar and vocabulary. All language study will focus on parallels with English grammar as well as English and Romance language derivatives. Individual and group projects will complement the students' experience of the language and culture. The course exposes students to a wealth of Greek and Latin culture, emphasizing cross-cultural interaction and the ancient world's impact on many modern cultures.

French A

Grade Offered: 6 Elective

The French A course is designed for 6th grade students with little or no prior background in French, and a desire to learn more about the people and cultures of the Francophone world. While the course is aimed at bringing students to a basic level of proficiency in the areas of listening, speaking, writing and reading, its main emphasis is on early understanding and communication using daily questions and routines, which build as the year progresses. Methodologies rely on comprehensible input, through which students are immersed in the French language at a level that is tailored

to their emerging abilities and understandings. Students are exposed to French daily during class activities which include games, music, media, collaborative projects and more!

By the end of French A, students will be able to communicate on very familiar topics such as family, preferences, weather and food using a variety of practiced and memorized words and phrases. Students will be able to recognize common words and expressions in speech, and present basic information on very familiar topics. Students will also gain familiarity with cultural practices and perspectives from throughout the French-speaking world.

Latin A

Grade Offered: 6 Elective

The first level of middle school Latin introduces 6th grade students to the language, culture and history of the ancient Romans. The students will develop reading and writing skills in Latin and language skills in general, including grammar, vocabulary, derivation and word study. First-year Latin students learn basic and vital grammar, including being able to identify and use correctly three declensions of nouns and adjectives, as well as three indicative tenses of regular verbs and the irregular verb sum. Readings are based on historical and fictional characters and their lives in ancient Pompeii. Additional material covers etymology, history, culture and mythology, with an emphasis on the early history of the Romans from Aeneas to Romulus. Latin A students also participate in the National Latin Exam.

Mandarin Chinese A

Grade Offered: 6

Elective

Mandarin Chinese A is for 6th grade students who have little or no prior background in the language. Mandarin Chinese A introduces students to the standard Chinese language (Mandarin) and culture. Emphasis will be placed on pinyin (the phonetic system indicating Chinese pronunciation in the English alphabet), listening comprehension and speaking skills. Simplified Chinese characters will be taught during the course, while traditional forms of characters are also introduced. Students will develop a core vocabulary and knowledge of basic grammar for conversation. Conversation topics will relate to daily life and school life, such as greetings, personal hobbies, and courtesy expressions. Cultural knowledge is gained through videos, arts and crafts, and supplementary readings.

Q&A

Question: Can I take Mandarin A if I've never studied Mandarin before?

Answer: Yes, the program is perfect for beginners or students who are new to the language.

Question: Can I take Mandarin A if I hear Mandarin at home and understand daily conversations, but cannot read or write in Chinese?

Answer: Yes, Mandarin A is an ideal choice if you want to improve your reading and writing skills in addition to your listening and speaking abilities.

Question: What will I learn in the first year of Mandarin?

Answer: In your first year, you'll learn:

- A system that uses the Roman alphabet (pinyin) to represent Chinese sounds.
- Proper pronunciation, with an emphasis on mastering the tonal differences in Mandarin.
- Around 250 basic to simple Chinese characters.
- How to express yourself on a variety of topics, such as introducing yourself and your family, discussing hobbies, and talking about dates and time.
- Key Chinese holidays and traditions, with hands-on experiences celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival and Lunar New Year.

Spanish A

Grade Offered: 6

Elective

The Spanish A course is designed for 6th grade students with little or no prior background in Spanish, and a desire to learn more about the people and cultures of the Spanish-speaking world. While the course is aimed at bringing students to a basic level of proficiency in the areas of listening, speaking, writing and reading, its main emphasis is on early understanding and communication using daily questions and routines, which build as the year progresses. Methodologies rely on comprehensible input, through which students are immersed in the Spanish language at a level that is tailored to their emerging abilities and understandings. Students are exposed to Spanish daily during class activities which include games, music, media, collaborative projects and more!

By the end of Spanish A, students will be able to communicate on very familiar topics such as family, preferences, weather and food using a variety of practiced and memorized words and phrases. Students will be able to recognize common words and expressions in speech, and present basic information on very familiar topics. Students will also gain familiarity with cultural practices and perspectives from throughout the Spanish-speaking world.

French B

Grade Offered: 7

Elective

French B is for students who have completed French A. Students begin with a review of what they learned in French A and continue to build a basic level of proficiency in the four areas of the language, although oral proficiency in the language as it is spoken "in real life" is the main focus of the class. Students learn an extended vocabulary and new accurate patterns of verbal and written communication. Students continue to study about the cultures of France and other French-speaking countries.

Latin B

Grade Offered: 7

Elective

In Latin B, students continue to build on their knowledge of the Latin language and the Roman people. They continue their study of grammar and learn the remaining noun cases and declensions as well as more detail on tenses in the active voice and indicative mood for regular and irregular verbs. They continue to develop skills in etymology, vocabulary, and reading fluency. The readings are a continuance of the Latin A stories, based on historical and fictional characters living in Roman Britain and Egypt. Students explore the history, culture, and mythology of the Romans more deeply, with an emphasis on the Kings of Rome and the heroes of the early Roman republic. Our 7th grade students also participate in the National Latin Exam.

Mandarin Chinese B

Grade Offered: 7

Elective

Mandarin Chinese B is for students who have completed Mandarin Chinese A. At the beginning of the course, students will have a short review of what they learned in Mandarin Chinese A. Then they will continue to study language and culture more in depth. Emphasis will remain on listening comprehension and speaking skills. Simplified Chinese characters will be taught in this course. Students continue to practice writing characters while their typing skills improve in terms of speed and accuracy. Students will also develop a core vocabulary and knowledge of basic grammar for reading and writing.

Spanish B

Grade Offered: 7

Elective

Spanish B is for students who have completed Spanish A. Students begin with a review of what they learned in Spanish A and continue to build a basic level of proficiency in the four areas of the language, although oral proficiency in the language as it is spoken "in real life" is the main focus of the class. Students learn an extended vocabulary and new accurate patterns of verbal and written communication. Students continue to study about the cultures of the Spanish-speaking world through more complex assignments and collaborative projects.

French C

Grade Offered: 8

Elective

French C students begin with a review of French A and B, and continue to build more proficiency in the language. Speaking skills continue to receive major focus, but additional emphasis is placed on reading, writing, and listening comprehension. The primary text is supplemented by selected short stories, poems, cartoons, music, films, and online sources, helping students to develop a deeper understanding of the culture. Students prepare and present projects on some aspects of the culture of the French-speaking world.

Latin C

Grade Offered: 8

Elective

In Latin C, students continue to build on their knowledge of the Latin language and the Roman people. They begin to study more advanced concepts in Latin grammar and continue developing skills in vocabulary and etymology. They continue to develop reading skills as they prepare to make the transition from adapted Latin to original texts. The students will complete this course with a confidence in translating Latin – single sentences as well as extended passages. They will be able to recognize Latin roots, prefixes, and suffixes in English words and thereby enrich their knowledge of their native tongue. Our 8th grade students also participate in the National Latin Exam.

Mandarin Chinese C

Grade Offered: 8

Elective

Mandarin Chinese C starts with a short review of Mandarin Chinese A and B, and continues to expand students' communicative abilities. Speaking and listening remain as the focus, while reading comprehension and writing are also emphasized. Accurate pronunciation and intonation are stressed. Conversation topics relate to situations that could occur while studying abroad; such as shopping, renting houses, banking, and travelling. Students are also expected to become more proficient in both handwritten and word-processed Chinese writing by using the pinyin input method. Further cultural knowledge is gained through supplementary readings, movies, research projects and cultural activities.

Spanish C

Grade Offered: 8

Elective

Spanish C students begin with a review of Spanish A and B, and continue building proficiency in the language. Speaking skills continue to be a major focus, but additional emphasis is placed on reading, writing, and listening comprehension. The primary text is supplemented by selected short stories, poems, songs, conversational scenarios and films, helping students to develop a deeper understanding of the culture. Students prepare and present projects on some aspects of the culture of the Spanish-speaking world.



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